

PRESS RELEASE

# **Agrarian Reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Building a New Vision, Redefining Strategies, and Celebrating Victories**

Friday 3 August 2012, by [La Via Campesina](#) (Date first published: 19 July 2012).

(JAKARTA, 19 JULY 2012) The international workshop and seminar, “Agrarian Reform and the Defense of Land and Territory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: The Challenge and Future” culminated on Sunday, July 15, in a celebration in Sibaladuang, Sungai Kamuyang Village, Limapuluh Kota Regent, West Sumatra, Indonesia.

La Via Campesina and Global Agrarian Reform delegates of the international workshop, from 26 countries, from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, in culmination of the Agrarian Reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> century discussions, joined the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Serikat Petani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant Union), the local host of the conference. There were also an additional 2,500 participants, with members of SPI from 15 provinces from around Indonesia. Also in attendance were the Indonesian President’s Special Envoy for Poverty Eradication, H.S. Dillon, Governor of West Sumatra, Irwan Prayitno, Limapuluh Kota Regent District Head, Alis Maradjo, SPI West Sumatra Chairperson, Sukardi Bendang, and SPI Chairperson and La Via Campesina General Coordinator, Henry Saragih.

The venue of the celebration had great significance not only to SPI, but to all struggling for agrarian reform, as it stands as an example of how agrarian reform can be properly implemented and how peasants can successfully cultivate the land for the benefit of the entire community. As the Governor of West Sumatra, Irwan Prayitno, stated in his address, congratulating and expressing his support to SPI, “I have signed the Governor’s Regulation for the West Sumatra province to now have regulations in which it returns the expired land use rights from corporations to ulayat (indigenous peoples/community) rights.” He goes on to say that, “The implementation of sustainable agriculture and organic farming programs should be continued in West Sumatra.” Henry Saragih, General Coordinator of La Via Campesina, declared in his speech, “This is the site of a victorious struggle for agrarian reform and we have come here to celebrate this victory but also to take inspiration from it for the continuation of our struggle for agrarian reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

The final declaration of the international workshop was also read out, outlining some of the key elements of a new vision of agrarian reform and the sovereignty of peoples over their territories [1]. Among them are:

Peasants and family farm production play the central role in the building of food sovereignty.

Harmonious coexistence based on mutual solidarity between rural peoples, including peasants, fisher folk and indigenous peoples.

The need to broaden our alliances to incorporate other peoples who are threatened by the same current phenomena, including urban dwellers threatened with impoverishment and with eviction to

make way for real estate speculation; peoples who live under military occupation; consumers who face ever higher prices for food of ever worsening quality; communities facing eviction by extractive industries; and rural and urban workers.

The need to reinforce our self-determination while building our autonomy in self-government over communal resources.

The deepening and expanding of the leadership of women in the struggle for land and the defense of territory, and in our movements.

To avoid repeating the errors of the Green Revolution and to take care of the Mother Earth by using agroecological production practices.

To prioritize the struggle of youth for access to land in Europe and North America as well as in the nations of the South, while reconstructing rural economies so that young people are not forced to migrate.

The need to build new alliances and develop new tactics of solidarity and protection against the growing criminalization of those who defend their territories.

The recognition of the fundamental role of social movements in the recent state-led agrarian reforms carried out with greater or lesser degrees of success in various countries.

The declaration ends with the statement that “The new agrarian reform should be a fundamental pillar not only in the construction of food sovereignty, but also in the democratic transformation of society to develop new civilizations that will put an end to hunger and poverty, and to respect and protect Mother Earth.”

La Via Campesina is the international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, women farmers, indigenous people, rural youth migrants and agricultural workers. It defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. La Via Campesina comprises about 150 local and national organizations in 70 countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Altogether, it represents about 200 million farmers. It is an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent from any political, economic or other type of affiliation.

The Global Campaign on Agrarian Reform is La Via Campesina’s campaign to support the local struggles of landless peasants around the world for access to land, and to support people’s who are trying to defend their territories from land grabbing TNCs and governments. Partners in this campaign are FIAN International and the Land Research Action Network.

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## **Agrarian Reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century PDF Print E-mail**

Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra, July 12, 2012

### **DEFENDING LAND AND TERRITORY, BUILDING A NEW CIVILIZATION AND FIGHTING FOR OUR FUTURE**

La Via Campesina and the Global Campaign on Agrarian Reform with Serikat Petani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant Union) as local host are currently holding an international workshop and seminar entitled, "Agrarian Reform and the Defense of Land and Territory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: The Challenge and Future" from July 10 to 14, 2012 in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia.

This international strategy meeting is happening at a time of a global downturn, the worst since the Global Depression in the 1930's. The multiple crises of food, jobs, livelihood, climate, biodiversity, energy, and finance, coupled with the staggering numbers of worsening poverty, inequality, hunger and environmental destruction all stand testament to the destruction that capitalism and the neoliberal policies have wrought.

And now, there are 1 billion people living in hunger, the majority of which are living in Asia. This increase in hunger can be correlated to the drastic increase in food prices, making it even more difficult for people, especially those living in poverty, to afford food for themselves and their families. More importantly though, the worsening hunger can be linked to the expansion of the industrial agricultural development, that promotes mono crops and massive land grabbing. Land grabbing is currently a global phenomenon, led by local, national and transnational elites, corporations and investors with the collusion of some governments, with the aim of controlling the world's remaining and most precious resources. The World Bank and regional development banks are also facilitating these land and resource grabs through their policies.

Because of the global crises, taking control of the earth's remaining resources – land, water, forests, biodiversity – has become crucial to the survival of capitalism and the corporations. At the recently concluded Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, this resource grab has been institutionalized under the label of "green economy."

All these recent developments and changing realities in the world, make this international meeting all the more relevant. The delegates from 26 countries, from Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia, which include members and leaders of La Via Campesina, the Global Campaign on Agrarian Reform and other progressive organizations, other social movement leaders and academics, have all come together to rethink and develop new strategies for achieving agrarian reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one that should be based on the strengths of social justice, radical traditions of past agrarian reforms, addresses past weaknesses and most importantly should be based on the foundations of food sovereignty and agroecology.

As the General Coordinator of La Via Campesina, Henry Saragih, stated at the opening of the meeting, "The destruction and grabbing of resources from peasants and poor people have intensified and if we are to succeed in defending our land, territory and our very future, we need to come together and identify clearly the kind of Agrarian Reform we are looking for and the strategy for which we achieve it."

La Via Campesina is the international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, women farmers, indigenous people, rural youth migrants and agricultural workers. It defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. La Via Campesina comprises about 150 local and national organizations in 70 countries from Africa, Asia,

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There are delegates from 26 countries who are all available for interview upon request.

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## Footnotes

[1] See on ESSF (article 26014), [Agrarian Reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Building a New Vision, Redefining Strategies, and Celebrating Victories](#).