

The International Peasant's Voice

Wednesday, 11 July 2007

Who is La Via Campesina

We are the international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers. We defend the values and the basic interests of our members. We are an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent of any political, economic, or other type of affiliation. Our members are from 56 countries from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

How was La Via Campesina created?

In May of 1993, the First Conference of La Via Campesina was held in Mons, Belgium, where it was constituted as a world organization, and its first strategic guidelines and structure were defined. The Second International Conference was held in 1996 in Tlaxcala, Mexico; the third in 2000 in Bangalore, India; and the fourth in 2004 in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

What is our main objective?

The principal objective of La Via Campesina is to develop solidarity and unity among small farmer organizations in order to promote gender parity and social justice in fair economic relations; the preservation of land, water, seeds and other natural resources; food sovereignty; sustainable agricultural production based on small and medium-sized producers.

What do we defend?

- Peasant, family farm-based production La Via Campesina promotes a model of peasant or family-farm agriculture based on sustainable production with local resources and in harmony with local culture and traditions. Peasants and farmers rely on a long experience with their locally available resources. We are capable of producing the optimal quantity and quality of food with few external inputs. Our production is mainly for family consumption and domestic markets.

- People's food sovereignty Food sovereignty is the RIGHT of peoples, countries, and state unions to define their agricultural and food policy without the "dumping" of agricultural commodities into foreign countries. Food sovereignty organizes food production and consumption according to the needs of local communities, giving priority to production for local consumption. Food sovereignty includes the right to protect and regulate the national agricultural and livestock production and to shield the domestic market from the dumping of agricultural surpluses and low-price imports from other countries. Landless people, peasants, and small farmers must get access to land, water, and seed as well as productive resources and adequate public services. Food sovereignty and sustainability are a higher priority than trade policies.

- Decentralized food production and supply chains The current industrialized agribusiness model has been deliberately planned for the complete vertical integration and to dominate all agriculture activities. This model exploits workers and concentrates economic and political power. La Via Campesina advocates a decentralized model where production, processing, distribution and consumption are controlled by the people the communities themselves and not by transnational corporations.

Events

To globalize the struggle against injustice and neoliberalism worldwide, La Via Campesina has two important dates:

1. 17th of April: The international peasant struggle day People all around the world will commemorate the killing of 19 peasants struggling for land reform in Eldorado dos Carajás (Brazil) on April 17, 1996.

2. 10th of September: The international struggle day against WTO.

On that date in 2003, Mr. Lee Kyun Hae, a Korean peasant, stabbed himself to death during a massive protest against the WTO in Cancun, Mexico. He was holding a banner saying "WTO kills farmers";.