



## Food Sovereignty now: young people creating their future

-Final declaration of the Youth Caucus-

### Introduction

Food Sovereignty is a legitimate cause involving sustainable improvement of social, economic and nutritional wellbeing of all individuals on earth by increasing access to quality food, production resources and making favourable food policies for all producers in the world. Young women and men from several Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) around the world gathered in Rome on November 14<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> 2009 during the CSO Forum held in parallel to the World Food Summit on Food Security 2009, to create our future by declaring our demand for food sovereignty and inclusive decision-making at all levels worldwide. This included discussions on the four central themes of the Forum: "Who decides about food policies?"; "Who controls food producing resources?"; "How is food produced?"; and "Who has/needs access to food?".

We recognised the development of agricultural production and trading in the past years and noted that neo-liberal policies without respect to nature and human beings brought the catastrophic situation of 1.02 Billion people. 75% of the hungry people are living in rural areas and peasant farmers are the victims of these policies.

We acknowledge the efforts made by different individuals, leaders, governments and Civil Society Organizations, to visualise food sovereignty in the world. However, much remains to be done as regards youth involvement in the fight for food sovereignty and food security at both national and international levels.

It was clearly noted that young people are always excluded from decision-making bodies and their views are not recognised during the formulation of food policies at all levels. This has not only made them victims of illusive and unrealistic food and agriculture policies influenced by Intergovernmental Organizations, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Transnational Corporations (TNCs), but has denied young people the access to and control over land and other food producing resources.

The issue of a lack of agricultural education was raised in the discussions. The topic of agriculture has been dropped from many school curricula and where it exists, it is delivered using narrow formal education methods. We shared examples of non-formal agricultural education that contributes to capacity building in young people.

### Recommendations:

- We, the young people, commit ourselves and we recommend that governments and institutions also commit to building awareness among the population about food security and sovereignty. Food sovereignty must be the basis of all policies, regimes and institutions which deal with and decide about agriculture and food production. All the governing mechanisms should ensure a participatory space for vulnerable groups and a democratic system in all decision-making processes that govern food and agriculture. An opportunity should be provided for young people to present their work plans to decision-making bodies so that their needs are taken into account.
- We recognise the progress made by reforming the FAO Committee on Food Security, as defined in the vision of the CFS reform as the international and intergovernmental platform which recognises the right to adequate food. However, we see the necessity to rename the Committee on Food Security of FAO to "Committee for Food Sovereignty" (CFS) as food security describes only a physical situation, such as eating three times a day and does not focus on how is food produced and by whom.
- We ask FAO to ensure the participation of young men and women in all three pillars of the CFS – Policy, Scientific and Financial; and the implementation of monitoring regulations through civil society-coordination mechanism. The new CFS would be empowered to develop, together with young people, a global strategic framework for attaining food sovereignty. We emphasise the importance of governments' commitments to the implementation of the framework and structure of CFS at national, continental and international levels. The CFS structure must ensure that the voices of young people are heard in order to define policies that create their future.
- While strongly supporting the creation of an Advisory Council, we the young people recommend the representation of youth in this Advisory Council as well as in the "participant" space. The High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) should be nominated in consultation with young people.
- We, the young women and men, believe that capacity building must be strengthened for young people in agriculture. We insist on the access to agricultural education in a formal and non-formal way from an early age. Capacity building training at all levels to address the needs of young people, and promoting engagement in sustainable production through agroecological, small-scale and family farming should be supplemented by resource support.

- We consider sustainable agriculture as the priority in order to feed people and thus we demand the access to and control over land and food resources that is often denied to young people. Young women and men demand the right to have our voices heard at the highest level of governments and international agencies. It is crucial that young women and men are mobilised to advocate on the issues that affect them.
- The genuine agrarian reform must recognise the socio-environmental function of land, sea, forests and natural resources in the context of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty implies policies of redistribution, equitable access and control over natural and productive resources (e.g. land, water, seeds, credit and appropriate technology etc.), by young people, women, indigenous people, peasants and other rural communities. Access to and control over land must be achieved through an implementation of the right to land with respect to hereditary inheritance and protection from land grabbing in rural areas.
- We denounce the land grabbing by transnational corporations and rich countries in poor countries that challenges peasants' access to land and threatens their right to food.
- Access to food is extremely important in conflict zones, military invaded and war areas, therefore we demand that our governments and all stakeholders address this issue as soon as possible to reduce the malnutrition, victims of disease and the deaths of women, men and children.
- We denounce the criminalisation of the peasant struggle and Civil Society Organization.
- Due to the exploitation and discrimination of neo-liberal policies young people are distracted from farming and compelled to abandon their profession, which causes the internal and external migration of the young women and men. In view of the sharp decline of interest in agriculture and the migration of young people to cities, we ask FAO to support the development of initiatives and programmes that motivate young women and men to remain in agriculture.
- We call for the Food Provision Periodical Review (FPPR) that will be a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation for each country.
- We recognised the aggravation of food insecurity in the world in 2007 and 2008, accompanied by social mobilizations throughout the world has changed the political situation and has led to a number of new initiatives at global level. We call for a better coordination of all UN institutions linked with food and agriculture as well as their policy coherence. We demand to have long-term sustainable policies for food provision in not only rural areas but also urban areas.
- The provision of good quality food is especially important for young people as they grow and develop. Therefore, we demand the access to good quality food, including increased access to organic and small-scale family farming products, for all people, especially young women and men. Therefore we promote environmentally friendly production which respects the dignity of human beings and meets the needs of local consumers.
- We denounce International Financial Institutions, and transnational corporations that promote the neo-liberal policies and agreements that facilitate the exploitation of peasants, women, indigenous, and young people.
- We demand the right to the unrestricted production of local seeds, adapted to our needs, including the protection of local seeds and support for the creation of seed banks by young people. We also recommend a moratorium on the production of agofuels and GMOs; and support for sector diversification in livestock and crops.
- We ask the UN agencies to assist in developing an alliance between young people, UN agencies and agricultural organizations, as previously facilitated for climate change and biodiversity. Such an alliance would allow the exchange of traditional knowledge and new technologies, development of common initiatives and support for local, national, regional and international efforts.
- FAO should identify and secure financial support to undertake a pilot micro-financing programme to allow young people to start their own agricultural initiatives and develop local projects such as community gardens and seed banks.

#### **Commitments by the young people of the Youth Caucus**

- Social movements, including young women and men, in civil society need to be mobilised
- Young people must organise themselves in order to make common demands through a united approach
- Young people will raise awareness of the issues of the right to food and food sovereignty, and advocate on behalf of those affected
- Young people will share their experience of local level capacity building that uses non formal education methods
- Young people will create local seed banks and this action can be promoted through civil society networks