



## **“Advance Food Sovereignty and Agroecology! Promote Youth’s Participation in Agriculture!”**

### **Advancing food sovereignty and agroecology**

Studies and experiences<sup>1</sup> of small food producers worldwide have demonstrated that agroecology (including all forms of biodiverse, integrated and diversified farming approaches combined with local knowledge systems) have sustained and fed communities while coping with the changing climate. It is being practiced by millions of farmers on millions of hectares on all continents. Farmers have also responded to various conditions by evolving and innovating their farm and resource management practices and techniques. These helped them develop a wide repository of local knowledge and skills that are efficient, appropriate and time-tested measures of adaptation to climate change – changing crop cycles and crop pattern; developing local varieties; diversifying and mixing crops; soil and water conservation measures, etc.

Compared to intensive industrial farming systems, local farming practices and systems such as the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) integrated pest management, farmer-led seed breeding, among others are agro-ecological approaches that show that agriculture and food production is possible and sustainable.

However, initiatives such as ‘climate smart agriculture’ and technologies such as geo-engineering and genetic engineering being pushed by corporations, supposedly meant to respond to the challenges of food insecurity and climate change, are at odds with the concept and practice of agroecology. For instance, propagating crop varieties through modified seeds that are “climate-resilient” comes with the paraphernalia of pesticides and fertilisers, which in turn affects local biodiversity, diet, nutrition, and food security of communities.

In agroecology, what is crucial is the strengthening of initiatives, innovations on the ground to preserve, develop, and promote community-owned and managed, integrated, biodiverse, climate resilient and food secure farming systems; and linking these with the broader farmers’ movements across the globe to achieve food sovereignty.

### **Why a campaign on land and resources?**

For small food producers (of farmers, fisherfolk, herders, indigenous communities, rural women and rural youth), land and resources are central to food security, agricultural development and environmental sustainability. Agroecology places food sovereignty as its principal concern, where farmers and local communities take control of their land, biodiversity, livelihood, food and farming systems.

But for millions of small-scale farmers and food producers, especially in the poor countries, their access to land and resources is being undermined by the aggressive expansion and concentration of corporate control over agriculture – whose agenda is ‘business-as-usual’ and profit-oriented false

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solutions to food security and climate change. This rapid expansion of industrial agriculture has led to increasing conversion of forest, grass and wetlands.

Land grabbing has placed the food security and sovereignty of small food producers in grave peril. Such is evidenced on the latest report of GRAIN on landgrabs exclusively for food and agriculture where 491 deals cover 30 Million hectares on land. In this landscape, small food producers' rights to land and resources are taken away, displacing them, robbing them of their livelihoods and most of all, undermining their food sovereignty.

Resistance is often met with state and corporate aggression and violence. Land Rights Watch has listed 5,147 human rights violations from January 2015 to August 2017 due to land conflicts and struggles. It is ironic that among those who suffer are those who directly produce food.

*Thus, it is in the struggle for land, resources and survival that strengthened the resolve of farmers groups and movements across the globe to fight for their future – one that is intertwined with their communities' food security, biodiversity and rural development. As we are threatened by the food and climate crises, the need for farmers, rural women and other marginalized rural sectors to fight back and assert rights to land and resources remain urgent, necessary and just more than ever.*

### Youth in Agroecology

Today's generation of young people is the largest in history. In developing countries, young people (defined by the United Nations as those aged 15 to 24) make up 20 per cent of the population on average. They represent a huge potential resource to their countries. Yet ironically, rural areas are not benefiting fully from this resource. In fact, many rural communities are ageing precisely because, there are no jobs, no land, no livelihoods, no income or their homes may be in militarized zones, and they have no incentives to remain, young women and men are leaving rural areas to seek jobs and opportunities elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the rural youth, concentrated in developing countries, suffer firsthand the persistence of landlessness and rural underdevelopment resulting to abject poverty. They are deprived of opportunities for holistic development- the rights to education, health and shelter and safe livelihood and jobs are only few of their rights being violated by states and current system of neoliberal globalization.

Such conditions motivate young people across Asia to organize among themselves and take initiatives that make them participate actively in agriculture. Many of these initiatives are connected with agroecology as a viable alternative to corporate farming that is one of the major cause of poverty and lack of opportunities for the youth in rural areas. For instance, in the Mekong Region, the Mekong Youth Alliance for Organic and Sustainable Agriculture (YOF) consistently exchange experiences and on-job trainings on agriculture practices. They are composed of youth from Cambodia, Bhutan, Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Myanmar.<sup>3</sup> In the Philippines, youth groups like National Network of Agrarian Reforms-Youth (NNARA-Youth) and Sining Na Naglilingkod sa Bayan (SINAGBAYAN/Art Serving the People) have been organizing the rural and urban youth and advocating farmers, small food producers and farm workers' rights through education, community immersions and artistic productions. Many other initiatives are being taken by youth groups in many countries around the world that contribute greatly in the genuine development of rural communities.

As a result, this year's 16 Days of Global Action on Land and Resources gives focus on youth's participation and initiatives in agroecology and agriculture as a whole. Their contribution in the struggle for food sovereignty, agroecology and the fight against land grabbing, chemical-farming and

corporate agriculture as a whole is vital and needs to be supported by movements and advocates everywhere. After all, the youth remains the hope of the future.

### What is the 16 Days of Global Action?

With the theme *“Advance Food Sovereignty and Agroecology! Promote Youth’s Participation in Agriculture!”*, the 2017 16 Days of Global Action on Land and Resources consists of a series of collective action of farmers groups, youth groups, movements and advocacy groups from different countries from October 1 to 16. Activities range from awareness-raising activities (from symposium to public assemblies and other creative events) to media and social media campaigns and lobbying. At least 20 countries from different sectors, movements and organisations are expected to join.

It will be kickstarted by the Youth for Food Sovereignty (YFS) on 1 October and will culminate on 15 October (Rural Women’s Day) and 16 October (World Foodless Day) through coordinated actions and online events of farmers, youth groups and grassroots organisations and movements around the globe.

The 16 Days of Global Action on Land and Resources 2017 hopes to build on the momentum gained from last year’s successful campaign. In October 2016, focusing on the issues of food sovereignty, climate change, pesticides-use and agroecology, the 16 Days of Global Action successfully reached out to more than 350,000 women’s, farmers’, fisher folks, youth and advocacy groups, movements and individuals in 18 countries in Asia, Pacific, Africa and Latin America. Through various assertive and creative means, movements from different contexts and cultures took action and leadership fully aware that they were rising up in solidarity with other movements around the globe for common demands and against common adversaries.

### What are the aims of the 16 Days of Global Action on Land and Resources?

- (1) To raise awareness to the public on the impact of food, land and resources crises, particularly highlighting specific impacts of land and resource grabbing to farming communities and movements
- (2) To generate solidarity in the struggle to defend collective rights to land and resources and mobilise people to be involved in the people’s resistance against corporate agriculture, land grabbing and all forms of repression
- (3) To gather broader support and promote youth’s initiatives on food sovereignty and agroecology as an alternative to corporate agriculture

### What can you do to join the 16 Days of Global Action on Land and Resources?

- (1) Organize a collective action or activity any day from October 1 to 16 across a range of issues and highlighting youth’s participation and initiatives. You can link up and get together with other farmers’ organization, women’s groups, youth groups or similar advocacy groups in your country.

These can be a combination of activities, such as:

- Community discussions, public forums, workshops, community meetings, trainings
- Mass mobilisation activities such as rallies, demonstrations, assemblies, marches, boycotts, etc.
- Celebrations, seed festivals and exchanges, etc.
- Mass distribution of information materials; putting up of banners and posters; social media campaign

- (2) The partners in the different countries will focus on a range of issues of the **16 Days of Global Action on Land and Resources** and relevant to the local situation. These can revolve around:
- *Highlighting Youth's participation* in the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology and their contribution in agriculture and various challenges they face such as landlessness, lack of opportunities, causes of rural-urban migration
  - *Food Security*: food crisis, hunger, food injustice; understanding food sovereignty framework and people's rights
  - *Monopoly control on food and agriculture: corporate and industrial agriculture*; trade agreements (such as RCEP, seed laws); pesticides industry; and impacts on small food producers, land and resource rights; environment, health and nutrition, safe food, etc.
  - *GMO/GE crops*: understanding its dangers and impact on health, environment, food and agricultural systems, contamination of traditional and local varieties; traditional knowledge systems, etc.
  - *Agroecology and climate-resilient agriculture*: highlighting and promoting agro-ecological methods, techniques and knowledge systems; pesticides-free environment, highlighting traditional crop varieties, drought-resistant crops, etc.
  - *Highlighting women's roles* in managing sustainable farms and conserving seeds
  - *Rights to land, water and resources*: landlessness, land grabbing, conversion of land and coastal areas; agro-fuel plantations; impacts and violations to people's rights to land and resources of small food producers; supporting local struggles
- (3) Post on Facebook and Twitter your photo with the campaign logo, slogan and demands. Share to: [www.facebook.com/panasiapacific](http://www.facebook.com/panasiapacific) and [@PANAsiaPacific](https://twitter.com/PANAsiaPacific)
- (4) Use the following hashtags: [#YouthRiseUp](https://twitter.com/YouthRiseUp) [#RuralYouthRiseNow](https://twitter.com/RuralYouthRiseNow) [#AgroecologyInAction](https://twitter.com/AgroecologyInAction) [#FoodSovNow](https://twitter.com/FoodSovNow) [#PesticidesFreeWorld](https://twitter.com/PesticidesFreeWorld) [#NoLandNoLife](https://twitter.com/NoLandNoLife) [#RuralWomenRiseUp](https://twitter.com/RuralWomenRiseUp)
- (5) Contact PANAP so that your planned activities can be listed in a common calendar of activities for all participating groups. Email: [terence.lopez@panap.net](mailto:terence.lopez@panap.net) or [elnard.arellano@panap.net](mailto:elnard.arellano@panap.net)
- (6) Organise coordinated actions to forward our demands during these significant dates:
- a. October 15: International Rural Women's Day
  - b. October 16: World Foodless/Hunger Day

#### What are our calls and demands?

- **Defend food sovereignty!**
- **Advance Agroecology!**
- **Resist Corporate Takeover on Agriculture!**
- **Uphold women's rights!**
- **Land to the Landless! Land to the Tillers!**
- **Promote Youth Actions in Agriculture!**

#### For more information, feedback and comments:

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<sup>1</sup> K Prabhakar Nair. 2010. *Weathering the Climate Crisis: The Way of Ecological Agriculture*. PANAP.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/feadfaf5-2f97-43fb-bf31-ad8e5a71549a>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.schoolforwellbeing.org/content?id=76>