

## Civil Society statement on the World Food Emergency

# No More “Failures-as-Usual”!

*Historic, systemic failures of governments and international institutions are responsible.*

*National governments that will meet at the FAO Food Crisis Summit in Rome must begin by accepting their responsibility for today’s food emergency.*

At the World Food Summit in 1996, when there were an estimated 830 million hungry people, governments pledged to halve the number by 2015. Many now predict that the number will instead increase by 50% to 1.2 billion, further threatened by unpredictable climate chaos and the additional pressures of agrofuel production.

In the midst of collapsing farm and fish stocks, skyrocketing food and fuel prices, new policies, practices and structures are required to resolve the current food emergency and to prevent future - and greater - tragedies. Governments, including those in the global South, and intergovernmental organisations must now recognize their part in implementing policies that have undermined agricultural productivity and destroyed national food security. For these reasons, they have lost legitimacy and confidence of the world's peoples that they can make the real, substantial changes necessary to end the present food crisis; to safeguard peoples’ food availability and livelihoods; and to address the challenges of climate change.

The emergency today has its roots in the food crisis of the 1970s when some opportunistic OECD governments, pursuing neoliberal policies, dismantled the international institutional architecture for food and agriculture. This food crisis is the result of the long standing refusal of governments and intergovernmental organisations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food, and of the total impunity for the systematic violations of this right among others. They adopted short-term political strategies that engineered the neglect of food and agriculture and set the stage for the current food emergency.

As a consequence, the UN agencies and programmes and other international institutions, dominated by a small group of donor countries, are badly governed, grossly inefficient, competitive rather than cooperative and incapable of fulfilling their (conflicting) mandates. The structural adjustment policies imposed by the World Bank and the IMF, the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and the free trade paradigm have undermined local and national economies, eroded the environment and damaged local food systems leading to today's food crisis. It has facilitated the development of corporate oligopolies and break-neck corporate concentration along the entire food chain; allowed predatory commodity speculation and financial market adventurism; and enabled international finance institutions and bilateral aid programmes to devastate sustainable food production and livelihood systems.

Social movements and other civil society organisations have joined together to determine a new approach to the dysfunctional global food system. We are developing the following global plan of action for food and agriculture and would be willing to discuss this plan with governments and intergovernmental organisations that will be attending the Rome Food Summit - the “High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy”.

**We are prepared to work with committed governments and United Nations organisations that share our concerns and are dedicated to end the food emergency and develop food sovereignty.**

**We declare a People's State of Emergency for the ongoing food crisis.** In a State of Emergency, people and governments can suspend any legislative or regulatory measures that could imperil the Right to Food and can also abolish any private arrangements considered damaging to Food Sovereignty. Any public or private measures that might restrict the ability of peasant and small-producers to get domestic food to market can be cancelled. Debt cancellation is urgently needed if the global South is to address the immediate and ongoing food emergency. We believe the current food emergency and the ongoing threat of climate change are sufficient grounds for declaring a State of Emergency.

- **We call on the Human Rights Council and the International Court of Justice to investigate the contribution of agribusiness, including grain traders and commodity speculators, to violations of the right to food and to the food emergency.** High production input costs and food prices during the current food emergency are in some measure due to historic agribusiness profits and the actions of commodity market speculators. The oligopolies and speculators, who operate throughout the food chain, must be investigated and suspected criminal behaviour must be brought to justice. The UN Human Rights Council should undertake the necessary investigations. National governments should not hesitate, wherever other governments have failed in their international obligations, to challenge abuses through the International Court of Justice. At the national level, anti cartel and monopoly laws should be strengthened. The Human Rights Council should support governments to guarantee that their public policies respect, protect and promote the right to adequate food, in the context of the indivisibility of rights.
- **We demand an immediate halt to the development of land for producing industrial agrofuels for cars, planes and energy production in power stations, including the use of so-called biomass "waste".** The sudden sharp increase in large scale industrial agrofuel production threatens local and global food security, destroys livelihoods, damages the environment and is a significant factor in the steep rise in food prices. This new enclosure movement - converting arable, pastoral, and forest lands to fuel production - must be rejected. The Rome Food Summit should endorse the proposal of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food for a five year moratorium on the expansion of large scale industrial production of agrofuel in order to resolve conflicts with food production, develop rules for agrofuel production and to evaluate proposed agrofuel technologies.
- **We call for a new and truly cooperative global initiative in which we are full participants in the process of policy change and institutional correction.** We will not stand aside to watch the rich and the incompetent destroy our lives and our earth. We will fight for food sovereignty including the right to food, for sustainable food production and for a healthy biologically-diverse environment. To achieve this:
  1. **We call for the establishment of a *UN Commission on Food Production, Consumption and Trade*. This Commission must have a significant and substantive representation of small-scale food producers and marginalized consumers.** The Secretary-General's recently convened Task Force offers a clear and welcome political signal that the food emergency transcends individual institutions and demands urgent global action. However, the Task Force is dominated by the failed institutions whose negligence and neoliberal policies created the crisis. Those whom the governmental and intergovernmental systems have damaged – those we must feed and those who must feed us -- are once again, excluded. The Task Force should end its work at the conclusion of the Rome Food Summit and the new, inclusive, Commission must begin its work immediately thereafter.

**Membership:** The Commission should expand upon the format established by the Brundtland Commission 20 years ago which opened the way for the environmental summits that followed. In forming the Commission, the Secretary-General should be mindful of the findings of the *International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)* whose recently completed report was approved by nearly 60 governments, as well as the outcomes of FAO agrarian reform (ICARRD) conference and process.

**Mandate:** The mandate of the new Commission must include all forms of – and constraints to – food production; all aspects of – and barriers to – safe, adequate, affordable and culturally appropriate food; and a full analysis of the entire food chain in consideration of changing climatic conditions. The Commission should provide an interim report to the UN General Assembly and the governing bodies of FAO, IFAD and WFP by the end of 2008 and provide a final report, with recommendations, to these organisations in the final quarter of 2009.

2. **We must fundamentally restructure the multilateral organisations involved in food and agriculture.** Several food-related multilateral institutions have been criticised for their governance and programme failures. Notably, Independent External Evaluations (IEE) of FAO and IFAD have exposed serious systemic shortcomings. In particular, the IEE of FAO shows that the senior management of FAO -- while recognizing the urgent need for change -- does not believe that the governments or the institution is capable of substantive changes. The evaluation of CGIAR is ongoing and is exposing major governance failures that cannot be resolved within the CGIAR framework. Last year, the World Bank undertook an internal evaluation of its agricultural work in Africa and was deeply and appropriately self-critical. It is because of this that civil society is convinced that the Secretary-General's Task Force must evolve into the wider Commission outlined above. In order to facilitate the Commission's work, civil society recommends three immediate decisions:

- The Rome Food Summit should agree to undertake a meta-evaluation of the major food and agricultural institutions (FAO, IFAD, WFP and CGIAR) by the end of 2008.
- Based on this meta-evaluation, FAO's biennial budget for regional conferences should be adjusted to allow the convening of regional food and agricultural conferences, equally involving all the major multilateral institutions, in the first half of 2009. These meetings must ensure the full and active participation of representatives of peasant and small-scale farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk.
- Building from the meta-evaluation and regional conferences, the Commission – by the end of 2009 – must submit its report including a new architecture for the UN's food and agricultural work.

Without prescribing the integrity of the process described above, we are convinced that responsibility for international policies and practices related to food and agriculture must reside with a single agency within the community of agencies of the United Nations where the principle of "one nation – one vote" must prevail.

3. **We call for a local and global paradigm-shift towards Food Sovereignty.** Food production and consumption are fundamentally based upon local considerations. The answer to current and future food crises is only possible with a paradigm-shift toward comprehensive food sovereignty. Small-scale farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and others have defined a food system based on the human Right to adequate Food and food production policies that increase democracy in localised food systems and ensure maximisation of sustainable natural resource use. Food Sovereignty addresses all of the continuing issues identified by the 1974 World Food Conference. It focuses on food for people; values food

providers; localises food systems; assures community and collective control over land, water and genetic diversity; honours and builds local knowledge and skills; and works with nature. Food sovereignty is substantially different from existing neoliberal trade and aid policies purporting to address world 'food security'. These policies are exclusionary; insensitive to those who produce food; silent on where and how it is grown or consumed; and have - since the 1970s - been proven failures. Governments and international institutions must respect and adopt food sovereignty.

4. **We believe that the Right to Food prevails over trade agreements and other international policies. In the current food emergency, trade negotiations related to food and agriculture must halt and work should begin on a new trade dialogue under UN auspices.** The structural adjustment policies imposed by the World Bank and the IMF, the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and the free trade paradigm have undermined local and national economies, eroded the environment and damaged local food systems leading to today's food crisis. Neoliberal trade policies have also strengthened multinational agribusinesses and encouraged windfall profiteering. Food dumping and artificially low-priced food exports have also destroyed local systems and must end. The international finance institutions and the WTO have forced the global South to close marketing boards and shutdown mechanisms for market stabilisation and price guarantees for food producers. Governments have been forced to abolish food reserves and eliminate import controls. Yet, state intervention in the market is necessary to fulfil the right to food, secure food production and the economy of small scale food producers. Therefore, FTA, EPA and WTO negotiations on the Agreement on Agriculture must be ended. These negotiations are hurting the vast majority of food producers. A new approach to international food and agricultural trade is urgently needed. This approach must be based on the right of countries to decide their level of self sufficiency and support for sustainable food production for domestic consumption. Discussions leading to a new trade regime based on the diverse needs of people and societies and the preservation of the environment should take place within the UN system.
5. **We insist that the right of governments to intervene and regulate in order to achieve food sovereignty, be reinstated.** National governments have to take up their responsibility, control and push back elites and make food production for domestic consumption their priority. Countries have to raise their level of self sufficiency in food as far as possible and to achieve this the following measures must be taken:
- respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate food, among other rights.
  - Increase the budget support of peasant based food production;
  - Implement genuine agrarian reform to give landless and other vulnerable groups access to land and other productive resources;
  - Guarantee credit access to peasants and other small-scale food producers;
  - Abolish all barriers preventing peasants and small-scale farmers from saving and exchanging seeds between communities, countries and continents;
  - Strengthen peasant led research and support autonomous capacity building;
  - Improve infrastructure so that peasants and small-scale producers can reach local markets;
  - Develop strategies with peasant and other appropriate organisations to manage specific hazards and emergencies.
  - Guarantee marginalised consumers access to domestic food and - if not available - to food brought in from adjacent surplus regions.

6. **We reject the Green Revolution models. Technocratic techno-fixes are no answer to sustainable food production and rural development.** Industrialised agriculture and fisheries are not sustainable. *The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)* clearly shows the need for a major change in the current research and development model. This report shows that governments (South and North) have wilfully and tragically neglected agriculture and rural development, especially small scale farming and artisanal fisheries since the last global food crisis. This attitude appears to be changing as the current emergency unfolds. However, the new interest in agriculture remains fundamentally flawed as private US foundations partner with global agribusiness to press national governments and international research systems to pursue a so-called "green revolution" in Africa and elsewhere based upon technological quick-fixes and failed market policies rather than social policy decisions. Governments, research institutions and other donors must learn from this study; change direction; and support small scale sustainable crop and livestock production and fisheries based on the expressed needs of local communities. The farmer/fisher-led programmes will lead to local and national self-reliance. Specifically, governments attending the Third High-Level Forum on Aid-Effectiveness in Ghana in September should reject the philanthro-capitalist directed models for a new green revolution and should reaffirm the central role of people and governments in setting the policy and practical framework for development.
7. **We support an inclusive strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity that prioritises the participation of small-scale farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk.** Biological diversity in agriculture is a prerequisite for securing food supplies. The huge loss in diversity, the use of GMOs and the patenting of seeds and genes make food production vulnerable. To support small-scale farmers that develop resilient, biodiverse production systems, we must work together to safeguard agroecosystems, species and genetic diversity that can adapt on-farm to new threats such as climate change. The Rome Food Summit should challenge governments, FAO, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Global Crop Diversity Trust to provide massive and immediate financial support for *in situ* and on-farm conservation through farmer-led crop and livestock conservation and improvement.
8. **We will participate in the development of a comprehensive local/global strategy to respond to climate change.** Climate change is already causing major losses in food production and is devastating the lives of millions of people including those of migrants. The future is uncertain but most studies assume that climate change will be more damaging to people and food systems in tropical and subtropical countries than those in temperate zones. There is an urgent need to cut greenhouse gas emission by at least 80 per cent by 2030. This is primarily the responsibility of the industrialised countries. The global South must also adopt different policies and practices for energy production. In agriculture, the high input fossil fuel-driven industrial model for production and transport is a major cause of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The development of peasant led sustainable food production, based on the sustainable use of local resources is a key solution to reduce these emissions. In addition, however, the polluting industrial countries must accept responsibility for the destruction of our environment and food systems and must pay reparations at levels, not less than 1 per cent of their annual GDP, that will help to alleviate damage and further development of sustainable and adaptable food and energy systems.

**Social movements and other civil society organisations who are prepared actively to pursue the agenda we have described, at local, national and global levels, are invited to sign up to this statement.**

**For more information and to sign up, see [www.nyeleni.eu/foodemergency](http://www.nyeleni.eu/foodemergency) .**

*This statement was prepared by members of the IPC, the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty. The IPC is a facilitating network in which key international social movements and organisations collaborate around the issue of food sovereignty: these include ROPPA, WFFP, WFF, La Via Campesina, and many movements and NGOs in all regions (see: [www.foodsovereignty.org/new/focalpoints.php](http://www.foodsovereignty.org/new/focalpoints.php)). The IPC is coordinating a Parallel Forum to the FAO Food Summit in Rome.*

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La Via Campesina is the international movement of peasants, small and medium sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers active in more than 56 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

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