

## **“Defending Farmers and the Right to Food”**

World Food Day Event 9:30-17:30 NCVO, Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London, N1 9RL

*“In a world overflowing with riches, it is an outrageous scandal that more than 850 million people suffer hunger and malnutrition and that every year over 36 million die of starvation and related causes. We must take urgent action now.”*

Jean Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

This week, the world food system is in the spotlight:

- The UN is promoting the Right to Food <sup>3</sup>;
- The World Bank is releasing its World Development Report 2008 on 'agriculture for development' <sup>4</sup>.

We believe that food provision should be driven by the needs of food for people and ecosystem stability, not the global market. We need a food system led by farmers and consumers, not traders, which produces sufficient, wholesome food, secures livelihoods and sustains the environment.

The UK Food Group <sup>5</sup> is marking World Food Day <sup>2</sup> with a series of member-led seminars, briefings, publication launches and debates <sup>1</sup>. These will describe how food providers should be integrated into decision making processes and could be better supported in order to realise the Right to Food and food sovereignty.

We will highlight three issues that contribute towards realising the Right to Food:

1. inclusion of marginalised farmers and their organisations in decision making
2. removal of any restrictions – legal, commercial or technological – on farmers' use, exchange and sale of seeds.
3. redirection of resources towards small-scale food production which integrates livestock and crops, enhancing diversity and the environment

### **Farmers must be at the heart of decision making**

Concern Worldwide is calling on the DFID to ensure that the world's poorest farmers are at the heart of policy efforts to tackle hunger and meet the millennium development goals. Despite the fact that the majority of people living in absolute poverty are from poor farming families, national agricultural policies often fail to recognise them and donors fail to reach them. *“Policy makers, including DFID, must listen to the voices of the world's poorest farmers to ensure that their specific circumstances are taken into account when developing policies that affect their lives.”* said Ruchi Tripathi, Head of Policy and Campaigns at Concern Worldwide (UK). With SEND foundation Ghana, Christian Aid, Oxfam GB, Farm-Africa and DFID, Concern will discuss the policy changes needed to secure the future for marginalised farmers in Africa.

### **Farmers Rights to seeds must not be restricted by laws, commercial contracts or technology**

**Defend Farmers' Rights:** Practical Action is launching its publication "Negotiating the Seed Treaty", which has a focus on Farmers' Rights. The Governing Body of Treaty is meeting at the end of the month. *“The Treaty ought to enable farmers to freely use, exchange and sell their seeds, and for global resources to be made available through the Treaty to assist them to do this”*, said Stuart Coupe. Future food supplies are threatened as local seed varieties disappear and farmers' dependence on commercial seed increases. Maintaining a wide diversity of seeds will enable farmers to adapt their agriculture to changing climatic conditions.

**Ban Terminator technology:** Progressio will launch the campaign *'Say no to Terminator seeds: become a seedsaver'*. The campaign calls on the public to ensure the UK government supports the moratorium on Terminator technology when it is debated by the UN Convention on Biodiversity in May 2008. Progressio's executive director, Christine Allen, said: *'Terminator would prevent 1.4 billion of the world's poorest farmers saving their seed to plant the following year. It is a major threat to sustainability and the self-sufficiency of rural communities.'*

### **Redirect resources towards small-scale food production**

The agricultural development agency Send a Cow, will announce findings from recent evaluations of its work which indicate that for Africa's rural poor the Right to Food is intrinsically linked with a right to own livestock. With over 70% of Africa's rural poor struggling to grow enough food from land that is degraded or unsuitable for cultivation, the ownership and strategic management of livestock can lead to widespread and sustainable benefits for farmers, their families and communities. It can also have a positive impact on climate change, capturing more greenhouse gases than are emitted. Monica Kapiriri, from Uganda, will describe how strong community groups are vital to long term success of Send a Cow's projects. Richie Alford, of Send a Cow, will present a summary of a recent environmental assessment of its work.

*"Farmers should be centre stage in decision making. Yet, in many parts of the world, most are forgotten, without a voice and often hungry themselves, as their lands, seeds, livestock breeds, markets and livelihoods are captured by more powerful corporate forces. It is only through the knowledge and skills of these people, however, that we will achieve a resilient food system that will survive future shocks such as climate change. It's time to defend farmers in order to realise the Right to Food and food sovereignty."* said Patrick Mulvany, Chair, UK Food Group.

Ref: <http://www.bond.org.uk/networker/2007/october/food-sovereignty.htm>

### **Notes:**

- 1. World Food Day event: "Defending Farmers and the Right to Food", 16 October 2007, 9:30-17:30**  
NCVO, Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London, N1 9RL. registration: [anita.mccabe@concern.net](mailto:anita.mccabe@concern.net)
- 2. World Food Day** is marked each year on 16<sup>th</sup> October, the date, in 1945, of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) [http://www.fao.org/wfd2007/index\\_wfd2007.html](http://www.fao.org/wfd2007/index_wfd2007.html)
- 3. Right to Food** is recognised by the United Nations as a universal human right. It is realised through Guidelines mediated by FAO <http://www.fao.org/righttofood/>
- 4. World Bank's World Development Report – WDR 2008**, will be released on 19<sup>th</sup> October [www.worldbank.org/wdr2008](http://www.worldbank.org/wdr2008)
- 5. UK Food Group** [www.ukfg.org.uk](http://www.ukfg.org.uk) is the principal civil society network of organisations concerned with global food and farming issues. It organises the UK's World Food Day event each year.

### **Co-organisers**

**Concern Worldwide (UK)** [www.concern.net](http://www.concern.net) is an international humanitarian organisation working towards the elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries. Its 'Unheard Voices' campaign in support of marginal farmers can be accessed at <http://www.concern.net/what-we-do/campaigns/unheard-voices.php>



**Practical Action** [www.practicalaction.org](http://www.practicalaction.org) mission is the use of technology to challenge poverty. Practical Action's publication "Negotiating the Seed Treaty" is at <http://practicalaction.org/docs/advocacy/negotiatingseedtreatycoupe.pdf>



**Progressio** [www.progressio.org.uk](http://www.progressio.org.uk) is an international development agency that works with people of all faiths and none for the eradication of poverty and an end to injustice. To join the *"Say no to Terminator seeds: become a seedsaver"* campaign and order 'seed packets' with postcards to send your MP and action packs, go to [www.seedsaver.org.uk](http://www.seedsaver.org.uk).



**Send a Cow** [www.sendacow.org.uk](http://www.sendacow.org.uk) is an agricultural development organisation that enables poor farmers in Africa to become self-reliant by providing them with livestock, training and advice.

