

Public statement of African and European farmer organisations

For the Right to Food through Food Sovereignty

Lisbon, 7 December 2007

Considering that the fight against hunger presently constitutes the greatest challenge at global level, with more than 850 million people worldwide still affected by it.

Taking note that 80% of the world's undernourished people are food producers who live in rural areas.

Having regard to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and in particular the goal of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015 established in 2001.

Whereas results achieved so far fall short of these original commitments and expectations. Africa is the region that presents the most dramatic situation, with one out of three people that is undernourished and the only region in the world in which the number of undernourished people has risen from 169 million (1990/92) to 206 million people (2001/03).

Considering that food is essential for life and an inalienable right for all people, enshrined in the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). More than 150 states have ratified the ICESCR. They are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the Right to Adequate Food.

Whereas access to sufficient and healthy food is a basic precondition for all people to fully develop their physical, mental and intellectual capacities and to conduct their life in dignity.

Whereas the ICESCR affirms that "States parties should, in international agreements whenever relevant, ensure that the right to adequate food is given due attention".

Whereas trade does not occur separately from the human rights framework. Dumping of cheap agricultural products from Europe, the subsequent displacement of local producers and local businesses are likely to have severe consequences for the right to food for people in African countries.

The policies carried out through the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the European Union and the ACP countries will have a significant impact on the future development of Africa, undermine the livelihoods of farmers and rural people and pave the way for the violation of their right to food.

By signing EPAs, ACP governments will be faced with the challenge of failing to meet their obligations on the right to food and the possibility of legal action. In spite of this, the European Union is unwilling to reflect human rights obligation into the Economic Partnership Agreements.

The EU-Africa Summit - now taking place under the auspices of the EU Portuguese Presidency - can be an important step towards intensifying the fight against hunger and poverty, particularly in Africa.

Therefore,

WE, FARMERS OF AFRICA AND EUROPE

Reaffirm that the scourge of hunger is unacceptable and its fight must be at the centre of a renewed partnership between Europe and Africa, if this will bring development, peace and prosperity in Africa and be meaningful for the peoples of Africa and Europe

Reaffirm that a renewed partnership between Africa and Europe must place people at the centre of relationship and be based on the principles of solidarity and mutual respect

Express our concern towards an unjust neo-liberal economic globalisation model which fuels inequality and is largely responsible for the perpetuation of poverty, and we note that the Economic Partnership Agreements will aggravate this situation

Deplore the currently dominant agribusiness agricultural model, which marginalises millions of smallholder farmers, threatens their very means of livelihoods, fuels urban-rural drift and international migration, results in loss of biodiversity and fuels land degradation with negative impacts for climate change

Express our concerns with the increasing pressure on land deriving from increasing demand for agro-fuels and search for energy alternatives in northern countries, associated with oil shortages and high prices. This will bring additional pressure on land use for food production with negative results for food production and hunger.

Express the greatest concern of farmers and producers of Africa in respect to the Economic Partnership Agreements. These concerns are shared by the largest majority of civil society organisations as well as a large number of policy makers and parliamentarians in Europe and Africa.

Reaffirm that **Food Sovereignty is the way to fulfil the Right to Food! A healthy agriculture requires access of producers to productive resources and means of production, but also to local, national and regional markets.**

Call on governments of Europe and Africa to adopt public policies that promote food sovereignty and create the conditions for the fulfilment of the right to food. We call on the Heads of State and Governments from both regions to take a clear political commitment to fulfil the Right to Food with Food Sovereignty in each national context. Countries that have not yet done so should commit to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) towards promoting the human right to food;

We demand that the European Union take a firm stand towards supporting the original UN mandate, particularly the FAO mandate of fighting against hunger and promoting sustainable agriculture and protecting smallholder farmers;

Call on governments to drastically reorient the negotiations of Economic Partnership Agreements and ensure that the negotiations are driven by a spirit of partnership for development that takes into full consideration the respect for human rights, particularly the right to food.

For the Right to Food with Food Sovereignty!

The subscribers,

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