



An open letter to European Institutions on the International Day of Peasant Struggle

Brussels, 15 April 2020

Dear Executive Vice-President,
Dear Commissioners,

On 17 April 2020, we will commemorate the International Day of Peasant Struggle. In the context of Covid-19, the vulnerability of the current globalised food system, dominated by industrial agriculture, and the dangers it poses to all forms of life, has once again been exposed. We must learn from this crisis and invest in building resilient, local and territorial, diverse food systems. In this context, European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) and its member organisations, together with the undersigned organisations representing peasants and small-medium scale farmers, fisherpeople, shepherds, mobile pastoralists, agriculture and food workers, consumers, indigenous peoples, other civil society organisations and academics many of which part of the Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Movement in Europe and Central Asia (Nyéléni ECA) want to send a clear message: peasants and small and medium-scale food producers are needed to guarantee food-sovereignty. They continue to produce food and feed people, guaranteeing the national and regional food supply more than ever in these times of crisis. Peasants across Europe are part of a large, developed network. These communities have been feeding the planet for generations, using many lifetimes' worth of knowledge, experience and expertise. Yet currently they are being ignored and ill-treated. Today, many of them are taking action to try and change this, and we urge you pay attention to how and why you, as decision makers, have a responsibility to start listening to their voices.

At a European level, many EU policies contradict and inhibit the goals set out by the EU itself. Europe is subjected to the interests of globalisation and international markets. The Green Deal is being juxtaposed with the continuing negotiation of FTAs; this counters any realistic and credible intention to achieve climate neutrality. The EU has promised to leave no one behind in its reforms and transitions, but fails to consider social conditionality within the CAP, which should for example guarantee proper salaries and conditions for salaried migrant rural workers. It has made commitments to produce food sustainably but refuses to guarantee that farmers get fair prices, due to a lack of market and price regulation. Nor is food justice for consumers a reality. There needs to be far greater emphasis placed on supporting access to fresh, nutritious, agroecologically grown food for all, including socially marginalised and vulnerable populations. By focusing on small, specific priorities in each area, the EU is unable to look at the bigger picture and fails to approach its goals in a holistic and all-encompassing way. Instead it listens to those who are able to shout the loudest: multinational and industrial companies. The peasant voice of those who live out the reality of EU policies every single day is drowned out by profit-focused private interests. These policies destroy thousands and thousands of small farms, which then jeopardizes food security for the entire population.

The EU is currently flouting its responsibility to its citizens, consumers, small and medium scale producers, and peasant family farmers and rural workers in order to protect and push these private interests. It has set ambitious and targets which require radical and systematic changes to policies and priorities, yet it doesn't appear to be willing to make these changes. It allows short-term gain to put the health and well-being of billions of people at risk around the world, and threaten the very future of the planet itself.

We therefore make the following demands to the Institutions, in the hope that they are ready to act on the priorities that they themselves have highlighted:

1. Establish an EU COVID-19 response process which includes representatives of European farmers' organizations particularly small and medium-scale producers (peasants, pastoralists, fisherpeople etc.)
2. Full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas (UNDROP).



3. Use the implementation of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork and biodiversity strategies to ensure food sovereignty and food security for European populations as locally as possible, and provide good-quality, healthy, nutritious and fresh food for all, ensuring food justice in a framework of economic, social and cultural justice.
4. A coherent CAP reform, which facilitates local agricultural markets and guarantees small-scale farmers receive a stable and decent income.
5. Agricultural, labour and social policies that guarantee proper salaries and working conditions for rural workers, protecting them from abuse and dismissal, with specific, adequate measures for seasonal workers and displaced migrants with documentation issues or precarious residential status.
6. Resolution of the inconsistencies and contradictions within EU policy, including ending FTAs.
7. Stop all attempts to deregulate GMOs, including New genomic techniques, with strict implementation of the current EU GMO legislation and a ban on patents on plants and animals.
8. Guaranteed fair access to land for all, through the drafting and implementation of an EU land directive and social and ecological forms of land use.
9. Promotion of the voice of Civil Society within the international agencies and institutions such as the FAO discussions on sustainable food systems and nutrition and agroecology.

To truly ensure that the rights of peasants, pastoralists, small and medium-scale food producers and citizens are respected, local, national and regional governments also have a responsibility to implement policy and regulations to facilitate these aims. They must show those further up the chain that there is a real desire and initiative to achieve our goals and implement our demands.

Real results need real change and at this critical point in history, we are running out of time and options. Peasants and small-scale food producers provide an immediately available, proven way to feed the planet sustainably, using methods, which help mitigate climate change, provide more employment in rural areas and protect the diversity of our planet and society. We are at a crossroads that will determine the future of every single individual on the planet. We urge those responsible for leading us to let peasants and small-scale food producers guide them along the path that they know so well, in order to achieve these goals: “*La via campesina*- the peasant way”.

Yours sincerely,


ECVC Coordinating Committee

Signatories¹

ECVC - European Coordination Via Campesina
ESN - European Shepherd Network
WAMIP - World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous People
WFFP - World Forum of Fisherpeople
URGENCI - the International Network of Community Supported Agriculture
The Sami Heritage and Development Fund/ member of Aboriginal Forum
CSIPN - Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North
FoEE - Friends of the Earth Europe
FIAN International
TNI - Transnational Institute
CEO- Corporate Europe Observatory
Action Aid
Slow Food Europe
Fair Trade Advocacy Office
Organisators of the European Citizens' Initiative 'Save Bees and Farmers'

¹ List of supporting organisations:

<https://www.eurovia.org/an-open-letter-to-european-institutions-on-the-international-day-of-peasant-struggle>