



WORLD FORUM ON ACCESS TO LAND

WFAL 2016

Valencia, Spain
March 31st- April 2nd

FINAL REPORT FROM THE WFAL 2016

The World Forum on Access to Land and Natural Resources (WFAL 2016) took place in Valencia, Spain, from 3/31 to 4/02. More than 1200 farmers' and civil society organizations, national and international institutions, professionals and specialists from over 70 countries expressed support for the forum, which brought together 400 people from all over the world in a free and open discussion about land and natural resource access.

Diagnostic

Forum participants agreed that, twelve years after the World Forum on Agrarian Reform (WFAR, Valencia, Spain, 2004) and ten years after the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD/FAO, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2006), public land redistribution policies have all but been abandoned; and that existing policies do not address the needs of rural communities. Limited or lacking access to land and productive resources is a major cause of rural and urban poverty, marginalization, and loss of food sovereignty throughout the world; and in many countries, these problems have only gotten worse as land, water, forest, pasture, fish, and seed grabbing by a small number of increasingly powerful actors has intensified.

Over the last 30 years, large agricultural enterprises with salaried workers have become more and more powerful, competing with small family farms. At the end of the 1970s, they spread through parts of Latin America and Southeast Asia, benefiting from low land and labor costs and advantageous agreements with local governments. In the 1980s and 1990s, neoliberal globalization (opening of markets in accordance with structural adjustment; WTO agricultural agreements; various international free trade agreements, financial deregulation) allowed them to spread throughout the entire world. With the abandonment of public policies that benefit family agriculture, they have expanded their reach, benefiting at the expense of smallholders. Natural resources are increasingly viewed as merchandise, undermining the environment, food sovereignty, and populations' rights to food.

These agricultural enterprises with salaried workers do not always produce more food and added value per surface unit than the family and smallholder agriculture that they replace. In keeping with the conclusions of the International Year of Family Farming (2014), participants emphasized the economic, social, and environmental efficiency of family and smallholder farms, especially when

supported by favorable public policies. In comparison, large private agricultural corporations are only “efficient” because they generate large financial profit by minimizing land, resource, and labor costs and while bearing a limited to nonexistent fiscal burden. They are not truly efficient from an agronomic or an economic standpoint.

Agricultural enterprises of this kind also impact the environment. When investors are awarded large quantities of land, they promote production systems that revolve around monoculture and require large amounts of fossil fuels and industrial inputs. These projects risk polluting the soil and the water and reducing biodiversity, contributing to ecological crisis and climate change.

Millions of farmers have been undermined by insufficient access to land, irrigation water, and other means of production, resulting in widespread marginalization and loss of dignity. This contributes to major disequilibrium at the global level. The current situation – persistent hunger and malnutrition; growing inequalities between countries, and within each country; exclusion, structural violence, massive unemployment, environmental crisis and loss of food sovereignty – is unacceptable. Indigenous people, women, and youth are particularly affected by this situation.

The CIRADR led to the adoption (by the Food Security Committee, FSC) of the “Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of Food Security” in 2012. These last have yet to be effectively implemented, mainly due to a lack of national political will.

The WFAL denounces and condemns the ongoing violence and intimidation towards activists rightfully fighting to gain land and natural resource access or to protect existing access rights. It condemns the criminalization of organizations that defend land and resource access rights and stands against the unnecessary pressure that is placed on them. It reaffirms the importance of democratic principles, civil liberties, and respect for human rights.

The FMAT supports multiple initiatives that address these issues throughout the world.

Proposals

In light of the situation described above, the WFAL 2016 affirms that access to land and natural resources is necessary for human food security. It therefore calls for:

- 1/ a halt to land and resource concentration and grabbing, everywhere where it is occurring throughout the world,

- 2/ the restitution, as soon as possible, of lands that have been unfairly stolen from displaced populations without sufficient compensation;
- 3/ policies, particularly agrarian reform policies, that eliminate inequalities in access by redistributing land and natural resources (water, forest and pastoral resources, fishing areas)
- 4/ greater recognition for the essential role of women, mechanisms that guarantee their participation in decision making processes; and the elimination of all inequalities in access to land and natural resources that affect women in particular;
- 5/ policies that make it easier for youth to access land and natural resources, and to make a proper living from these last; the promotion of intergenerational dialogue that reconciles transmission of local knowledge with youth autonomy;
- 6/ the use of regulatory tools to prevent land concentration: fiscal policies, mechanisms that regulate land purchase and sale, leasing, and investment;
- 7/ the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of Food Security (VG); the development of autonomous land observatories;
- 8/ the immediate launch of an organizing process to transform the Voluntary Guidelines into binding national, and international, commitments;
- 9/ policies to discourage the formation of very large, specialized production units that rely heavily on mechanization, synthetic and fossil fuel inputs, and salaried workers;
- 10/ the transformation of family/smallholder agriculture into a central public policy priority; recognition for its efficiency including its ability to increase food production, generate employment, and reduce poverty while protecting ecosystems;
- 11/ the guarantee that land – which is a limited resource – be allowed to fulfill its social functions of producing a maximum amount of food and wealth per surface unit sustainably;

- 12/ a reorientation of all forms of public support, both direct and indirect, towards family and smallholder agriculture, in particular towards agro ecological production systems;
- 13/ trade policies that allow small producers to make a sufficient living from their work;
- 14/ the fair consultation of citizens, before the implementation of trade policies that have a potentially ruinous impact on smallholders with limited access to land, natural resources, and equipment; and which may violate the rights of populations to protect their own food sovereignty;
- 15/ the promotion of participatory territorial governance models that involve local populations, in particular indigenous populations; which allow communities to define rules and usage rights in their commons; and which allow them live in accordance with their technological, ecological, economic, and cultural preferences ;
- 16/ an immediate halt to all repressive measures that target activists working for more equitable access to land and natural resources, and additional support for farmers', landless farmers, fishermen and fisherwomen, indigenous peoples', women's, and youth movements, throughout the world
- 17/ continued support for, and development of, movements that were discussed during this forum
- 18/ the broadening of citizen alliances, both urban and rural; a massive mobilization of civil society groups, which are the only organizations capable of effectively developing and implementing mechanisms to prevent the concentration of resources and minimize conflicts associated with the concentration of resources;
- 19/ the creation, within the United Nations and UN special agencies, of an independent entity responsible for protecting the interests of future generations.
- 20/ the WFAL asks all international institutions (the FAO, CFS, UN) to follow up on both the ICAARD 2006 and the and the WFAL 2016 by organizing an additional international conference about land and natural resource access, involving both governments, and civil society organizations.