



We are the seeds that take root
We are the trees that bear fruit
We are the shaking of the ground
as we tear this fortress down!

Recorded during the II Youth Assembly,
North American Mistica, Matola, October 2008

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editorial : youth and agriculture

There will be no future for Food Sovereignty without the participation of young people – young people that are committed to the historical struggle for the liberation of our peoples and the transformation of our reality.

As the Youth of La Vía Campesina (LVC), we must recognize the dignity and value in the work we do to maintain our struggles. During the *3rd International Assembly of the Youth of La Via Campesina*, we identified the major areas of struggle as - Agroecology, Climate Change and Energy, Migration, Food Sovereignty, Territory and Commons; and Health.

Through a process that started in 2004, we have debated these topics and developed our strategic direction in order to further **our agrarian visions**, as part of our contribution **to the building of a radically new society.**

As rural-peasants, migrant and indigenous youths, we recognize that we cannot confront the systems of oppression that inflict destruction on our peoples and the Earth **without calling to every other youth in our society to mobilize alongside us.**

And so we the Youth of La Via Campesina present this edition as our call to the youth of world - **to educate, mobilize and organize for Food Sovereignty Now!**

The International Youth Articulation of La Via Campesina

who we are

In the last years hundreds of organisations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organisations were present in the *International Nyéléni Forum 2007* and feel part of a broader **Food Sovereignty Movement**, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organisations involved: Development Fund, ETC Group, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, Roppa, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, VSF-Justicia Alimentaria Global.

now is time for food sovereignty !

box 1 Agroecological formación for Food Sovereignty

We struggle for an education that teaches us to think – not one that teaches us to obey. Paulo Freire

Feeding Critical Thought

The vast majority of rural youth are marginalized at all levels of the educational system, and the very few opportunities to study exist in institutions that reproduce the transnational perspective of agriculture, a model that goes against the interests of smallholder family farmers.

While mainstream universities continue graduating what they call “technicians” and “engineers” who are promoters of agribusiness, since 2006 La Vía Campesina has been developing **original experiences in agroecological formación** for young men and women, campesinas and campesinos, indigenous people, rural workers and other excluded members of society - so that a new generation of Food Sovereignty activists can successfully build the new food system we so desperately need.

These spaces are the direct result of social struggle, born of enormous efforts and mobilizations in defense of an education that dignifies rural livelihoods, and are guided by a **popular education** based in the philosophical and pedagogical principles detailed below.

Philosophical Principles:

Education through and for *Social Transformation*;

Education through and for *Diversity*;

Education through and for *Work and Co-operation*;

Education through and for *Rebellion*.

Pedagogical Principles:

Practice/Theory/Practice: popular education is based on the dialogue between action, reflection, and matured action. True formación takes place when society is being transformed.

Education/Learning: A dialectical and horizontal relationship exists between educators and learners, with both teaching and learning in a constant dialogue free of hierarchy.

Diálogo de Saberes: only through a diversity of visions, perspectives, and proposals do people come to truly understand the world around them.

Action-Based, Participatory, and Contextualized Research: Investigations that take place are directly related to the real needs of students, their families and communities and the struggle for Food sovereignty.

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in the spotlight

1

Young people in action: struggles and visions for Food Sovereignty

Peasant villages which resist, feed the fertile soil where the youth grow to join their hands together in a creation of the future. The youth which is the people, the youth which is the earth¹.

Young people in the rural areas of the world are facing one of the greatest challenges in all history: **gathering the testimonies of the farmers' struggle and at the same time facing the new challenges for the construction of a radically different world.** All over the world, the neoliberal capitalist system has imposed a political and economic model of industrial agriculture, intensive monoculture and of land grabbing driven by transnational corporations with the approval of national and local governments.

This model –which promotes the privatization of all natural resources including land, forests, water and planted seeds - destroys livelihoods and rural cultural heritage, and exhausts Mother Earth.

Fighting against...

Throughout the world, **young people are standing up to the capitalist neoliberal system.** In the streets and in the countryside, they are fighting to build new pathways for our society and planet to follow.

The industrialisation and mercantilization of agriculture creates a system in which very few people hold power over nature and over all the different phases of the food distribution system (from its production to its distribution). This system puts a *barrier on access to natural resources* and to the land which farmers need in order to produce healthy food, and it also *denies access to local markets* where they could get a fair price for their products without having to compete with prices which are below the cost of production of imported and subsidised foods.

Above all, **this system strips the farmers of their role in society** and the youth is fighting to safeguard this role. They are fighting for the right to produce food for their communities and for the right to have sovereignty over their lands, their seeds and their traditional knowledge...**and they are doing so in new ways and by new means.**

From the youth's point of view, the theme of **access to land** is a key element of the fight, especially now that land grabbing and the system of large landed estates is more and more prominent all over the world. *For this reason in cities and in the countryside, young farmers are occupying land and territories to produce local food*, and to challenge the neoliberal capitalist model which allows corporations and other private interests to grab, exploit and destroy land and by doing so to destroy the way of life of communities all over the world.

The current industrial food system is not able to offer a future to humanity. The earth is a resource which is shared amongst all of us, it belongs to all of us and we all belong to it. **The only alternative proposal** capable of recovering the life and dignity of these people and of encompassing our shared struggles, and standing against the current capitalist financial system **is Food Sovereignty.**

And young people represent the future of Food Sovereignty in the world.

Fighting for...

Young people's struggles are the product of over 500 years of resistance to colonialism and are fed by the inviolable right to imagine and build a way of life from the land around them in balance with nature and its ecosystems (the Pachamama²).

The young people of Via Campesina integrated in more than 160 organisations in over 70 countries have taken over the legacy of this long history and of the farmer's struggle waged by the people of Via Campesina.

1 - Poem of Javier García Fernández, young activist of the SOC-SAT. Original version in Spanish.

2 - Pachamama, Mother Earth is the highest divinity of the Andean people.

in the spotlight

2

Young people of all continents are showing us that another world is possible.

On the one hand, through the participation of the youth in demonstrations of struggle and resistance for Food Sovereignty worldwide. Examples of this are the MST cooperatives in Brazil, land occupations in Andalusia, the fight against GM maize in South Africa, or the struggles against Monsanto led by farmers in India.

On the other hand, through the work of their organizations in promoting self-management, participatory decision-making, greater recognition of the key role of youth and of the creation and use of new forms of organization and of action. On the streets of many countries, we are seeing the beginnings of movements such as the Occupy movement, the *Indignados*, and the *Arab Spring* - driven by many of these young people who are building new ways of organizing society from the bottom up.

The youth are fighting for **land rights**, for comprehensive **agrarian reform** and to ensure the **rights of people working the land**.

Young people are fighting for another way of producing food, using **agroecology** and its principles as a basis to build local food systems that work with nature and not against it, and which claim **rights over seeds** – this is our heritage and it works at the service of humanity.

They develop markets and processing systems as well as local distribution systems in order to find an alternative to the market that oppresses them. Agroecology and its principles meet the vision of a local, ecological and economic model which is also cultural and political and which young people want for their present and their future.

Young people are fighting for **gender equality** and **against the patriarchal system**. They are fighting for the rights of young women farmers and for the right of access to quality sexual and reproductive medicine. The youth of today are fighting to ensure dignified conditions for all, they are fighting for a future in rural areas.

In order to carry out their struggles, young people know **the importance of education and training**, as more and more states, as well as national and local governments do not address their educational needs.

Therefore there has been an increasing tendency for self-training, new training initiatives and popular education at the heart of peasant resistance groups as well as the practice of agroecology. *An education to live, to think and to find new ways to organize oneself. An education that helps us to decolonize our hearts, thoughts, words and actions.*

These are the paths that the youth are taking right now.

We are the present

Our first step is local: *we work the land or attempt to work the land.* Each of us tries to live according to the agricultural model and the model of society that we claim to follow. *We see our struggles reflected in the struggle of others in the field, in cities and in any other places where people are fighting against the neoliberal capitalist financial system.*

Therefore, **the second step we undertake is union work:** this is seen through the militancy that we express in every debate in which our movement takes part or supports through our efforts. *In this way we build networks of militant alliances with students, urban activists, farm workers, consumers, migrants.* If young people do not defend themselves and if they don't work together, then no one will do it for them!

We are not the future, we are the present!

**¡Alerta, alerta, alerta que camina,
la juventud en lucha de la Vía Campesina!**

...continued from **box 1**

The Harvest

The aforementioned spaces for agroecological formación within La Vía Campesina are beginning to see their first harvests – *new pedagogical experiences, different methods for democratic dialogue, and the most important of all outcomes, young women and men who recognize in Food Sovereignty their platform for the transformation of their realities.*

And while many more sites for formación still need to be consolidated, there are currently hundreds of other permanent educational processes taking place at the roots of rural social movements.

All across the World youth are asking and answering the question, what do we do to achieve Food Sovereignty?

Voices from the field

1

Youth in action!

Norman Chibememe, Zimbabwe Smallholder Farmer Forum (ZIMSOFF).

Most of the youth from school age – both male and female - are fully engaged in farming activities in Zimbabwe. Youth are taking in farming through organic methods and sustainable *agroecological systems*. The majority of the rural farming communities are involved in *seed multiplication* for the sustainability of seeds production and for ensuring the quality, quantity and reliability of crops. *The communities are eradicating hunger* in many areas through self banking 'fushai' small grain, which is the most suitable grain to be produced in low yield regions where climate change affects severely agriculture production. Together with the production of traditional and local seeds, youth are also *practicing water harvesting techniques and conservation farming* (crop rotation, management of the top soil...). They are actively involved in the family businesses, especially in the shaping of the business and marketing plans. *Youth education and formation is really important*, young farmers are taking courses to improve their farming practices such as the record keeping seeds multiplication course or contract farming. Agriculture policy documents have been also handed to them and their communities to better understand and be aware of the national and international context.

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Voices from the field 2

The struggle against landgrabbing

Julia Bar-Tal, Farmer of Bienenwerder, 45 km from Berlin and member of "Bündnis junge Landwirtschaft – Confederation of young farming" and AbL, Via Campesina, Germany.

Young farming in East Germany within the struggle of creating food sovereignty is strongly *challenged by the process of land grabbing* we are witnessing today. As a young farmer starting to build a farm the struggle against the investors and big agribusinesses grabbing the land under our feet has defined much of our daily struggle. Due to the socialist history most lands are in the property of the state, which now in its neoliberal policies is *following the path of privatization* through big investors and not aimed at creating a food production for and with those living here. *In the past two years we have managed to create a movement effectively confronting this process.* As a young farmer from our own farm the very personal struggle for the lands of this home has been the most practical example of what is happening to all of us hit by the danger of losing the ground we stand upon. As initiators and members of the *"Confederation of young farmers" in east Germany we have put this struggle into a common context*, we have protested and fought as farmers, with our friends from the cities, leading our struggle into the path of these commons – understanding the process of displacement as our collective pain and putting the reclaiming of our sovereignty against it.

A well-considered installation programme for young people in agriculture 3

Papa Bakary Coly, called "papis", president of the youth section of the National Council for Rural Consultation and Cooperation (CNCR), Senegal.

Considering the challenge of unemployment, particularly amongst the youth, *African agriculture, like all other sectors, must mobilise to create all sorts of employment.* However, you can see that there is an enormous lack of means for installation in some African countries. If we take the example of Senegal, *there is no policy to set up young people in agriculture.* There are just some initiatives -- programmes and projects -- that are part of the existing structures responsible for agricultural employment.

This kind of approach has many inconsistencies and limits the achievements. These inconsistencies are evident in the kind of installations proposed and in the targets. *Instead of accompanied self-installation, it's mainly state welfare programmes that focus on a small number of people, with poorly defined targets* (often the young people have no experience of agriculture or they have abandoned agriculture as a result of the rural exodus) *and with exorbitant investments.* The return on investment in terms of job-creation or capital generated is often very weak due to the low rate of commitment of the young settlers. This is what motivated us, in the youth college of the CNCR, to think about an installation programme that takes into consideration the youth in agriculture. Our reflections brought us to the conclusion that *"the projects to install new arrivals in the agricultural sector are good, as such, but it is even better if these projects try, first of all, to look after those who are already there, because it is the success and the well being of these people that provides the motivation for self-installation of the others."*

A Landless Youth, 30 years later 4

Raul Amorim - Collective Youth Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) - Pernambuco, Brazil

30 years ago, young people with a belief that the land struggle should go beyond their local territory, put their backpacks on and set out to build a *National Movement of Landless Rural Workers*, fighting *not only for land but also for agrarian reform and for social transformation.* It was young people who created the *Movement of Landless Workers (MST).* After these 30 years, the challenges faced by these young rural workers has changed. There is an *increased concentration of land* and the enemy has become stronger through *agribusiness partnerships.* At the same time, the courts *criminalize movements* and prevent Agrarian Reform and the apparatus of *international finance capital speculates on life.* But young rural workers - organized in social movements - are to build what we call *Popular Agrarian Reform.* This February, during the Sixth Congress of the MST, the *Third Assembly of Landless Youth* took place with over two thousand young people present. There we committed to act on the problems we face in our reality: we promised to build farms without pesticides and to strengthen the development of our lands through *Agroecology* as a model for the relationship between human beings and nature. We undertook to organize a collective Youth and *build new social, cultural and gender relations, as well as to participate in the struggles of young people in the cities and make internationalism and*

international solidarity part of our daily practice. The youth is at the historical forefront of these workers' struggle and will continue to lead it, until we achieve the people's victory, an end to exploitation and oppression, and human emancipation.

Sharing experiences 5

Dan Kretschmar, National Farmers Union - La Via Campesina, Canada. Young family farmer and part of the North American Youth Collective of LVC.

I help run my family farm in Ontario, Canada that produces organic vegetables and livestock. I have just returned as a youth delegate for the *National Farmers Union* from La Via Campesina regional meeting in Florida. After spending 5 days with comrades from the US and Mexico I feel energized, *outraged and empowered all at the same time.* The experience was overwhelming. Hearing the stories from *undocumented migrant/immigrant farm workers* about their working conditions and struggles for rights made the situation we all hear about at home that much more real. *There is a very apparent class system in place.* Farm workers are unable to take a day off sick, because they would be fired. Many workers who harvest citrus fruits have serious skin conditions from pesticide exposure, and pregnant women are required to work basically until they go into labour. I am saddened that this is what the industrial model of agriculture has become. The migrant worker issue is one of many our region faces. I felt like I was among family from the moment I arrived at the LVC meeting. The plights of all small scale farmers are mirrored across the region. *I am motivated to fight for change.* We must all continue to *fight for peasant and farmer rights and help develop a change in consciousness among the people.* It all starts with consuming oppression-free food. When the government throws us crumbs in an attempt to quiet us down, we must not be fooled by these tactics. The only option is to take the crumbs, throw them back at them and shout even louder "that is not good enough!" *Backing down is not an option.*

**one does not sell
the earth
upon which
the people walk**

Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877

Students and farmers, the Indonesian Youth Caravan to #endWTO

The Youth Caravan of the Indonesian Youth Food Movement departed on 25th November from Jakarta with forty-five energetic participants, ready to campaign across Java for the end of the WTO and the Free Trade Regime. Among them were two international guests from South Asia, Pathak Lal Golder representing BKF (*Bangladesh Krishok Federation - Bangladesh Peasants Federation*) and Savitha BC representing KRRS (*Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha - Karnataka State Farmers Association, India*).

"I decided to participate in the caravan because I wanted to understand the peasant movements of Indonesia - their strategy for building strength and what is the lifestyle of the peasants. I wanted to know how they are fighting for their rights" said Patak. Savitha added "I wanted to join the Caravan so I could compare Indian movements with Indonesia, especially the youth movement. I was excited to learn how they actively oppose the agrarian crisis, and how the student unions work together with the farmer movements. I'm a university student, so I can bring ideas from Indonesia back to our own Youth Movement - The Green Brigade."

The first stop was Cirebon, where the Youth Caravaners met with

local fisherfolk part of *Serikat Nelayan Indonesia* (SNI). They talked about the acute crisis they are facing because MNC fishing companies are **overfishing** the sea. Local fishers try to cope with the effects of overfishing by going far out into the ocean, and those who can't manage migrate to Thailand as fisherman or Saudi Arabia as domestic workers.

In Semarang, the Youth Caravaners had an action in front of the government building. "It was a fruitful action - after it, the government met the Youth Food Movement representatives, and committed to supporting food sovereignty at local level. They also plan to work **against climate change** (though within the limitations of the already-existing WTO agreements)" said Pathak.

Next was Solo, a provincial city where cultural events and street theatre took place. "Women's students participated and put forward *drama and skits on food sovereignty*. I took away a lot of inspiration for my university, we don't have anything like that in Karnataka," said Savitha.

At Surabaya, both Savitha and Patak were able to share their experiences during the International Seminar on WTO at Veteran University. Savitha talked about the multiple crises of **land grabbing**, **oil seed farmers**, the increasing rate of **farmer suicides**, women farmers, and the dairy sector, while Pathak spoke about the campaign to #endWTO and the alternatives such as food sovereignty. Last stop was Banyuwangi, where they met with the Baffel community who is fighting against the gold extractions since 1995. "The community faced **violence** from hired paramilitaries - some people were killed and the community still lives in fear. Not only did they lose their land to the **gold mining industries**, but also their peace of mind. Indigenous people especially suffered," told Savitha.

"As a former organizer of the Bangladesh Climate Caravan, it was interesting to see a *youth-oriented caravan*. Our caravan is more farmer-oriented, but now we are interested involving student groups as well," Pathak commented. "As a member of a student group and a researcher, I am inspired by the students unions in Indonesia. I hope to organize student groups in Karnataka as well that join with the farmers' movement and to end the agrarian crisis and free trade regime," Savitha concluded.

To read the full article <http://lvcsouthasia.blogspot.in/2013/11/2-of-our-own-in-indonesian-youth.html>

Young people reclaiming the fields in Europe

Reclaim the Fields (RtF) is a **constellation of young people and collective projects willing to go back to the land and reassume the control over food production**. We are determined to create alternatives to capitalism through cooperative, collective, autonomous, real needs oriented small scale production and initiatives, putting theory into practice and linking local practical action with global political struggles.

Since 2007 we organized several European camps attended by hundreds of enthusiasts, participated in global mobilisations with La Vía Campesina, took direct actions to fight for the land and held assemblies from Sweden to Catalonia and Hungary. Nowadays, there are people participating in Reclaim the Fields in Austria, Belgium, Catalonia, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Suecia, Switzerland, Greece and several active local groups have been created with their own agenda. We want to break frontiers between professional farmers and self-consumers around the joint idea of collective re-appropriation of food production. We try to link urban gardens with peasant farming, consumers-producers initiatives with land squatters, etc.

Between January 30th and February 2nd about 40 people met in Burg Lutter (Middle Ger-

many) for the first RtF gathering of the german-speaking region. It was a great camp, with some practical work and lots of workshops on different issues like: food sovereignty, critics of 'green economy', land grabbing in East Germany, forest gardening, seeds, etc. We shared information about our projects, existing initiatives and actions, and planned new joint ones. This was the beginning of a german-speaking network (inside the european RtF network) for experience and skill sharing, as well as for the organization of direct actions.

For more informations please visit:
<http://www.reclaimthefields.org/de>

Youth articulation of CLOC LVC

For more than 20 years in Latin America and the Caribbean, there has been a process of identity and unity called CLOC (Latino-american Coordinator of Rural Organizations)- Vía Campesina, the young people of the Latin American countryside and women are all involved in this political process. After three continental meetings and interim meetings during the 1st year, the Continental Youth Assembly and its delegates laid out the operating guidelines of the *Continental Youth Articulation CLOC LVC*.

The articulation is an opportunity for **youth dialogue, discussion and for making decisions to strengthen the agreements** reached in the various Continental Congresses and Assemblies of the youth movement. It will be a forum for monitoring and evaluating the processes of the youth struggle. These joint activities should respond to the dynamics and problems that capitalism imposes on the rural youth of today so it will be a space of constant political education. (...) October 8, the day of the commemoration of the fall of Che Guevara, has been declared as a space for the unity of these youth struggles.

In 2014, this joint venture will promote seminars and events locally in preparation for the IV Continental Assembly in Argentina in 2015. Topics which have been chosen to enrich dialogue and generate a global view of the regions are: Agroecology, Energy and Climate Change, Food Sovereignty, Access to Land, Territory and Natural Resources, Migration, Health, Education and Political Training. *Against the looting of capital and of the empire, America Fights! By the land and sovereignty of our people, America fights!*

many worlds are possible

collective creation

The countryside is our life
The Earth feeds us
The rivers run in our blood
We are the Youth of La Via Campesina
Today we declare the beginning of a new world.

We come from the four corners of the world
To stand together in the spirit of resistance
To work together to create hope
To talk together about our struggles
To learn by each other work
To build solidarity between our movements
To unite as a strong force for social change.

From here we go forward into the four corners of the world
We carry with us a spirit of revolution
The conviction that another world is possible
And a dedication to fight for our way of life
We will fight until we win
Until youth all over the world are able to live in the countryside
As campesinos with peace and prosperity.

When the states try to repress us
we will unite in solidarity and continue the struggle
When a compañero falls we will pick him up
When it gets cold we will embrace each other
So that the fire of our struggle will warm our hearts.

Each day we will place our bodies,
Our minds and our hearts on the line
And fight for life
Fight for La Via Campesina.

*Collective creation
by the II Youth Assembly in Matola, October 2008*

To hear the recording,
<http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/627-la-via-campesina-greatest-hits>

Angelo Monne -
www.angelomonne.com



To read, listen, watch and share

- *The youth declaration from Jakarta*, 3rd International Youth Assembly, 2013, <http://www.viacampesina.org/en/index.php/our-conferences-mainmenu-28/6-jakarta-2013/resolutions-and-declarations/1452-declaration-of-the-3rd-international-youth-assembly-of-the-via-campesina>
- *Youth participation in agriculture in Africa*, Jose Mateus, UNAC - Mozambique (only Spanish) <http://viacampesina.org/es/index.php/temas-principales-mainmenu-27/jes-mainmenu-65/2068-situacion-de-la-participacion-de-los-jovenes-en-la-agricultura-en-africa>
- Video, Youth Committee of the SOC-SAT, *Lands occupied by the Union in Cordoba*, Spain, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCmSN_rXBs0#t=116
- *The future of european youth in agriculture*, (only Spanish and French), Jeanne Verlinden, http://revistasoberaniaalimentaria.wordpress.com/2012/12/02/el-futuro-para-la-juventud-europea-en-la-agricultura/?relatedposts_exclude=2246
- *Reclaim the Fields website*: <http://reclaimthefields.org/>
- *NFU (National Farmers Union) youth web page*, Canada, <http://www.nfu.ca/about/youth>
- *International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth website* <http://mijarc.org/>
- *We are Fed Up demonstration*, Berlin, <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/sustainable-peasants-agriculture-mainmenu-42/1559-germany-wir-haben-es-satt-we-are-fed-up>

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