

Stop injustice and hunger: Strengthen farmers' rights worldwide!

Appeal to the International Conference of Agriculture Ministers

Berlin, 20 January 2024

The Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) is once again setting itself very ambitious goals with the theme "Food systems of the future: Together for a world without hunger". We very much welcome ambitious goals. But this is the fourteenth time in a row that we have come to the "We've had enough" demonstration and the GFFA in Berlin, with many farmers and their tractors among us - and we are all deeply concerned! Concerned about the ongoing dramatic world food crisis, concerned about the **situation on farms, which is tense to breaking point**. We are particularly concerned about the lack of political understanding for the situation of farmers, who are at the centre of the food system. The major farmers' protests in Germany in recent weeks also show the massive need for action in agricultural policy. Farms need economic prospects and planning security. To this end, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL) presented a [6-point agricultural policy plan](#) at the beginning of January. The reports of the Commission for the Future of Agriculture and the Borchert Commission must form the basis for the changes that now need to be made to reorganise agriculture.

Internationally, we are also seeing this lack of focus on food systems that give farmers' production a future and a voice. The central **promise of last year's communiqué** to make **special efforts for marginalised and vulnerable groups in particular** has not been sufficiently addressed. The increased efforts of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) are to be recognised, but so far they have not been enough to overcome national and international blockades. More commitment is needed from everyone. At the same time, there is a lack of financial support for marginalised and vulnerable groups. Large funds such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) and other financing instruments urgently need to be reformed - so that those who need it most can finally access the money. Once again, we must reaffirm our conclusion from last year: A transformation of food systems looks different!

Tackling inequality

Inequality is increasing globally and in all areas of our lives. Without a reduction in structural inequalities within and outside food systems, combating hunger and realising the right to food is simply not possible. The High Level Panel of Experts of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has made it clear that **power asymmetries are fundamental causes of hunger and food insecurity**. Our food systems are characterised by strong power imbalances between food corporations and farmer producers, market concentration, unfair trading systems and hugely unequal access to resources such as land, water and seeds. This system also means that seasonal and migrant labourers in rural areas are often exposed to extremely undignified working conditions.

Today, 0.6 per cent of the world's farms own 70 per cent of the global arable land. A handful of seed companies control the commercial seed market. These structures are exacerbated by strong inequalities within and between different countries - often based on discrimination by gender, age, physical or mental disability, skin colour, religion, ethnicity or class. In the context of these extreme

inequalities, the ideology of the "free market" can only lead to even more inequality. Instead, we need a new, fair global trade paradigm that is based on solidarity and achieves food sovereignty. To achieve this, we need **policies and regulations as well as financing instruments that prioritise marginalised groups!** We call on the agriculture ministers of the GFFA: Address the issue of inequality, put questions of redistribution - especially with regard to access to land, water and seeds - on the agenda and include marginalised and vulnerable groups and their solutions. Specifically: **Ensure farmers' right to participation** by involving them in all political projects and programmes as soon as they affect their lives and work. For example, fairer access to land requires a global agenda for agricultural reform, effective programmes for young farmers, women and queer people in agriculture, as well as measures against the global sell-off of land to non-agricultural investors and for a socially responsible distribution of land. This would be a positive step towards realising farmers' rights to land, water and seeds.

Implementation push for the right to food

The guidelines on the human right to food were negotiated and adopted internationally 20 years ago. So far, too little has been done to implement them. **Take advantage of the 20th anniversary of the Guidelines on the Right to Food:** we urgently need a global push for the implementation of the right to food. The Guidelines are linked to other important human rights instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) and the UN Land Guidelines (VGGT), which must finally be implemented consistently. We call on the ministers of the GFFA to make a **clear commitment to the right to food and its implementation** - for example with a global action plan on the right to food. This right must be applied and enforced worldwide as a compass for food policies. What's more, campaigning for human rights is always also a campaign against inequality!

Dramatic situation on farms in Germany

We farmers are increasingly worried about our farms and those of our colleagues around the world. In Germany, 10 farms close their doors every day, 36,000 farms have been lost in 10 years and many of us are still in great economic distress. In Europe, we have lost 5 million farms in the last 15 years. Our farms are needed! **In order to improve climate protection, animal welfare and species conservation, we need many farmers and diverse agricultural businesses to realise this. And we are ready to do so.** But the federal government is acting too timidly. The Federal Government and you, Minister Özdemir, have not yet seized the opportunity to implement the united proposals of the Commission on the Future of Agriculture and the Borchert Commission. The reorganisation of animal husbandry cannot succeed without long-term financing. We cannot and will no longer produce at world market prices as long as these do not even cover production costs. That is why we are calling for fair prices through effective market regulation and by strengthening us producers in the supply chain. We need clear framework conditions and predictable directions. We need to know today what requirements will apply to our stables in the coming years and we need a predictable fertiliser policy instead of constantly changing regulations. We can adjust to a lot and are prepared to do a lot. Standing still harms everyone - the farms, the climate and the environment. Therefore: **Traffic lights, switch to action!**



Seeds are a common good: Hands off the bogus solutions of the agricultural industry

The loss of diversity in the field - agrobiodiversity - is staggering. This jeopardises our ability to resist and respond to the climate crisis, which is particularly affecting farmers worldwide. To halt the loss of agrobiodiversity and recognise the immeasurable contribution of farmers and indigenous peoples to global food security and biodiversity, the international community formulated several complementary rules, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Seed Treaty (ITPGRFA), the UN declarations UNDROP and UNDRIP. These instruments and the rights enshrined in them must finally be implemented effectively. To this end, they must be transposed into national legislation. Because **without farmer (seed) diversity, there will be no end to hunger**.

We appeal to all EU ministers: Use the reform of the EU seed regulations for the implementation of farmers' rights from ITPGRFA and UNDROP. But above all: Stop the deregulation of genetic engineering in the EU. Ensure that farmers and consumers can continue to choose GMO-free products in the future, from seed to food. Advocate for effective protective measures against genetic engineering contamination of our seeds, food and environment. Ensure implementation of the precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle and liability regulations. Stop patents on plants and animals.

Time is running out: Minister Özdemir, dear GFFA ministers, take decisive action now for the human right to food and the rights of farmers worldwide!

Farmers around the world expect the GFFA, under your chairmanship, Minister Özdemir, to take decisive action in favour of food sovereignty, human rights and the structural fight against the causes of hunger. Especially against the backdrop of increasing conflicts and wars, such as in Ukraine, the Gaza Strip, Myanmar, Sudan or in so many other regions of the world: human rights and the right to food must guide our actions! We stand in solidarity with all civilians who are suffering from these conflicts and whose human rights are being violated.

We are therefore calling on you, the international agriculture ministers who are meeting at the GFFA, and especially on you, Mr Özdemir, Minister of Agriculture:

With a view to the world food crisis:

1. A strong signal from the Agriculture Ministers' Conference on the realisation of the human right to food. To this end, a global action plan on the right to food should be developed.
2. To work together at this year's negotiations in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in favour of strong, human rights-based policy recommendations to overcome inequality - and to develop immediate measures in the CFS now.
3. Commitment to a strong and active crisis mechanism at the CFS.
4. In the acute response to the global food crisis, finally focus aid on producers undergoing agroecological transformation - and reform financing programmes such as GAFSP so that producers can access the funds directly.

5. Support measures that promote food sovereignty and the transformation of food systems.
6. Commit to developing national and multilateral strategies to implement the Farmers' Rights Declaration (UNDROP).

With a view to farmer seed diversity and genetic engineering:

7. Strengthen farmers' rights in the sense of the International Seed Treaty (ITPGRFA) and UNDROP by reforming national and regional seed legislation and making UNDROP a central instrument of the ongoing EU seed reform.
8. Continue to safeguard the right to GMO-free conventional and organic breeding, food production and nutrition. New genetic engineering techniques are also risky technologies and must remain strictly regulated. The EU precautionary principle must be strengthened and implemented, and the precautionary principle of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) must be consistently applied worldwide.
9. To strengthen farmer seed work and farmer seed systems financially, e.g. by promoting farmer seed banks and training programmes. Better financing programmes are needed that reach the vulnerable groups directly.
10. Reform intellectual property laws on seeds so that farmers' and indigenous rights are protected; ban the patenting of seeds and life globally and enforce the right to replant globally.

With regard to access to land:

11. Send a signal against the huge increase in the concentration of land in the hands of a few investors and companies. Campaign for an international conference on agricultural reforms under the leadership of the FAO in order to provide a global response to the dramatic concentration of land and the issue of socially acceptable land distribution on the basis of international law (UNDROP, VGGT).
12. Use tax policy measures to steer a broad and fairer distribution of land. In Germany, increasing the land transfer tax rate for actors with above-average land ownership could contribute to this and at the same time generate additional tax revenue for the necessary transformation.