

From: Kirtana Chandrasekaran and Patrick Mulvany

Dear all,

Calling UK NGOs/CSOs to sign a European food declaration

***“Towards a healthy, sustainable, fair and mutually supportive
Common Agriculture and Food policy”***

As you may know the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will change significantly after 2013. It is now undergoing a major review. In the next couple of years the future shape of Europe's agriculture and food policy, and its impact on the rest of the world, will be decided. .

The current CAP has had a devastating impact on communities in the developing world through its subsidies for European corporate farming and drive to source the cheapest possible commodities for European corporations from across the world. The CAP has failed to provide European citizens with good food or stop the haemorrhaging of small scale farming and food cultures in Europe. Based on an outmoded model of farming, the CAP also has a staggering impact on the European and global environment, for example causing deforestation on a massive scale for animal feeds exported to Europe to causing huge losses of biodiversity and degrading landscapes across the globe due to the type of farming supported by the CAP.

Many of us are working to build a more equitable, healthy and sustainable food system based on peoples' right to food, environmental sustainability and a shift of power from corporations to people. What will emerge out of the reformed CAP will have a huge impact on all of us.

At the same time an exciting new local food movement is building across Europe – from grow your own, local food groups, seed swaps and smallholders to the Transition town movement and local battles against supermarkets and factory farms. The appetite for change in the food system is growing across Europe.

Last year, a coalition of European organisations met to strategise on how to work on reforming the CAP. We believe that to overhaul the way food is produced and consumed in Europe we must build a broad coalition of organisations across issues and regions who are demanding change. As a first step toward this goal we have written a declaration (attached) that outlines in a page what we are calling for from a new food and agriculture policy in Europe. A cover note explains more about the goals of this coalition.

We are asking organisations to sign onto the following European food declaration, which will be launched at an event in Brussels in the next months.

Please do consider signing on to this declaration by emailing

Kirtana Chandrasekaran – kirtana.chandrasekara@foe.co.uk or

Patrick Mulvany – patrickmulvany@clara.co.uk

If you would also like to be more involved in this movement that would be great and can you let us know via email.

Warm regards,

Kirtana , Patrick

Re: European food declaration

INTRODUCTION

We are a broad range of organisations – farmer, consumer, environmentalist, altermondialist, public health and development NGOs – who are concerned with the future of food and agriculture in Europe. As in other regions in the world, the number of people and organizations that are working towards a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable food system is growing. Many of them are actively engaged in building a viable alternative to the current food production, distribution and consumption - from the bottom up. This new system of food and agriculture is firmly grounded on equity, the universal right to food, good governance and transparency.

A wide range of renewed activities such as increasing local food production, local markets, local procurement, seed swaps and so on has been emerging and growing across Europe. In addition new movements, such as the Transition Town movement, GM-free regions and national and local debates on food policy show increasing public support for another form of food and agriculture.

Yet, grassroots activities and local movements are not enough. We believe it is time to build a broad coalition of groups at the European level to challenge the current Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and the European Commission's and our governments' avowed plans for a renewed CAP in 2013. Their vision is, to keep the global 'competitiveness' of Europe's food industry as the chief objective of Europe's CAP. The political process for the new CAP 2013 is starting now. We believe a strong message is needed, not only for EU policy makers, but for policy makers in our countries – a vision for a CAP suitable for the 21st century.

We have created a "European Food Declaration: towards a healthy, sustainable, fair and mutually supportive Common Agriculture and Food Policy". It outlines what we think the policy objectives of a CAP for the next decades should be. We invite as many organizations, groups and individuals as possible to sign this declaration and to use it as a tool to promote the discussion about what kind of food and agriculture policy we need. We also ask you to share this declaration with other grassroots, civil society, environment and food organisations that are actively engaged in building a better food system.

Our aim is to collect as many signatures within our different networks before the end of January 2010. Early February, we will invite the public to join our movement.

This declaration is the first step in our efforts to build a broad movement for change towards food sovereignty policies and practices in Europe, including the EU. We are also planning a Europe-wide forum in 2010 or 2011 for people and organisations who are concerned about these issues and who would like to join forces in order to reach our common objectives together. If you are interested to be involved in the preparation of that forum or could help us to organise that forum please contact us.

In solidarity

European Coordination Via Campesina
Friends of the Earth Europe
European Platform for Food Sovereignty
European Health and Agriculture Consortium

European food declaration

Towards a healthy, sustainable, fair and mutually supportive

Common Agriculture and Food policy

We, the undersigned, believe that the European Union needs to meet the urgent challenges Europe is facing regarding food and agriculture.

After more than a half-century of industrialisation of agriculture and food production, sustainable family farming and local food cultures have been substantially reduced in Europe. Today, our food system is dependent on under-priced fossil fuels, does not recognize the limitations of water and land resources, and supports unhealthy diets high in calories, fat and salt, and low in fruit, vegetables and grains. Looking ahead, rising energy costs, drastic losses in biodiversity, climate change and declining water and land resources threaten the future of food production. At the same time, a growing world population faces the potential dual burden of widespread hunger and chronic diseases due to overconsumption.

We will only be able to address these challenges successfully with a completely different approach to food and agriculture policies and practices. The European Union must recognize and support the crucial role of sustainable family farming in the food supply of the population. All people should have access to healthy, safe, and nutritious food. The ways in which we grow, distribute, prepare and eat food should celebrate Europe's cultural diversity, providing sustenance equitably and sustainably.

The present Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) is currently being debated and is due for change in 2013. After decades of the domination by transnational corporations and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in determining food and agriculture policy, it is time for people in Europe to re-appropriate agriculture and food policy: it is time for food sovereignty. We believe a new Common Food and Agriculture Policy should guarantee and protect citizens' space in the EU and candidate countries and their ability and right to define their own models of production, distribution and consumption following the principles outlined below.

The new Common Agriculture and Food Policy:

1. considers food as a universal human right, not merely a commodity.
2. gives priority to growing food and feed for Europe and changes international trade in agricultural products according to principles of equity, social justice and ecological sustainability. The CAP should not harm other countries' food and agriculture systems.
3. promotes healthy eating patterns, moving towards plant-based diets and towards a reduced consumption of meat, energy-dense and highly processed foods, and saturated fats, while respecting the regional cultural dietary habits and traditions.
4. gives priority to maintaining an agriculture all over Europe that involves numerous farmers producing food and caring for the countryside. That is not achievable without fair and secure farm prices, which should allow a fair income for farmers and agricultural workers, and fair prices for consumers.
5. ensures fair, non-discriminatory conditions for farmers and agricultural workers in Central and Eastern Europe, and promotes a fair and equitable access to land.
6. respects the local and global environment, protects the finite resources of soil and water, increases biodiversity and respects animal welfare.
7. guarantees that agriculture and food production remain free from GMOs and fosters farmers' seeds and the diversity of domestic livestock species, building on local knowledge.
8. stops promoting the use and the production of industrial agrofuels and gives priority to the reduction of transport in general.
9. ensures transparency along the food chain so that citizens know how their food is produced, where it comes from, what it contains and what is included in the price paid by consumers.
10. reduces the concentration of power in the agricultural, food processing and retail sectors and their influence on what is produced and consumed, and promotes food systems that shorten the distance between farmers and consumers.
11. encourages the production and consumption of local, seasonal, high quality products reconnecting citizens with their food and food producers.
12. devotes resources to teaching children the skills and knowledge required to produce, prepare, and enjoy healthy, nutritious food.

Initial signatories

European organisations

A SEED Europe
European Coordination Via Campesina
Friends of the Earth Europe
MIJARC Europe

....

National organisations

...