

## **SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE/BIODIVERSITY CAUCUS**

**Caucus organised by Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN), Pesticides Action Network (PAN), Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), AS-PTA (Brazil) among others. Activities throughout the NGO Forum and, on 14 November, "Una Tierra para Vivir", an all day conference with plenary, working groups, individual workshops and case study presentations, plus continuous video session of sustainable agriculture and genetic resources NGO documentaries shown on the Video Wall.**

### **Report to Plenary**

Food is a basic Human Right and the Right to Food means the right to productive resources for sustainable livelihoods and the Right to feed oneself. This can only be achieved in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed.

It entails:

- \* The sustainable care and use of natural resources especially land, water and genetic resources used for food production
- \* Security of tenure, and rights of access, to productive resources, healthy soils and aquatic ecosystems and reduced use of agro-chemicals
- \* Reduced militarisation of rural areas and food supplies and decentralisation of control of the food system from governments and TNCs to local people and communities
- \* Increased recognition and respect for local knowledge systems which have developed the agricultural, livestock, fisheries and local food gathering practices that feed the world.

However, what we see is:

- \* A denial of Rights
- \* Worsening Rights of tenure and access to productive resources
- \* Increased centralisation of control over production and genetic resources through patenting and other intellectual property systems
- \* Accelerating land degradation and pollution of water supplies
- \* Increased militarisation; and
- \* A comprehensive loss of knowledge about the provision of food, and the loss of the genetic resource base on which it depends - the first link in the food chain .

**"This will be the first generation that has lost more knowledge than it has gained."**

About 300 workshop participants discussed actions that they are taking, and will be taking to help food providers achieve the Right to develop and use sustainable food production systems, and to be adequately rewarded for so doing.

For example:

### **Local /Regional**

- \* Working with farmers', herders and fisherfolk organisations to build upon local management and conservation practices, to achieve sustainable food provision in, for example Haiti, India, Philippines, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Mexico, Peru Brazil etc.

- \* Mobilising support for women food producers especially in securing land tenure, and improved health services, for example in Cameroon
- \* Developing, within Latin American NGOs, an awareness of the new political and technical environment, with a new leadership that does not lose contact with its base, and improving international linkages for exchange of political and technical information
- \* Monitoring, locally, the National Food Standards, especially within the scope of Codex Alimentarius, for example in Malaysia
- \* Challenging the European Parliament to recognise the damage to sustainable food production and loss of common property resources, that will result from implementing the Bangladesh Flood Action Plan which they are financing
- \* Developing a legal proposal to prohibit the production and export of banned pesticides from Italy
- \* Championing sustainable production methods for the local organic production and consumption of safe, healthy food, using locally-adapted genetic resources, through challenging national and community regulations and laws, and improving consumer education, for example in Europe

### **International**

- \* **Organising communities** and individuals, in the 133 countries that have signed the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which established the legal Right to feed oneself (Article 1 1), to monitor violations of these Rights (this will strengthen the development of international law to protect individuals and communities Rights to food security)
- \* 180 Groups and individuals, world-wide, co-operating together to expose the impact of the World Bank's new, and significantly weaker, policies on pest management projects implemented at community level
- \* Challenging the international research agenda, and contributing to the imminent review of the CGIAR, by an international alliance of NGOs
- \* Campaigning for the implementation of Farmers' Rights in both South and North as the fundamental pre-requisite to the conservation and sustainable utilisation of agricultural biodiversity.

These are just a small sample of actions that NGOs are taking at all levels. It shows that sustainable food production necessarily includes the struggle for Rights as well as the development of diverse production systems, and that food security means the Right to feed oneself

## Article for CONNECTIONS, UNED-UK Newsletter

### Agricultural Biodiversity

by  
Patrick Mulvany, ITDG

Agricultural biodiversity is arguably the most vital sub-set of biodiversity, developed through human intervention by countless farmers, herders and fisherfolk over the past 10,000 years. It comprises the varieties, breeds, species and agro-ecosystems that underpin universal food security and provide the genetic material needed for industrial agriculture and biotechnology.

The CBD has been increasing its interest in the conservation, sustainable use, and benefit sharing from the use, of these resources for three reasons. First, there is global recognition of the need to halt genetic erosion. It is estimated that over 75% of crop varieties and 50% of livestock breeds have disappeared from farmers' fields, mainly due to changes in global production and consumption patterns. Secondly, the need to support continued development of varieties and breeds for food security that are adapted to new social, economic, physical including climatic environments in the next millennium, is fully recognised. Thirdly, in recognition that these resources embody farmers' knowledge, innovations and practices and that it is their right to retain communal ownership of them, the CBD wants to ensure the development of satisfactory benefit sharing measures. To give effect to these concerns, the CBD has provided the framework, through Decision III/11, agreed in November 1996, on 'Agricultural Biological Diversity', for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of agricultural biodiversity at all levels and for the control over, access to, and ownership of, these resources and the intellectual property which they contain.

This landmark Decision III/11, to be implemented with the FAO as the lead international organisation, could result, over the next two years, in significant developments in both practical and policy measures. In brief, there could be an agreed Revision of the FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, including a commitment to the full implementation of Farmers' Rights, by the FAO Conference in November 1999 and its acceptance by COP V in 1999/2000 as a Protocol to the Convention. There could be international recognition of the primacy of this and related instruments over the WTO and other trade-related instruments. There could be a funded programme of work, at local national and international levels,

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#### ***Definition of Agricultural Biodiversity***

*The variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms used directly or indirectly for food and agriculture (including, in the FAO definition, crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries). It comprises the diversity of genetic resources (varieties, breeds, etc.) and species used for food fodder, fibre, fuel and pharmaceuticals. It also includes the diversity of non-harvested species that support production (e.g. soil micro-organisms) and those in the wider environment that support agro-ecosystems (agricultural, pastoral, forest and aquatic), as well as the diversity of the agro-ecosystems themselves.*

globally-coordinated by FAO, to implement the Leipzig Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (June 1996), and other actions arising out of Decision III/1, agreed by both the FAO Conference and COP V.

However, the decisions in the WTO, dominated by ministries of trade and finance, have the possibility of reversing any progress made by the CBD and FAO. The revision of the WTO/TRIPS agreement in 1999 will review, *inter alia*, the patentability and recognition of other Intellectual Property Rights systems on all life forms and biodiversity-related knowledge. And the renegotiation of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, starting in 1999, could negatively impact on the biological diversity and sustainability of agriculture and food security world-wide. There needs to be a full evaluation of the impact of the current Uruguay round measures before new negotiations start.

Because of its breadth of impact and dependence on human society, agricultural biodiversity should probably become the defining theme of the Convention and the lead implementing agency, the FAO. The Thammasat Action Plan (December 1997) developed by Civil Society Organisations gives strong support to this agenda, especially the defence of *sui generis* community rights over their genetic resources. Civil Society Organisations need to work with the CBD and FAO and with the often marginalised national departments or ministries of agriculture and environment, to develop strong well-argued positions that will positively influence the outcome of the WTO negotiations. Universal food security depends on this.

**NOTE: for further information on agricultural biodiversity and for links to key organisations, see the UK agricultural biodiversity coalition's (UKabc) HomePage <<http://www.ukabc.org>> Biodiversity Button.**

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*Extract from the Thammasat Action Plan  
(December 1997)*

*\* Demand the revision of TRIPS in order to allow countries to exclude life forms and biodiversity-related knowledge from IPR monopolies under the jurisdiction of WTO.*

*\* Reinforce the defence mechanisms of local communities who are highly vulnerable to unbridled bioprospecting and to the introduction of genetically engineered organisms.*

*\* Support any calls by local communities for a moratorium on bioprospecting, and demand an immediate moratorium on the research, development, release, and transboundary movement of genetically engineered organisms.*

*\* Assert the primacy of international agreements on biodiversity, such as the CBD and FAO instruments, over TRIPS and other trade regimes, for the resolution of these issues.*

*\* Reaffirm the original intent of the CBD for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and prevent the CBD from becoming a mechanism for transnational corporations to trade in biodiversity in the name of "access" and "benefit-sharing".*

*\* Mobilise a strong global movement engaging environmental, trade, agriculture, consumer, labour, health, food security, women's, human rights and all people's organisations in these campaigns.*