

FARMERS' COLLECTIVE RIGHTS TO CULTIVATED BIODIVERSITY MUST BE RECOGNISED

OPEN LETTER OF SEED NETWORKS, PEASANT FARMER AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND MEMBER STATES

The increase in frequency and seriousness of food, economic and energy crises and also climate change is forcing small scale farmers worldwide to adapt their cropping systems to the rapid changes taking place in their environment. Dynamic conservation and the sustainable use of cultivated biodiversity, agricultural systems, social systems and associated traditional knowledge are at the heart of this adaptation on which the food of future generations depends. Many local initiatives in Europe are already developing a variety of dynamic conservation practices linked to the sustainable use, development and valorization of cultivated biodiversity.

The undersigned organizations from different European countries:

- 1) Acknowledge the importance of implementing the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture negotiated under the FAO framework (organization of the United Nations), which recognizes the invaluable past, present and future contribution of farmers to the conservation and sustainable use of cultivated biodiversity
- 2) Recall that the European Union and its Member States ratified it
- 3) Note that despite the numerous political and scientific declarations on the necessity to develop on farm conservation:
 - 3.1. The Member States and the European Commission do not recognize the local initiatives of seed networks, peasant farmer and civil society organizations. In addition, their laws and rules, which are only adapted to large-scale distribution, industrial agriculture and its seeds, are blocking these initiatives. The national governments and the European Commission forget that there exists in Europe a non-industrial seed system referred to as „informal”. Hence, they do not respect the signature of article 6 of the Treaty on the sustainable use of cultivated biodiversity, the application of which is compulsory.
 - 3.2. The current European directive on „conservation varieties” will only allow the cultivation of a limited number of fixed local varieties based on one old phenotype. The requirements for the registration of these varieties have the same logic as the official catalogue. They exclude all intra-varietal diversity and variability, which are necessary conditions for the renewal and sustainable use of biodiversity and the maintenance of a more economic and autonomous agriculture.
 - 3.3. The current legislation on seeds for organic farming enhances the erosion of cultivated biodiversity.
 - 3.4. The collective rights of farmers defined by article 9 of the Treaty, whose application is entrusted to national governments, are still not recognized in European countries. We observe that these rights do not prevent ‘Farmer’s Privilege’ which allows farmers to resow a part of their harvest as payment for breeding.
- 4) Demand from the European Union and the Member States to:

- 4.1. Recognize in their Directives, rules and laws farmers' rights to conserve, use, exchange and market seeds originating from past, present and future peasant farmer breeding, to protect their traditional knowledge and to participate to national decisions on the management of agricultural biodiversity,
- 4.2. Facilitate public information and farmers' access to resources in public collections and ensure protection against contamination from genetic manipulation,
- 4.3. Apply fully article 6 of the Treaty by politically and legally acknowledging local initiatives and by applying the following measures:
 - a) Elaborate agricultural policies encouraging the introduction and the maintenance of diversified agricultural systems that foster the sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity,
 - b) Reinforce and conserve cultivated biodiversity by maximizing intra- and inter-specific variation for the benefit of farmers, in particular those, who create and use their own varieties and/or apply ecologic principles in the maintenance of soil fertility and fight against diseases, weeds and harmful organisms,
 - c) Promote participatory research and breeding for farmers' varieties specifically adapted to different social, economic and ecologic conditions
- 4.4. Make public each country's complete report they will present at the meeting of the Treaty's Governing Body in Tunisia in June 2009 on the sustainable development of biodiversity and on the respect of farmers' rights in Europe.

Organizations that have promoted the letter:

1. Heritage Seed Library (England/ United Kingdom)
2. IG für gentechnikfreie Saatgutarbeit (Germany)
3. Protect the future (Hungary)
4. Red de Semillas “ Resembrando e Intercambiando” (Spain)
5. Réseau des semences paysannes (France)
6. Rete Semi Rurali (Italy)

Organizations that have signed the letter are listed below:

7. Grupo Semillas (Colombia)
8. Red de Coordinación en Biodiversidad (Costa Rica)
9. Syndicat d'Agriculture Biodynamique (France)
10. Confédération Paysanne (France)
11. Amis de la Terre France (France)
12. Nature & Progrès (France)
13. Fédération Nationale de l'Agriculture Biologique (France)
14. Union Nationale de l'Apiculture Française (France)
15. BEDE (France)
16. Semeurs de biodiversité Hérault (France)
17. AMAP Ile de France (France)
18. Erable 31 (France)
19. Université Nomade (France)
20. Pomologen-Verein (Germany)
21. Linda-Freundeskreis (Germany)
22. ABDP – Assoziation biologisch-dynamischer Pflanzenzüchter e.V. (Germany)
23. Arche Noah (Germany)

24. Bingenheimer Saatgut AG – Ökologische Saaten (Germany)
25. Dreschflegel e.V. (Germany)
26. Kultursaat e.V. (Germany)
27. ReinSaat KG (Germany)
28. Sativa Rheinau AG – Ökologisches Pflanz- und Saatgut (Germany)
29. VEN – Verein zur Erhaltung der Nutzpflanzenvielfalt e.V (Germany)
30. GM-free Ireland Network (Ireland)
31. Verdi Ambiente e Società- VAS (Italy)
32. Centro Internazionale Crocevia (Italy)
33. Consorzio della Quarantina (Italy)
34. Civiltà Contadina (Italy)
35. Associazione Veneta Produttori Biologici-A.Ve.Pro.BI. (Italy)
36. Archeologia Arborea (Italy)
37. Associazione Rurale Italiana - ARI (Italy)
38. Coordinamento Toscano Produttori Biologici-CTPB (Italy)
39. Associazione Italiana Agricoltura Biologica-AIAB (Italy)
40. Associazione per la Solidarietà della Campagna Italiana-ASCI (Italy)
41. World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms-WWOOF- Italia (Italy)
42. Fondazione Diritti Genetici-FDG (Italy)
43. The Development Fund (Norway)
44. Asociación "Llavors d'ací, per a la promoció i la conservació de la biodiversitat agrària del País Valencià" (Spain)
45. Red Andaluza de Semillas "Cultivando Biodiversidad" (Spain)
46. Observatorio de la Biodiversidad Agrícola (Spain)
47. Ecologistas en Acción (Spain)
48. Slow Food Terres de Lleida (Spain)
49. Assemblea Pagesa de Catalunya (Spain)
50. Red de Semillas de Cantabria (Spain)
51. Coordinadora de Agricultura Ecológica de Cantabria (Spain)
52. Associació de Productors d'Agricultura Ecológica de Menorca (Spain)
53. Col·lectiu 'Transgènics Fora' (Spain)
54. Cooperativa "Impelte" (Spain)
55. Red de Hortelanos de Sobrarbe-Un Paso Atrás (Spain)
56. Cordinadora de Accines de Agricultures y Ganaderos (COAG) (Spain)
57. La Alegría de la Huerta Sociedad Cooperativa (Spain)
58. Federación Andaluza de Consumidores y Productores Ecológicos (Spain)
59. Asociación de consumidores y productores de agricultura ecológica "La Borraja" (Spain)
60. Asociación de Amigos de la Naturaleza de Alozaina (Spain)
61. Grupo Soberanía Alimentaria y Genero (Spain)
62. Red Canaria de Semillas (Spain)
63. Entrepueblos (Spain)
64. Asociación Nueva Cultura Rural (Spain)
65. Asociación Medioambiental El Observatorio (Spain)
66. Associació de Varietats Locals-Illes Balears (Spain)
67. Asociación Albar (Spain)
68. Ecologistas en Acción de Castilla-La Mancha (Spain)
69. Ecologistas en Acción de Ciudad Real (Spain)
70. Triticatum (Spain)
71. Extremadura Sana (Spain)
72. Les Refardes – Gaiadea (Spain)
73. COAG-Canarias (Spain)
74. Asociación de Consumo Ético La Talega (Spain)
75. Centro de conservación de la Agrobiodiversidad y la Etnobotánica de las Sierras de Francia y Béjar (Spain)
76. Asociación para el Desarrollo y Estudio de la Agroecología (Spain)
77. Agrícola Pueblos Blancos S.C.A. (Spain)
78. La Verde S.C.A. (Spain)
79. Euskal Herriko Nekazarien Elkartasuna (EHNE) (Spain)
80. Asociación Cultura Permanente (Spain)
81. Muntanyes de la Vall digna (Spain)
82. Amigos de la Tierra España (Spain)

83. Asociación Vida Sana (Spain)
84. L'Era - Espais de Recursos Agroecològics (projecte Esporus) (Spain)
85. Asociación Rural Paulo Freire Sierra de Cádiz (Spain)
86. Asociación Medioambiental MEJORANA (Spain)
87. Red de Semillas de Euskadi- Euskal Herriko Hazien Sarea (Spain)
88. Grupo de consumo sostenible del Aljarafe (Spain)
89. Ecologistas en Acción-Ciudad Real (Spain)
90. Plataforma Mallorca Lliure de Transgènics (Spain)
91. Serranía Ecológica S.C.A. (Spain)
92. Plataforma Rural Alianzas por un Mundo Rural Vivo (Spain)
93. Veterinarios Sin Fronteras (Spain)
94. Plataforma Andalucía Libre de Transgénicos (Spain)
95. Asociación Ingeniería Sense Fronteres (Catalunya) (Spain)
96. Asociación RAMA (Spain)
97. A.D.V. Ecològica Gent del Camp (Spain)
98. L'Almàixera (Spain)
99. Banc de llavors de la provincia de Tarragona (Spain)
100. Cooperativa de consumo ecológico La Pera (Spain)
101. Plataforma Som Lo Que Sembrem (Spain)
102. Grupo del Decrecimiento de Tarragona (Spain)
103. Mesa Andaluza de la Producción Ecológica (Spain)
104. Grupo de Permacultura de Tarragona (Spain)
105. Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica (Spain)
106. GRAIN (Spain)
107. ProSpecieRara (Switzerland)
108. Practical Action –ITDG- (United Kingdom)
109. Sunseed trust/Sunseed Desert Technology-SDT- (United Kingdom)
110. Friends of the Earth England Wales and Northern Ireland FoE EWNl (England Wales and Northern Ireland)
111. Sunseed Trust/Sunseed Desert Technology (United Kingdom)
112. Scottish Crofting Federation (United Kingdom)
113. The Soil Association (United Kingdom)
114. The Agrarian Renaissance (United Kingdom)
115. GM Freeze (UK)
116. CSGR/Law University of Warwick (United Kingdom)
117. ECONEXUS (United Kingdom)
118. FARM (United Kingdom)
119. Friends of the Earth EWNl (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
120. GM Watch, (United Kingdom)
121. Soy Alliance (United Kingdom)
122. Friends of the Earth Europe (United Kingdom)
123. LandShar (United Kingdom)
124. GM Free Cymru (Wales - UK)