

European Food Declaration launched

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

Last Updated Wednesday, 24 March 2010

- Call for a healthy, sustainable, fair and mutually supportive Common Agriculture and Food policy -

Brussels, March 16 – On the eve of a European Parliament hearing which will debate the future of Europe's agriculture policy a broad alliance of European, national and local civil society organisations concerned with the future of food and agriculture in Europe, are today launching a 'European food declaration' to mobilise European citizens and authorities to reshape the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). See www.europeanfooddeclaration.org for the full declaration and the list of 187 initial signatories from European countries, including A SEED Europe.

The future of the CAP after 2013 will be debated tomorrow at a hearing of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee. Nearly 200 organisations from 24 member states have so far signed the declaration and believe a strong message is needed, not only for EU policy makers, but also for national policy makers. The declaration calls for a complete overhaul of the current system and outlines the policy objectives of a new Common Agriculture and Food Policy for the future.

Over the last 48 years, the CAP has led to an industrialised food system heavily dependent on fossil fuels and the unsustainable use of natural resources, and contributes massively to climate emissions and global loss of biodiversity. The CAP has also led to unhealthy diets in Europe and continues to damage developing country food systems. The new CAP must respond to these challenges Europe is facing by supporting the development of fair, inclusive, transparent and sustainable food systems.

'The European Union must recognise 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 declaration reads.

Sustainable family farming creates jobs and contributes to more inclusive rural communities.

For decades transnational corporations and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have dominated decision making in food and agriculture policy. The declaration calls for people in Europe to re-appropriate agriculture and food policy. It demands that a new Common Agriculture and Food Policy must guarantee and protect citizens' ability and right to define their own models of production, distribution and consumption, and more effectively manage precious resources and ensure biodiversity.

This declaration is the first step in efforts to build a broad movement for change towards food sovereignty in Europe, including EU policies and practices.

The coalition says: 'We encourage organizations, groups and individuals concerned with the future of farming and food to sign this declaration online on www.europeanfooddeclaration.org and to use it as a tool to initiate discussions about what kind of food and agriculture policy we need.'

European Food declaration 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 Food and Agriculture 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.