



RESOLUTION

FIMARC Executive Committee – Assesse - Belgium

May 2017

We, the Executive Committee members of FIMARC (International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements) from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, representing rural movements and communities from more than 50 countries in the world, gathered in Assesse, Belgium from 18-25th of May 2017 for the FIMARC formation session on “PEASANT RIGHTS ON SEEDS”, to deepen our common understanding, to share our own experiences from different continents and to define concrete next steps in order to support and advance the enforcement of peasant rights on seeds all over the world.

FIMARC consider that creation is the gift of God entrusted to men and women to sustain all its inhabitants, without excluding or favoring anyone. We value the work of small-holder farmers and scientists provided their ethical goal is the common good.

Seeds are the core of life, the source of our food. Quality seeds are the basis of health and well-being of all humans. Good, healthy, nutritious and safe food is a fundamental human right. Seeds are the heart of agriculture. Farmer’s right to seeds means right to life.

Historically small-holder farmers (peasants) were the custodians of production, usage, preservation and exchange of traditional seeds: these are customary rights that allow communities, family farmers and particularly women to continue playing a vital role in this regard. Seeds were treated indeed as a common good for the community and humanity but have become a commodity through privatization to control our food system and to make profit. Seed laws in most of the countries dictate what kind of seeds can’t be *sold*, used and even be *exchanged by the farmers*. *Intellectual Property frameworks*, marketing regulations, certification and mandatory seed registration mechanisms work together towards a single goal: absolute corporate control over seeds.

Even if some national constitutions and laws mention the right on traditional seeds and biodiversity, yet many governments are manipulating these laws for supporting agro industries and to give more priority for hybrid varieties and genetically modified seeds instead of farm saved seeds and peasant farming. The small-holder farmers (peasants), who are insisting on their traditional seed rights are being criminalized, seeds are privatized and turned into commercial commodities, which has terrible effects, not only on small-holder farmers (peasants), but on all human beings, nowadays and in future:

- Extreme reduction of biodiversity
- Loss of traditional varieties
- Increase of agricultural chemistry, pollution and environmental devastation
- Negative effects on the health of humans and also of our planet
- Existential threat for small-scale family farms
- Prevention of food sovereignty

FIMARC affirm that traditional varieties of vegetables, fruits, herbs and grains are a vital heritage. They are the key to our food security and food sovereignty at present and in future. While hundreds of varieties of a crop were once grown, now only two or three are left, or the crop itself may have been abandoned. The seed companies which breed the so called new resistant varieties requires the gene traits of the old varieties which are being lost.

Varieties that do not have a world market lose their space and may no longer be sold. Soon they vanish forever. The lack of genetic diversity in food crops greatly increases their vulnerability to pests and disease –

And at a time when the global climate is changing in unpredictable ways, nobody knows what sort of crops may be needed in the future -- the meagre number of commercial varieties available could prove useless in the new conditions. It has been proven that peasant traditional varieties can long last as well as be adaptive to changing climate and also could be more sustainable in respective climatic and geographical zones.

Traditional and locally appropriate peasant agriculture is more and more pressured by agribusiness and multinational biotechnology companies, which have just one priority, to increase shareholder values. FIMARC condemns the ongoing privatization of seeds. While we reject all practices of patents on seeds and living organisms, we strongly claim for our rights as farmers and rural communities to produce, use, reuse and exchange our own traditional seeds and plant varieties.

FIMARC strongly demands, that any legislation on seeds first and foremost has to look at peasants rights on seeds. Small-holder farmers (peasants) are the stewards of seeds and genetic resources. Peasant rights on seeds have to be protected.

FIMARC will continue its strong efforts, to support the adoption of a declaration of “Rights of Peasants and other People working in Rural Areas” by the United Nations, including an article on the peasant rights on seeds.

FIMARC and its member movements strongly commit themselves to ...

- ...study and analyse the seed issues, the impact of seed regimes and national framework (laws, rules and regulation), that deny the peasant rights on seeds.
- ... inform and educate women, men, youth and children about seed issues and peasant rights to seeds.
- ...build local resistance, in order to protect our own seed systems, traditional knowledge and practices.
- ... challenge the corporate control over seeds through private research and technologies.
- ... inform about the important role of family farming and particularly of women in agriculture, seed preservation and protection of biodiversity.
- ... inform about the ongoing process in the United Nations, in order to adopt a declaration of “ Rights for Peasants and other People working in Rural Areas”.
- ... establish and deepen links between farmers and consumers, in order to prevent jointly the ongoing process of seeds privatization.
- ... facilitate forums and exchanges on local, national and global level, in order to support the rights of small-holder farmers (peasants) on seeds.
- ... identify and put to practice viable seed preserving methods, appropriate to the different regions of our planet.

Executive Committee of FIMARC
Assesse, May 24th, 2017
