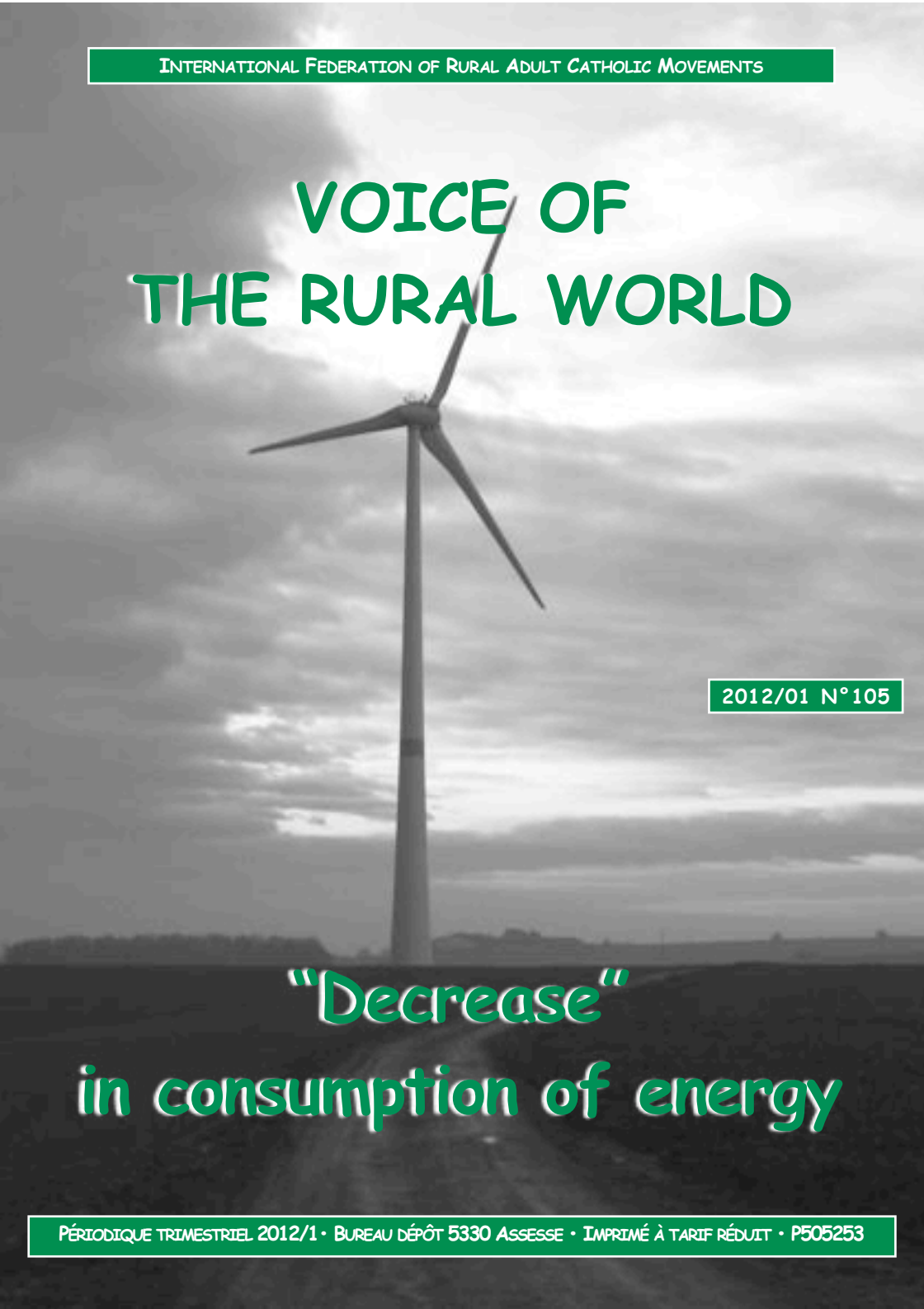
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RURAL ADULT CATHOLIC MOVEMENTS

VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD



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"Decrease" in consumption of energy

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It highlights the rural world's life and activities of the member movements belonging or not to the Federation

Dear readers of VMR,

First of all let me wish you a very happy and prosperous new year 2012.

We have published different aspects of land issues in all the 4 editions of VMR in 2011 in the context of ongoing land grabbing trends in the world. FIMARC stressed the need to protect the land rights and tenure of the most vulnerable producers and rural people (small farmers, fisher folks, Indigenous, Pastoralists, etc.) in order to save their life and livelihood in rural areas and to ensure the food security and poverty eradication. Through the testimonies of our actions and interventions on land issues in different countries, I hope we were able to mobilize public opinion on this matter.

To provide not just an over view but also the different dimension of the topic, this year all the 4 editions will be on one important theme "Decrease".

FIMARC General Assembly 2010 proposed "Decrease" as an alternative against the exploitation of resources and to save the planet. From this edition onwards we are trying to discuss on how we can apply decrease in a more practical and pragmatic ways in different sectors that effect our daily life as well the life of the society.

Resource consumption in the world is rising rapidly, driven by population growth and rising wealth. Technological change and urbanization also fuel consumption, by creating new patterns of human needs and aspirations. These trends are causing a lot of adverse Socio -Environmental impacts on the planet.

Decrease in Energy consumption is the main topic of VMR 105. There has been an enormous increase in the global demand for energy in recent years as a result of industrial development and population growth.Oil prices are soaring and the price of coal has doubled. Many Countries are plagued by power cuts and faced riots due to this. Rich states are also worried about security of energy supply. In the developing world, 1.6 billion people around a quarter of the human race have no access to electricity.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) says the worlds energy needs could be 50% higher in 2030 than they are today. World still depends on fossil fuels which are finite and not environmentally friendly. Dependence on non-renewable sources of energy instead on utilizing the renewable sources of energy is also one major cause of this global energy crisis. Serious thought needs to be given now to creating viable alternatives.

The need for coordinated political action on energy and related issues climate change and alleviating poverty, to name but two has never been more acute. World leaders need to take action on the energy crisis that is taking shape before our eyes. This is why FIMARC demand to apply decrease to decelerate the energy consumption on individual and collective basis. Energy conservation doesn't just only save money; it has significant benefits for the environment. Let us take personal actions to promote energy conservation and advocate for the use of sustainable energies.

I wish you a good reading and please write to me about your different actions for energy saving.

With cordial greetings

George Dixon Fernandez
Secretary General

“Decrease” in consumption of energy

An abundant and economical energy is one of the challenges of the modern civilizations. From now onwards, the electricity production would be the origin of several tensions all over the world.

We live in the age of oil, but the age of oil is drawing to a close. The coal, the nuclear and the hydrology are the 3 main resources utilized to produce electricity. Natural gas is broadly utilized for heating. The bio mass is used for heating and cooking. The wind and solar energy are sustainable sources of energy but we are not mastering them totally. From now, if the oil production remains constant, the experts say that there will remain only 42 years before its exhaustion. The situation is the same for gas that will be exhausted in 61 years and for coal in the coming 133 years.

A number of people already realize that oil and gas will become rare and expensive resources during the coming years. Sustainable and renewable energies will thus be the only solution. The coming era of limited and expensive energy will be very difficult for everyone on Earth but will surely be even more difficult if we are not planning it. It is thus extremely important that the public and especially the decision makers understand the global energy crisis in its totality. This is why the FIMARC reflects on the need to implement decrease in the energetic consumption in our daily life as well as in the society.

The diverse forms of electricity production

Production of electricity is mainly an industrial sector, called to provide electricity power responding to the needs of the consumers. Its production, since the 19th century is realized from different sources of energy. The very first electric system were functioning from wood but nowadays the electrical production is possible from fossil energy (coal, natural gas or oil), nuclear energy, hydro electric energy, wind energy or bio mass.

Due to the rarefaction (concentration) of fossil resources and the fact that they are getting exhausted without renewal, the productive industry has developed over the years other productive ways, utilizing nuclear energy and when and where possible the available hydraulic energy. We will see that those solutions are alternatives but which are not without danger or consequences for the populations.

What guides the choice of an energy rather than another?

The means implemented are diverse and depend on several factors: the available technology, the reactivity of implementation, the necessary production, the yield, the costs of investment and exploitation, even the deconstruction, the eventual cost of raw materials… Unfortunately, the social and ecological impacts are not always taken into account, as seriously as it should be, creating disasters for the planet as well as for the populations, often expelled from their land, without any compensation and consideration.

THE FOSSIL ENERGIES

Natural gas

The main gas producing countries (Stat BP 2004)

Natural gas is resulting from the decomposition of organic and vegetable material during millions of years. It is mainly methane, which is the composition of carbon and hydrogen. Being the fossil energy less carbonic, the natural gas has serious advantage on other sources of energy in regards of the objectives of green house gas emission reduction.

The natural gas reserves are more or less for some 60 more years of consumption at the actual rhythm and are located mainly in ex URSS and Middle East region.

Coal

Coal is one of the fossil energies emitting more carbon dioxide. But still it is the source of more than 30% of the worldwide production of electricity. And the cost of coal in regards with the energy produced is several times less than the one of natural gas. In the industrialized countries, coal is confronted to the technology and economic challenge that represents the conformity to environmental norms, more and more exigent. The energy producers have as objective to better the energetic yield of coal and to reduce its polluting rejections.

Oil

Before the oil crisis of the 70's, the integrated oil companies were managing the oil chain from the well to the pump, with long term links with the producing countries. The oil prices were fixed for long periods and the trade did not face particular difficulty.

The war of 1973 in Middle East drove the oil exporting countries to organize themselves while creating the OPEP (Organization of Oil Export Countries) and to multiply by 4 the price of the crude oil. One by one they nationalize the concessions given to the oil companies.

One of the responses from the consumer's countries to the raising of the price of the crude oil was to diversify the supplying sources out of the OPEP and to save the oil, especially with the development of car engines consuming less, the thermal isolation of the buildings, the construction of nuclear power stations etc …

World reserve of oil - 2010

THE NATURAL ENERGIES

Water

Hydroelectric energy is a renewable electric energy obtain ed by the conversion of hydroelectric flow of natural waters, waterfalls, dams… into electricity. The energy of the water flow is transformed in mechanic energy by a turbine and after wards in electric energy through an alternator. In 2011, hydroelectricity represented more or less 16% of the world wide production of electricity and still has some added value. It is a renewable energy that emits only few green house gas. Third source of electricity production in Europe, hydroelectricity is brought to develop while integrating the protection of fish production resources and while articulating with other renewable resources like the wind energy or other hybrid systems (for example with hydrogen).

Iguaçu,Falls - Paraguay
(PH. C.Delhez)

Nuclear power

A nuclear central is an industrial site that utilizes the fission of atomic nucleus to produce heat that will produce water vapor, which will cause the rotation of a generator to produce electricity. This is the main implementation of nuclear power in the civil sphere. A nuclear central is made of one or several nuclear reactors and the electric power varies from some mega watts to more or less 1.500 mega watts (for the current reactors). In 2011, 435 reactors are functioning in 31 different countries around the world, with a total production of 370 giga watts producing more or less 16% of the worldwide electricity.

Nuclear power plant of Leibstadt
(PH.Roland Zumbühl,Arlesheim)

THE INCONVENIENCES

We have seen it here above, the non renewable energies are becoming rarer and rarer and the companies have not expected the total lack to develop other forms of production. The principal problem of the fossil energies being that they are not renewable and of more polluting, the industries turned itself towards the production from renewable energies such as the production from water or nuclear power with the inconveniences and/or the problems that these forms of production are generating

Hydroelectricity presents social and ecological inconveniences, especially in the case of dams settled in non mountainous regions: displacement of population, inundations of agricultural lands, modifications of aquatic and land ecosystems, end of the alluviums…

Even if hydroelectricity is considered as a clean and constant energy,in contrast to the oil or natural gas; some researchers are raising serious doubts about the green house gas emission of those hydroelectric systems. The bacteriological activity in the water of the dams, especially in tropical regions, are accused to liberate important quantities of methane, gas that has green house effects 20 times stronger than the CO2.

A notable example of the major environmental impact is the destruction of the 7 falls water fall, at the border between Brazil and Paraguay, in 1982 by the Itaipu Dam.

Today it is considered as the Second more important dam and when it was settled it was the main important dam in the world.

Only 2 weeks were sufficient to the artificial with holding of water to submerge the region of the falls.

The Brazilian government decided after wards to dynamite the mounts that remained outside the water, destroying thus one of the main natural marvelous wonders of the world.

The community of Santa Cruz close to Barillas in the region of Huehuetenango in Guatemala, opposed the construction of a hydroelectric central on its territory of Poza Verde. In spite of this opposition, the enterprise Hidro Santa Cruz continues its settlement works, threatening the local population. This 1st of May, a clash between some members of the hydroelectric project and some persons from the community

ended with the death of one of them and 2 other people severely injured. One of them refused to give his land to the company. In spite of the opposition signed by the mayor of the community, national government maintained the license of exploitation to the company that continues, with the support of the national policy and the army to threaten the population.

All of us remember the most important nuclear accident of all humanity. The 26th of April 1986, the raising power of a reactor led to the fusion of the heart of the central of Tchernobyl in Ukraine. This accident liberated a quantity of radioactive elements in the atmosphere, causing several deaths and severe diseases after the radiations or contamination. It was the first so important accident.

More recently, the 11th March of 2011, the nuclear accident of Fukushima (Japan), caused by a tsunami after a major earthquake, reminds us the potential dangers of nuclear centrals. The affected zone, without even speaking of immediate danger for the health of the population, would be contaminated for hundreds of years.

After this accident, some countries have revised their nuclear development policies. For example, China has decided to frozen all new authorizations of nuclear centrals, Germany has announced its decision to close all its nuclear centrals before the end of 2022, Italy has stopped its nuclear projects and Switzerland will not renew its centrals.

In spite of the major importance of those accidents and the few experience we have in the treatment of the nuclear wastes, the lobby force of the enterprise is not ready to give up and continue to promote this technology. This is a fact that our needs in electricity are more and more important and that without voluntary policy to get out of the nuclear power, this way of production is far to come to an end.

Questions for the groups and for the movements :

- *What are the resources utilized in your country for the production of electricity?*
- *What are the advantages and the inconveniences you find to the electricity productive system in your countries?*

POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES

Being conscious that we cannot continue to consume energy in such a frenetic way, the FIMARC calls for a decrease in the consumption and for the development of alternative production of energy from solar energy, wind energy or bio mass.

The techniques to capture directly a part of the energy provided by the sun are available and constantly improved. We can distinguish the passive solar, the photovoltaic solar and the thermal solar. The applications are numerous: heating of the buildings, solar cook and oven, allowing sparing of the fire wood, mainly in the Southern countries, electricity production on the same principle of a classical electric central or via photovoltaic technology. This technology is full of promises thanks to its simplicity and his durability, its quite law costs, if we are not considering the installations costs.

Another possible alternative that is also gaining importance is the one of wind energy. So simple technology as the solar one, the wind power could respond to a lot of our necessities.

We can thus see that solutions are existing for an alternative production. But before all other consideration or reflection on a large scale reproduction of electricity that could cover our needs, it is imperative to drastically reduce our consumption. This is possible through small daily gestures for the particulars but mainly through citizen's behaviors in the choice that we are operating in our daily life.

It is urgent to act for our planet.
The future generations will be thankful for the same.

Questions for the groups and for the movements :

- *In which domain of your daily life do you think that you could reduce your energy consumption?*
- *What are the alternatives developed by your government to reduce the energy consumption or to turn to renewable alternatives?*

International Agenda

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development RIO+20

The United Nations Conference on sustainable development will be held in Brazil form June 20 to 22 of 2012 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Conference on environment and development that was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the 10th anniversary of the International Summit on Sustainable Development that took place in Johannesburg in 2002.

The objective of this Conference is to ensure a renewed political commitment for sustainable development, to evaluate the progress and the lacks in the implementation of the decisions adopted during the past Summits and to pinpoint the new challenges for the years to come.

The Conference will focus on 2 major themes: a green economy in the context of the sustainable development and the poverty eradication and secondly the definition of an institutional framework for the sustainable development. In the context of Rio+20, the FIMARC, will co organize 2 side events together with “More and better” network; one of those events will take place at the Centre of Convention on June 19th and the second one in the Flamenco Park on 22nd of June. A brief report of those 2 side events will be given in the next VMR.

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Countries adopted global guidelines on tenure of land, forests, fisheries

Last 11th of May in Rome, the CFS (Committee for Food Security) of the FAO adopted a set of global directives aiming to help the governments to safeguard the rights of the people to own or to have access to land, forests and fisheries. This work started in 2009, including the participation of government's representatives, Civil society organizations, private sector, international organizations and universities ,has lead to the adoption of those guidelines for the responsible governance of lands, forests and fisheries in the context of the national food security.

The guidelines address a wide range of other issues as well, however, including:

- Recognition and protection of legitimate tenure rights, even under informal systems
- Best practices for registration and transfer of tenure rights
- Making sure that tenure administrative systems are accessible and affordable
- Managing expropriations and restitution of land to people who were forcibly evicted in the past
- Rights of indigenous communities
- Ensuring that investment in agricultural lands occurs responsibly and transparently
- Mechanisms for resolving disputes over tenure rights
- Dealing with the expansion of cities into rural areas

The complete text of the Voluntary Guidelines can be downloaded on the web site of the FAO www.fao.org

News from FIMARC

FIMARC European session on reform of CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) and Parliamentarian evening.

On 10th of April 2012, the FIMARC organized a session on the reform of CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) and an event with European parliamentarians in the house of the Bavarian Representation in Brussels. 2013 will be the year of important reforms of this policy and the European Coordination of the FIMARC wanted to meet parliamentarians to share their concerns for this reform and its consequences for the small European farmers, for the society in general and for the other countries around the world.

Congress on rurality and migrations.

FIMARC Central American Congress on rurality and migrations was held in Salvador from 16th to 21st of March.After some days of exposure program in the rural side of El Salvador, the participants came together in the UCA (University of Central America) of Salvador. They were welcomed by the rector of the university, Father Andreu who reminded how the rural area was historically marginalized and how it is still suffering because of years of right oriented governments that developed trade and import of agricultural products from other countries. This is one of the main reasons from big migration to the United States and to other countries of the region. During the congress, resources persons deepened the causes of the migrations and the difficulties resulting from these phenomena. One of the recommended solutions is to gain political stability in the country that will allow the inhabitants to live and to work on their land, solution that was approved by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs that declared “to hope to reach rapidly to create a country that will be able to maintain its sons…”

Seminar “Migration”, Salvador 2012

The Bureau of the FIMARC met in Brussels on April 23rd and 24th.

This meeting has been followed by an international seminar during the following days on Agricultural investments and end with the meeting of the Executive Committee on April 28th and 30th. During the Bureau meeting,functioning of the federation as well as the planning of the continental activities and lobby work were the main agenda. All these topics were dealt in the context of major financial constraints as Misereor and Broederlijk Delen stopped their supports.

International seminar on "Agricultural Investments"
Visit in the farm of the Sacred Heart - Assesse, April 2012

VMR

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