

# VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

2012/03 N° 107

“Decrease” in  
mode of production

## Summary

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*Cover page : Cultivation of strawberries,  
South Korea 2006*

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

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Dear readers of VMR,

*Warm greetings from international secretariat*

*I hope you have enjoyed reading the last two editions of VMR which really made an attempt to stress the need to apply decrease in energy and water usage. This edition of VMR is focusing again on our general theme "Decrease" but with a specific analysis and reflection on the need to apply decrease in Production Systems.*

*The use of chemicals is one of the most disputed issues in agricultural development. Especially the industrial model of production uses tremendous chemical inputs which are an unnecessary evil that damages human health and the environment, that accelerates trends to push small-scale farmers out of business, and that hence increases rural poverty. The contribution of chemicals to global production of food and fiber is a myth and the continuous focus on farming methods that depend on high amounts of external inputs is irrelevant for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in general, and the reduction of rural poverty in particular. Resource poor small-scale farmers in developing countries should rather rely on low external input agriculture to optimize the use of available, but limited resources.*

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*The more comprehensive ecological approach to agriculture can effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also can more easily adapt to climate change, and its associated problems such as rising temperatures, water shortages, extreme weather, soil degradation and increasing frequency of disease and pest outbreaks. Eco-agriculture can help to ensure the country's food production and food security.*

*Sustainable Agriculture, Integrated and Organic farming are some of the methods of production that FIMARC has been promoting for a long time with a view to conserve nature and to protect the environment. By involving in such production models, our farmers have more control over their production resources and less dependence on external farm inputs. Let us take personal and collective actions to promote and advocate for the sustainable production models. I wish you a good reading and please write to me about your different actions from the field*

*With cordial greetings,*

*George Dixon FERNANDEZ  
General Secretary*



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## **“Decrease” in mode of production**

*Decrease is not always a well accepted concept. Thus what about the acceptance in the agricultural world!*

*The period of successive crises we are experiencing and the consequences of climate change put however this debate on the carpet and more and more people question the current productivist model that we know, especially when it comes to food production.*



*Togo 2007*

## **AN OBSERVATION**

Our model of society leads to an ecological and human dead end, as we arrive at the end of what the planet can give us. Earth resources reach their end and the biosphere can no longer absorb the pollution that we are generating. In the previous VMR, we were drawing the attention to the energy reserves that in the short term, with regard to human history, could disappear. And yet, these are more than necessary for the extensive farming model as we know it. Machines need fuel, processing also, especially in large scale units.

The objective in this case is to reduce our consumption and our production to share the global renewable resources with all its inhabitants while taking care to preserve them or better yet to renew them for future generations. One of the ways the FI-MARC calls with other organizations throughout the world is to produce and consume locally.

In an issue of "Nature and progress", Guy Kastler, member of the Peasant Seed Network proposes to "return to farming practices and healthy rearing economically and environmentally, turning his back on industrialization". It focuses on the exchange and trade of proximity, because there is no possible autonomy if working on the world market.



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## AGAINST PROGRESS

When talking about decrease, its critics often accuse us of wanting to turn back, to refuse the Southern countries or emerging countries the knowledge of the same mode of production that the Northern countries have and to deny them the possibility of growth. In this reflection, we would like to draw your attention to the fact not to confuse economic growth (and well being of populations) and liberal economy.

Agricultural production and especially food production is particularly interesting in this reflection. Let us just remind that the primary purpose of agriculture is to feed humankind. In recent years, with regard to the history of the world, the evolution of production has been so fast that we switched from an agriculture for food to an agricultural production to make a profit, from a production based on the work that respect the nature to companies based on the capital and without barriers or consideration of available resources and farmers.

It is therefore the main critical question on development. What development are we talking about?

*Questions for groups and movements :*

- *Do you share the same analysis?*  
*If Yes then what?*  
*If not, why?*



### **A few figures**

Today nearly one billion people suffer from hunger or malnutrition and the vast majority of these people live in Southern countries. And yet it is in these countries that the vast majority of the labor force is occupied in agriculture. What a paradox!

Today, seeds, patents on these seeds, are concentrated in the hands of a few seed firms, ultra powerful, with great strength to lobby that in a short term they can control the market, using all possible measures to get there: legislation, purchase of small firms which are no more competitive, patents...

Today, GMOs are always presented as the solution to all issues of seeds reproduction, rapid growth, disease resistance...

Today, millions of hectares of land are sold or transferred to multinational firms for agrofuel production, for monocultures especially destined for export, either for food or for animal feeding.

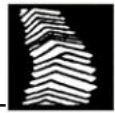
Today, food is speculated, causing panic and crisis as we experienced in 2008.

### **And yet...**

Many analysis show that world food production is sufficient to feed the world. But many factors are involved and as a result, distribution is absolutely not fair. Production on a large scale, productions for livestock food and production for agrofuels get prominence than food production. Speculation on food commodities...

Seeds and patents..., while farmers were able to reproduce, select and improve their seed.





In most countries, and particularly in the Southern countries, seeds are still in free circulation. But this freedom of movement is increasingly hampered by the extension of biotechnology. Indeed, in the 1970s, medium-sized companies have begun to invest in research and development (R & D) and since profits began to fall, we saw much more important groups (agri-food, seed and pharmaceutical companies) investing in research and wanting to carve out the best share of the cake!

The trend towards concentration is now very clear and is done by the game of alliances and takeovers between large firms. Their goal is to occupy a strategic position in seizing of firms that have the largest number of patents. These groups become so sprawling and global, while their number is limited to form a vast oligopoly. Phyto-seed companies (Monsanto, Pioneer Hi-Bred, Du Pont de Nemours, Limagrain, Syngenta, BASF, etc.) engage a war without thank you already bought a lot of small seed companies. Today, the first 10 global agrochemical groups represent almost 90% of the seed market, some firms control more than 40% of the world market. All of the transgenic seed market is in the hands of four groups: Dupont (USA), Novartis (Switzerland), Monsanto (USA) and Aventis (France-Germany).

The problem of this seeds concentration is that the seed is the first link in the food chain. It is a considerable economic and political issue. One who holds the seed possesses a weapon of fearsome domination, since it concerns the food of the humanity. Since 1995, with the establishment of the WTO, intellectual property rights is on the program of international discussions. Therefore, there was a rush of the multinationals not only for the production of seed but also on the organization of the distribution through commercial channels, and research.

All these leads to the loss of autonomy of smallholder farmers, the loss of biodiversity with seeds that are getting more and more alignment and with potential dangers for the health of the populations, animals and for plant diversity.



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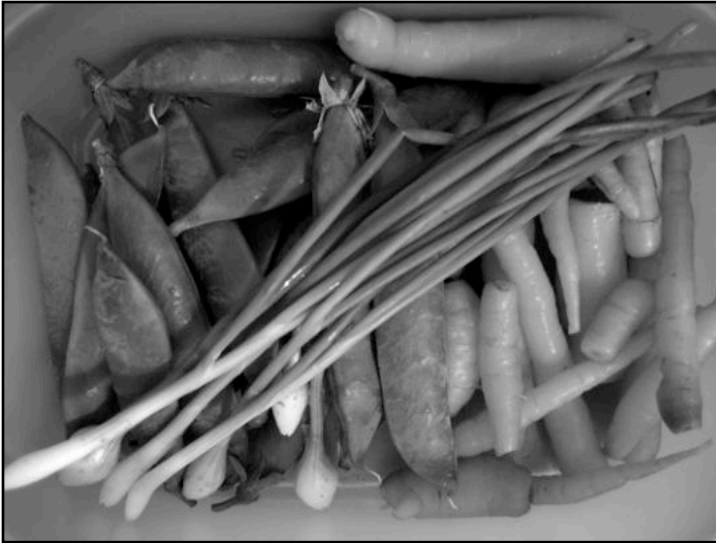
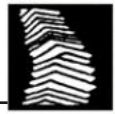
Among all these seed manipulations, it is also question of GMOs. For a long time, the FIMARC as other farmer organizations and consumer organizations denounced the potential danger of GMOs in food or animal production. Last September, a study conducted in great secrecy by Gilles Eric Séralini on rats fed with GMO maize, had quite strong evidence and showed the severe toxic effects, the development of tumors on rats and their rapid death. Many criticisms are made with respect to this study, arguing that the study sample is too small to be meaningful; that this type of rat develops easily tumors, that the amount of GMO absorbed in this study is more important than what humans beings consume...

We are not wishing to take sides in this debate and to take into account the results of this analysis, but it seems to us however that this is one of the first times that Governments are interested in this issue and take it seriously. We agree with the authors of the analysis and the persons claiming a counter expertise but carried out with rigor and by independent researchers.

While speaking about access to land, we can only encourage Governments that protect their lands and their farmers through agrarian reforms and agricultural laws to allow farmers and peasants keeping their own resources and giving them the possibility to work with dignity and be guaranteed their right to food.

*Questions for groups and movements :*

- Are you facing the aforementioned problems in your country ?
- What is the response from your Government?
- Do you know farmers organizations capable of bearing the claims of its members?



## **ALTERNATIVES**

All these problems seem to be so wide and we feel often overwhelmed to find solutions. The fact also that some negotiations we do not understand , as for example everything that concerns the rentals or purchases of land that often are negotiated in the greatest secrecy. And yet the stakes are of size. We have facing us opponents who have mastered the legislative arsenal, who are powerful in terms of human and financial resources.

### **What can we do ?**

As we recommend, and it is in our mission in FIMARC, first thing to do is probably to get information. As a modest extent, that is what we are trying with the VMR. It is essential that information, its analysis and interpretation of issues reach into our grassroots organizations.

To do this, we stress the importance of organizations. In our super informed society, the difficulty is to find the correct information to be able to decode it to be able to organize us. More and more civil society organizations form youth, lawyers... to be able to defend the interests of their peers in the legal proceedings. Because we are in this society, organized, which legislates for everything and this is undoubtedly a good thing but we need to know the laws and practices if we are to defend our interests.

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The decrease in the production that we recommend, pass for sure through a more environmentally and friendly production, by the minimum of chemical inputs and by the consumption of local products to reduce our ecological impact. Therefore, the practice of agro-ecology, of sustainable agriculture is that we recommend for many years. They have proved their effectiveness in terms of reduction of costs, quality of products, in terms of preservation of resources and therefore of sustainability.

Throughout the countries of the North especially, many initiatives are emerging to address these concerns. Contacts are formed between producers and consumers for the benefit of 2 parts: the producer is guaranteed to sell part of its production and the consumer is assured of quality food of the season and provide an opportunity for producers to continue their trade.

The decrease in production means also relearn to work, to cook with local and seasonal products. The example that is well known in the Northern countries, is that "all we want to eat strawberries in winter"... even if it is not the season. In other countries, it is the same dynamic that is at work with the proposal, such as sodas, while fresh fruits are available. How to give added value to our products so they are competitive and found their place in our local markets?

And to complete these few words that we hope will be for us all the beginning of a broader reflection on the necessary decrease in our modes of production, we have to reiterate the importance that we have as citizen. This guess, as we said previously, to inform us, to continue to exercise our critical spirit, to partner with to be stronger and claim our rights, so that the earth rotates more just, that the resources we have still long for us and future generations and that both human and animal food is healthier.

*Questions for groups and movements :*

- Do you have success stories of (women, peasants...) organizations ?
- What power you have to fight in your country?



## CALL FOR ACTION

### ***World Food Day 2012***

"Agricultural Cooperatives key to feeding the World"

This year world food day will be celebrated on 16 October with the main theme "Agricultural Cooperatives key to feeding the World". A cooperative is a social enterprise that balance two main goals 1.Satisfying its members needs 2. Pursuing Profit and Sustainability. In other words it is an association of women and men who come together to form jointly owned, democratically controlled enterprise where profit is not a priority than the people. Cooperatives also help their members achieve their shared social, cultural and economical aspirations. Some cases it can act also as a political player

It is estimated that one billion individuals are members of cooperatives world wide generating 100 million jobs in various sectors such as agriculture, food, health care, finance, insurance, credit, marketing, fishing, forestry, livestock etc. Out of the estimated 925 million hungry people in the world, 70 percent live in rural areas where Agriculture is the economic main stay. That is why World Food Day 2012 throw a light on the role Agricultural cooperatives in improving food security and contributing to the eradication of hunger. FIMARC has been promoting sustainable solidarity economic initiatives for a long time. Some of our member movements also have the cooperative initiatives such as direct marketing, self help groups, trade and marketing groups, credit unions etc. FIMARC in Uganda organises 3 strong Cooperatives in Central and East areas in Uganda and producing maize and beans. They have Contract with WFP and supply cereals to South Sudan and North of Uganda.

I am very happy to mention about some of the practical actions that FIMARC carried out during our campaign on WFD 2011.

- -A public rally and meeting with Politicians were organised in Bangladesh in connection with World Food Day 2011. Drawing competition for the students and one seminar for the RRF Staff with the resource person from World Food Programme of the UN was organised
- -INAG,Kerala organised a session with school students about Rice price and its cultivation
- -Movements in Uganda and Togo organised various public gatherings and demonstrations
- -As usual MRC Spain carry out the solidarity action to support a project in a southern country

I take this opportunity to thank all the movements that were involved in various actions in connection with the World Food Day call 2011. Your action is a motivation for others.

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Run up to the World Food day 2012, I would like to call upon all our member movements around the world to take up concrete actions in your movements. Some ideas are mentioned below but please note that each movement can organise activities based on their own reality.

- Organise sessions on the role of cooperatives and how to build solidarity based enterprises
- Organise meetings with politicians and local self government to seek the support for launching and strengthening cooperatives at your place.
- Share the best practices and experience on the management of cooperatives
- Provide legal support to start new cooperatives and help in terms of its legal registration
- Make any solidarity action like fasting to collect money to support the needy
- One day volunteer work to save money and to support hunger eradication projects in your own places or send to the FIMARC world Food Day fund to support other people who are in need around the world
- Organising press conference, press release or demonstrations on the topic to raise the awareness of the society

During this world food day of 2012, FIMARC requests all its member movements to have deep reflection on the role of cooperatives in the rural and agricultural world and to strengthen the existing cooperatives as well as to initiate new ones based on the principle of solidarity economy

One of the main objectives of the cooperative is the common welfare of its members and society and thus FIMARC wanted to encourage such cooperatives, which can bring socio-economic changes in the society.

While looking forward to receive more information about the involvement of our movement in this regard, wish you all the best for your world food actions of 2012

George Dixon FERNANDEZ  
Secretary General  
ASSESE, 15/09/2012



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## News from Coordination

### **FIMARC Asian Coordination meeting - Chiangrai, Thailand.**

FIMARC Asian coordination meeting was held at Chiangrai Thailand from 13-19 July 2012 in collaboration with Caritas Thailand and CCHD. Ki-Hwan Chung (President FIMARC), Philip Biswas (Asian Coordinator), Rony Joseph (Coordinator INAG), George Dixon Fernandez (Secretary General FIMARC), Praphan Thienviharn (South East Asian Coordinator) participated in the meeting. Ms. Naiyana Vichitporn, Mr. John Jirawat Chenpasuk (Caritas Thailand), Fr. Niphon Thienviharn and other leaders of Caritas Thailand were also present in the meeting as observers. The different field visits and meetings with the local people, Phayao University, Community centre, Buddhist monks were really gave an opportunity to learn and share different issues related to rural development, farming etc. Asian coordination meeting also revised the plan of action of the movement. Forth coming seminars on Agricultural Investment, Alternative economy, Preparation of a CD with best practices in the movements etc. will be main activities of FIMARC during the next 2 years in Asia. One good news is that Caritas Thailand has been declared as an Associated Member in FIMARC. We are much thankful to CCHD and Caritas Thailand for hosting the Asian Coordination of FIMARC in Chiangrai.

FIMARC Asia also made felicitation to Praphan Thienviharn for his successful election as the mayor of Maeka Municipality. This achievement of Praphan is recognition of his work as leader of

FIMARC in his area and we wish him all the success for his alternative development plan in his municipality Maeka Municipality. This achievement of Praphan is recognition of his work as leader of FIMARC in his area and we wish him all the success for his alternative development plan in his municipality

### **South & Southeast Asia Farmers' Conference by Caritas Asia**

The upcoming South & Southeast Asia Farmers' Conference will be organized by Caritas Asia in Chiang Mai, hosted by Caritas Thailand during 9-14 October 2012. FIMARC will be making a presentation in this conference to bring the agricultural and rural issues at the core of the debates.

During the event, there will be sharing of good practices of farmers from different Caritas organizations in the region. There will be training session and exposure visits too. The overall issues of the conferences will be surrounding the issues of climate change, food security and sharing of best practices on farming techniques. FIMARC will make the presentation on 1) issues related to sustainable agriculture & WTO/AFTA and 2) the food security in relation to climate change /or in relation to farmer led approach

**The 39th session of the Committee on the World Food Security (CFS) and the annual FORUM of the civil society** will be held at the FAO head quarters in Rome of October 15-20th, 2012. We will give more details on this subject in our next edition of the VMR.



*FIMARC Asian coordination meeting in collaboration  
with Caritas Thailand and CCHD, Chiangrai, Thailand - July 2012*



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