

# VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

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## "Decrease" in food consumption

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*Cover page: Malakoff market (France), 2009*

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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,*

*The last edition of VMR2012 is reflecting on the topic of food consumption. There are only few things the human body needs for survival. Absolute essentials are air, water and nutrition. But today our consumption of food contributes to environmental damage in a variety of ways. The production, processing, transportation, and packaging of food can all contribute to environmental damage. With the process of globalisation food travels in high speed around the world and foreign enterprises interfere in local food supply. Foreign food restaurants are popping up and causes changes in food habits not only in cities but even in rural areas .The amount of thrown food is rising and shockingly high in industrialized countries. Food prices are rising and especially for people who have less money have to spent up to 100% of their haves for food this causes a heavy problem and forcing them to cheaply available or ready made food items. Recent years meat production and consumption as well as related problems has been raised a lot.*

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*Cattle production is a major reason for burning and clearing rainforests and causing desertification. Meat production requires not only land but also energy and water. 16 pounds of wheat and up to 2,500 gallons of water are necessary to produce one pound of grain-fed beef. Cattle production also consumes large amounts of fossil fuels - about a gallon of gasoline per pound of beef - and cause water pollution. Chicken and pork production also require large amounts of water, grain, and energy and result in significant water and air pollution .Fish farming" destroys wetlands and mangroves.*

*What's the answer? While we all have to eat, we can educate ourselves and make better food choices to reduce the harmful consequences of our diet. Eating less animal products and more locally and organically grown products is good for our health and for the Earth. In a situation of food crisis, where 925 millions people suffer from malnutrition and 2 billion suffer from deficiencies in proteins and minerals, and hunger kills 9 million people every year (according to FAO), we cannot decently continue with the present trends of food habits.*

*Food sovereignty starts with every one of us.*

*Enjoy reading.*

*Wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy, Prosperous Year 2013.*

*George Dixon FERNANDEZ  
Secretary General*



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## “Decrease” in food consumption

*In the VMR edition 108 we provide a critical analysis on the current trend in Food Consumption .With regard to the changes in food habits, the recent changes are highly linked to the global economic developments especially in the food producing sector. One can observe a trend to more industrialized production of food items and ready meals around the world. Not only agricultural products are produced more and more by large scale industries, but also the development of chemical additives is on rise. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are promoted and introduced in various ways into the food chain. McDonalds, Pizza hut, Subway, Burger King, KFC etc have established their networks in various parts of the world and even replaced the culturally adapted food from the tables of local people. In many cultures and countries meat is a non-negotiable dish to put on the table for the family and guests. There has been a global rise in meat production and consumption as well as related problems. A 50% reduction in meat consumption in the West by 2020 would enable us to stop 3.6 million children suffering from malnutrition in developing countries (International Food Policy Research Institute). Why don't we produce and consume more food locally as far as possible and to avoid hectic meat consumption. This edition will be looking for options in this regard*



16% of the world's population is severely undernourished. While the available resources are sufficient to produce enough food for the world's population, about one billion people suffer from hunger, almost a third of food produced in the world are wasted, and a more significant part of humanity suffers from obesity!

But what is the problem, where do these paradoxes come from?

If we are talking about food production, the countries where people are most suffering from hunger are the one that grows most of the food! This paradox is the result of three general political trends that have mutually strengthened and had disastrous effects on the agricultural populations:

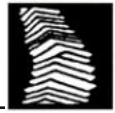
- The lack of interest in policy development for agriculture resulted in progressive disinvestment of the State in this area, particularly under the influence of the structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF and the World Bank.
- Liberalization policies concerning all economic activities have developed in competition of agriculture completely different yields, in disfavor of peasant agriculture, in the North and the South.
- The promotion of an Industrial agriculture as only possible agricultural model has resulted in the decline of peasant and family agriculture, source of jobs and the guarantee of quality local production

## CAUSES

The causes of hunger in the world are many and interrelated. Pragmatically, they can be grouped into two types of lack of access to food: lack of economic access: when food is available but too expensive so people can't buy it and because of lack of physical or geographical access: when food is simply not available<sup>1</sup>. These two types of inaccessibility can be found as causes in different factors.

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<sup>1</sup> See «En 2 mots» document published by Entraide & Fraternité for its 2013 annual campaign



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## Economical inaccessibility

In the free market system, prices are set by supply and demand. When food prices sharp, the populations of the poorest countries, who spend about 70% of their budget in food products lose their access to food.

Population growth and the growth of standards of living in developing countries inevitably put pressure on "food demand". The growth of standards of living in developing countries such as China or India, for example, allows the population first to eat and in a second time to move to a regime that is more developed with a greater meat consumption. As a direct result, farming cattle's activities grows which request a very intensive cereal culture. According to the sources, it should be up to 17 kg of grain to produce one kilogram of beef.

Two additional factors are involved in the pressure on food demand: the demand for biofuels and speculation on the price of foodstuffs. With increasing oil and fossil fuel prices, the pressure for the production of agro fuels is increasingly high because demand is high; profitability is more and more attractive to investors, at the expense of small producers. The evolution of oil prices influences the food supply. Indeed, in an industrial agricultural system, this increases the production costs through the cost of fertilizers and pesticides which will also have a direct effect on the prices. Finally, in a globalized system, it also has an impact on the cost of the transport

To develop, this production needs raw plant materials (sugar cane, corn...) and large plots of land, which also found on the food market at the expense of human food production. It is probably one of the reasons justifying the soaring prices in 2008, following the first "hunger riots".

A final factor must no doubt be taken into account when the food demand is mentioned. This is the waste. Indeed, if it does not cause an increase in demand over time, it has nevertheless just inflated it and therefore put pressure on prices. According the United Nations program for the environment, half of the world's food production is not consumed. We consider that in the developed countries the waste reaches up to 30% .

Finally, a last parameter to be taken into account in the food supply is because of the unfair competition between different States; subsidies, such as those granted under the common agricultural policy for example, allow farmers who take advantage of the dumping on foreign markets. Other means exist to distort competition:quota, customs duties or sanitary rules...

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## Physical inaccessibility

The physical (or geographic) inaccessibility to food is due in part to the phenomenon of urbanization in some countries of the South. The FAO notes that rural people suffer overall less hunger because they still have access to land to produce the bulk of their diet. Growing urbanization is due to the poverty of the countryside but it is also sometimes driven by the policy of expropriation or deportation carried out by some States to resell the land to large industrial groups or to hedge funds for the benefit of the agro industry. The physical inaccessibility is also due to the lack of agricultural yield and the poor infrastructure of the South. Failed storage capabilities result in a deterioration of crops. Insufficient transport routes make it difficult to access markets.

### The conflicts

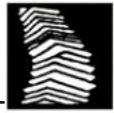
War and civil wars also have a hard impact on the food production. Conflicts, most numerous in the countries of the South, often cause population displacements, preventing regular season's culture and production.

**Climate problems** (droughts, floods...) are one of the cause's unfortunately more frequent of crops destruction. We are witnessing around the world more and more often these phenomena of climate change, both in the countries of the South than in developed countries.

*Questions for the groups and movements :*

- *What is the situation of food production in your country?*
- *Can you observe the change in this production over the last 20 years?*





## THE DEVELOPPING WORLD'S NEW BURDEN: OBESITY

While in many countries, hunger and malnutrition remain crucial issues in other developed countries or developing another problem begin to take significant proportions.

It is ironic that, as developing countries continue their efforts to reduce hunger, some are faced with the problem of obesity. Obesity has a greater incidence of chronic diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. And while some poor people are overweight, they are not necessarily better fed because obesity often masks deficiencies of vitamins and minerals.

"We believe that obesity is a big problem that must be addressed on the same plane as the problem of malnutrition," said Prakash Shetty, Chief of planning, analysis and nutrition evaluation of FAO. Not a few years ago, such a statement would have been exceptional. Experts were reluctant to draw attention to obesity when so many human beings died of hunger - and a total of 815 million undernourished people in the world, nearly 780 million are in developing countries. But the surprising data published last year by World watch Institute have called into question the conventional wisdom: For the first time, the overweight individuals in the world were equivalent in number to the too lean people. And sadly, developing nations have come to join the ranks of countries burdened by obesity.

A 1999 United Nations study found that obesity was in all developing regions, and increased rapidly, including in countries where hunger remains a real problem. In China, the number of people overweight grows from 10% to 15% within 3 years. In Brazil and Colombia, the figure is around 40%. Even in sub-Saharan Africa, region where most of the populations live under nourishment also shows a rate of increase of obesity, particularly in urban areas. The curves show the rate of obesity increases in the same ratio or at the same time that economic revenues improve.

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## Three problems, a solution: good nutrition

The existence of obesity in the developing world is not a surprise. The world produces enough food for all of the inhabitants of the planet. Unfortunately the food does not always reach the people who most need and the type of food that is produced today by the firms of agro-business is not always adapted to the real needs of the populations. In result, it knows from the problems of hunger and malnutrition in some parts of the world and elsewhere is a real problem of public health with a growing number of obese people.

In addition, almost all human beings who are hungry and number of those who suffer from an excess weight are weakened by a third type of malnutrition: the lack of vitamins and minerals, including trace elements deficiency. People eat more and more cheap food that fills the stomach but do not meet health standards.

Data on obesity in the developing world are limited, but based on preliminary studies, some of the same nutrient deficiencies that afflict undernourished people are also too big people. Two of the most common are anemia due to iron deficiency and deficiency in vitamin A, which continue to cause blindness on a large scale in children less than five years.

*Questions for the groups and movements :*

- *What is the State of nutritional health of your village, your region, your country?*
- *Is there a health policy exists in your countries warning against the excesses of available food through the large distribution chains (Mac Donald, Kentucky chicken...)*



## **FACING THESE PROBLEMS, WHAT CAN WE DO?**

Facing these findings of the unjust distribution of food in the world, the increase of obesity problems (and problems it causes) what can we do to at individual and collective level?

In the last issues of the VMR we often mentioned the need to enhance local markets. More and more organizations of peasants, producers are organized with consumers in an attempt to reduce the margins of intermediaries and to ensure, without any need for labels, a fresh, quality food.

An example of these short circuits is the GAC: “purchase group transit”, consisting of several neighbors of the same neighborhood that come together to buy food from local producers in their region. Once a week, they meet to collect and distribute the products. Often, these products are organic and still made by small local producers who cannot sell their products in retail. In the same idea of proximity and create a social link, it is probably also need to promote convenience stores.

Also promote peasant family farming that practice poly culture rather than monoculture, using traditional seeds which is enriched with organic matter and compost to fertilize the soil, and thus produce a healthy and quality food

In addition to this proximity trade, we must also undoubtedly enhance fair trade. Our land is rich and fertile but does not allow all to produce all products in all regions of the world. If it is needed to consume these products, as long as possible, try to find them through fair trade channels, which guarantee a fair price to producers and enable them to make their voices heard.

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## A reflection in depth

In addition to a few tracks that we cite above, there is a current of thought which aims to fundamentally change the way to eat, live and think the relationships of others. During our last world assembly in Paraguay, we have chosen the slogan "less is more". For some, this will mean decrease. This orthodox movement rejects the objective, as such, the maintenance of a positive economic growth rate. Some advocate even a reduction of economic activity, which corresponds to a negative rate. The term is sometimes supplemented by adjectives such as "sustainable growth" or "friendly decrease". Another, more recent, title is "objection of growth".

These concepts are not so important but what they are carrying is in a different way of live, move, feed, and shelter. The transition movement was born in the UK in 2006. The Transition is moving from the addiction to oil to local resilience. Local people are invited to create a better future and less vulnerable to environmental, energy and economic crises that threaten by acting now to:

- reduce the consumption of fossil energy;
- rebuild a strong and sustainable local economy and look for a good degree of resilience by the relocation of what can be;
- acquire the skills that will become necessary.

Others will still speak of happy sobriety or voluntary simplicity. This current is to voluntarily reduce its, consumption as well as the impacts of the latter, to carry out a more "core" values-centered life. Personal and/or community commitment stems from multiple motivations that will usually give priority to family, community and/or ecological values.

The FIMARC asserting any of these trends in particular but encourages everything that goes in the direction of a reduction in the consumption, a reasoned consumption that allows all to live well, to meet the food needs for good health and to enable producers to live decently.

It is necessary to take time and step back to reflect on the values that we wish to defend, as share and respect. It is necessary to ask us not only about our rights, but especially on our duties and responsibilities. We have a real economic power that can turn into a power of pressure. The decision to purchase or shopping can become a political act that would help change the system. Eat differently, claim its willingness to change the legislation, it is to say yes to an ethical approach to the act of purchase, economic alternatives and another way of management. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) held its Thirty-ninth Session from 15 to 20 October 2012 at FAO Headquarters in Rome.

Le Bureau de la FIMARC vous souhaite une bonne année

*The Bureau of the FIMARC wishes you a happy new year*

El Buro de la FIMARC le desea un feliz año nuevo

*O « Bureau » da FIMARC deseja-lhe um muito bom ano*



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## News from Secretariate

### **The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) held its Thirty-ninth Session from 15 to 20 October 2012 at FAO Headquarters in Rome**

The Session was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee, Mr Yaya Olaniran of Nigeria. Opening statements were delivered by Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, United Nations, Mr José Graziano da Silva, Director-General (FAO), Mr Kanayo Nwanze, President (IFAD), Ms Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director (WFP), Mr M.S. Swaminathan, Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE). The two Policy Round Tables: 1) Social Protection for Food Security and 2) Nutrition Food Security and Climate Change were organised during the CFS 39. The CFS adopted the First Version of the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF) and also approved the Terms of Reference for the process within CFS to develop principles for responsible agricultural investments. FIMARC will actively involve in the up coming consultation process in order to bring the voice of the rural people and marginalised farmers who are much effected with the investment trends around the world. Jean Paul Perrin, the Exco member of FIMARC from France participated in the CFS 39 along with George Dixon Fernandez, the Secretary General and the advisory council member of the World Committee on Food Security.

### **Caritas Asia Training Program on Sustainable Agriculture-Chiang Mai, Thailand - Chinnappan Nicholas**

Caritas Asia had Organized a Training Program to share the best practices of Sustainable Farming initiatives of its Partner Organizations in Asia as a means to learn from each others experiences and to strengthen and spread the initiatives as a strategy to address the issues of Poverty and Hunger and to achieve Food Sovereignty in the Region. This Training Program was organized In Chiang Mai in Thailand from 10th to 13rd of October 2012. I had participated as a representative of FIMARC to share my experiences as, FIMARC has been working for a long time among the Rural Communities on the issue of Food Sovereignty.

Food Sovereignty has two aspects. The first one is the community's access to Land and other Natural Resources like forest, Sea coast and water. The second aspect is communities control over these resources to use these resources for the benefit of the Humanity. If you go deep into this line of thinking you would find that traditionally the Human beings and Natural Resources are organically linked to each other. The Human beings and nature depend each other for all their needs. It is this organic link which protected and safe guarded each other. The Human beings never attempted to over exploit Nature as they felt that it is part and parcel of the Human beings.

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Ever since the development of the Capitalist system which revolved around the single objective of making profit, the Organic link which existed between the Nature and Human beings started to erode. As mentioned earlier, the Capitalist system, in order to make profit for the Individuals has started to over exploit the natural resources and the human resources there by totally destroying the organic link which existed in the past. The neo liberal economic globalization is the worst form of capitalist system which has least respect for the nature and the human beings. As a result the natural resources like land, water, forest, mountains and sea coasts are day by day are becoming private properties of the Capitalists who through their agricultural policies, water policies, forest policies, and Industrial policies are controlling all these resources and are displacing the communities from their traditional abodes, who for ages lived and cherished in these abodes. The farmers are evicted from their lands, the indigenous communities are evicted from the forests, and the fisher folk are evicted from the sea coast to facilitate corporate controlled agriculture, mining and deep sea fishing activities. As a result, in most of the countries, the marginalized communities have become refugees in their own land. The issue of climate change has burst out of proportion leading to frequency of natural disasters in the world and we do not know what will happen tomorrow.

In this situation sustainable agricultural practices which are intended to address the issue of hunger and poverty and to restore the traditional seeds, biodiversity of the soil and to address the issue of climate change are needs of the hour. We have to keep in mind that we should not limit ourselves only to spreading these practices. We have to educate and mobilize our communities to rebuild the organic link between the nature and Human beings. It is a political work. Therefore we have to search for a peoples centered politics that would lead our communities to a sustained struggle to establish a society based on Justice, Equality and Peace.

It is in this direction, we who are organized into movements within FIMARC are doing in our respective countries. While Organizing the marginalized communities into movements to struggle for progressive land reforms progressive water , sea and forest policies in the countries, we are also working on alternative economic models such as sustainable agriculture, consumers and farmers linkages, community forest management, cooperative agriculture and fishing initiatives that would ensure the communities to fulfill their basic needs and would also address the issue of climate change.

Apart my sharing, I also found that the sharing of experiences of the participants on sustainable agricultural practices were extremely enriching .The exposure visits to certain areas where young farmers are involved in organic farming and marketing their products directly to consumers were encouraging. Above all the visit to Mai jo University in Chiang Mai which is completely involved in promotion of Organic farming had further enriched my conviction that communities and people around the world have started to work towards the society we all want. That is the society based on Justice, Equality and Peace.



*Caritas Asia Training Program on Sustainable Agriculture  
Chiang Mai, Thailand - October 2012*



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