



FIMARC

Rue Jaumain 15

Assesse, Belgium

Tel: +32 83 65 62 36

Fax: +32 83 65 62 36

E-mail: fimarc@skynet.be

Annual Report 2020

2020 was not a good year with the outbreak of the COVID 19 Pandemic. FIMARC express our deep concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on farmers, fishers and other small food producers, rural and urban poor, daily wage and seasonal workers, migrants and unemployed people and extend our solidarity to those who affected in the crisis. We want to offer our thoughts and condolences to those of you who have been affected by this pandemic.

This suffering has underscored the urgency of transforming our global economic, legal, and political systems, which contributed to the cataclysmic harms of this pandemic. Such change will necessitate international and national solidarity. Indeed, among the pain and disruptions of 2020, it was heartening to see many inspiring acts of solidarity, from the formation of robust mutual aid networks around the world, to the months-long protest movement in the United States for racial justice.

It is evident that the crisis has threatened food and other essential commodities : supplies around the world and the agro-industrial food systems and transnational supermarket chains are almost paralyzed due to the trans boundary trade and transport distortions. COVID-19 only aggravates the situation of rural families, mainly those engaged in agriculture. Those who have gone through hard drought, the availability of food is hampered due to the Pandemic. The marketing of what exists requires much creativity and means for alternative strategies to trade, prices can be favorable in case of direct sale from producer to consumer, which hardly happens. As for distribution, it also requires adequate means and social protection with government support, but there is still no concrete news for peasant families. But small-scale producer's accounts for over 70% of the food needed for the world and around 90% of food products are consumed by local communities or people within the national boundaries. We should not forget that small-scale farmers have remained central to food production, provision and distribution in all the countries even at this time of crisis through direct sales, short circuit chains, public distribution systems and available local market possibilities. Small scale food producers will continue to play their important roles by promoting an ecologically rational and socially just food system. They are still and will continue as champions and stewards of food and nutritional security of the populations even in the amidst of COVID 19 outbreak. They are the solutions and positive responses to ensure healthy food for all and should not only be a narrative of mere victims or vulnerable group during this crisis

The coronavirus and quarantine measures have posed significant challenges for social movements. Citizens are experiencing high degrees of anxiety and uncertainty, brought on by risks to health and economic well-being. The crisis has exacerbated and made visible existing social problems and inequalities, and the effects of austerity policies on social services are also felt keenly, with health services struggling to cope with the pandemic.

Lockdown and quarantine mean that cyberspace has become the main arena for social movements, as digital tools have been used to help activists and citizens communicate, organize, and mobilize. Social media is a double-edged sword, facilitating movement mobilization online but also facilitating the spread of misinformation, and much more worryingly, disinformation. While right-wing and other extremists have weaponized disinformation around the pandemic, progressive critical media activists have also mobilized to combat information disorders online, as well as to provide useful tools for mutual aid groups and other social movements facing the challenge of moving their activism online

Many of us have perhaps even become somewhat desensitized by now to the continued and repeated information about the cost and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic that has changed the world in 2020. We hear about the dramatic figures related to the infected, hospitalised, and deaths. We also now hear of the statistics on how the distribution of vaccines is developing. And we hear daily updates on how the pandemic has already begun to affect our societies and global reality in a broader scope: related to food supply and hunger, unemployment and increased poverty, financial crisis and increased debts, anti-democratic control mechanisms and restrictions for civil society actors, militarisation and security measures, and a lot more. It is a lot to wrap our heads and hearts around, yet these issues have impacted the very way that we think, feel, and act.

In this dramatic year, there is even a greater need to tell the stories of initiatives and actors who have challenged injustice despite of (and in response to) the global pandemic. Even under harsh restrictions that have been placed on them (both health regulations, but also extended abuse of power and political austerity), movements in the South have demonstrated their deep commitment to progressive, justice- based and human rights focused activism. And they have done so by exploring and utilising new methods and digital approaches. Yes, there's been an overwhelming amount of webinars and internet consultations (which comes with a number of opportunities and limitations), but the clear effort to lift peoples' alternatives and the strong popular belief that "Another World is Possible" has never been closed down.

The reality is that the COVID-19 pandemic has given heightened attention to a number of critical global challenges. We must all work together to find new solutions, new ways of thinking, and new catalysts for change. We must allow our minds to be opened to new approaches as we jointly struggle for a transformed and just future. We stand in solidarity with the movements that bravely continue to find creative solutions and are serving as change agents in the "new normal" in 2021.

FIMARC engaged in many struggles that are part of everyday life. This includes supporting movements to face the ongoing challenges of the Pandemic for the life and livelihood of the most vulnerable groups. We have also provided support and put forward proposals that can bring about social and ecological transformation.

Assesse, 20-04-2021

FIMARC presentation

International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements

Composition of the Exco of FIMARC 2018-2022

President	Wolfgang Scharl (Germany)
Treasurer	Jean Claude Germon (France)
Secretary General	George Dixon Fernandez (India)
Chaplain	Fr. Tomas Sphangero (Argentina)
Delegates	Medard Meyanga Ayong (Cameroun) – Coordinator Africa Elizabeth Kibuywa (Kenya) – Coordinator Africa Manuel Moran (El Salvadore) – Coordinator Latin America Modesta Arevalos Ortiz (Paraguay) – Coordinator Latin America Naiyana Vichitporn – Coordinator Asia Rony Joseph (India) – Coordinator Asia

The global objective:

The overall goal of all the activities of FIMARC is to foster sustainable rural development and peasant based agriculture by promoting and creating a lively rural world with dignified life. Our activities also aim for the creation of sustainable society and to promote a comprehensive education and training of rural people

Thrust areas

FIMARC take into account in our actions, lobby and advocacy the following topics.

1. Food System Transformation in the light of Laudato Si
2. Formation and building of Livelihood initiatives in the context of COVID-19 Pandemic
3. Strengthening Agro Ecological Practices and Approaches
4. Promotion and Protection of Family farming and Follow up of UNDF
5. Food sovereignty: Peasant rights /Implementation of UN Declaration
6. Rural Migration
7. climate change and Environmental protection
8. Decrease /Less is more-Sustainable production , consumption and life styles
9. Sustainable rural world and peasant based agriculture
10. Solidarity economy-Fair trade, direct marketing and other initiatives
11. Defence of Human Rights and right to food
12. Justice and solidarity between the people

FIMARC implemented the activities with the following major objectives during the year 2020 :

- To Equip and support the rural populations and farmers to face the current challenges of the COVID 19 Pandemic and its impacts on their life and livelihoods
- To protect the environment and to promote alternative life styles
- To advocate and lobby against the causes of the poverty among rural people at world forums and power blocks for the progressive realisation of right to food and food sovereignty
- To organise educational programs and strategic actions in order to strengthen FIMARC as an effective and truly representative network of catholic rural movements.
- To Increase the capacity of members as social movements

Some Key Results

- FIMARC survey on the impacts of COVID 19
- FIMARC statement on COVID 19
- FIMARC inputs on UNESCO strategic plans and on COVID 19 impacts
- FIMARC inputs on the joint survey of the UN special rapporteurs on the violation of rights under UN special procedures
- Grass root campaigns to protect and promote family farming
- Drawing collective actions and synergies to face the challenges of the Covid 19 Pandemic
- More visible and regularly present in virtual policy spaces to influence the policy debates especially in favor of Family Farming and Agro ecology at CFS, HRC and FAO
- Better coordinated and collective actions at national and sub regional levels in the context of the Pandemic
- Brought the perspectives of farmers and rural people in the FAO APRC, FAO ARC and IFAD Global Farmers Forum 2020
- Follow up of UNDROP
- Strengthening global food sovereignty movement

Major Engagements of FIMARC in 2020

FIMARC : global activity

1. FIMARC Exco and Bureau Meetings 2020
2. FIMARC statement on COVID 19 Impact-
3. FIMARC Survey on the impact of COVID 19
4. World Food Day Campaign 2020
5. FIMARC Human Rights Working group (GTDH)
6. FIMARC Publications

FIMARC in the Church

7. MIACS Meetings
8. FIMARC Collaboration with CCIC (International Catholic Centre in Paris)
9. Vatican Forum thematic virtual meetings

FIMARC and the international organisations

10. FAO APRC CSO Physical Consultation meeting, Bangkok
11. 35th FAO Regional Conference for the Asia and the Pacific (APRC)
12. Seventh global meeting of the Farmers' Forum, IFAD, Rome
13. Civil Society Preparatory Consultation meeting for the FAO 31st Regional Conference for Africa (ARC)
14. FAO 31st Regional Conference for Africa
15. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
16. FIMARC response to the combined survey of the Special Rapporteurs under special procedures of United Nations
17. Meeting with UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Food
18. IPC : facilitation of the global food sovereignty movement
19. Solidarity, Resistance, Hope - Solidaridad, Resistencia, Esperanza (SoliREsp) global meetings
20. UNESCO Seminar on COVID 19 Impacts
21. UNESCO Consultation on Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5)
22. UNESCO : 2020 international Conference of NGOs "Envisioning a better and sustainable future: a new paradigm for civil society"

FIMARC and the national movements

23. Sénégal : MARCS celebrated the Diocesan Day of the Rural World
24. Kenya : DESECE activity on agroecology in covid 19 pandemic
25. Germany : seminar on Peasant Rights and Land
26. France : CMR, agroecology and EU Common Agriculture Policy
27. Europe coordination : FIMARC and ProRurE (Association Pro Rural Europe)
28. India : Global march for land and food sovereignty

FIMARC and its financial partners

29. Meetings with the financial partners in the context of the Pandemic
30. CCFD General Assembly
31. DKA Webinar on Making their Voices Heard

FIMARC : global activity

1.FIMARC Exco and Bureau Meetings 2020

Exco and Bureau are the two main political decision bodies of FIMARC. The Bureau normally meets two times per year and one along with Exco which takes place once a year, with the participation of continental coordinators of each continent as well as the Bureau members. Due to the unprecedented spread of the Pandemic all over the world it was impossible to organise the physical meetings of both Bureau and Exco. But we organised the online Bureau meetings every month regularly from April 2020 as well as the Exco meeting since September 2020 onwards.

Exco made a concrete planning for the strong and committed engagement of FIMARC to build the initiatives, synergies and actions in the context of the Pandemic, approved the work and financial report of the movement, provided inputs for the engagement of FIMARC at the Human rights council, FAO, CFS, UNESCO and updated our lobby advocacy actions. Monthly Exco meetings allowed the Exco members to have the possibility to share the impact and challenges of the Pandemic in their respective countries and continents. More over the preliminary preparatory discussions in relation to the next World Assembly has been started.

2. FIMARC statement on COVID 19 Impact-

In April 2020, FIMARC Bureau released a global statement regarding the unprecedented deep impact of the COVID 19 for the life of farmers and rural people in the world. (Statement is available in English, French and Spanish on our webpage www.fimarc.org). Through this statement the Bureau members of FIMARC, express our deep concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on farmers, fishers and other small food producers, rural and urban poor, daily wage and seasonal workers, migrants and unemployed people and extended our solidarity to those who affected in the crisis. FIMARC also condemned the neo liberal economic policies implemented in different countries that drastically cut down the public spending on health and allowed the privatization of the health services.

FIMARC called upon all the governments, our member movements and other stake holders to act consciously on the following areas which need urgent considerations.

- Urgent health care measures and services to the most vulnerable groups
- Massive public awareness about the pandemic and the protective measures
- Viable economic support to the most vulnerable
- Establishment of social protection programmes
- Ensure sustainable Food Production and supply
- Solidarity initiatives for the battle against the Pandemic

3. FIMARC Survey on the impact of COVID 19

FIMARC conducted a solid **Survey on the impact of COVID 19 with a view** to collect the details about the COVID 19 situation of the different countries , to have a common overview and analysis about the impact of this crisis at global level .We also wanted to share this analysis and reality to all our members. This survey was also the source of valid information to develop our demands further to the decision makers and to build solidarity actions of our movements to combat the Pandemic. FIMARC demanded the movements to prepare the testimonies in the form of a report or in a short video based on the reality in respective countries. Key guiding questions were sent for the preparation of the testimonies (Video or written report). Testimonies were also asked to collect from

our members and leaders, or other farmers, fishers, workers or common people allowing them to provide their views about the impact of COVID 19 Pandemic.

4. World Food Day Campaign 2020

Founded in 1945, to unite all nations in the fight against hunger, the FAO celebrates its anniversary on 16 October through a worldwide celebration known as World Food Day. World Food Day 2020 marked FAO's 75th anniversary and 40th observance during a very exceptional time as many countries are dealing with the widespread effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 1979 the 20th session of the FAO Conference adopted Resolution 1/79 inviting FAO member countries to observe World Food Day (WFD) every year on 16 October. This was followed by Resolution 35/70 during the United Nations General Assembly in December 1980, which urged governments and national, regional and international organizations to contribute to the effective commemoration of World Food Day to the best of their capacity/to the greatest extent possible.

World Food Day is considered as an opportunity to call for global cooperation and solidarity to help all populations, and especially the farmers and the most vulnerable and to build their livelihoods. It is also an occasion to sensitize the public on how everybody has a role to play in transforming our food systems by changing the way we produce, transform, consume and waste our food. World Food Day promotes worldwide awareness and action for those who suffer from hunger and for the need to ensure food security and nutritious diets for all. The World Food Day 2020 focussed on the theme "Grow, nourish, sustain. Together. Our actions are our future". On the occasion of this World Food Day, FIMARC called along with FAO on countries and other stakeholders to implement concrete initiatives to create a world without hunger.

During this world food day of 2020, FIMARC demanded all its member movements to have deep reflections, actions on "Grow, nourish, sustain, Together. Our actions are our future" and to lobby the governments for the same. We urged all the members to organise a common action day to raise awareness on this topic.

Following are some of the proposed actions for the movements in relation to the theme of the World Food Day 2020

- **Choose healthy and diverse:** A healthy diet contributes to a healthy life. When we choose to eat diverse foods, we encourage a variety of foods to be produced. Remember, a diverse diet favors biodiversity!
- **Choose local:** Support farmers by buying locally grown fresh food, such as from a farmers' market in your community and thus you are supporting local economy and you are encouraging crop diversity.
- **Choose Seasonal :** When food is out of season in one part of the world it has to be imported and travel a long way before it arrives to your local grocery store or market. So choose seasonal
- **Grow Food at Home:** If you have a green space at home, access to a garden, or a balcony with space for plant pots, you can learn how to grow your own fruits, vegetables and herbs
- **Respect Food and Farmers:** Food loss and waste can occur throughout the food system, once it arrives at your table. Learn how to store uneaten food properly for another day's meal to avoid wasting perfectly good food and to respect the farmers

- Organise Recreation and sports activities** such as a run, a march, a walk or even a marathon against hunger and malnutrition.
- Organize conferences, debates and public round tables** with political leaders, educators, scientists and farmers
- Organize food donations** that would otherwise be wasted or lost in accordance with local regulations. Link to local shops, restaurants, etc
- Plan a WFD exhibition** to support the agricultural products in your region.
- Organise Corner meetings, press conference, press release or demonstrations** on the topic to raise the awareness of the society
- Organise 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
- Make awareness raising activities and campaigns** for promoting agroecology and sustainable food systems

A glimpse of national activity in India

On 16th October IRDS, organized the World Food Day event in their center with the participation of 86 women, mostly young women from the farming families and 16 men. They had a one day program with sharing of practical experiences of organic farming in which the participants also shared 16 varieties of seeds and food cooked from their own products. They all decided to widespread the initiatives of Panchami lands struggles, organic farming and protection of seeds.

They also decided to meet once in two months and learn from each others experiences. They also decided to grow medicinal plants in all their homestead lands and spread the practice of traditional medicine and food. They have also sowed traditional medicinal and vegetable seeds in IRDS center and decided to take them to their village when it comes up during the coming monsoon rains. All the participants were very much encouraged with this programme



5. FIMARC Human Rights Working group (GTDH)

FIMARC Human Rights working group is composed with the Secretary General and militants of our movements. It is a support group of FIMARC within the ECOSOC. For a few years, the group centred its efforts on all that related on the Right to food and UN Declaration on Peasant Rights. With the constant work of FIMARC, Via Campesina and of the other organisations, little by little the suggestion of the food Sovereignty as basic right is now more accepted than before and even became constitutional rights of some countries. We were able to realise the approval of Peasant Rights Declaration by the UN General Assembly. **Currently FIMARC is making advocacy for the implementation of UN Declaration of peasant rights (UNDRDP).**

Member of the FIMARC Working Group for Human Rights (GT/FIMARC/DH), Gérard Boinon had the opportunity to interpellate Mrs. Cécile Cukierman, member of the French Senate; the objective of this interpellation was that the senator questioned the Minister of Agriculture on the reasons for France's abstention during the vote at the UN in December 2018. In her question, Ms. Cukierman stressed the "historic" importance of the signing of this Declaration, "the fruit of a struggle of nearly twenty years led by many organizations defending the rights of peasants around the world. Calling on the French Minister of Agriculture, Ms. Cukierman said: "While one hundred and twenty countries adopted this declaration of the rights of peasants on December 17, 2018 at the UN, France, the country of human rights, abstained. This is why she asked him the reasons that led France to abstain". FIMARC thus received the response of the French Minister of agriculture in this regard.

The meetings of the FIMARC Human Rights working group took place only 2 times in 2020 to prepare the written statements to the Human Rights Council Meetings and to plan the follow up work in relation to the UN declaration on Rights of Peasants and Other rural workers and more over to prepare the participation in the Jai Jagat Gobal March for Land and Food Sovereignty.

6. FIMARC Publications

1. **Voice of the Rural World (VMR)** is the review of the movement, published four times a year in four languages (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese). VMR is a tool to share ideas and experience between the continents/Movements. FIMARC supports the movements to share and showcase best practices through VMR. It contributes to the information and formation of national and local leaders on the different topics of FIMARC's work. We think that VMR serves as tool between the movements of FIMARC from the experiences which promote viable alternate development of the rural people and particularly peasants. This also helps us to reach out to the vast network of organizations that fight in the same perspectives and/or with similar objectives. The following editions with respective themes were released during the year 2020.

VMR 131- Special edition on World Assembly of FIMARC

VMR 132- Climate change and Agriculture

2. **LMR** : FIMARC published LMR 101 and LMR 102 in relation with the theme of reflection about Easter 2020 and Christmas 2020 respectively.

3. **FIMARC pedagogical document on Seed** : FIMARC always tries to spread our ideas through the pedagogical documents. FIMARC published various documents on climate change, Food Sovereignty, Agro fuels, land grabbing and Agroecology in the previous years. A new pedagogical document on Peasant Right to Seed was published in 2020 in 3 languages (French,

Spanish and English) and this was a major contribution to the analysis and reflection on the ongoing debates about seed rights of peasants and models of production systems all around the globe. This tool is at the disposal for the 60 movements and organizations for the animation of the basic groups. This is published on the FIMARC web site to serve more people, the partner organisations and all the institutions working in these areas.

FIMARC in the Church

7. MIACS Meetings - FIMARC participated regularly in the monthly meetings of the global catholic social action movements (MIACS)

The International Specialised Catholic Action Movements (MIACS) represent more than 500 movements around the world with a great diversity of countries, cultures and backgrounds. Since the beginning of the Covid pandemic, MIACS had monthly regular meetings at global level with the participation of key leaders of the International teams for reflecting together on this crisis and to prepare a common statement in this regard along with some key actions based on the collective reflection. The common statement called for a more humane world from crisis to conversion. It has been widely distributed among the movements inviting them to exchange and renew their activities in this pandemic time.

8. FIMARC Collaboration with CCIC (Catholic Centre in Paris)

George Fernandez and Jean-Claude Germon attended for FIMARC in different meetings organised by Catholic Centre for Collaboration with UNESCO especially to have common views of the Christian NGOs about the UNESCO Priorities in relation to the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5).

9. Vatican Forum thematic virtual meetings-

Working group meeting of the Vatican forum on Development and Environment was held on 13th October 2020 and Migration on 21 October 2020 which discussed mainly about the "Impact and Effects of the Pandemic". It defined the key priorities as well as draw policy strategies of the Vatican forum. George Fernandez participated in these two working group meetings.

FIMARC and the International Organisations

10. FAO APRC CSO Physical Consultation meeting, Bangkok, 28-31 January 2020

FIMARC participated in the FAO APRC CSO Physical Consultation meeting which was held in Bangkok from 28 -31 January. George Fernandez (Secretary General, FIMARC) and Naiyana Vichitporn (Asian Coordinator of FIMARC) participated in the programme

The two-day consultation was hosted by the CSOs and in part by UN FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization). It was attended by more than 50 representatives of the different organizations which include farmers, fisher folks and fish workers, forest dwellers, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, urban poor, non-government organizations, women and youth from countries in Asia and the Pacific.



“Small farm families who only have 25% of the land feed 75% of the population and they are more vulnerable to exploitation, climate change, and rapid land loss”

Food (in)security, migration, and ageing population

According to FAO, recent years show a changing trend in the diet of the people. Data shows that there are more people having diverse diets and not mainly subsisting on rice and grains and starchy foods. From the nutritional point of view, this is positive because of the reduction in obesity. On the contrary, stunting of growth among children is also widespread due to not enough calorie intake which is sourced from rice, root crops, and grains.

FAO also emphasizes the ageing population in the farm communities due to the migration of the young people in the urban centres and it is also beneficial since it can generate non-agriculture income which may help in poverty alleviation. But in reality migration happens due to lack of prospects and opportunities in the countryside.

Digitalization of agriculture

The proposed digitalization of agriculture and technology innovation by FAO also poses a serious challenge to the small farm families. Digital innovations applied to agriculture which starts in the production of the management cycle, value chain and market access from the crop, forestry, fishery, and livestock production. Known as the blockchain technology for e-commerce in agriculture, food can be traced from farm to various markets. FAO argues that digital innovations in agriculture are touted as ‘tools and approaches to empower rural households and inspire youth entrepreneurship in food and agriculture’.

However, the CSOs believe that the complexities of technology could hamper the growth of the small farmers thus, creating social and economic divide between the ones who control and have the access of technology and the ones who cannot afford these. The affordability of technology is also important since most small farm families may not afford technology. Aside from that, technology changes rapidly, hence, sustainability is also compromised.

Further, it is argued that digital technology in agriculture reduced the small farm families as passive consumers of technology. Although there are potential benefits it could outweigh the negative impacts. Moreover, the CSO insists that it is not the FAO or the government that decide on the use of technology alone but most importantly it must include the participation of the people in evaluating the use of technology and how it will impact their livelihood. In addition, small marginalized farm families need tool kits and capacity building to equip themselves with the necessary skills to compete in the digital market. Innovation is more than the issue of technology in agriculture but it is also used in the exchange of information which compromises copyrights, land rights, and human rights.

Prospects and challenges

FAO Asia-Pacific Regional Conference (FAO APRC) is held every two years. Since 2010, civil society organizations have been participating in the APRC producing inputs and interventions for their own countries as well as the regions' concerns in food production. In line with FAO' Strategic Objectives, the CSOs' analysis provided governments data, issues and challenges which could help in the decision-making towards a sustainable development goal. But it was only in 2014 that more FAO representatives participating and interacting with the CSO.

“The FAO adapted some of our recommendations. Among these are the Decade of the Family Farmers, and agro-ecology and the recommendations of the Pacific Farmers on sustainable fisheries. In 2014, the 1st International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition in Rome, Italy, addressed the topic of Agroecology.

According to FAO, it applies ecological concepts & principles to optimize interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while taking into consideration social aspects needed for a sustainable and fair food system.

In 2019, the UN launched the UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028 in recognition to the contributions of family farmers in safeguarding biodiversity, environment, and culture. Therefore, governments are encouraged to create policies that should protect smallholder farmers and provide access to social protection.

George Dixon Fernandez was one of the panelists who interacted with FAO-Regional Asia Pacific senior economist, David Dawe, and other FAO representatives during the biennial consultation in preparation for the 35th FAO Regional Conference for the Asia and the Pacific (APRC) between FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations) and the civil society organizations (CSO) on January 29-30, 2020 at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. CSO Consultation prepared the collective statement of the Civil Society with regard to the agenda of the official conference.

11. 35th FAO Regional Conference for the Asia and the Pacific (APRC), 1-4 September 2020

The 35th FAO Regional Conference for the Asia and the Pacific (APRC), supposed to be held in Bhutan on 17- 20 February 2020, had been postponed due to the unexpected COVID 19 outbreak.

The 35th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific was held virtually on 1-4 September 2020, on a videoconferencing platform, on an exceptional basis, in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health concerns. The move to a virtual format followed consultations with the FAO Director-General, the Regional Groups representing member nations, and with the concurrence of the Host Country, Bhutan. Representatives from 41 Member Nations participated in the Regional Conference. Representatives of 9 inter-governmental organizations and 34 international and non-governmental organizations attended as observer.

FIMARC participated in the 3 days official virtual conference of FAO APRC held in Bhutan from 1-4 September 2020. George Fernandez, Secretary General of FIMARC attended in this

four days online conference. CSO delegation presented our Collective statement which was prepared by the CSO conference held in Bangkok, Thailand at the end of January 2020. The Regional Conference, convened every two years, results in recommendations that guide FAO's work in the vast Asia-Pacific region, and provide further guidance to FAO's global conference in Rome in June the following year.

Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji, Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan and Mr. Jong Jin Kim, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative of FAO, presented opening addresses. Mr. QU Dongyu, the Director-General of FAO, delivered the statement to the Regional Conference. He outlined the vision for the transformation of FAO to support policy and programmes and serve Member Nations with greater dynamism. He emphasised the importance of the APRC's guidance and strategic direction to FAO for the provision of contextualized solutions for many pressing issues in the Asia and Pacific region and achieve the SDGs. Mr. Khalid Mehboob, the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, delivered the statement. He emphasized the important role of the Regional Conference in defining FAO policies and priorities for the region. Ms. Chime P. Wangdi, Secretary General of the Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan, summarized the views of the civil society organizations for the Regional Conference.

The collective statement made by CSO's highlighted that while the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities in health, wealth, race and gender, it has had a positive outcome in the increased importance of local small-scale production and the importance of healthy and environmentally sound food systems. CSO's demanded the greater inclusion of small holders, family farmers, indigenous and vulnerable people, women and youth in all aspects of agricultural development.

Following were some of the key topics discussed during the conference

- The impact of COVID-19 on Food and Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific and FAO's response
- State of Food and Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific Region, including Future Prospects and Emerging Issues
- Setting regional priorities to manage water for agriculture under conditions of water scarcity
- Building resilience of small-scale fisheries to ensure food security and nutrition in the Pacific
- Building sustainable and resilient food systems in Asia and the Pacific
- UN Food System Summit

12 . Seventh global meeting of the Farmers' Forum, IFAD, 6-11 February 2020, Rome

The Global Farmers' Forum is an on-going, bottom-up process of consultation and dialogue between organizations of smallholder farmers and rural producers from all over the world, IFAD and its Member States. The Forum brings together more than 80 farmers' leaders from around the world, representing millions of smallholders and rural producers, who have interacted with IFAD and partner institutions.

The FAFO is organized on a four-year cycle, with global meetings being held every four years and regional consultations organized in between these meetings. The first cycle of regional FAFOs took place between 2017 and 2019 in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America. The main outputs of these regional consultations were a set of Action Plans by countries to strengthen collaboration between FOs and IFAD.

IFAD President, Gilbert Houngbo, opened the Forum on Thursday 6 February with members of the FAFO Steering Committee. IFAD presented its analysis of evolving partnerships with farmers' organizations from the Partnership in Progress Report 2016-2019.

On the second day, five thematic working groups addressed the following issues:

- Climate change and the transition to agroecology

- United Nations Decade of Family Farming and the engagement of farmers’ organizations in the preparation of the Food Systems Summit
- Women’s leadership
- Youth in agriculture
- New instruments for IFAD’s twelfth replenishment

A Synthesis of Deliberations and Recommendations were presented at the closing session on Monday afternoon and at the plenary of the IFAD Governing Council on 11 February.

Various Side events were held on 10 and 11 February. A special session on the Food Systems Summit 2021 was held on 10 February in the afternoon, including a dialogue between farmers’ leaders and the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Food Systems Summit, Agnes Kalibata, and a presentation of the report *Farmers and food systems, what future for small-scale agriculture?*

FIMARC participated in the Global Farmers Forum organised by IFAD in Rome from 6 -13 February 2020. George Fernandez participated in this physical meeting and made several interventions including the talk with the president of IFAD and Agnes Kalibata, UN special envoy for the organization of the global sustainable food system summit 2021. IFAD would extend the possibilities for FIMARC to engage with the regional farmers forum processes in the upcoming years and more over George had dialogues with the person in charge of MTCP programmes of IFAD in regions where we could eventually engage with the relevant people concerned.



George Fernandez (Secretary General of FIMARC) with Gilbert Hougbo (IFAD President) at the FAFO 2020

13. Civil Society Preparatory Consultation meeting for the FAO 31st Regional Conference for Africa

The civil Society Consultation meeting in relation to the 31st Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) was held from 25-27 February 2020 at Harare in Zimbabwe. The key leaders of major global and regional peasants and other small scale producers organisations participated in this important preparatory meeting. IPC Africa secretariate hosted the meeting with all the logistical support. ***Mr. Arnold Kawendama (East African Coordinator of FIMARC) and Mr. Lucy (Leader from Kenya) represented FIMARC in this regional consultation.***

14. FAO 31st Regional Conference for Africa (ARC)

ARC31 was held from 26-28 October using Zoom, hosted by the Government of Zimbabwe. The functions of the Regional Conference are to hold consultations at a high level, to indicate the special problems of the Region and the priority areas which should be taken into account in preparing the Programme of Work and Budget for the next biennium, as well as in relation to longer term programme objectives of the Organization to the needs of the Region; to undertake consultations on the means by which the countries of the Region can solve their own problems through the use of their own resources; and on the volume and nature of the external aid required to implement their food and agricultural development plans. The Regional Conference made recommendations to Member Nations in the Region, the Conference, the Council, the Director-General and, through the Director General, to the United Nations Regional Economic and Social Commission for Africa.

15. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) High-Level Virtual Special Event on Food Security and Nutrition, 13 - 15 October 2020

The CFS 47 initially forecasted on October 2020 has been rescheduled to 8 - 12 February 2021 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. CFS organized this virtual special event on 13 - 15 October 2020. George Fernandez and Wolfgang Scharl attended this conference, the objective of which was to keep food security and nutrition front and centred on the global sustainable development agenda.

Over the course of these 3 days, CFS organized three high-level virtual plenaries, one per day, to:

- Take stock of the global food security situation guided by the SOFI 2020 and the HLPE report on Building a Global Narrative towards 2030 ;
- Reflect on the impacts of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition and the global efforts needed to “build back better”;
- Discuss the draft CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition and the draft CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches, and their relevance to the objectives of the UN.

16. FIMARC response to the combined survey of the Special Rapporteurs under special procedures of United Nations

FIMARC prepared inputs and submitted for the global survey organised by UN Special rapporteurs about the impact of COVID 19 for the most vulnerable people in the world.

17. Meeting with UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Food

George Fernandez, Secretary General of FIMARC together with some few key regional food and agriculture related organisations had a bilateral online meeting with the newly elected UN Special rapporteur on Right to Food. Micheal Fukhri on 18 July 2020. He agreed that FIMARC can submit our inputs and views about his future reports to UN on relevant themes. George Fernandez also participated in the consultation meeting with UN Special rapporteur on Right to Food organised by IPC global facilitating committee in July 2020 and provided our views about the global trade and impacts on food and agriculture in relation to his first report on “Trade”.

18. IPC : Facilitation of the global food sovereignty movement

The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) is an autonomous, self-managed global network of more than 45 people’s movements and NGOs involved with at least 800 organizations throughout the world. The IPC serves as a mechanism for information and training on

issues regarding food sovereignty in the world. It promotes forums in which Peoples Movements and other Civil Society Organisations involved in food and agriculture issues can debate, articulate their positions and build their relationships at national, regional and global levels. It facilitates dialogue and debate between civil society actors, governments and other stakeholders at all levels. It is not a centralized structure and does not claim to represent its members. It does not aspire to constitute an all-inclusive civil society interface with FAO and other institutions, but is rather a space for self-selected CSOs which identify with the food sovereignty agenda adopted at the 2002 forum in Rome. FIMARC has been actively participating in the IPC platform for many years.

Mr. George Dixon Fernandez, Secretary General of FIMARC is the global facilitating committee member of IPC. FIMARC is responsible for the coordination work and strengthening IPC in Asia too. FIMARC also actively involved in the preparation of the FAO regional conference and Civil Society Participation where IPC had been given a mandate from FAO. We participated in various preparatory meetings organized by FAO regional office in Thailand for the Asia Pacific regional conference of FAO (APRC 2020) in Bhutan and the CSO Consultation meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand. We also supported the preparatory work for the African regional conference of FAO (ARC 2020) and the CSO preparatory meeting held in Zimbabwe.

In 2020, FIMARC participated in the regular monthly virtual conferences of the IPC at global level to prepare various programmes and initiatives in line with food sovereignty and to plan the global virtual general meeting of the IPC. We also participate in the periodic meetings of the IPC Asia Pacific region as responsible for this region from the global committee. IPC is planning to organise an alternative third global forum for people's food sovereignty in the upcoming year. FIMARC is part of the task team to prepare this forum

19. Solidarity, Resistance, Hope - Solidaridad, Resistencia, Esperanza (SoliREsp) global meetings

Soliresp is the platform and mechanism to support people who face human rights violations and criminalisation in various countries. FIMARC joined in this mechanism and participated in the general meeting held in Olviedo, Spain in February 2020. Arnold from Paraguay represented FIMARC in that meeting. In September George Fernandez had a meeting with the secretariat of the Soliresp to discuss about our engagements in the future. FIMARC actively involves in the "Write for Columbia Campaign about the human rights violations over there.

Extended Coordination of the SoliREsp

Digital Meeting of the Extended Coordination of the SoliREsp was held on December 02, 2020. FIMARC is one of the coordination committee member of the SoliREsp. Meeting focussed on three key areas

- PART 1 - Analysis of the global situation : pandemic, power reconfigurations, situation of violence and persecution towards social movements and leaders
- PART 2 - SoliREsp activities in 2020
- PART 3: Perspectives for 2021 -fundamental actions

20. UNESCO Seminar on COVID 19 Impacts

George Fernandez, Secretary General of FIMARC participated in the virtual seminar organised by UNESCO on COVID 19 Impacts on 10 September 2020 and shared our concerns and perspectives as movements working with rural populations and peasants.

21. UNESCO Consultation on Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5)

At its 40th session, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted resolutions on the preparation of the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5). A questionnaire has been designed to solicit contributions from Non-Governmental Organizations in official partnership and Foundations in official relations with UNESCO regarding the new strategic orientations and programmatic focus of UNESCO.

The COVID-19 global pandemic, shows us how important international cooperation is for effective action and reminds us of the fundamental role of UNESCO with regard to the mandates assigned to it by the international community. FIMARC provided our organisational input in relation to the key priority areas, having the consultative status in UNESCO as well as provided collective input in relation to the International Catholic Centre for Cooperation with UNESCO in Paris (CCIC). Our contributions to this questionnaire would have an impact on the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025, to be examined by the Executive Board at its 210th session.

22. UNESCO : 2020 international Conference of NGOs “Envisioning a better and sustainable future: a new paradigm for civil society”

International Conference of NGOs (ICNGO)

The International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations is a key forum for meeting and dialogue among NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, explicitly provided for by the Directives. It enables NGO official partners to meet every two years (usually in December) to review the state of cooperation with UNESCO, to conduct collective consultations on the main lines of UNESCO's programme, and to facilitate cooperation between NGOs having common interests.

The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee

The **NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee** is a permanent body - elected by the International Conference of NGOs – operating between meetings of the International Conference to represent the interests of all NGO partners vis-à-vis UNESCO and ensure the proper functioning and efficiency of the partnership between the community of NGO partners and UNESCO. It is chaired by the Chairperson of the International Conference and is composed of 10 NGO partners (four with associate status and six with consultative status), with at least one partner from each region.

The Committee is currently chaired by Mr Davide Grosso, Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs for the 2021-2022 period. Among its main tasks, the Committee also organizes, in cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat, **international forums of NGOs** in official partnership with UNESCO on a priority issue of the Organization.

The 2020 International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) was held from 16 to 18 December 2020 on the theme “Envisioning a better and sustainable future: a new paradigm for civil society”.

In view of the current circumstances and in order to enable the equitable and inclusive participation of all NGOs in official partnership, the Conference was held **online for the first time**.

The 2020 conference was particularly important because NGOs had the opportunity to collectively transmit their opinions and suggestions on the preliminary proposals concerning UNESCO's draft Medium-Term Strategy (41 C/4) for 2022-2029 and the Programme and Budget (41 C/5) for 2022--2025.

Conference elected a new Chairperson of the Conference, as well as a new NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, made up of ten NGO partners representing all regions of the world.

The Conference is a key forum in which UNESCO's official NGO partners meet to review the state of cooperation with UNESCO. A statutory element of the collective cooperation expressly provided for by the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations (36 C /Res. 108), it gathers every two years NGOs in official partnership with the Organization. Representatives of Member States, foundations in official relations with UNESCO, other NGOs and/or other interested organizations also attended the Conference as observers.

FIMARC and the national movements

23. Sénégal : MARCS celebrated the Diocesan Day of the Rural World

As an extension of the FIMARC World Assembly in November 2018, the Diocese of Thiès gathered more than a thousand people this February 16, 2020 in Batal, near Bambey, around the different delegations of MARCS of Thiès (Senegalese Movement of FIMARC) and many supporters and partners, to celebrate the rural world, in its diversity and richness.

The theme of this day was: "Let's strengthen family farming to preserve our health and the environment". Prosper Kama, the President of MARCS recalled that this theme "is more than topical with regard to the effects of intensive agriculture on the degradation of the health of the populations and the environment"

Monsignor André Gueye, addressed the assembly and the competent authorities to ask for a better consideration of the rural world and the many challenges it faces, but also and above all, to take care of the environment. A duty certainly for the state, but which must first of all be a concern of the populations themselves, first concerned.



24. Kenya : DESECE activity on agroecology in covid 19 pandemic

DESECE is the Kenian NGO member of FIMARC. « Since the pandemic of covid-19 corona, we have had the challenge to reach our farmers with our field staff to assist the farmers. We continued activities when going to the field visiting farmers. »

« We had education awareness for the community members, farmers and youth against covid-19. We gave out fact sheets on information and give out the following items: water jericans, soaps, sanitizers, masks and different types of food stuffs to the vulnerable people (Elderly people, people living with HIV/Aids, orphans,...) »

« Concerning our activities on Agro-Ecology by the time of the pandemic of corona we had established 4 Nurseries' for the farmers/communities. Every nursery had a target of producing 10,000 seedlings to give to the farmers and public schools to establish food forests. This was doing

very well as we reached many schools and families. This same programme has been established with another NGO who has adopted our methods and they are doing the same programme. »

« DESECE has been contracted to train their farmers so far we have complete training 66 farmers who have been going in their villages to teach other families and are supervised by a team of 8 people and are fully funded. »



Distribution of water tank and masks in school



Some of the seedlings on the nurseries

25. Germany : Seminar on Peasant Rights and Land

Wolfgang Scharl, the president of FIMARC involves in the working group of peasant rights in Germany and participated in the seminar organising by this working group in end of September 2020 and lead the topic on Access to land. This working group is actively following up the implementation of UN Declaration of Peasant Rights. (UNDROP).

26 .France : CMR, agroecology and EU Common Agriculture Policy

Supporting rural development and types of agriculture consistent with « Laudato Si » is a priority shared by FIMARC and the national movements it federates. This priority is expressed in CMR through the advocacy concerning the orientations of the European Common Agricultural Policy. During the national consultation organised in autumn 2020 on the National Strategic Plan for France, it recalled the priorities it wishes to advance :

- A common agricultural policy that allows farmers and their families in Europe to earn a dignified and fair income
- An agricultural policy that favours the installation of young people in agriculture under good working and living conditions, whether or not they come from a farming background
- An agricultural policy caring the environment and allowing a production of quality food at an affordable price for all
- A European agricultural policy respecting the farmers of the South and promoting food sovereignty.



A CMR meeting on the Common Agricultural Policy with a Member of Parliament

27. Europe coordination : FIMARC and ProRurE (Association Pro Rural Europe)

In continuation of the multi-annual European ProRurE project, FIMARC was actively involved in the founding of the new association PRO RURAL EUROPE (on November 11th 2020) with the aim to strengthen European cohesion through active civil societies and to promote a lively and sustainable development of rural areas in Europe. Members of the FIMARC European Coordination and delegates of European FIMARC member movements are part of the board of this new association.

28. India : Global march for land and food sovereignty -

A global one-year march was organised by Gandhian through Ekta Parishad on the 150th anniversary of **Mahatma Gandhi's birth. The 14,000 km walk, called Jai Jagat 2020, started from New Delhi on October 2, 2019, and head to Geneva by October 2020** after winding through 10 countries.

As per Rajagopal PV, a Gandhian and founding member of Ekta Parishad. globalisation must see through the lens of Jai Jagat (victory to the world) – All for the planet, Planet for all. Everyone should think about the poor. An eye for an eye will not solve any problem. This march was to initiate conversation and urge implementation of policies which keeps the poorest in the mind,”

The march in India head to Jaura in Madhya Pradesh from New Delhi, then to Maharashtra and then to Sevagram in Gujarat. From there went to Shiraz in Iran. “Then it walk through Iran in 35 days, cross to Armenia, Georgia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy and then Switzerland. Final walk will be through Switzerland for 25 days and reach Geneva by September 25, 2020.

The march had four core pillars of advocacy. “Eradication of poverty, social inclusion, climate justice and non violent resolution of conflicts”.

FIMARC participated in the global culmination march for land and food sovereignty that had a final demonstration in Geneva in end of September .Gerard Boinon and Marie Theresa represented FIMARC in this global event.

FIMARC and its financial partners

29. Meetings with our financial partners in the context of the Pandemic

Meetings with Entraide & Fraternité (EF) - FIMARC together with MIJARC and JOC had different virtual meetings with Guy Aulines (in charge of International Movements) of EF to share about the updates of activities in the context of Pandemic. Our common project on gender training workshop had been shifted to 2021.

Meetings with DKA – FIMARC together with MIJARC had different virtual meetings with Philipp Buck (responsible of Asia and International Projects) to discuss about our activities in the context of Pandemic and to finalise our next long term joint project on strengthening family farming through agrobiological practices.

Meeting with CCFD-Terre Solidaire– George Fernandez and Jean Claude Germon attended a meeting organised by CCFD with the international federations of movements supported by CCFD-Terre Solidaire in order to define the terms and conditions of partnership.

30. CCFD General Assembly

Jean Claude Germon, bureau member of FIMARC, took part in the CCFD General Assembly at the end of August through video conference.

31. DKA Webinar on Making their Voices Heard: Realizing Peasants' Rights through Children and Youth in Agroecology

DKA Austria organised a kick-off webinar 30 November 2020 on the theme “Making their Voices Heard : Realizing Peasants' Rights through Children and Youth in Agroecology”. Webinar was facilitated by Ute Mayrhofer, DKA Austria.

Philipp Bück, DKA Austria gave an introduction with History, Background and Framework for the Proposed Advocacy Convergence on this topic. It was followed by inputs on Key Concepts such as:

- Agroecology, Isabelle Schützenberger (DKA Austria)
- Children's Participation (Pilgrim Bliss Gayo, Terre des Hommes-Germany)
- UNDROP - the UN Peasants' Rights Declaration (George Dixon Fernandez, International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements, FIMARC).

Q&A session and then, breakout session in regional groups and the plenary discussions allowed the participants to build some collective reflections in terms of the future work on this topic. Philipp Buck concluded the seminar with a note on concrete way forward in this regard.

George Fernandez, Secretary General of FIMARC was an intervener on the topic of UNDROP, actively involved in all the sessions of the seminars.

Conclusion

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our donors, allies and partners and, of course, to Exco, and national movements for their ongoing support and contributions to FIMARC. The post-COVID-19 'new normal' is impossible to think at the moment and anyone of us to predict, but social movements must nevertheless be ready for this situation. It requires renewed urgency and creative energy in our activism. Many of us anticipate an immediate future that will likely include new and more forceful restrictions on the ability of civil society to act, increased and hardened injustices, widened inequalities, and a rapidly closing space to confront and challenge power. While this expected reality will be tremendously hard, it can also challenge us to develop innovative and genuine transformative approaches in our actions and initiatives. To present alternatives that build equitable and just societies, and to step into the unknown, may require a new form of courage for many of us around the world (both in the North and in the South). In order to become real actors for change in this new reality, we might be forced to critically question our own practices, governing structures, decision making processes, alliances and dependencies. At the start of the year, perhaps we all should commit to a few core drivers of change that could help us in the search for truly transformative activism in 2021.

COVID 19 Pandemic calls for an urgent conversion in all spheres of live starting with personal conversion. This is a time to reflect our way of life, the mode of development that we have promoted and further our relations with nature and other fellow beings. It's time to take a new road. We really need to build a new history from the lessons that we learned. We need to provide feasible formation and support programmes to the farmers and other rural sectors to sustain their livelihoods in the context of current challenges as well as to face the post COVID era. Let's move together.