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Peasant agroecology is the only type of agroecology!

We wish to use this declaration to alert the participants of the International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Safety and Nutrition organized by the FAO on 18 and 19 September 2014. We affirm that peasant agriculture is the only type of agriculture: it is not compatible with the “ecosystem services” or the notion of “natural capital”, nor with the participation of agro-food and chemical industries in this symposium. This economic view of nature does not serve peasant agro-ecological practices but rather seeks to open new markets to multinationals who benefit from boosting their image. These alliances and agriculture thus formed do not match our social justice ambitions, but on the contrary undermine the foundations.

As organized social, association, union and professional movements, together we affirm that peasant agro-ecology exists today in France. We are obliged to qualify “peasant agro-ecology” to distinguish it from the communication campaign of the French Ministry of Agriculture and its Minister, Mr. Stéphane Le Foll, which flies the agro-ecology flag in view of consolidating agriculture policies predominantly for export. This is in addition to his drive to “produce more” including for energy purposes. By continuing to work with industrial model agriculture protagonists, he contributes to greening agriculture, which eliminates peasants and increasingly standardizes food products. Behind the fair observation that the current agriculture model has been dead locked, is a purely technical economic view of agriculture which promotes practices which have nothing to do with the actual sector. Even worse, there is a will to legitimize the financialization and the appropriation of nature. The “ecosystem services” are commodified, the wild and grown “biomass” is confiscated by intellectual property rights. Nature is patented! These objectives are incompatible with peasant autonomy and food sovereignty, which are core issues for agro-ecology. Within this framework, it is not surprising that nothing is being done for the political and overall economic context which determines agricultural and food choices. As such, public policies and international trade are not questioned, and land questions and social issues are not taken into account. By continuing to apply the same policies, the French government instead of offering a favorable framework for peasant agro-ecology practices, takes decisions which are leading to gradually excluding those who implement these practices. Within the framework of this agriculture policy which prides itself on environmental virtues, human-sized family farms shall continue to be replaced by factories, peasant know-how by patented technologies (like drones, for example) and human work by machines or chemical inputs. This kind of agriculture survives only due to declining fossil energy and increasing exploitation of precarious manpower which seeks refuge in its “bio-economy” to the delight of multi-nationals and financial markets while concealing its destructive forging ahead behind alternative methods of wording.

What we are faced with in France happens in many other countries. We would like to share our concerns and our resolutions with the participants of this international symposium. We endeavor to defend values and initiatives brought by peasants, peasants and actors of social movements, while denouncing false solutions. More than anything, peasant agro-ecology is a body of living practices supported by social movements with a common political objective aiming for a social and ecological type of agriculture based in rural territories. It is a stakeholder in the overall societal transformation dynamics which touches all sectors of activity: we are the principle players!

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