

## 1. Background

Pesticide Action Network (PAN) is a network of over 600 participating nongovernmental organizations, institutions and individuals in over 90 countries working to replace the use of hazardous pesticides with ecologically sound alternatives. Its projects and campaigns are coordinated by five autonomous Regional Centers.

This PAN International position paper came out from the working group on Food Sovereignty and Corporate Control and was collectively developed by the PAN Regional Centres and their partners. This paper provides PAN's views and analysis on food sovereignty and corporate control, proposes solution and presents the network's commitment to resolve the issue. Other position papers related to the five strategic objectives of PAN as well as supporting technical papers are also available.

## 2. The Problem

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, over 800 million people, mostly in developing countries, do not have access to food. Behind these cold data are men and women peasants, farmers, agricultural workers, indigenous people, herders and small rural communities who are slowly being displaced everyday due to the globalisation process and other national and local factors. The right to access and control land and other productive resources and the right to adequate food are growing social, economic and political crises.

Corporations' control over land, agriculture, food production and marketing is increasing rapidly. The impact is that food production, consumption patterns and lifestyles are increasingly being homogenised for greater control and profitability. Transnational corporations (TNCs) promote a model of agriculture that is unsustainable, against nature and depletes local and indigenous farming communities. It devastates their land, productive resources, knowledge and skills.

It is the TNCs involved in seeds, agrochemicals and the whole gamut of agricultural production from inputs to marketing and retailing, which now determine what to grow and the type of seeds and chemical inputs to use even at the community level. Meanwhile, through plantations and contract farming, rampant use of genetically modified seeds, pesticides and other hazardous technologies are on the rise.

The opening of markets brought by the globalisation process, driven by the G8 countries, the WTO and other free trade agreements, provide a huge opportunity for TNCs to gain more profits. This has also led to dumping of subsidised, cheap agricultural produce from the North to the weak and vulnerable markets of the South and in the process has destroyed the livelihoods of small farmers and agricultural workers.

TNCs take advantage of neo-liberal policies and conditionalities imposed by the international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to further



advance corporate agriculture. In partnership with CGIAR and other agriculture and research extension programmes, TNCs are propagating green revolution and gene technologies around the world.

Furthermore, food in the form of aid is used as a political tool by the U.S. to force governments in the South to align with its neo-liberal agenda. It also becomes a channel for the forced introduction and proliferation of genetically modified food.

Multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements are seen by the agricultural biotechnology industry as an important conduit for spreading GMOs around the world. U.S. agribusiness corporations are looking into bilateral and regional trade agreements to expand foreign understanding and acceptance of US regulations and standards, particularly with respect to agricultural biotechnology and intellectual property rights.

These trade agreements not only undermine the right of the communities and countries to decide on their policies in food and agriculture, it also threatens the health and environment of the people and their traditional knowledge.

As a result of these, small farming communities are being wiped-out as farming is no longer a sustainable livelihood. Hazardous technologies bring irreversible damage to biodiversity. Farmers' traditional knowledge in producing food is becoming endangered just like the farmers themselves. In this climate of maximising profits at all cost, the rights of agricultural workers are also being eroded and wages plummeting as TNCs move their facilities and their business in search of the cheapest labour to countries with weak regulations and protection.

Farm communities and the people are increasingly being de-linked, marginalised and disenfranchised from their food sources, resources and production systems. Communities are fast losing their potential, ability and responsibility to feed themselves.

### **3. The People Demand**

People are reclaiming their right to live with dignity. People's resistance against corporate agriculture is alive and strong.

The evolution of this resistance into "People's Food Sovereignty" has been rapid over the last five years and has emerged as a people's alternative against corporate control in agriculture. At the World Food Summit (WFS+ 5), "Food Sovereignty" ([www.foodsovereignty.org](http://www.foodsovereignty.org)) was put forward by the people's assembly attended by organisations of farmers, fisher folks, farm workers, pastoralists, workers in industries, urban poor, indigenous people, consumers, women and other groups who were calling to further uphold human rights in food and resources to produce food. Various social movements led by peasants have since embraced the concept, further debated on it, sharpened and popularised it ([www.foodsov.org](http://www.foodsov.org)).

Food sovereignty needs independence, it is the freedom and power of the people and their communities to assert and realize the right to food and to produce food, and fight the power of the corporations and other forces which destroy people's food production systems through trade,



investment and other policies and means. It is based on local or regional potential, capacity and variety. Food sovereignty is an urgent demand of the people and their communities.

Nations and states must be able to protect themselves from negative international impacts to promote, develop and exercise the people's food sovereignty.

As part of its commitment to grassroots empowerment, PAN asserts the demands of communities for food sovereignty that encompass:

- right of communities and people to decide on their food and agriculture policies
- right to produce sustainably based on holistic approach, biodiversity and building on indigenous and local knowledge
- right to food that is adequate, nutritious and culturally appropriate
- right to access and control land, territories and productive resources such as seeds, water and other possible support
- empowerment of women and the right to access and control of productive resources
- fair wages for agricultural workers and workers rights
- fair trade as a basic standard
- build up and globally promote the “**complex quality standard**” including social, environmental and hygienic quality of food/product

#### 4. The Commitment

PAN is committed to food sovereignty as outlined above, and it will forward the debate and discussions within its network, in broader coalitions as well as in intergovernmental organisations and donor agencies.

Based on the food sovereignty platform, PAN is committed to working with civil society organisations, men and women peasants, small farmers, agricultural workers and agricultural communities to create awareness of pesticide poisoning and its abuse and to advocate for safe, sustainable and agro-ecological forms of agriculture. PAN commits to solidarity with peasant movements and struggles for land and productive resources.

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