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**The Youth of the European Coordination Via Campesina met in March 12th and 13th, 2016, to formulate their common position and their requests about new entrants in Europe.**

HERE IS THE SUMMARY OF THEIR WORKS.

# INSTALLATION: REQUESTS OF THE YOUTH

## FOR EUROPE



**Nowadays, a farm disappears every three minutes in Europe. The number of farms and farmers is decreasing, and the average age of farmers is going up (around 60 years old)... Meanwhile, the European population keeps growing, as well as food demand.**

**Peasant (small scale) farming has fed humanity successfully and sustainably for hundreds of years, providing healthy employment for rural populations. There are lots of young people who want to live and work on farms these days, but they face huge challenges, which must be addressed if we are to renovate Europe's rural workforce.**

### 1 Access to commons

(in particular land, water and seed). **All across Europe the price of land is rising quickly**, with wealthy individuals and organisations treating it as a commodity to be bought as a financial investment. Small farms are being bought up and combined with bigger farms. Land is scarce and where it is available, access to water is often complicated. Across the Earth seeds are being patented, regulated and manipulated, and it's becoming increasingly difficult for farmers to use and exchange their peasant seeds.

### 2 The lack of availability of "agro-ecological" training

**The vast majority of agricultural training available focuses on "agro-industrial" farming**, with high input, low labour, socially and environmentally damaging methods of production. We want our training to focus on an agriculture respecting his environment.

### 3 The Common Agricultural Policy

**Although there is compulsory Pillar 1 support for new farmers across the EU** (25% extra payment on per hectare payments), this is only applicable for holdings between 20-95 hectares. Pillar 2 support is voluntary for Member states, and is not widely provided.

### 4 Access to markets

**The extreme concentration of the food market means that small-scale, agro-ecological farmers are bullied out of business.** Under the proposed trade and investment agreements, Europe's subsistence farmers will be even more at risk. New farmers are virtually unable to compete, their only solution often being to build their own distribution network so as to generate an income.

1

ACCESS TO

## COMMONS

On a European level, one of the issues that new entrants face relates to access to “commons”, such as land, water and seeds but also knowledge and training:

### LAND, WATER, SEEDS: PRIVATE PROPERTY AND SPECULATION

The existence of protective patenting on living organisms is harmful to biological diversity and prevents the free exchange of peasant seeds between peasants. Nowadays, land and water are considered presently as “private properties” and not as “common properties”. This has a major impact on young farmers’ starting out. Indeed, financial speculations and risky financial transactions on land in touristic areas or in areas where agribusiness is present result in the loss of agricultural lands. The structure of the Common Agricultural Policy supports this process by the basic payment rewarding land-owners for the amount of hectares they own, rather than for the quality of their farming.

#### What is already available?

- Exchange of seeds, public and social garden or others;
- *Terre de lien* in France: assistance for the installation of farmers by the collective acquisition and renting of agricultural land without land speculation.

#### What we’re asking for:

- Stop patent protection on living organisms;
- Approve the free exchange of peasant seeds between peasants;
- Modify the legislation regarding the public and collective management of “common properties” in the general interest: restore the laws of customs and uses.

### FARMING KNOWLEDGE

Impairment of the farming world, low number of people, cultural rupture with the Earth’s values. The impairment of the peasant world, and of its culture in History, especially since the rural exodus in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the agricultural mechanization, has reduced our European farming knowledge; the “know-how” transmitted from generation to generation. Children don’t receive basic teaching in how to produce, prepare and consume food of good quality. Today’s adults do not have these skills and therefore can’t transmit them to the young.

The biological systems of agriculture are placed at the second level in the agricultural world which is currently dominated by chemicals.

#### What already exists?

- *Solidarity between peasants, local networks of associations, syndicates and leaders of territories;*
- *Direct meeting and selling between consumers and producers (AMAP, CSA, school farms, farmer’s markets, collectives farmer’s stores);*
- *Local school restaurants and collective restaurants with local food from agroecological peasants;*
- *Wwoofing programme.* ■

#### What we’re asking for:

- Recognition of peasants and their values through representation in the political sphere;
- Creation of more human-scale farms to increase the number of peasant farmers (reducing unemployment) and support with succession;
- Inscription of peasant knowledges into bond education programs / curriculums (compulsory education at school about water, soil, seeds, food sovereignty);
- Opening of agrarian colleges or consulting centers, where future farmers can study not only agronomy but also basic agricultural skills. Small scale farmers need a chance to gain the skills of business; calculation of expenses, planning their working hours in right and economical ways, etc.

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PEASANT

## AGRO-ECOLOGY FARMING

It is our major goal to achieve conditions that facilitate the installation of thousands more agro-ecological farms in Europe. This will help to support the food sovereignty movement and maintain Europe’s biodiversity. It is necessary to turn away from our current competitive economic system and to co-create a new way of community, sharing and distribution. Concretely, to achieve more agro-ecology we have the following requests:

### POLITICAL STATEMENT

We want a political statement, which recognises Peasant Agroecological Farming. Currently the mainstream political view is that modern agriculture has to include specialisation of farms and the maintenance of global competition. This capitalistic logic leads to destruction and oppression of people worldwide. Conversely, the objective of peasant agro-ecological farming is to reduce the global impact of our production and to develop resilient farm organisms that take into account the environment and the people living in it. Peasant farming that focuses on agro-ecology is not competitive in a sense of low production costs. Agro-ecological farming is not regressive, but a sustainable way of producing food; it takes responsibility for the effects it has on its environment. The installation of new entrants has to be encouraged, therefore, it is essential that politicians acknowledge the necessity to support this farming system. Examples of support can be local authorities giving advice, technical or capital support in the beginning that can help to make it possible for new entrants to consider and to develop their production system.

### SYSTEM OF AGRO-ECOLOGY TRAINING SCHEMES

We want to build up and develop a system of agro-ecology training schemes in Europe. People starting in agriculture often do not bring the required knowledge to practice agro-ecology on their farm. The majority of existing agricultural schools and universities do not teach sufficient skills in this subject area and focus normally on industrial logic. The agroecology network we strive for will teach the peasant’s perceptions and includes both theoretical knowledge sharing and practical training. Schools can provide information on technical issues, to enable new entrants to develop sustainable farm organisms and political aspects, to raise awareness and strengthen the peasant movement. The network can represent a framework for best practice and ancestral knowledge to be passed on from generation to generation. We want to intensify intergenerational exchange and implement a system of mentoring by older farmers for new entrants.

An very interesting example of a successful agro-ecology school is the one created in the Basque country by EHNE Biskaya. The school provides free courses that include both practical and theoretical input and farm visits.

### PEASANT-LED RESEARCH

As research feeds into education we request peasant-led research that deals with agro-ecological and peasant subjects. The research projects need to be participatory, involving farmers in the choice of subjects to be researched and as many projects as possible have to be researched under field conditions on farms. Moreover, results have to be prepared to be used by farmers in the situations they face. It has to be assured that knowledge is not going to be stolen from farmers e.g. seeds by companies intending to draw a profit from it, but that the research results will be freely available and designed to be used to the benefit of agro-ecological farmers. At the moment the lack of funding available for research on peasant subjects is striking. ■

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COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY

## CAP

CAP works as a subsidiary system that distributes almost 40% of the EU’s budget. But instead of being a support system, it creates dependence or farmers to constantly receive CAP money to be able to operate. The realities for new entrants in the member countries are very different: Most countries do not make use efficiently of the possibilities to support young farmers and new entrants.

### CHANGE FINANCIAL AIDS

In most member countries new entrants receive little or no aid to start a farm. In order to receive money you already have to own land or be ‘Head of Holding’ of a farm, and the amount of money you receive is linked to the amount of land that you have. There are certain excluding criteria for receiving CAP aid, e.g. a maximum age of 40, a minimum income or even a minimum amount of land like in the UK (5 ha). We think that all new entrants should receive a direct timely financial aid (capital) to start operating, e.g. 25.000 euro. This money should not be correlated to the amount of land that peasants want to work on, but to the person, and thus give people the opportunity to start a livelihood as a small-scale farmer.

Examples of member countries who give some financial subsidies for new entrants are France and Spain. This aid can help new entrants with their start-up costs, but the access to this support is again restricted by certain criteria which are not met by all entrants.

### FREE CONSULTATION POSSIBILITIES

There have to be free consultation possibilities for new entrants. So far, So far, European advisory services for new entrants are rare, insufficient or non-existent, or they’re not free. When it is available it is not for free. Starting a farm with agro-ecological principles is a complex process, even more so for people who are new to agriculture. Free and easily available consultation is a crucial part of getting more people to start farming. Agricultural support institutes have to be publicly financed!

### SUPPORT FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Support for capital investments has to be adjusted. So far, to receive these subsidies, peasants have to buy brand new equipment. It is not acceptable for new entrants, with high risk and high set-up costs, to be forced to buy new equipment to receive aid. Capital investment support should permit buying used equipment.

### INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

To follow the principles of food sovereignty, an involvement of civil society is necessary when deciding how our agricultural structure should be developed. The population should have a say in how agricultural support should be distributed. ■

**We want a clear prioritization of young farmers and new entrants in the CAP, in all member countries!**

## PUBLIC POLICIES SHOULD SUPPORT MARKET STRUCTURES

Access to a remunerative market is difficult for new entrants. We are calling for a regulation system of remunerative prices for all. Failing that, it is necessary to establish and support powerful Farm Based Organisations. They will further ensure to organize the creation of the association of the farmers producing the quality products, the goal of the association is to jointly tackle various agricultural problems, search for the trustworthy buyers, protect their rights and sell their products in the best way possible. They allow to support new entrants. Furthermore, it possible to achieve diversification of the products, to protect the farmers from the unfair-low prices by means of cooperation with the organizations issuing the certificates and in order, finally to get the products certified. They should be support. Otherwise, despite of the fact that healthy products need more expenses the price for the both types at the market is the same. This discourages the farmer to manufacture ecologically clean product. In order to solve this problem we think it is essential to identify the prices at the market according to the quality and its origin.

Product quality and origin must be traceable for the buyer / Community

– Meetings / exchange visits between peasants (FBO, Coop etc..)

– The establishment of political group in order to protect farmers' rights.

## FARMERS SHOULD BE PROTECTED FROM MANIPULATION OF TRADE ORGANIZATIONS

### Objectively determine the market price.

Farmers should be protected from manipulation of re-sellers and trade organizations and food commodification. Regulations should be changed to ensure the rights to access to market and a bargaining power of the prices in the face of the downstream of the sectors. For example, we experience problems with peasants producing wine, hazelnuts and citrus fruits. They depend on the decisions of larger producers, i.e. when the processing factory first gets the products and the price of the products. This approach fundamentally damages the product itself, as most small-scale farmers do not have proper storage, equipped to the relevant standards. These factors keep the prices low. When the market price starts from a low baseline, it affects the skilled and diligent small-scale farmer. It is vital to deliver products according to the quality, and for the farmers in the agricultural regions to have access to temporary storage equipped with high standard materials, at low cost, or ideally free of charge.

**Co-operative / joint sales will give farmers the opportunity to sell a product for better price.** Purchasers prefer to buy products in large quantities rather than collect from lots of individuals. Farmers should be supported to organize themselves to make it easier for buyers to collect orders at one place and time. It will help to control quality of products, and help small-scale producers achieve the highest price accordingly. ■



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## CONCLUSION

**The installation of new farmers has to be the main objective for the upcoming years in Europe.**

**It is the primary tool for food sovereignty, vibrant rural life and people's livelihoods.**

**Peasant farming helps to keep rural values, skills and knowledge alive, and has to be reinforced.**

**Let us create a system where this can happen! Let's struggle together to these proposed solutions find political realizations!**

## REFERENCES

**On average, across the EU, there are 6.5% of farm managers under the age of 35.**

**More than half of farm managers are aged 55 or above in EU-28.**

**While area used for agriculture remained stable, over 1 out of 4 farms disappeared between 2003 and 2013 in the EU.**

Sources : Thinktank, Eurostat, Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics 2015 edition, Eurostat 206/2015.