

INTERNATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS´ FORUM

STATEMENT OF YOUNG FARMERS AT GLOBAL FORUM FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (GFFA) 2025

INTRODUCTION

Food systems around the world are facing immense and increasing challenges due to human-made climate change and increasing conflicts. Those who have the least responsibility for causing the climate catastrophe are the ones carrying the brunt of its destructive impacts on their livelihoods, namely women and other gender-marginalized groups, youth, indigenous peoples, farmers, and peasants especially in the Global South. Addressing the issues these groups face and centering their solutions must be central to building sovereign and sustainable food systems within the climate justice framework.

1. Considering the proposed shift to a bioeconomy

The proposed shift to a bioeconomy promises to solve the global economy’s fossil fuel dependency by using food and agricultural waste as biomass for energy production. It promises potential for waste reduction and for a new market that could allow producers to succeed in making a sustainable living in agriculture. If done in a just way, creating a sustainable bioeconomy could have the potential to reduce food waste and create socio-economic opportunities.

However, we question whether this proposed shift will truly fight the underlying issue of extractive systems. We are concerned that the bioeconomy is a technological fix proposed by the industrialized and developed economies that does not address the real issues of stark global inequalities and violent and unequal power relations. Questions remain about the rights of small-scale farmers and peasants in this framework and their sovereignty in the face of the power of multi-national corporations. In times of climate collapse and in our striving for climate justice and food sovereignty for peasants and farmers, we need to seriously assess the bioeconomy’s impact on sovereign access and control of land, seeds, markets, and technology.

We are worried that the bioeconomy, as it is being proposed by mainly industrialised nations, is intrinsically linked to corporate-controlled nano- and biotechnology and would thereby contribute to the increased artificialization and corporate control of nature, which we strongly oppose. We question whether the bioeconomy, when it is proposed in the current dominant economic system, can ever be compatible with peasant rights. In addition, we need to ask whether it is possible for the global economy to continue requiring resources at its current rate. We are worried by the idea of food actually replacing the fossil fuel input that is needed to fuel the global economy at its current rate. We demand that governments enable critical policy shifts for structural change within the global economy to cut net emissions and safeguard biodiversity. As we are facing escalating hunger crises worldwide, we, as young farmers and peasants, emphasize that the primary goal of agriculture is to grow food and sustainably develop our communities.

2. Young Farmers' Participation and Land Access Reforms

We are grateful to be able to speak, representing a wide range of youth voices, and demand earnest integration of the youth perspective in all agricultural policy processes. The centering of youth must hereby take into account youth diversity¹, with specific attention to indigenous youth and historically disadvantaged communities. Governments should support the creation of bottom-up local mechanisms for global policy formulation and bioeconomy suitability and criteria assessments. Collaboration with locally youth-led NGOs and other civil society groups can help train policymakers and center community interests. Farmers and peasants know their lands, communities, and markets best and must be at the center of such assessments.

Due to increasing land prices caused by land speculation and power consolidation, young people need government support to participate in our food system, build their capacities, and succeed in generational renewal. We need equitable access to land and policies that center the rights of those historically marginalized, who are contributing significantly to rural and national economies and protecting biodiversity: landless peasants, impoverished rural workers, women, youth, and indigenous peoples. Land grabbing by large corporations is prevalent, and we question whether, in the proposed bioeconomy, this can be stopped. Comprehensive and inclusive agrarian reform that protects peasants and farmers from land grabs by corporations and access to land is a fundamental right and necessary if we want to redistribute power to us producers and ensure a just future for agriculture.

We need a new international Conference for Agrarian Reforms & Rural Development (ICARRD+20) to take place in 2026 to implement the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests (VGGT) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP). Land-use policies must be integrated with climate, water, and biodiversity policies and be region-specific yet compatible globally. Youth participation, a prosperous democracy, and sustainable development of food systems are essential to achieve peace. Conflicts and wars severely hinder access to land, destroy communities and infrastructure, and exacerbate hunger and inequality. All efforts must be directed toward restoring peace and establishing democratic systems that prioritize the rights of food producers and consumers.

3. Food Sovereignty

As young peasants and farmers, we demand efforts towards food sovereignty and for power to be with us as producers. We reject giving up sovereignty over our land and farming practices to multinational food retail chains and free trade agreements. We all deserve healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. This right can only be enjoyed by everyone if nation-states realize the right of peoples to democratically define and control their own food and agricultural systems. Food sovereignty defends the interest and inclusion of the next generation. This includes the protection of biodiversity and the health and habitability of rural regions. In order for our new generation to be able to earn our livelihood in farming,

¹ Diversity in terms of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, class, levels of education, citizenship, and disability status.

governments need to make investments in rural areas and their infrastructure. We demand policies that protect our local markets from extractive global trade and call for a system that shapes markets based on equity, solidarity, and ethics of responsible production. Governments need to make greater policy efforts to support local and regional food chains.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, local food systems have proved to be more resilient and can be the solution for our communities in the multiple crises around us. Farmers and peasants need parity prices for their work to thrive in their profession and life, taxation that keeps profits in their communities, and policies that minimize imports and prioritize local food production. Fair trade frameworks are only possible if small-scale producers can compete and are not pushed out by large corporations. To realize this, we want to see the implementation of our human rights as formulated in the afore mentioned UNDROP declaration and in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Passed by the UN General Assembly, these declarations grant us sovereign control over our seeds, land, and the culture surrounding our farming practice. To thrive in our communities and work with the land, we further demand context and need-specific social protection systems to guarantee access to quality education, health, sanitation and hygiene, adequate housing, and safe and dignified working conditions for all food producers and rural workers.

4. Agroecology as the Basis for Sustainability

Farming a sustainable bioeconomy can only happen if the earth is treated with respect and the food is grown in harmony with ecological processes. We demand that all actors should be included in assessments concerning a bioeconomy, including nature as its own stakeholder with rights. The concept of agroecology ensures this and is a real solution to tackle the climate crisis and to move away from extractive fossil fuel-based industrial food systems. It offers a holistic approach that integrates ecological and regenerative principles into agricultural practices, promoting biodiversity, resilience, and sustainability. This model supports diversified farming systems and stewards soil health, which is crucial to farming in a sustainable way. We wonder if in the bioeconomy prevalent, the biomass monoculture farming model might have large negative ecological effects, especially on biodiversity, as this is happening to an alarming degree already. Agroecology also has an important social justice aspect that ensures that local economies are supported, fostering equitable access to resources, lowering entry barriers into farming for youth, and empowering rural communities.

We demand that the health and environmental risks of NBIC technologies (nanotechnology, biotech, information technology, and cognitive technology) linked to the proposed bioeconomy be critically assessed with the input of peasants and other food producers. We believe that in a sustainable and circular bioeconomy, the whole production chain needs to be taken into account. It is important in the fight against waste to create policies that support agroecological food chains, as they create less food waste than industrial ones, and work on consumer awareness. Further, the question of equitable distribution of food is central. This circular economy is central to achieving a sustainable food system.

5. Sovereign control of technology

Innovation and technology have always been central to farming. We see great potential in using technology and open data to share skills and information with other food producers to be able to

adapt our practices as effectively as possible in the face of the climate crisis. Furthermore, we see potential in new technology to reduce the ecological impact of food production, to promote peasant-to-peasant knowledge exchange and community-centered innovation and make use of waste products in an attempt to move toward a circular bioeconomy. Technology should complement rather than displace traditional and indigenous practices and always be developed with local community involvement to ensure it fits their needs.

We believe that accessibility of all kinds of technology is at the center of a just food system and bioeconomy. Especially the aforementioned groups, women, youth, peasants, and indigenous peoples, need equitable access to technology. Cooperatives and other local participatory structures can provide opportunities for access and need to be supported by governmental policies. Further, collaborating with educational and research institutions can be a way to address barriers.

The questions that we want to raise around new technology are political ones about ownership and sovereignty. Peasants and farmers need to be in full control of all kinds of technologies, including the right to repair. We demand that their adoption should not create dependencies that infringe on producers' ability to make sovereign decisions over their production, territories, culture, and lives and that governments create policies that stop corporations from making profits at the expense of peasants' and farmers' rights and livelihoods. Peasants and farmers need to have the right to decide for themselves if they want to adopt new technologies into their growing systems and not be pushed into using them by corporate actors.

CONCLUSION

Global food systems can become a source of life, not conflict and corporate control. A bioeconomy framework can only be just and sustainable when it addresses questions of stark global inequalities and violent power relations. We must work towards a society and governance that places principles of equity, ecological sustainability, and food sovereignty above corporate interests. We demand policies that create the necessary conditions for peasants and farmers to practice agroecology and ensures our rights over land, seeds, market and technologies. We demand that the control over food systems is returned to those who grow the food. We need policies that ensure that farmers and communities become the true stewards of their land and future. Together, we can create a system that feeds everyone, supports biodiversity, is grounded in principles of justice and ensures a fair and sustainable livelihood for all farmers and peasants. There is no bioeconomy without the right to food.

Young farmers expressed divergent views on the following points

- “extractive capitalism” or “extractive systems”
- “current dominant neoliberal economic system” or “current dominant economic system”
- “multinational food retail chains and neoliberal free trade agreements” or “multinational food retail chains and free trade agreements”
- “Accordingly, we oppose the modification of living organisms and the increasing privatization of nature through ever-growing transnational corporations. These corporations are taking power and control away from us farmers and peasants and are making us dependent, hindering us from adapting to a fast-changing climate.”
- “We question whether the use of genetically modified organisms really reduces the dependence on chemical inputs or rather increases the reliance on them and thus exacerbates global inequality.”