



LA VIA CAMPESINA
the global voice
of peasants!

La Via Campesina - A movement of movements and the global voice of peasants¹ who feed the world

La Via Campesina, founded in 1993, is an international movement bringing together millions of peasants, landless workers, indigenous people, pastoralists, fishers, migrant farmworkers, small and medium-size farmers, rural women and peasant youth from around the world. Built on a solid sense of unity and solidarity, it defends peasant agriculture for food sovereignty.

Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their food and agriculture systems. La Via Campesina insists that diverse, peasant-driven agroecological modes of production, based on centuries of experience and accumulated evidence, is central to guaranteeing healthy food to everyone while remaining in harmony with nature.

To achieve food sovereignty, La Via Campesina mobilizes and advocates for agrarian reform in peasant territories and provides training on agroecological production methods. This global coalition is also a platform for its members worldwide to communicate and carry out joint solidarity actions, mobilizations, and campaigns in defence of land, water, seeds, and forests.

Over the last three decades, La Via Campesina has successfully found a seat at the table of global institutions of governance such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation, the UN Decade of Family Farming, the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and more. The United Nations Declaration on Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, adopted by the General Assembly in 2018, results from 17 years of negotiations patiently led by La Via Campesina and its allies. This Declaration is among the essential international instruments that defend the rights of small-scale food producers and is a crucial tool in the implementation of food sovereignty.

Currently, La Via Campesina comprises 182 local and national organizations in 81 countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Altogether it represents about 200 million small-scale food producers. Around the world, La Via Campesina has more than 70 schools and training processes based on popular education, which is a method and an approach that puts forward the scaling up of agroecology at the territorial level and the strengthening of peoples' food sovereignty. All these agroecological training processes are being constructed and organized by member organizations of La Via Campesina.

¹ La Via Campesina's definition of "Peasants" includes people who till the land to produce food, the fishers, the pastoralists, the farmworkers, the landless, the migrant workers, the indigenous people rural workers - of diverse identities, gender and age groups.

► **La Via Campesina is an autonomous, pluralist, multicultural movement, political in its demand for social justice and is independent of any political party, economic or other types of affiliation.**

1. NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US: A MOVEMENT BORN IN 1993

In 1993, - peasant representatives, comprising women, men and people of diverse identities and ethnicities, coming from social organizations and small-scale food cooperatives from different continents, founded La Via Campesina at a meeting in Mons, Belgium. At that time, agricultural policies and agribusinesses were globalized, and small farmers needed to develop a shared vision and struggle to defend it. Peasant representatives and other small-scale food producers who founded this global movement also wanted to have their voices heard and participate directly in the decisions affecting their lives.

THE CENTRALITY OF PEASANT WOMEN AND YOUTH IN FEEDING THE WORLD:

Women produce 70% of the food on earth but are marginalized and oppressed by neoliberalism, colonialism and patriarchy. In La Via Campesina, they are at the helm of our struggle to transform the food systems. As a global movement seeking social justice, La Via Campesina defends women's rights and gender equality and fights against all forms of violence against women and people of diverse identities. Young peasants, who come from our territories, play a central role in keeping our struggles alive. They are committed to the historical demand for food sovereignty and are an inspiring force in the movement. They contribute to advancing Food Sovereignty globally by using innovative and inspiring ideas to spread the message of agroecology and peasant feminism in our communities.

2. A VOICE FROM THE TERRITORIES

La Via Campesina is a grassroots mass movement whose vitality and legitimacy comes from peasants' organizations at the grassroots. Its operation relies on decentralized decision-making between all its regional arms. Every member organization of La Via Campesina is La Via Campesina, and represent the movement both within their respective countries and also at international forums.

To ensure that the International Movement represents the diversity of its members, the international operative secretariat of La Via Campesina "rotates" according to the collective decision made every four years by the International Conference. It was first located in Belgium (1993-1996), then in Honduras (1997-2004), Indonesia (2005-2013), Harare, Zimbabwe (2013-2020) and Bagnolet, France (November 2021 onwards).

NOT A FEDERATION. NOT AN "NGO":

La Via Campesina is a Movement of Movements. It is not a Federation or an NGO with rigid structures, staffing and funding. As a movement, it articulates the voice of peasants and defends their rights in spaces at all levels. For this reason, La Via Campesina does not engage in short-term social projects, nor does it is an entity that "implements projects on the ground". Its autonomy and authenticity come from the fact that La Via Campesina is first and foremost the voice of the people who work the land and feed the world. It ensures direct representation of rural communities and their representatives in global, regional and national spaces of governance and negotiations. La Via Campesina is not speaking "on behalf of" peasants. The peasants that form this global movement articulate directly at the international level.

The highest decision making space in the movement is the International Conference that takes place every four years. Since 1993, La Via Campesina has organized seven such International Conferences. The decisions generated from this International Conference, which are based on the lived realities of rural communities worldwide, are then implemented by an elected body of peasant representatives from all continents. This body is called the International Coordination Committee (ICC) of La Via Campesina. The elected representatives strive to meet at least twice a year to review and finalize many activities and plans. This democratically elected body of peasant representatives, comprising women, men, welcoming non-binary gender members, and also including the youth, is supported by a lean team of technical staff, volunteers and interns who assist with the daily technical operations and logistics of its global and regional secretariats.

3. GLOBALIZE THE STRUGGLE, GLOBALIZE HOPE ~ BUILDING INTERNATIONALISM THROUGH SOLIDARITY ACTIONS!

La Via Campesina is a movement that upholds the spirit of internationalism and solidarity. It presents grassroots solutions to global warming and lays the pathway to addressing hunger, malnutrition and distress migration in rural areas. It is an original expression of the struggles in defence of land, seeds, water and forests that are taking place in countries around the world. The movement believes that while diverse and rooted in local culture and context, all these struggles have a fundamental element of centrality - the demand for social justice and respect for peasants' rights. And this central demand and its various political expressions are made visible through solidarity actions that take place every year on the following days;

- ▶ **8th March: International Women's Day** – La Via Campesina joins women's movements and social movements to demand equal rights. It campaigns for the elimination of gender-based discrimination at all levels of the society. It advocates for the realization of popular peasant feminism in rural communities.
- ▶ **17th April: International Day of Peasant Struggles** – A day to remember The El Dorado dos Carajás Massacre where 19 landless peasants lost their lives to police brutality and state-sponsored repression. It is a day when La Via Campesina highlights the criminalization and oppression of rural social movements worldwide.
- ▶ **10th September: International Day of Action against the World Trade Organization and Free Trade Agreements.** In the memory of Mr Lee Kyun Hae, a South Korean farmer who sacrificed himself during a mass protest against the WTO in Cancun, Mexico, in 2003 while holding a banner that read "WTO kills farmers". La Via Campesina marks this day to highlight the devastating consequences that free trade agreements have on national and local economies, particularly on small-scale food producers.
- ▶ **16th October: International Day of Action for Peoples' Food Sovereignty & against transnational corporations** – A day to amplify the demand for food sovereignty and call out the aggressive expansion and human rights violation of Transnational Agribusiness firms. The day is also an occasion to present the alternative pathway to address the pressing crises of global warming, hunger, malnutrition and extreme poverty.
- ▶ **25th November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** – La Via Campesina joins women's movements worldwide to demand justice and a violence-free life in all spheres for women, girls and LGBTIQ communities.
- ▶ **3rd December: International Day of "No Pesticides"** The movement stands in solidarity with the struggle against agro-toxins and chemicals, increasingly pushed by agribusiness.

4. HOW CAN YOU HELP?

La Via Campesina is a movement that relies on contributions from individuals and associations that believe in food sovereignty and the need for peasant agriculture. All our supporters, who contribute either their time or their resources to La Via Campesina, are activists who believe that social transformation is possible only through acts of solidarity. The peasant movement is a movement built and run by ordinary people who work the land. You can be a part of this broad, diverse and dynamic coalition of peasants and small farmers in the following ways;

1. If you are someone who can help the movement with interpretation or translation, write to: **interpreters-signup@viacampesina.org**
2. If you are a student or a researcher who wishes to intern or volunteer with our global or regional secretariats, write to: **internships@viacampesina.org**
3. If you are a multimedia producer, photographer or artist, who can help us tell the story of our territories, write to: **communications@viacampesina.org**
4. If you are someone who could donate to help us maintain the annual meeting of our ICC members and other basic financial needs of the movement, you can contribute here: **<https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/viacampesina>**

Visit **www.viacampesina.org** for more information and to subscribe to our news updates, and make a donation.

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