

DECLARATION

Global People Summit on Food Systems

End corporate monopoly control! Fight for People's Rights to Just, Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Food Systems!

September 24, 2021

We are organizations of smallholder farmers, landless peasants, agricultural workers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, plantation workers; groups representing indigenous peoples, local communities, youth, women, urban poor, and consumers; and advocates of food sovereignty, agroecology, and genuine agrarian reform and rural development. We represent the global regions of Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and North America.

We make up the Global People's Summit for Just, Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Food Systems.

In 2020, about 2.37 billion people worldwide suffered moderate or severe food insecurity, according to the 2021 report on the state of food security and nutrition. The number of food-insecure people swelled by 320 million in just one year – equivalent to the increases in the previous five years combined.

Further, the raging COVID-19 pandemic has devastated millions of jobs and livelihoods worldwide, including those directly involved in food production, worsening the already alarming and deteriorating state of global hunger and poverty. Worldwide, the number of people facing hunger reached about 768 million in 2020, around 118 million more than in 2019. This includes those who are likely to have experienced hunger as a result of the pandemic.

We stress, however, that the COVID-19 pandemic is just one of several drivers of worsening hunger and food insecurity. Long before the coronavirus, a pandemic of systemic and perpetual hunger being perpetrated by big business through the globalized food economy – a system characterized by unsustainable monoculture production, environmental plunder, and waste; as well as wars and conflicts fueled by imperialist competition for resources, land, and markets.

The worsening climate crisis – highlighted in the 2021 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – has been pushing hundreds of millions to famine and deprivation. Like many other environmental crises, the climate crisis is deeply rooted in the inherently

destructive monopoly capitalist mode of production, including in food and agriculture.

Amid these multiple and interrelated crises of health, climate, environment, and economy and their many impacts on hunger and poverty, it is indeed very urgent to radically transform the global food system.

The nature of this transformation should be a subject of open and honest debate, with people's rights at the center of all discussions. But the oligopolies of agribusiness including the agro-industrial livestock industry, agrochemicals, genetic engineering, and digital technology in cahoots with research institutions, foundations, and token civil society groups, have dominated and dictated the discussions on food systems transformation, as can be clearly seen in the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS).

We find it unacceptable that the UNFSS is proclaiming itself as a so-called "people's summit" when the aspirations and demands of the world's peoples for a truly radical transformation of food systems are being met with lip service while being sidelined by the profit-seeking interests of monopoly corporations. As the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food pointed out, the UNFSS turned a blind eye to structural causes of failed food systems, ignored the worrisome corporate concentration of power, and diluted the right to participation in decision-making through the so-called multistakeholder approach. While supposedly encouraging the contribution of grassroots movements and civil society, the UNFSS lacked transparency and meaningful opportunities for people to participate. Those who took part in UNFSS events and meetings have become cynical as there was no clear connection between people's input and the Summit's outcomes.

The path that UNFSS has charted is towards the further promotion of "techno-fix "solutions", including digital farming or precision agriculture; harmful technologies like agrochemicals and genetic engineering; and market-based approaches anchored in neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization, pushed by corporations and implemented by governments – all for the narrow benefit of big business at the great expense of people and the planet, including fragile ecosystems already suffering unprecedented forest fires to make way for agro-industrial production.

It is highly concerning that powerful industrial livestock agribusinesses, which are among the worst emitters of GHGs and destroyers of forests, have gained space in the UNFSS while small-holder farmers have been almost erased from the process. The UNFSS thus serves this destructive industry by greenwashing its harmful practices and giving them free

passes to continue as usual with their dirty business. Meanwhile, governments and multilateral development banks continue to invest in unsustainable livestock farming, especially in the Global South, when the real solution is to divest from factory farming and redirect those resources towards small-scale diverse farming, agroecological practices, and overall cleaner food systems.

We say to the UNFSS and its big business patrons, "Not in our name!"

Not in our name shall you peddle unsafe GM foods on the pretext of addressing the climate crisis when your real intention is to deepen and expand corporate monopoly control of our seeds and resources.

Not in our name shall you push more toxic pesticides from the Poison Cartel of big agrochemical companies in the guise of improving farm productivity, when these expensive inputs merely shove small food producers into the pits of debts and bankruptcy, while damaging our health and environment.

Not in our name shall you displace and threaten indigenous peoples and local communities and deforest their lands to make way for agro-industrial livestock farming, plantations, mining, and other so-called development projects, which are already taking a huge toll on the world's forests.

Not in our name shall Big Tech mine, privatize, and monopolize data about our farms and crops so that corporations can consolidate their position as the command and control of food production while making it easier for the finance oligarchs to determine which are the most profitable farmlands for their parasitic speculation.

Not in our name shall governments use their levers of power to subsidize and orient food production towards exports rather than towards feeding their own citizens.

Thus, we have gathered as the Global People's Summit to expose and strongly counter the devious corporate agenda of the anti-people summit that is the UNFSS.

More importantly, as the Global People's Summit, we declare that through the collective vigor and resolve of our communities and movements, we shall advance with unwavering enthusiasm the people's demands for a food systems transformation that is truly built on justice, equitability, health, and sustainability.

We commit to the struggle for just food systems.

We believe that a just food system can only be built on the people's right to own and effectively control land, seeds, water, and other productive resources. We will continue to assert that land belongs to those who directly till and enrich the land to produce food and other needs of societies, and not to the landlords or corporations that enormously profit from its wanton exploitation. Water resources shall be accessible at all times to communities that rely on them for food and livelihood. We will resist all forms of land and resource grabbing and labor exploitation that massively displace farmers, indigenous peoples, workers, fishers, and other rural peoples. We demand accountability from those who plunder and destroy the environment and grossly violate the people's rights to land and resources.

In building just and healthy food systems, the contributions of indigenous and local communities, including women, who play an essential role in the sustainable management of natural resources and restoration of ecosystems, must be recognized. Indigenous and genuinely sustainable local initiatives to produce food must be supported instead of the destructive and unsustainable agro-industrial food production. Recognition of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination over their ancestral land and diversified food system is critical to promote just and equitable food systems.

A just food system entails that people's rights and human dignity be upheld at all times. No community, social class, or nation shall be ever deprived of access to food because of poverty, wars, or conflicts.

We commit to the struggle for equitable food systems.

We believe that an equitable food system can only be built on the people's right to land and livelihoods, and to decent working and living conditions for all. This means that food production must be decided by the sovereign will of the people, based on their particular circumstances, priorities, and needs. Profit motives of corporations – euphemistically called market forces – should not determine what food to produce, how to produce it, and for whom. Meanwhile, we assert that agricultural workers and all workers in the food sector must enjoy living wages, job security, maximum social protection, and other rights and benefits, and the incomes of smallholder farmers must be guaranteed through various forms of state support and protection to allow them and their families to live decently. Women farmers, who make up much of the global farming population, must be accorded the respect they have earned, and their rights protected.

We commit to the struggle for healthy food systems.

We believe that healthy food systems can only be built on the people's right to have access at all times to nutritious and sufficient food. Food that is produced in an agroecological manner must be promoted and be made widely available and affordable to all in order to protect the health and wellbeing of both the food producers and consumers. We assert that food production that relies on heavy doses of poisonous agrochemicals or uses questionable technology – like genetic modification – must be halted. Corporate-controlled farms and plantations and intensive, large-scale animal farming are creating conditions for the spread of killer diseases and pandemics and must be held accountable for damaging the environment and harming public health.

We commit to the struggle for sustainable food systems.

We believe that sustainable food systems can only be built on the people's right to a healthy planet and environment that is also capable of adequately producing all the food needs of the world's population. Building a strong foundation for sustainability in our food systems requires food sovereignty and agroecology, for people's rights to land and resources, for decent working and living conditions, and for a nutritious diet. We assert that our farmers and other small food producers can feed the world in a manner that is mindful of our planetary boundaries by maximizing and combining their indigenous knowledge and practices with socially responsible science and technology supported by public resources and appropriate, pro-people, and pro-planet government programs. Amid a worsening climate crisis, support for smallholder farm production is more urgent and necessary than ever. Unlike large-scale corporate farms that drive significant GHG emissions, smallholder farmers are motivated to practice agroecology and are more resilient to severe climatic events. Unlike industrial mono-crop plantations and factory farming, small-scale farmers practice integrated farming and diverse crop production. They are the custodians of the diversity of crop species and varieties that are crucial in maintaining rich and healthy biodiversity, which is very important for global food security and indispensable for resilient food systems, in particular in the face of the growing climate crisis.

We commit to the struggle for diverse local food systems.

We believe that a single, globalized food system imposed everywhere can never be healthy, sustainable, or equitable. Those goals can only be met by local food systems that are reflections of cultural and biological diversity, and that put local needs before export. Local food systems are the key to food sovereignty, dignified land-based livelihoods, and the health and wellbeing of both people and the planet. We reject and oppose

the globalization and corporatization of our food systems, and call for the political mechanisms – regulations, subsidies, and taxes – that currently favor the big, global and techno-industrialized, to be shifted so that they support sustainable local food systems instead.

We vow to work collectively to carry out the national, regional, sectoral, and thematic People's Action Plans that were produced from the workshops, public forums, and consultations organized under the Global People's Summit. These Action Plans represent our concrete and particular demands and campaigns along the four pillars of food systems transformation – (1) Food sovereignty and democracy at the core of food and agricultural policies; (2) Agroecology and sustainability in production, distribution, and consumption; (3) People's right to land, production, and resources; and (4) People's right to adequate, safe, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food.

We are the Global People's Summit and we are hungry for change.

Join the struggle for just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable food systems!