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Peasants' actions and solutions in Romania during Covid-19 crisis

Eco Ruralis Association expresses its solidarity with all workers from vital services, confronting Covid-19 crisis and ensuring our right to health and to food. Medical personnel and all those working in the health system, as well as peasants, food producers and workers in food system are among the most important players to solving this crisis, being at the same time among the most exposed to and affected by the crisis and they need to be supported.

The crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic highlights the extraordinary importance of the public health system and the public policies that can efficiently ensure our right to health. If currently we face a health crisis, the reality around us shows the risks in front of us, heading to a food crisis. Romanian small-scale producers and from all around the world are the ones to provide access to food in their villages, to their families, as well in the neighboring cities.

Eco Ruralis's initiative – free peasant seeds distribution

In the context of current crisis, peasants from Eco Ruralis association organized a free peasant seeds distribution in the benefit of 3035 peasant families from Romania and Republic of Moldova. Tens of small-scale seeds producers, members of Eco Ruralis, contributed to this distribution, consisting in 38 species and 106 varieties of vegetables, legumes, aromatic plants and flowers. Collecting, packaging and distribution of the seeds had been possible thanks to solidarity among peasants and the 10-year-long experience of Eco Ruralis in this field. This action comes as a support to peasants during spring seeding season, considering the new restrictions imposed due to Covid-19 pandemic. The autonomy, diversity and resilience of the peasant model of production have a vital importance in ensuring production of healthy food, in general, and especially in times of crisis.

Peasants market remain open!

Small-scale producers from Romania, as well as from Europe are currently confronting big obstacles in food production and distribution. In many European states – Italy, Spain, France, Belgium – peasant markets are being closed, generating conflicts and intense debates. Following many debates, we are grateful that in Romania, so far, the government allowed the peasant markets to remain open, in safe conditions. We need on-going support from authorities, in order for producers to be able to come at the markets and sell their products in safe conditions for them, as well as for consumers. The public peasant markets are the main way to direct distribution of products from small-scale producers. Public markets are important for consumers as well, especially for vulnerable society groups, as food is sold at fair prices in these times of

crisis, when speculation is high on industrial food market. Short supply chains and local economy not only they provide healthy and fresh food, they also represent the solution to the crisis, which announces to be a long one.

If only supermarkets are supported and kept open, we risk to head towards a food security catastrophe. Supermarkets rely and insist to be supplied from the global market, that currently is very fragile; products are traveling a long food chain, pass through numerous middlemen, and the contamination risk is higher that through local food systems.

In this period of crisis, the states turn to measures that limit or forbid exports of basic goods, making even more fragile the situation, unless we turn towards local food producers. We must support local economy, agroecological small-scale local producers, not only because they produce healthier and more nutritious food than what is sold in supermarkets, but because we must not allow this pandemic to bring us to a food crisis. Food and health are fundamental human rights.

Considering the enormous capacity of peasants and small-scale producers to feed consumers and their exposal to Codiv-19 pandemic, public policies and public action must now focus on supporting them, and the poor consumers in urban areas (including the elderly population) in order to defeat the consequences of this crisis. Eco Ruralis will propose concrete measures to the government and the relevant institutions in short time.

**Eco Ruralis is a Romanian nation-wide peasants' association, with 13.000 members across the country. Eco Ruralis was established in 2009 and represents the interests and the rights of peasants, small-scale producers and people working in rural areas.*