Europe needs more farmers
The right to land for small-scale farmers

The problem
Land affects us all but is controlled by few

Land politics – who controls what land, how it is used, for what purposes and to whose benefit – dictates how food you eat is produced, where it comes from and what you pay for it. It shapes rural communities, impacts climate change and biodiversity, and determines who receives subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), funded by public money. Currently, a lack of transparency and concentration of power means powerful industry actors exert pressure to control land politics, and many examples of corruption have been publicised in recent years.

Land grabbing is the control of larger than locally typical amounts of land (through ownership or other agreements) for purposes of speculation, extraction, resource control or commodification at the expense of peasant farmers, agroecology, food sovereignty and human rights.

Land grabbing is particularly fuelled by agricultural policies like the CAP that subsidise farms based on how big they are. As more land leads to more money, the incentive is to acquire as much as possible, leading to land concentration.

Land is treated as a commodity and financial asset and is used to reap huge profits for a small number of people, without considering that access to land is essential to grow healthy food for the population, combat climate change and biodiversity loss, provide jobs and maintain communities.

Echoing inequalities
Increasing land concentration often impacts marginalised ethnic, gender, age and class groups. It prevents farming entrants’ access to land and affects the ability of small farmers to retain access to their land when faced with powerful actors. With an ageing population of farmers in Europe and climate commitments that require a move away from exports, insufficient access to land for new entrants may lead to future food insecurity.

Who controls land?
In 2016, 6.9% of EU farms controlled 68.2% of the EU’s utilised agricultural area.

On average, 80% of CAP direct payments go to 20% of CAP beneficiaries.

Size matters
The largest 1.95% of a total 6.7M EU farms receive 30% of the total CAP direct aid.

European cooperation
VIA CAMPESINA #17APRIL2021
EUROPE NEEDS MORE FARMERS
THE RIGHT TO LAND FOR SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

THE SOLUTION
ACCESS TO LAND FOR PEASANT FARMING

Land cannot be treated as a commodity: it is a finite resource with social, cultural, environmental, and economic functions. The ageing population of farmers means that millions of hectares of farmland will change hands in the coming two decades and what happens when that land becomes available will be key. As peasant agroecological farming is more diverse and less intense, access to land for small-scale farmers helps maintain biodiversity, creates jobs, ensures animal welfare, and provides healthy, local food that does not impact the planet or our health in the same way as industrial farming.

HOW TO CHANGE THINGS

Better transparency, through a European Land Observatory, that monitors land
An independent assessment of the impact of land policy by a high-level institutional task force, working with small-scale producers
Better guidance on land governance as well as public policy objectives on land that are coherent, effective and transparent through an EU Land Directive
Coherence between EU policies like the Green Deal, F2F Strategy and the CAP, including stopping negotiating Free Trade Agreements
Guaranteed fair income for farmers through CAP subsidies linked to no. of workers and not land size, as well as market regulation mechanisms
National and regional land policy that facilitates democratic and transparent access to land for agroecology, encouraged by these EU level measures

LAND AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
Food sovereignty ensures the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and the right to define our own food and agriculture systems. It is a process that strives for solidarity, not competition building a fairer world from the bottom up. Without access to land, peasant farmers do have the autonomy to grow what and how they want, and citizens are denied the full story behind the food they eat.

UNDROP
Article 17 of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas (UNDROP) outlines access to land as a human right. Measures must be adopted to carry out agrarian reform in order to facilitate wider, more equal and guaranteed access to land for peasants. It must limit land concentration and excessive land control, respecting the social function of land.

FARMERS’ INCOMES ARE 50% INFERIORES A LOS DEL RESTO DE LA SOCIEDAD EN EUROPA

70 % OF THE WORLD POPULATION ARE FED BY NETWORKS OF SMALL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCERS

THE EU LOST OVER 3.5 MILLION FARMS UNDER 5 HA. BETWEEN 2005-16

INFO + DOCS: https://www.eurovia.org/main-issue/land