



International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty

Working Group on Agricultural Biodiversity



COAG 27, 28th September – 2nd October 2020

Final Declaration

The twenty-seventh Committee on Agriculture (COAG) of the FAO was held in virtual mode between 28 September and 2 October 2020.

The IPC participated in this important meeting through the participation and collaboration of two working groups both deeply involved in the issues discussed during the meeting, namely the Working Group on Agroecology and the Working Group on Agricultural Biodiversity.

The COAG, which is FAO's main technical advisory committee on agriculture, has the task of reviewing the central role of food and agriculture for achieving SDGs and will provide guidance on further strengthening FAO's contribution to the SDG Decade of Action.

During the week the members of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty, representing more than 6000 organizations and 300 million small-scale food producers around the world, attended the meeting and, as Observers, had the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

The Members participating in the meeting, despite the important challenges that the current global situation pushes us to face, seem not to want to see the urgency with which we need to act: in many cases, during the week, it seemed to participate in a meeting on international trade rather than on agriculture and nutrition, which is COAG's mandate as specified in its terms of reference. Most debates neglected the FAO's mandate to ensure the right to food in many delegates' attempts to protect their interests in global markets.

Discussions around the negative impacts of industrial livestock production have been particularly galling to witness, and the world's largest producers and exporters of livestock and feed dominated discussions and shut down attempts by others to act in the interest of the global public, including but not solely around the urgent need for One Health approaches and to phase out antimicrobials as growth promoters.

On specific issues in need of positive and urgent action, such as agroecology, biodiversity, transition, and support to countries that want to work to strengthen their internal markets, we have witnessed resistance from big exporters, and great difficulty in reaching tangible outcomes to improve food security and self-sufficiency in countries expressing those needs and sovereign desires.

COAG is not the WTO. It is not bound to protect the interests of the most powerful nations like that destructive organisation.

Their obligation is to defend access to healthy and adequate food, as well as to act to strengthen local and national food and agricultural systems, especially those that are developing and undeveloped.

Agriculture is essential to a healthy and sustainable future for all, and it is also a major driver of the multiple crises facing the world today: droughts, floods, fires, soil degradation, salinification, water scarcity, pollution, climate change, non-communicable diseases, pandemics, and anti-microbial resistance. We call on all members of COAG to work together for a future where everyone has enough nutritious and culturally-appropriate food to eat that is grown and distributed in ecologically-sound ways, and the right to democratically determine our own food and agriculture systems.

Finally, while it has been made clear that holding virtual meetings will not create a precedent for future meetings, which we hope will be held in person, we call for a more democratic management of future meetings, involving a broader participation of Observers, respecting those, such as small-scale food producers and Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and for their fundamental role in the realization of the right to food and nutrition.