

Peasant Farming, Food Security and Agroecology

UNCTAD Critique of Monoculture and Industrial Farming Methods

By [Grain](#)

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GRAIN

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Media release

La Vía Campesina, GRAIN and ETC welcome a new UNCTAD report which states that farming in rich and poor nations alike should shift from monoculture towards greater varieties of crops, reduced use of fertilizers and other inputs, greater support for small-scale farmers, and more locally focused production and consumption of food. More than 60 international experts contributed to the report, launched last week.

UNCTAD's 2013 Trade and Environment Report ("[Wake up before it is too late: make agriculture truly sustainable now for food security in a changing climate](#)") states that monoculture and industrial farming methods are not providing sufficient affordable food where it is needed, while causing mounting and unsustainable environmental damage.

This is the line of argument that Vía Campesina, GRAIN and the ETC group have been advocating for over twenty years. They contributed chapters to the UNCTAD report and have now created a joint partnership to advance agroecology and peasant farming as alternatives.

Over the past few years, we have seen a steady flow of high level reports from the UN system and development agencies arguing in favour of small farmers and agroecology. International recognition that this is the way to solve the food and climate crisis is clearly building, but this has not been translated into real action on the ground where peasant farmers increasingly face marginalisation and oppression.

"Long before the release of this report, small farmers around the world were already convinced that we absolutely need a diversified agriculture to guarantee a balanced local food production, the protection of people's livelihoods and the respect of nature. To achieve this goal, the protection of the huge variety of local seeds and farmers' rights to use them is paramount. As small farmers, we are struggling to preserve our own indigenous seeds and knowledge of farming systems," said Elizabeth Mpofu, general coordinator of La Vía Campesina.

Evidence is mounting that the industrial food system is not only failing to feed the world, but also responsible for some of the planet's most pressing social and environmental crises. "The industrial food system is directly responsible for around half of all global greenhouse gas emissions, as we showed in our contribution to the UNCTAD report," says Henk Hobbelink of GRAIN. "We cannot solve the climate crisis without confronting the industrial

food system and the corporations behind it. We should be turning to peasant based agroecology instead.”

Pat Mooney of the ETC group adds:

“The corporate food chain uses about 70-80% of the world’s arable land to produce just 30-40% of the food we eat. In the process peasant farmers, the real food producers, get thrown off their land and tremendous environmental harm is done. This is clearly not the way to feed the world”

It is time to translate policy documents into real action and governments at all levels (from local authorities to international bodies) are responsible for taking the right decisions in this regard. We call upon the international community to join us in the struggle for food sovereignty, to resist the corporate control of our food system, and to support peasant farmers and other small scale food producers to feed the world.

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[Vía Campesina](#) is the global movement of peasant farmers struggling for food sovereignty. [GRAIN](#) and [ETC Group](#) are international organisations that fight the industrial food system and support peasant based alternatives. They have joined forces in a partnership to advance peasant based agroecology.

UNCTAD is the United Nation’s Conference on Trade and Development. The 2013 Trade and Environment Report can be downloaded from: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ditcted2012d3_en.pdf

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