



## **Genuine Agrarian Reform is imperative for promotion of Food Sovereignty**

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### **Genuine Agrarian Reform: A forgotten agenda!**

Land reform agenda has taken a back seat in India and in West Bengal for last two decades and presently the Indian government is planning to impose market-based land reform measures in the states, in collaboration with World Bank. The World Bank model of land reform will intensify land alienation of smallholders and will result into further privatization and corporatization of common property resources and productive resources in the rural belt. Access to land and access to support like infrastructure, market, credit etc. are fundamental rights of smallholders for realization of their Right to Food (RTF) and for attaining food sovereignty. This right can not be left to the market forces to realize and both nation states and global states, have responsibilities to ensure the realization of this right.

### **Land alienation in Singur, West Bengal, India destroyed livelihoods of 15,000 smallholders**

More than 15,000 peasants in Singur are facing eviction from their lands and livelihood resources as the Government of West Bengal has taken their land for the building of "Tata Motors", a car manufacturing unit of the Indian multinational Tata Corporation. Already 997 acres of land are enclosed by fences. Violence in the area has continually escalated, including brutal attacks on members of Singur including beatings, arrests, and the destruction of their houses. 72% of the people of West Bengal live in rural areas with the majority depending on agricultural activities to survive. The state of West Bengal has not found other non-agricultural land for the car manufacturing plant nor has it offered any adequate compensation or sustainable rehabilitation package for those affected by the plant. Loss of land and earning opportunities from the land has lead to hunger, mal-nutrition, and starvation

### **Addressing Hunger with Pro-people Reform measures & role of the global actors**

The state has obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the right to food and livelihoods of smallholders and international communities/global states have also responsibilities to ensure protection of smallholders. This is becoming increasingly important in the context of present food crisis and climate change concerns.

The fact that only small holdings could be sustainable: economically, socially, culturally and environmentally, has been proved in many developing countries by the



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smallholders and their support organizations (CBOs/CSOs/NGOs). The need of the hour is to create an enabling environment for smallholders to flourish with dignity. This requires urgent interventions like followings:

- Full implementation of Genuine Agrarian Reform (GAR) programmes at national level
- Making global decision making process related to 'development' inclusive, creating space for smallholders to voice their concerns and aspirations
- Allotting more resources for promotion/support of smallholdings
- Global/national policies and programmes leading to eviction and displacements of smallholders, alienation of their resources, privatization of common resources, promotion of uneven competition for smallholders in the open market etc. should be carefully controlled and if and when necessary discarded by the global communities
- It is very important to strengthen micro-macro cooperation and increase recognition of food sovereignty by national and international actors, as the right of the people to take decisions about their livelihoods.
- EU can play a significant role in promoting GAR in developing countries (based on existing commitments/instruments like RTF, Voluntary Guidelines on Right to Food, International Conference on Agrarian reform and Rural Development)
- EU can further contribute in restricting such policy invasions which would undermine food sovereignty of the most vulnerable groups in the world, i.e. smallholders in the developing nations.



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