



Press Release
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1 bn € to save 1 bn people

SAAPE calls on the EU to pass the 1 bn € food facility and save 1 bn people on the brink of starvation

BRUSSELS — SAAPE, a South-Asian alliance of civil society organizations and social movements, speaking for millions of small and marginalized farmers in the region, calls on the European Union to use the 1 bn € fund as an immediate and essential response to the global food price crisis driving millions into destitution and hunger.

At the occasion of a special meeting of the European Parliament's development committee on the 1 bn € fund with high-level guest-speakers, such as the heads of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP), SAAPE welcomes the ambitions by the European Commission and MEPs like Gay Mitchell and Thijs Berman to use the 1 bn € to fund agricultural development in developing countries.

"On moral grounds, the EU must pay back to small farmers in developing countries the 1bn € it has saved by way of farm export subsidies", said Prerna Bomzan, Programme Co-ordinator for the SAAPE-Eurostep EU advocacy initiative in Brussels.

Even with food prices reaching an historical peak, throughout the developing world poor small-scale farmers can barely survive from what they harvest. "The additional funds will help in boosting our agriculture in a sustainable, humane and regenerative way", said Sarath Fernando with the Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform in Sri Lanka. "And we also urge the EU not to give in to demands by multinational companies to implement an industrial agriculture system, based



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on mono-culture, hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and genetically-modified organisms, which is the very reason for the current deadly crisis”.

With severe droughts leading to crop failures from Australia to Latin America, the loss of arable land to an obscene biofuel production and famines in Africa making the headlines again, the call for help seems to be more urgent than ever. Especially at a time when, according to latest UN and World Bank announcements, aid to poor nations has slumped and more people suffer from extreme poverty than previously thought.

“The EU must act now and prove that it is a reliable leader on the international scene, capable of reacting adequately to major crises and living up to their own high standards and the expectations in a post unipolar world”, said G.V.Ramanjaneyulu with the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture in India, working mainly with women farmers. “Further, the EU must take the lead in promoting the new paradigm of local resource based technologies and a community managed institutional systems that have been actually working wonders on the ground”.

As an answer to the food price crisis SAAPE favors food sovereignty. “It is the inalienable right of peoples to define and implement their own agricultural policies, which are ecologically, socially and economically appropriate to their unique circumstances”, said Prem Dangal with the All Nepal Peasants’ Federation that was a forerunner in enshrining the Right to Food Sovereignty in the country’s interim constitution in 2006. Empirical evidence shows that farmers, who have maintained their right to choose their mode of production, have all over the world found distinct approaches to secure food safety and have managed to feed themselves and their families sufficiently.

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SAAPE, South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication is a regional alliance of civil society groups and social movements from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, working together towards poverty eradication by combating the harmful socio-economic policies of globalization and neo-liberalization.

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