

Social Movements Statement on Nutrition

Rome, November – *Social Movements around the world are deeply disappointed at the process and outcome of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) that fails to address the fundamental causes of nutrition issues. We are also afraid that some of the solutions proposed at ICN2 will create more threats to human nutrition, environment sustainability and social justice. We, representing social movements around the world including Women, Youth, Indigenous Peoples (our indigenous elderly woman and men, the youth, boys and girls), Peasants, Workers, Urban Poor, Consumers, Small Scale Farmers, Small Scale Fisher-folks and Fishing Communities, Pastoralist, and the Landless are strongly concerned that ICN2 does not represent or reflect in any means the interests and needs of our constituents. Instead, it meets the demands of private sector. Agriculture, food, pharmaceutical and chemical industries have exacerbated nutrition and hunger challenges. The private sector is given increasing power and space in policy processes and governance structures, especially at ICN2.*

Nutrition cannot be separated from food. The artificial separation of nutrition from food systems (including traditional food systems), health, environment and agriculture, induced by this devastating neoliberal economic model; has resulted in highly technical and product-based solutions that ignore economic, environmental, social and cultural determinants.

For the peoples of social movements nutrition also encompasses identity, love, caring, spirituality, health —physical, mental and emotional. For us nutrition is more than just the act of eating, we integrate it into the transmission of methods, knowledge, language, ceremonies, dances, prayers, oral histories, stories and songs related to food, subsistence practices and the continued use of traditional foods in daily diets. We perceive and live nutrition as a whole.

This is why we denounce a global food system and international paradigm that is increasingly dominated by transnational and other corporations that offer only suffering, damaging human linkages and connections to food and nutrition and the commons.

The contemporary and agroindustrial development priorities have negatively impacted our experiences and challenges with regard to nutrition. This includes monocropping; the use of genetically modified organisms; the use of agrotoxics that poison us, our soils, our water resources, our environment and the life around them; the land and ocean grabbing that involves also lakes, rivers, aquatic resources and indigenous territories; the horrifying damaging of the soils, water and territories through practices like extractive industry activities, fracking and unregulated expropriation.

For any serious transition towards nutrition, an ecologically sound and socially just food regime there is a great need to put an end to privatization (grabbing). We urge state governments to establish and implement fishing policies that put small-scale fishers and fishing communities at the heart of governing and caring for the oceans, lakes, rivers, aquatic resources and marine ecosystems. We demand an end to corporate enclosures and bring oceans back into the global commons.

The World Trade Organization rules and the additional constraints imposed by regional trade and investment agreements remove from governments the resources and policy space needed for responsible investment which can strengthen nutrition, food security and rural livelihoods. The World Trade Organization treaties violate human rights.

Nutrition is immerse in the centrality of the Human Rights, of everyone's entitlement to adequate food and nutrition, with an understanding of nutrition being the expression of culture, traditions, and social relations; therefore the right to adequate food can only be fulfilled in the context of food sovereignty.

Social movements understand food sovereignty to be a pre-condition to food security and the achievement of sustainable nutrition. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food, with respect for their own identities and systems of managing natural resources.

The interdependencies of a healthy environment, food sovereignty, food security and nutrition cannot be underestimated. We are deeply concerned about the impacts of the agro-industrial model which result in the degradation, contamination and severely affectation of ecosystems, soil, water and other productive resources. All peoples have the right to healthy, safe and chemical-free food.

Social movements are alarmed at the explicit exclusion of gender in the process and outcome documents of ICN2. We recognize the relationship between existing threats to reproductive and maternal health, environmental violence and contamination. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by malnutrition, and the realization of the right to adequate food and nutrition. Globally, and across the rural-urban continuum, socioeconomic inequalities between men and women have direct impacts on nutrition. Nutrition starts with women. Their sexual and reproductive rights need to be respected and guaranteed. In many communities women are responsible for much of the food cultivation / harvesting and processing, as well as providing meals for the family, but many lack access to adequate food and nutrition education. We support the inclusion of the issue of breastfeeding at ICN2, not only as a matter of nutrition and early childhood development, but also as a matter of traditional and inherent rights of infants and women which have been compromised due to discrimination, harassment, and false information about the nutritional value of breastmilk and manufactured, chemically enhanced formula.

Breastfeeding represents the very first guarantee of the human right to healthy food and nutrition.

We demand a human-rights based approach to nutrition and food which is understood through the lens of existing human rights standards, including but not limited to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We also demand for the governments engage with the establishment of: the open-ended working group on a legally binding instrument on transnational corporations as well as other business enterprises with respect to human rights; and open intergovernmental group on a United Nations declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. We stand ready to support governments' action in this regard. We demand that States implement, with full participation of social movements as identified by the CSF Reform Document, the Voluntary Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Lands, Fisheries and Forests in Context of National Food Security.

In the near term, we urge State governments and corporations to act on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, including the state obligation to protect human rights, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and the right to a remedy for victims of business-related abuses. Regarding this point, finally we express our concern about the content of the UN Global Compact on business and human rights, and the concept of "corporate social responsibility" which can be manipulated to shield corporations from true accountability with complicity of State governments.

We express deep concern at the corporate takeover of food systems, wherein nutrition has become an industry unto itself, creating business and generating revenue not through the provision of real nutritious food, but through its replacement with expensive supplements that do not meet the nutritional needs of people.

The characterization of nutritional "emergencies" in situations of crisis and protracted crises has promoted and reinforced international/regional aid programs and "solutions" that tend to be carried out without consulting local communities, and do not meet the real nutritional needs of affected communities. This has the effect of demoralizing and devastating local economies while undermining social movements and potentially creating new conflicts. UN Agencies, donors, NGOs and

States must endeavor to understand the consequences of such projects and work towards more integrated solutions and orientations. This is particularly important in light of the current state of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the potential of future natural disasters due in part to climate change and the insufficiency of measures to address climate change.

We note with alarm the ongoing diminishment of governance, governments and correlated corporate capture of policy space at the local, regional, national, and international levels, particularly evident at ICN2. This includes public-private partnerships which frequently result in strengthened corporate lobbies and influence. Weakened governance and corporate capture of policy space is in direct contradiction to the rights-based advocacy of social movements all over the world. Furthermore, shrinking space for governments is resulting in a loss of accountability of governments in relation to food, nutrition and beyond. Finally, corporate capture of policy space respecting nutrition and food poses substantial risks to human and environmental health, social welfare, the future of agriculture and fisheries. Public policy must be in the public interest and conflict of interests needs to be fully addressed.

Governments at all levels should implement public procurement policies that source food from local-small scale producers. Regional and inter-governmental bodies should similarly adapt their policy frameworks for regulating public procurement. International regimes should also promote sustainable food systems by not adopting policies that prohibit local procurement.

It is necessary for the formal establishment of adequate mechanisms for consumers to have access to healthy fresh foods coming from small producers.

The role of communications, information and media is vital to the appropriate development of public policies. As such, all information, communications and media of transnationals and other corporations require regulation and monitoring. The rights of consumers include adequate information and consumer education free of corporate influence that alerts of the risks. In this regard, we need more stringent standards in food labeling and food label standardization that address risk versus disclosure of misleading benefits. The labeling must go beyond current minimum standard requirements and disclosures as commonly agreed.

We demand regulations that prohibit all marketing of unhealthy, ultraprocessed products high in sugar, fat and/or salt including formulas, infant and small children foods promoted to parents, children and youth.

We demand a policy space that is inclusive in particular of those who have been marginalized, having the appropriate and meaningful participation of all constituents of social movements in which our values and objectives are reflected, and with representation chosen through our own internal processes. We emphasize

that the increasing criminalization of social movements with regard to food and nutrition-related advocacy and protest is unacceptable.

Civil Society must have space for meaningful participation, such as the space created within the CFS. Nutrition is a core pillar of the CFS mandate and nutrition should be mainstreamed in all CFS policy processes. We recommend the creation and expansion of such spaces for members of civil society and social movements in international organizations such as the World Health Organization, whose activities are directly connected to and impact the enjoyment of rights related to food and nutrition. We emphasize the fundamental role that nutrition has to play as a preventive measure in the achievement of good health. Food is medicine, but medicine is not food.

In poor communities, a lack of access to healthy food combined with a barrage of highly processed food from transnational and other food corporations is fueling the epidemics of obesity, diabetes and other diet-related diseases. Effectively tackling issues of hunger, malnutrition in all its forms and diet-related diseases would encourage communities to become active participants in shaping food systems in cooperation with small-scale food producers in surrounding areas, while contributing to food sovereignty.

The an adequate standard of living is inclusive of conditions to maintain healthy living, from food, water, sanitation, housing, and health. Some of those that are most disproportionately affected are the workers that grow, harvest and process food, but lack a living wage to support their own household nutrition, food security and quality of life. A core pre-requisite to achieving this goal is labor rights. There is a clear link between low wages and poor nutrition. The answer is not to give supplements to workers but to ask employers to pay all workers living wages so they can buy nutritious foods for themselves and their families.

Small-scale food producers, including family farmers, indigenous peoples, fishing communities and pastoralists should be at the center of any strategy to combat malnutrition, as reinforced by the FAO International Year of Family Farming. In this regard, overcoming socio-economic environmental challenges and achieving sustainable nutrition in local communities is best served through the promotion and support of small-scale sustainable and agro-ecological food production focused on local markets.

We imperatively demand the protection of native and peasant seeds, as well as centers of origin from the invasion and contamination of genetically modified seeds that affect biodiversity and ecosystems, and that affect humanity of this generations, the unborn and the lives to come.

Social movements are well placed to provide positive contributions in the form of best practices in sustainable nutrition using local resources. Food systems based on

indigenous and traditional knowledge can offer, in theory and in practice, important contributions to collective progress towards sustainable food systems and nutrition.

Social movements support the fulsome and equitable enforcement of concepts such as “fair trade” with regard to family farmers. While terms such as “organic” and “fair trade” have been captured through marketing efforts of transnationals and other corporations obligating producers to acquire expensive certifications. These terms must be accessible and used in a manner that is respectful and inclusive of the social movement.

Social movements urge states, local governments and authorities to ensure equitable distribution of food through the creating of public distribution well functioning public distribution systems such as school meal programs and maternal and children program support. Officials need to pay specific attention to meeting the needs of vulnerable populations, including women, children, senior citizens, indigenous peoples and the chronically ill or disabled. Furthermore, education regarding nutrition and food must be popular education and culturally appropriate. Social movements are concerned about the appropriation of education respecting nutrition, food and food systems by transnational and other corporations with complicity of State governments.

For this and much more that has not been fully expressed by the oppressed and the unheard, we demand for our voices to echo into the hearts of people, international communities and Member States.