

# “The Nyéléni Peasant Agroecology Manifesto”

**Our solidarity is based on the following unifying beliefs and principles:**

1. The human rights to food, water, and land are fundamental ; they are essential for life. All people, men and women, adults and children, rich and poor, rural and urban dwellers should be able to enjoy these rights.
2. Water and land are not only vital natural resources but they are also a part of our common heritage. Each community should ensure that these rights are safeguarded and regulated for the common good of our societies and in order to protect the environment, today and for the generations to come.
3. Water, land and seeds are common goods; they are not commodities.
4. The legal and constitutional mandate that we assign to the State is to represent the interests of the population. For that reason, the State has a duty to oppose any political policy or international treaty that threatens human rights or State sovereignty; this would apply to mechanisms for settlement of disputes between corporations and governments as well as to the majority of investment treaties.
5. Land and water management policies should help to bring about social equity, gender equality, improved public health, and environmental justice.
6. There should be a firm rejection of all forms of foreign occupation and domination.

Regional AEP commissions and effective local activities	Food Sovereignty	Respect for the Rights to land, water, peasants’ seeds, local breeds, Knowledge
Healthy and nutritious products respecting local food systems	Collective territorial dynamics	Ethics, solidarity, commitment
Natural, agricultural, and domestic animal biodiversity	Peasant Agroecology, a peasants’ and citizens’ movement on the go	Autonomy
The agricultural solution for struggling against climate change and for the maintenance of natural soil fertility		Participatory public research
		Peasant to peasant training
		Based on peasant knowledge, peasant know-how, and peasant life skills
Improving the income and well-being of populations	Family Farming	Experimentation, innovation, exchanges
Foresters, fishers, pastoralists and herders, farmers	Women/Youth	Complementary and diversified peasant agroecology practices

***Taking our inspiration from the past and transforming the present, in order to espouse a Family Farming model that is based on peasant agroecology and food sovereignty.***

Our local ancestral ecological systems related to agriculture have developed over thousands of years. During the last 30 to 40 years, they have acquired the name of agroecology. Today, because of the

differences in the various interpretations and applications of that term, we are calling for peasant agroecology, which is synonymous with dignity and which is based on peasant knowledge, peasant know-how, and peasant life skills. Peasant agroecology has life itself at its core. It is a way of living based on solidarity, on practices that are respected, shared and transmitted, and on common values and principles, most notably human rights. By virtue of its philosophical, social, environmental, and economic dimensions, peasant agroecology incorporates all forms of ecological, organic and fairly-traded agriculture. It is the key to safeguarding human life and the planet, today and tomorrow.

In a global context marked by numerous crises, among them the global food crisis, the statistics on the number of people suffering from chronic hunger are appalling. In the world today, the majority of the approximately 800 million to 1 billion victims of chronic hunger are peasants. The massive use of chemical inputs, abusive mechanisation, and modern biotechnology constitute an agricultural model that undermines the way of life of rural communities. This dominant model, based on the profit motive, leads to profound social, cultural, and dietary changes. The rural exodus, environmental pollution, land and water take-overs and the concentration of landholding and water access, monoculture, deforestation, and climate change, all of these have very serious repercussions on the quality of life of the world's peoples.

As though a substantial number of people seem unaware of the disastrous situation, the neoliberal system is trying to resuscitate an agro-industrial production model that is visibly failing. This is the logic underlying the promotion of initiatives such as the Green and the Blue Revolutions, the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NASAN) sponsored by the G8 and the World Bank, as well as so-called climate-smart agriculture, and other similar proposals. The agro-industrial production model, which is based on the profit motive, only actually profits a handful of people, to the detriment of the population as a whole and the peasant population in particular. It uses violence to entrench the commodification of natural resources and of land. It impoverishes and evicts communities and farming families. It criminalises those who defend human rights and the commons. It exacerbates climate change, and increases malnutrition; it leads to a deterioration in public health and to environmental degradation, and it destroys our social cohesion.

**In response to the agro-industrial model, we are defending a different agricultural and social model, namely peasant agroecology.**

We, rural and urban actors for social change: peasants, including herders and pastoralists; artisanal fishers; members of peasant organisations; activists from social movements and associations and from consumers' groups and research institutes,<sup>1</sup> - want to make a collective commitment to a family farming model that is based on peasant agroecology and food sovereignty.

In an initiative that began in 2014 within in a context of dialogue<sup>2</sup>, our peasants' and citizens' movement, based on strong synergies, is today promoting social and environmental justice and our respective cultural identities, while working towards a peaceful and prosperous shared future. In order to meet the challenges posed by food sovereignty in Mali and family farming, we need to build a strong convergence around peasant agroecology, in cooperation with the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles and at the highest levels. This is the reason why we have become part of the Mali Peasant Agroecology Platform, which was set up in April 2017, at the Nyéléni Training Centre.

In order to act together in a consistent manner and in solidarity, we have collaborated in writing this manifesto. It describes our shared vision and actions and it develops joint strategies for the promotion of peasant agriculture through a shared approach to advocacy, involving peasants, civil society, and research institutions, that reaches up to the spheres of public policy at national, regional, and continental levels.

**The Peasant Agroecology Manifesto is a tool which is centred around 7 inter-related pillars, embodying our values and principles, that will give a common purpose to our actions.**

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**Pillar 1 : *Ensure that land, water, and other natural resources are safeguarded***

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This is the essential pillar. There can be no harmonious agricultural development without the safeguarding and rational management of land and water by, and for, rural communities. Peasants are the principal

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1 List of signatories

2 Multi-actor meeting in 2014 at which the CNOP was recognised as the lead organisation in agroecology in Mali.

investors and the main food providers. Their rights to land and natural resources must be safeguarded. This implies:

- The safeguarding and legal recognition - excluding privatisation and commodification - of the customary collective landholding rights and rights to natural resources of villages and families.
- Protecting the community rights of hunters, gatherers, fishers, and nomadic herders to use and have access to common goods, namely forests, pastures, transhumance routes, and water sources; simultaneously promoting the ecological and cultural restoration of the past abundance of these common goods by means of local agreements for the fair and balanced management of natural resources.
- Establishing local institutions for conflict management and conflict resolution at the village level that are inclusive of all community members, particularly women and youth.
- Adopting a territorial and holistic approach to social and economic questions concerning natural resources.

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**Pillar 2 : *Place value upon and safeguard biodiversity, peasant seeds, and local breeds.***

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Natural biodiversity and the diversity of crops and farm animals is the mainstay of present and future life. It must be fostered. This implies:

- Making an inventory of the diversity of local peasant varieties and animal breeds , working towards their multiplication, and recognising their nutritional and therapeutic qualities.
- Guaranteeing the collective rights of peasants and communities to freely use, save, exchange, and sell their peasant seeds (putting into effect Article 9 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture<sup>3</sup>).
- Preventing the bio-pirating of our natural resources and the privatisation of life.
- Struggling against efforts by corporations and institutions to misappropriate agroecology and their attempts to use it as a way of promoting GMOs and other false solutions and dangerous new biotechnologies.

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**Pillar3 : *Encourage peasant agroecological practices : diversity, complementarity, adaptability.***

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On the basis of the knowledge, know-how, and life skills of peasants and rural communities, peasant agroecology flourishes in areas that are full of vitality and rich in biodiversity. It is sustained by agricultural practices and knowledge that have been exchanged, shared, enriched and passed on from peasant to peasant over the centuries. Agroecology has developed through our own innovations, research, and methods for selecting and improving crops and animal breeds. Its many varied practices are a response to issues and challenges as well as to the aspirations of the peasants of today and tomorrow. This implies:

- Encouraging participation and creating spaces for exchanges between peasants ; systematising and documenting the results of peasants' experimentation, and circulating this information at forums, meetings and gatherings.
- Supporting training in basic agroecology with appropriate teaching tools to be used in the training centres and in on-site training. Providing particular support for training, both in agricultural practice and in the comprehension of issues and challenges, to women and men peasant promoters who are the actors for change.
- Giving financial and human support to the practice of peasant agroecology, particularly with regard to collective initiatives.

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**Pillar 4 : *Promote local food systems that provide a range of foods that are nutritional and beneficial to health (therapeutic).***

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Our local food systems are the primary guarantors of our health, our jobs, our environment and our identity. This implies:

- Promoting local markets and local products. Valuing these products because of they are healthy, flavourful, nutritious, and therapeutic....
- Supporting the development of infrastructure, institutions, and alternative means of financing, in order to assist producers and consumers.
- Promoting peasant agroecology as the best way to reduce loss and waste in the food system.
- Ensuring that production, processing, and marketing regulations are adapted to the realities of local and peasant agriculture, in order to bring about a return to food systems that are locally based.

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**Pillar 5 : *Support and value the participation of women and youth.***

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The participation of women, who bring with them their knowledge, their values, their vision, and their leadership, is essential in order for agroecology to progress and to fulfil its potential. The development and practice of peasant agroecology, with its potential for social and ecological transformation now and in the future, depend to a great extent on the participation of young people and women. This implies:

- Fairness and equality with regard to landholding, decision-making, access to services, rights, social status, and remuneration.
- Creating secure situations where women and young people can develop their autonomy, and providing them with the tools to do so.
- Within the framework of peasant agroecology, establishing and supporting social initiatives to keep young people in the countryside, by creating a flourishing collective life and providing decent incomes.
- Encouraging the exchange and handing on of knowledge, especially from one generation to the next.

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**Pillar 6 : *Strengthen synergies and alliances and collective organisational processes.***

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It is of essential importance to increase the development of peasant agroecology on a larger scale through self-organisation and collective action. This implies:

- Extending and strengthening networks, by promoting spaces for discussion and activities concerning peasant agroecology, from the local to the regional level.
- Encouraging and supporting collective organisation directed towards dynamic and living agroecological areas that contain a wealth of environmental, productive, and human diversity.
- The extension of our peasants' and citizens' movement to include public research institutions and organisations, in order to serve the interests of the people by giving priority to subjects related to peasant agroecology and by developing really collaborative research programmes that put peasant knowledge at the heart of solutions.
- Establishing continuing education training programmes to ensure the sustainability of Agroecology.

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**Pillar 7 : *Act at the institutional, legislative, and regulatory levels.***

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Ensure that peasant agroecology, according to the definition in this document, is recognised and put into effect by our governments and by international institutions - as has begun to happen with the FAO – and by local and regional authorities. This implies:

- Including peasant agroecology in public policies, particularly in policies concerning agriculture, health, nutrition, and education.
- Ensuring that 10% from Maputo goes towards supporting Family Farming based on peasant

agriculture and food sovereignty, while protecting our local economies in a context of regional integration involving the actors of the AEP.

- Ensuring that produce from peasant agroecology is supplied to all food programmes and restaurants linked to public services. This includes food that is served during workshops, forums, meetings, summits.
- Creating and maintaining peasant agroecological green belts, in conjunction with the relevant local authorities and administrations, through the promotion of really participative de-centralised planning processes.
- Opposing any agreement or treaty that jeopardises our peasant economies and identities.

Peasant agroecology is the answer to the need for protection, security, and sustainability for the world and for humankind. Solidarity between peoples, as well as between rural and urban populations, is an essential element in bringing it to fruition.

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