

# **Seminar on Food Crisis and Food Sovereignty planed in Lahore**

Monday 2 November 2009, by [Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee - PKRC](#), [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 17 October 2009).

**Dear all,**

**The seminar “food crisis and food sovereignty” was postponed on 15 October, the day Lahore was rocked with terrorist attacks. 29 people died in attacks on police training centers and intelligence offices in Lahore on the day. We had to postpone the seminar as many delegates were not able to come due to security situation and traffic jams on several roads leading to Lahore.**

The seminar is rescheduled now for Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2009. Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee in cooperation with SAAPE and Action Aid Pakistan will hold the seminar at the same place, “hotel Ambassador Lahore at 3pm. The speakers include Asif Sharif, an expert in agri-initiatives, Mehr Abdul Sattar secretary Anjman Mozareen Punjab and Nazli Javed, women secretary Labour Party Pakistan.

Please contact if you are interested in attending the seminar.

**PKRC**

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***Earlier, we send this information about the seminar,***

Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee is planning to organize a seminar on the theme of “Food Crisis and Food Sovereignty” on 15 October in Lahore. The programme is planned as part of the activities by the PKRC in connection with the international food day 2009. The seminar will take place at Hotel Ambassador Lahore at 3pm.

The speakers include Mian Asif Sharif, an agriculturist and expert in agri based initiatives, Choudry Fateh Mohammed, president Pakistan Kissan Committee, Mehr Abdul Sattar, general secretary Anjman Mozareen Punjab, Nazli Javed women secretary Labour Party Pakistan and others.

## **Back ground**

Food and the means of its production are central to human life. Access to food - as a necessity of life - is a human right. Our economic and political systems must guarantee that none go hungry while others consume excessively.

World Food Day was proclaimed in 1979 by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO). It marks the date of the founding of FAO in 1945. The aim of the Day is to heighten public awareness of the world food problem and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. In 1980, the General Assembly endorsed observance of the Day in consideration of the fact that "food is a requisite for human survival and well-being and a fundamental human necessity" (resolution 35/70 of 5 December 1980).

World Food Day, October 16<sup>th</sup>, is a worldwide event designed to increase awareness, understanding and informed, year-around action to alleviate hunger.

Food sovereignty is the peoples', countries' or groups of countries' right to define their agricultural and food policy, without any dumping vis-à-vis third countries.

### ***Food sovereignty includes:***

□ Prioritizing local agricultural production in order to feed the people, access of peasants and landless people to land, water, seeds and credit. Hence the need for land reform, for fighting against GMOs (genetically modified organisms), for free access to seeds, and for safeguarding water as a public good to be sustainably distributed.

- The right of farmers, peasants to produce food and the right of consumers to be able to decide what they consume, and how and by whom it is produced.
- The right of countries to protect themselves from too low priced agricultural and food imports.
- Agricultural prices linked to production costs: they can be achieved if the countries or unions of states are entitled to impose taxes on excessively cheap imports, if they commit themselves in favor of a sustainable farm production, and if they control production on the inner market so as to avoid structural surpluses.
- The population taking part in the agricultural policy choices.
- The recognition of women farmers' rights, who play a major role in agricultural production and in food.

The concept was brought to the public debate during the World Food Summit in 1996 by Via Campesina and represents an alternative to neoliberal policies. Since then, that concept has become a major issue of the international agricultural debate, even within the United Nations bodies. A lot of farmer-, fisher- and rural organisations have made food sovereignty to their main objective including Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee.

### **Achieving Food Security in Times of Crisis**

At a time when the global economic crisis dominates the news, the world needs to be reminded that not everyone works in offices and factories. The crisis is stalking the small-scale farms and rural areas of the world, where 70 percent of the world's hungry live and work. With an estimated increase of 105 million hungry people in 2009, there are now 1.02 billion malnourished people in the world, meaning that almost one sixth of all humanity is suffering from hunger.

On the occasion of World Food Week and World Food Day 2009, let us reflect on those numbers and the human suffering behind them. Crisis or no crisis, we have the know-how to do something about hunger. We also have the ability to find money to solve problems when we consider them important.

### **Our aims**

- To heighten public awareness of the problem of hunger in the world;
- To encourage attention to agricultural food production and to stimulate national, bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental efforts to this end;
- To strengthen international and national solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty and draw attention to achievements in food and agricultural development;
- To encourage the participation of rural people, particularly women and the least privileged categories, in decisions and activities influencing their living conditions;
- To achieve Food Security: The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life". Commonly, the concept of Food Security is defined as including both physical and economic access to food that meets people's dietary needs as well as their food preferences.
- To achieve Food Justice: Conceptually this means everyone has access to food as a basic human right. Food Justice strives to ensure that (globally) enough food is produced to feed the world's population at an adequate level. The basic goal of Food Justice is to ensure no one lives without enough food because of economic constraints or social inequality. The core of the Food Justice movement is the belief that what is lacking is not food, but the political will to fairly distribute food regardless of the recipient's ability to pay.
- To achieve Food Democracy: Ensuring that food and farming systems at all levels are accountable to people, responsible to communities, the environment and that they are socially just.

### **Agro fuels and Climate change-Even more threats for Rural Poor**

Climate change, the rise of need and prices of fossil energies and their deposit launched a discussion on renewable energies. In addition to water and solar power and other renewable energies, agro fuels play an important role in energy production. But agro fuels grow on the same land as food. This fact brings in a new dimension in the discussion of food sovereignty. We demand an end of this agro fuel policy.

Industrialized countries have released huge amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels, and have caused a human induced change in the earth's climate. On the one hand, 1.02 billion people suffer from hunger, most of them in rural areas, where food is used to be produced. On the other hand, the rising industries in various countries need more energy for industrial production. Fossil energies are not available in a sustainable way and renewable energies are not that established as they should be.

### **End of feudalism**

Throughout Pakistan, millions of sharecroppers work on land they do not own, giving between half and two-thirds of their crops to landlords. The farms they work on can be modest or vast in scale—some landowners own up to 30,000 hectares of land. Workers often end up tied to the land, after taking a loan from a landowner and offering to pay it back by working. Sometimes whole families end up in this type of debt bondage, working to pay off a loan on which the interest keeps accumulating.

Debts are also sometimes passed on to the next generation, condemning whole families to a life of servitude, according to international human rights organizations that condemn the practice.

Pakistan, a country of 170 million people that is trapped in poverty in large part because of its skewed land distribution, international institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) say.

In a country where about half the workforce is engaged in agriculture, the key to improving lives is in redistributing land more equitably, independent organizations and observers agree. That would free farmers from virtual bondage and boost productivity in a country that is blessed with arable land, water and the largest irrigation system in the world, but still remains a net importer of food.

Yields remain low because many landowners are absentee landlords, and without ownership the farmers themselves have little or no access to agricultural credits, the right fertilizers, appropriate technology or marketing know-how.

Land reform is a very critical question for any successful poverty reduction strategy.

To address some of the question of food sovereignty, climate change and rural poor, solutions of food crisis and question of feudalism, PKRC is organizing this activity as part of its larger campaign for land reforms and land rights.

The seminar will bring together over 100 representatives from different parts of Pakistan to Lahore. A PKRC meeting is planned before the seminar where all the future questions of the campaign and organizational priorities will be taken up.

It will be a full day activity on 15 October 2009.

Farooq Tariq

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