

# Sustainable Agriculture as a Way of Struggling Against Climate Change

Wednesday 12 December 2007, by [La Via Campesina](#) (Date first published: 10 December 2007).

## Contents

- [Agrofuels are an illusion \(...\)](#)
- [Sustainable Agriculture is \(...\)](#)
- [Continuity of the Social \(...\)](#)

Members of La Via Campesina from Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Cambodia, Norway, Canada, Mozambique and Brazil visited the Jatiluwih village in Bali to see rice cultivation in terraces and to analyze ways to practice peasant farming with local producers.

The meeting aims to exchange experiences between peasants, in order to take advantage of the presence of farmers from 20 countries in Indonesia who are taking part in the parallel activities to the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP 13).

La Vía Campesina had participated in a march on Saturday in the region of Kuta, in Bali, to demand climate justice and responsible measures of the industrialized countries governments to tackle climate change. Real World Radio was there and interviewed a member of La Via Campesina Celso Rivero, who is also state leader of the Rural Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in the west of Parana.

Rivero highlighted the participation of La Vía Campesina in the parallel activities to the COP 13 in Bali. He said that their presence there "is part of a world program to discuss and suggest the governments a climate system so that they not only approve what's in their interests, but what's in the people's interest".

Besides, "our headquarters are there, which gives us strength, and La Via Campesina believes that the discussion about the climate system is part of the agenda".

## Agrofuels are an illusion for the people

That's how Rivero defined it when he explain that agrofuels will affect the climate system and the peasants more and more mainly because its development implies planting large monocultures. The peasant said that in this country sugar cane monocultures are damaging the environment and the farmers.

He said it is necessary to discuss agrofuel production because it is a threat to the world since they would bring more hunger to the world. "The peasants will stop producing food to produce agrifuels, that's Via Campesina's concern", he said.

In a statement they say it is insane that food is produces to feed cars while human beings are dying

of hunger. “Agrofuel production will increase global warming, instead of reducing it, it will increase intensive monoculture plantations of palm, soy, maize, sugar cane, and it will contribute to deforestation and the destruction of biodiversity”.

For this reason La Via Campesina demands to dismantle the campaigns of agrofuel production, because it is “taking away the lands of small farmers by producing junk food and by causing environmental disaster”.

## **Sustainable Agriculture is the Alternative**

La Vía Campesina believes that sustainable, small scale agriculture contributes to a cooler planet. Rivero told Real World Radio that in order to “freshen up” the planet” we must take care of the environment. “When we say that we can contribute to a cooler planet it is as a result of the peasant’s care of the land and the environment”, he explained.

Small scale production, without need of large industrial machinery that uses too much energy and releases greenhouse gases; organic agriculture, which does not use agrotoxics made of fossil fuels; and the ability to produce solar energy, are some of the characteristics of sustainable agriculture that lead La Via Campesina to say that small farmers contribute to make the planet cooler.

That is why the international rural workers movement demands the replacement of industrialized agriculture with small scale sustainable agriculture that is supported by real programs of agrarian reform.

They also demand the promotion of “sensible and sustainable energy policies” as the movement’s political statement issued in Bali reads. “This includes that peasants will consume less energy and will produce solar energy and biogas, instead of the large scale promotion of agrofuels”.

Besides, La Vía Campesina asks the world governments to design policies on trade and agriculture that promote the consumption of local food and the respect the peoples to determine their own systems of production, consumption and commercialization of food, which is included in their concept of food sovereignty. “We demand food sovereignty and we commit ourselves to to struggle together to achieve it”, says the document.

## **Continuity of the Social Movement of Struggle Against Climate Change**

Rivero said the peasant representatives who participated in the parallel activities to the COP 13 in Bali have the responsibility of continuing the work in their own countries, so that farmers from different parts of the world know what happened there and organize in the struggle against climate change.

The MST leader said that each farmer who went to Bali can “organize seminars in his/her own country to discuss with the peasants and the civil society to discuss about the environment, and we also have to call these organizations to join us”.

Finally Rivero referred to the murder of Valmir Mota in October. He was rural worker member of the MST and La Via Campesina who the farmers claim was murdered by armed militiamen paid by Swiss biotech company Syngenta. Valmir Mota was shot in cold blood during a crackdown against a Via Campesina camp in a Syngenta tract of land in Parana state, Brazil.

“We know that fighting against a transnational corporation is fighting against a giant, a dragon, because it has many political allies, money and media”, Rivero said, who also highlighted that the peasant struggle against transnational corporations will continue in Brazil.

He said: “La Vía Campesina and the MST don’t want to be told who killed Valmir Mota, we want to find out, that it becomes known, who sent someone to kill him, not who killed him, but who said ‘kill Valmir Mota, execute Valmir Mota and other leaders of the movement’”, who managed to save their lives during the attack.

Rivero said that another four peasants were injured by the Syngenta militias and that, therefore, the tragedy could have been much worse. “Over 500 bullets were fired that day and for us, La Via Campesina, that means they are now sending people to kill workers”, the MST leader concluded.

---

**P.S.**

\* Radio Mundo Real

<http://www.radiomundoreal.fm/rmr/?q=en/node/24344>