



Press Statement: Agro Ecological Farming – Alternative to the dominant farming workshop 4 – 6 March 2008

The chemical industrial model of agriculture controlled by corporations and supported by the South African government has directly contributed to rural poverty and the destruction of our environment. The export model of agriculture has resulted in the consolidation of farms, which undermines land reform, displacement of rural people and the exploitation of farm labour.

The agricultural sector remains untransformed controlled by white commercial farmers and agribusiness. This sector has been unable to provide in the food and nutrition needs of the majority of the population. Instead we have witnessed over the recent past the rapid escalation of food prices, which renders the rural and urban poor vulnerable. The food sovereignty of the population is systematically being undermined by the profit motive. That is the right of people to produce their own food, determine agricultural policies and access healthy food.

The chemical industrial model of agriculture, which actively uses pesticides, promotes the use of genetically modified organisms and agro fuels impacts negatively on the health and land based livelihoods of small-scale farmers and farm workers. The recent call by organized white commercial agriculture that genetically modified organisms is a panacea to small-scale farmers, bears testimony to this reality.

The right to agrarian reform by landless poor and small scale farmers are undermined in favour of a market based model that has led to the concentration of land and the displacement of small-scale farmers. To date only approximately 4% of agricultural land has been transferred to the dispossessed rural people of South Africa.

In resisting the current framework small scale farmers, activists, NGO's, social movements like the Landless Peoples Movement are having a three day workshop to discuss agro ecological farming as an alternative to the dominant model. The workshop is part of a broader campaign for food sovereignty and agrarian reform. The keynote speaker at the workshop would be Diamantino Namphossa Coordinator of La Via Campesina Africa. The workshop would discuss ways in which small scale farmers and farm workers could directly resist the corporate control of the chemical industrial model of agriculture that are

undermining agrarian reform, environment and the health of farmers and consumers within South Africa.

The workshop would be concluded with small-scale farmers, farm workers, social movements and NGO's launching a plan of action to resist and struggle for an alternative countryside. Agro ecological farming are seen as a direct alternative to the dominant model.

Small Scale farmers and NGO's are calling on small scale farmers, farm workers and the rural poor to reject the chemical industrial model of agriculture which undermine the environment, rural transformation, agrarian reform and the health of its citizens.

Join us in Malmesbury, Goedgedacht from 9:00 am on the 4 –6 March 2008 as we discuss agro ecology as an alternative to the dominant model and design a plan of action for the coming year.