



Peoples' Control over Land, Water and Territories: Agrarian Reform for Food, Life and Dignity

Position paper for the Second International Conference on Agrarian Reform
and Rural Development (ICARRD+20)

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Working Group on Land, Forests, Water and
Territories of the International Planning Committee
for Food Sovereignty (IPC)





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I. INTRODUCTION

Two decades after the first International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), land, water, forests, and oceans are undergoing a process of increasing concentration and are being grabbed, commodified and degraded at an accelerating rate. Hunger and malnutrition are on the rise, inequality is deepening, climate and ecological breakdown are accelerating, and wars and displacement are proliferating. Around the world, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, peasants, pastoralists, fishers, agricultural workers, and rural communities face systematic discrimination and exclusion from their territories, livelihoods and ways of life.

In this moment of multiple, interconnected crises, Colombia, together with Brazil, has announced the convening of a second International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20), to be held in Cartagena, from 24 to 28 February 2026. For us, the Working Group on Land, Forests, Water and Territories of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), this conference must go beyond symbolic commemoration. It must be a space for states to renew political commitments, legal obligations and agree on corresponding policy measures that will chart a new path toward equitable and sustainable access to, use of, and democratic control over land, fisheries, forests, water and territories with redistributive tenure policies and people-led rural development rooted in justice, equity, people's self-determination and the defense of life and Mother Earth.

The first ICARRD, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006 with the participation of States from all continents, underscored the importance of redistributive agrarian reforms and equitable access to natural resources based on principles of social justice and sustainability. It paved the way for the development of human rights-based international policy instruments for the responsible governance of natural resources. ICARRD was also a milestone in the history of the United Nations as it set in motion a democratic process that allowed for a strong and self-organized participation of organizations representing peasants, landless people, Indigenous Peoples, artisanal fishers and fish workers, pastoralists, workers and other rural communities. In parallel to the official conference, social movements and Indigenous Peoples' organizations of the IPC held the "Land, Territory and Dignity" forum, where they articulated their vision, demands, and proposals as a basis for negotiations with the states participating in the official conference.

Twenty years later, ICARRD+20 offers a historic opportunity to reaffirm the importance of agrarian reform and rural development, to take stock of transformative examples of agrarian reform around the world, to update the meaning of agrarian reform, and to forge a shared vision for popular, feminist, decolonial, and eco-social transformation. It is a moment to restate clearly that the human rights to food, land, water, and territories are essential to the realization of food sovereignty and all human rights. We demand from states and international institutions not another round of voluntary pledges, but real commitments and concrete, binding and measurable actions for structural change. We, the IPC Territories Working Group, representing movements of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural women and communities, rural working people and human rights defenders, bring this position paper as a collective voice of struggle and hope. It will be the basis for our participation in the ICARRD+20 and its follow-up and the dialogue with states and multilateral institutions. Our aim is to remind the world that, without broad, equitable and sustainable distribution of land, fisheries, forests, water and territories, there can be no food sovereignty, no just transitions to food systems based on agroecology, no economic, social, agrarian, gender, environmental, climate and intergenerational justice, and no peace.

II. THE CURRENT CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Across continents, peoples' rights over land, water, forests, fisheries, and territories are being violated by an economic and financial system that thrives on dispossession and extraction. Today, small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and working people face interlinked dynamics: the violent grabbing of natural commons and the deepening concentration of wealth and power. These are not random outcomes—they are the results of policies that prioritize capital accumulation over life, corporate profit over collective wellbeing, and private ownership over collective forms of control and use.

1. A System of Dispossession and Inequality

The past two decades have seen vast areas of land, water, and forests transferred from rural populations and Indigenous Peoples to corporations, investors, and political elites. What is presented as “investment” or “development” is, in reality, an organized process of plunder. From agribusiness and mining to energy, tourism and infrastructure, the logic of dispossession and extraction reshapes entire territories, leaving behind conflict and violence, wastelands of deforestation and ecosystem destruction, biodiversity loss and the disruption of communities' means of subsistence, social fabric and cultural identities, amounting to a continued reproduction of colonial patterns of domination and exploitation.

In addition to the immediate devastation that natural resource grabbing inflicts on people, communities and territories, it has driven profound structural shifts in the way land is owned, used and controlled. Over the past decades, the expansion of industrial agriculture, livestock, aquaculture and fisheries, mining, export-oriented trade regimes, and policies designed to favor global commodity production have accelerated an alarming concentration of land and other natural resources in ever fewer hands. Today, 1% of the world's largest farms controls 70% of the world's farmland, while hundreds of millions of smallholders and family farmers – who make up the overwhelming majority of producers and provide millions of people with nutritious, culturally appropriate food – control only a fraction of it.¹ This concentration also extends to the wealth generated from the land: corporations and a small proportion of rural and urban elites capture most of the value of agricultural property and production, while half of the rural population receives almost none of it. Simultaneously, ocean grabbing has intensified as “blue growth” policies expand privatized control over marine and freshwater spaces, enabling the concentration of power in a small group of transnational ocean-industry corporations and deepening the dispossession of small-scale fishing communities.²

As a result, the majority of peasants and small-scale farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fishers and Indigenous Peoples find themselves pushed to the margins – landless, indebted, and dispossessed from access to the very resources that sustain them. Rural women face additional challenges of discrimination and exclusions arising from patriarchal norms that compound their burdens of care and undermine their rights in such hostile conditions. Inequality in ownership and control over land, fisheries, forests, and water mirrors and magnifies all social and class divides – between rich and poor, Global North and South, center and periphery, men and women.

1. Lowder, S. K., Sánchez, M. V. & Bertini, R. (2021). 'Which farms feed the world and has farmland become more concentrated?' *World Development*, Volume 142, 2021, 105455. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105455>.

2. Satizábal, P., Quinquillá, A., Franco, M. & Pedersen, C. (2024). *Ocean, Water and Fisher Peoples' Tribunals: Cutting the nets of capital and weaving nets of solidarity*. Available at: www.tni.org/en/publication/ocean-water-and-fisher-peoples-tribunals.

This pattern of exclusion threatens the livelihoods of billions of people whose survival and dignity depend on small-scale food production and provision and undermines the possibility of equitable and sustainable rural development.

Behind these dynamics lies the global financial system, which treats land, fisheries, forests, biodiversity and water as assets to be traded, resulting in the growing concentration of land, forests, water and all natural wealth and means of subsistence in the hands of a few. Pension funds, asset management companies, hedge funds, banks, ultra-wealthy and greedy individuals and corporate conglomerates have transformed fertile soil, forests, and waters into speculative instruments, ignoring the people they dispossess and the ecosystems they destroy. This financialization of nature turns the foundations of life into collateral, and every living being into a subject of profit and loss.

2. Climate Breakdown, Biodiversity Loss, and False Solutions

The climate crisis intensifies these injustices. Rising temperatures, droughts, floods, rising seas, wildfires, disrupted natural cycles and extreme weather are already devastating rural livelihoods, reducing yields, forcing distress migration and deepening hunger and food insecurity. At the same time, natural, agricultural and animal biodiversity are being eroded at an alarming rate and speed, driven by the destructive logic of industrial exploitation: deforestation, mangrove clearance, industrial agriculture, livestock farming and aquaculture, ocean trawling, and seabed mining, all linked to global trade networks that extract wealth from rural territories for global markets. Moreover, industrial ocean fishing practices disrupt the migration and spawning of fish that move between marine and inland waters, threatening ecosystems, livelihoods, and the cultures that depend on them.

Yet the very system responsible for this devastation now claims to offer solutions. Under the banners of the “green” or “blue” economy, “net zero” and the “30x30” conservation target, new forms of natural resource grabbing are being justified in the name of climate mitigation and conservation. Green grabs – land, ocean and resource grabbing under the guise of environmental purposes – account for 20% of large-scale land deals,³ while carbon offset markets are expected to quadruple within the next seven years.⁴

Carbon offsetting schemes, biodiversity credits and offsets, and large-scale renewable energy projects require massive areas of territories and control over their associated natural resources – often taken from communities without consent. What we are witnessing is the expansion of a “green colonialism,” where the natural environments of rural people all over the world are once again sacrificed to sustain the consumption and financial interests of the rich and powerful. Debt-for-nature swaps and corporate conservation deals enclose territories under the guise of sustainability, while displacing local peoples and criminalizing their practices. These are not pathways to ecological balance or climate change mitigation – they are extensions of the same colonial logic that has long sought to control land, resources, nature and people through coercion, repression and violence.

3. IPES-Food (2024). Land Squeeze: What is driving unprecedented pressures on global farmland and what can be done to achieve equitable access to land? Available at: ipes-food.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/LandSqueeze.pdf.

4. Coherent Market Insights (2025). Carbon Offset Market Analysis and Forecast: 2025-2032. Available at: www.coherentmarketinsights.com/market-insight/carbon-offset-market-6177.

3. Conflict, Occupation, War and Militarization

Conflict, occupation, war and militarization are not only major drivers of hunger, malnutrition, violence and dispossession – they are integral mechanisms through which financial and corporate interests concentrate and assert control over land, fisheries, forests, water, and resources. In many parts of the world, armies, militias, and occupying powers seize land, kill livestock, destroy agricultural infrastructure, capture waterways and marine areas, and impede access to fisheries, grazing lands and forests as tools of domination and wealth extraction. Settler-colonial projects and policies systematically displace Indigenous Peoples and local populations, illegally reconfiguring territories through annexation, wall-building, resettlement for demographic engineering, and the serious crime of population transfer. The destruction of food systems, water sources, and bio-cultural landscapes is not an unfortunate byproduct of war and occupation – it is a deliberate strategy to erase peoples' existence, suppress resistance, and deny self-determination and food sovereignty. The use of starvation as a weapon of war and genocide in Palestine, Myanmar, Sudan and Somalia are the most vivid illustrations of this brutality.

4. Digitalization and New Frontiers of Control

Technology has become a powerful force in reshaping the politics of land and territories. Digital land registries and mapping systems – presented as tools for modernization and transparency – often erase collective and customary rights. They enable and facilitate corporate and private ownership and use models, reducing complex systems of tenure rights, usage rights and stewardship to individual titles. At the same time, the digital economy relies on intensive extraction of minerals, water, and energy for digital infrastructures – from lithium for batteries to land and freshwater for data centers – creating new frontiers of exploitation that reproduce long-standing patterns of colonial resource extraction.

Megaservers and data centers require enormous built-up areas, permanently converting fertile and coastal lands into industrial infrastructure and consuming massive amounts of power and cooling water. Their rapid expansion, driven by global logistics systems and the growth of so-called artificial intelligence (AI), accelerates environmental degradation and removes land from cultivation and coastal areas from community use forever.

5. Structural Inequalities and State Complicity

The dynamics described and the structural inequalities they reveal are not inevitable; they are enabled by policies and power structures that privilege dominant economic and political groups, including through discriminatory land, agricultural, fishing, conservation and investment laws. Public institutions, weakened by austerity policies, captured by corporate power, and increasingly dependent on private sector financing through public-private partnerships (PPPs) and so-called blended finance, often fail to protect rural peoples and instead facilitate dispossession through concessions, trade agreements, corporate-friendly investment policies and corruption.

Rapid urbanization and the unchecked expansion of mega-cities introduce yet another frontier of dispossession, as land, fisheries, water bodies and forests are converted into high-value urban assets. Real estate speculation and infrastructure megaprojects swallow and destroy peri-urban and rural lands central to urban and peri-urban food systems, displacing small-scale food producers and providers, eroding local food economies, and severing communities from the land, forests, fisheries and water that feed working people in the cities. Instead of understanding and supporting the complex interlinkages within the rural-urban continuum, this kind of urban development subjugates rural areas and people to the capitalistic interests of the metropolises.

Across regions, many countries' tenure systems remain rooted in colonial legacies, where lands were surveyed, codified, and privatized to facilitate extraction and control. Colonial structures persist in many of today's cadastral, judicial, and administrative frameworks, which privilege private property, elite ownership, and export-oriented production while delegitimizing the collective, customary, and territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples, peasants, pastoralists, fishers, and forest communities. Patriarchal norms further compound these injustices: discriminatory legal systems, customary authorities, and public policies routinely deny women and gender diverse people secure tenure, use and control over resources, essential goods and services, and meaningful participation in policy and decision-making processes, entrenching gender inequality and enabling gender-based violence and economic dependence.

The result is a world divided between those who accumulate wealth through the control of nature and those who bear the cost of survival. As eco-systems break down and environments degrade, rural poverty deepens, distress migration grows, and social and cultural fabrics are torn apart. What we face is not merely a crisis of distribution – it is also a profound rupture between human societies and Mother Earth.

6. Impacts Across Communities and Working People

Every constituency of rural and working people experiences this crisis in particular ways:

- . **Indigenous Peoples** face the ongoing denial of their ancestral territories and cultural genocide through deforestation, degradation of natural food sources, extractive industries, and imposed development projects that systematically disregard their right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- . **Pastoralists and their communities** face enclosure of grazing lands, blocked migration and transhumance routes, and privatized water points. While mobility can make them more resilient to shocks, they are particularly affected by armed conflicts and climate disruptions.
- . **Small-scale fishers and coastal communities** are displaced by industrial fishing and aquaculture, tourism, and water, energy, and transportation infrastructure. Fishing grounds and coastal commons are seized and marine protected areas enclose fisheries and disrupt their territories, livelihoods and food systems. The destruction of mangroves and natural coastal landscapes also destroys marine life habitat and increases vulnerability to storms and floods.
- . **Women** face structural barriers in laws, customs, and inheritance that deny them ownership, tenure rights and decision-making power, reinforcing patriarchy, gender-based violence and economic dependence. Enclosures of lands and territories, and environmental degradation create additional burdens and risks in relation their access to food, livelihood and water sources.
- . **Youth** are locked out of access and control over land by rising land prices, financial speculation and natural resource grabs, shutting them out of small-scale food production and other livelihood opportunities. At the same time, policies fail to support intergenerational transfer of land and tenure rights as well as farm renewal, leaving older producers with no successors and young people without prospects of dignified work.
- . **Migrants and displaced peoples** are stripped of protection and rights, while hostile border regimes and exploitative labor systems force them into precarious labor, wage theft and exploitation. Sea level rise caused by global warming threatens to wipe out large swathes of land and endangers coastal communities and entire populations of small island states, with the risk of creating millions of climate refugees who will be forced to abandon their homes, their land, and their livelihoods.

.Peasants and small-scale farmers are displaced by agribusiness expansion, mining projects, infrastructure development, rapid urbanization, and land speculation, while their remaining lands, farms, and water sources are polluted by agro-toxins and other chemical contaminants. At the same time, the loss of local and public processing infrastructure—driven by corporate consolidation and vertical integration—forces producers into dependency on a handful of powerful firms, stripping communities of value-adding capacity. This, combined with inadequate irrigation systems and neglected public support, serves to weaken food sovereignty, and deepens vulnerability to unfair and exploitative pricing, climate shocks, and poverty.

Each of these realities reveals the same truth: the systems that govern land, fisheries, forests, and water are built on exploitation, extraction, concentration and exclusion. Social movements, Indigenous Peoples and rural communities defending their territories are met with repression, criminalization, and violence.

7. The Broader Political Context

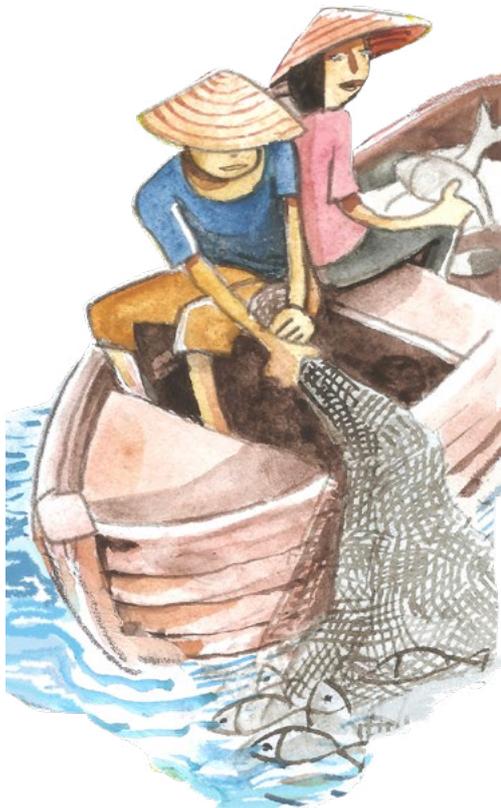
The trends described are unfolding in a world order undergoing profound transformation, marked by geopolitical shifts, deepening authoritarianism, resurging fascism and the decline of multilateralism. Signs of the beginning of decline of US-led Western imperial global domination – political and economic – have given rise to aggressive, colonial attempts by the USA and several of its allies to revitalize capitalist accumulation. At the same time regional and emerging global powers are implementing their own hegemonic strategies, including through economic imperialism and war. In addition, trade and tariff wars are reshaping trade relations, which could call into question the free trade regime/dogma of recent decades.

The resurgence of far-right politics and radical economic liberalism, coupled with the repression of dissent, strengthens corporate power and exclusive private property rights, while states retreat from their obligations to guarantee social and economic rights, and their climate and environmental commitments. Public debt, imposed through unjust financial systems and increasingly owed to private creditors, keeps many countries locked in dependency, forcing them to prioritize debt repayment over agrarian reforms, redistributive policies or public investment. Debt becomes an instrument of domination that prevents redistributive reforms. Meanwhile, the global arms economy and militarization expand, diverting resources away from food and life toward war and destruction.

In this context, ICARRD+20 must not repeat the failures of technocratic approaches that ignore the underlying structural, root and systemic causes of the problems at hand. So-called market-assisted agrarian reforms, promoted as part of the neoliberal agenda of the 1990s and heavily backed by the World Bank, offer a cautionary tale: rather than creating a more equitable, inclusive, and just distribution of land, fisheries, forests, and water, they have often accelerated the commodification of natural resources and, in many cases, even intensified the concentration of land ownership and control.⁵

Therefore, public policies must abandon development and governance models that destroy life to sustain capital accumulation. The challenge before us is to reclaim territories as spaces of autonomy, care, and collective existence – to rebuild the bond between societies and Mother Earth on the foundations of justice, equity, solidarity and peace.

⁵ See, for instance: Borras, Saturnino M. Jr., Cristóbal Kay & Edward Lahiff (eds.) (2008). *Market-Led Agrarian Reform: Critical Perspectives on Neoliberal Land Policies and the Rural Poor*. London: Routledge.



III. BUILDING ON NORMATIVE AND POLICY ADVANCES

Over the past two decades, the struggles and persistent collective mobilization and advocacy of social movements, Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers' organizations, and grassroots communities from local to global levels has played a critical role in achieving significant progress at the normative level toward recognizing the right to land, fisheries, forests, water, territories, and natural resources. The resulting policy instruments provide the moral and legal foundations upon which states are required to act, clearly defining the obligations and commitments of states. Yet, despite their importance, implementation has lagged behind, leaving these frameworks as promises unfulfilled.

1. From ICARRD 2006 to the Tenure Guidelines

Building on the first ICARRD, the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) adopted in 2012 the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests* (hereafter: Tenure Guidelines) – a landmark global consensus shaped by the active participation of organizations of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, agricultural and food workers, landless, urban poor and civil society, through the CFS' Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM). The Tenure Guidelines remain the most comprehensive international policy framework on land and natural resource governance, explicitly grounded in human rights and the principles of equity and justice. They recognize that states have the duty to respect, safeguard, and promote all legitimate tenure rights, including those not formally recorded in law, prioritizing vulnerable and marginalized people and to take proactive measures – such as restitution and redistributive reform – to redress historical injustices and ensure a broad, equitable and sustainable distribution of land, fisheries and forests.

Building on the Tenure Guidelines, the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries* (2015), which were negotiated with the active participation of small-scale fishing organizations, highlight the importance of tenure rights for small-scale fishers, fish workers and coastal communities.

2 The Right to Land and Territories

Parallel developments within the UN human rights system have clarified both the collective and individual dimensions of the right to land. Among others, these developments have led to a shift away from a narrow, individualistic conception of tenure rights towards recognition of the collective modes of access, use, and control of territories by rural populations. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP, 2007) affirms Indigenous Peoples' rights to the lands, territories, and resources they have traditionally owned, occupied, or used, recognizing that these are inseparable from their self-determination and right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas* (UNDROP, 2018) enshrines the right to land and natural resources, water, seeds, and biodiversity to billions of rural people who depend directly on them for their livelihoods and dignity, including Indigenous Peoples, but also rural peoples who are not Indigenous, and obliges states to ensure

access, restitution, and fair distribution. Among others, the UNDROP explicitly recognizes agrarian reform as a central tool for social and economic justice.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), *through General Recommendation No. 34* (2016), affirms rural women's right to land and natural resources, reminding States of their obligation to dismantle patriarchal structures that generate and maintain discrimination and exclusion. General Comment No. 26 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR, 2022) re-emphasizes the link between land and economic, social, and cultural rights, highlighting agrarian reform as a key state obligation.

These instruments complement earlier guidance on the rights to food and housing, including the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food* (2004), CESCR General Comments No. 4 (The Right to Adequate Housing, 1991), No. 7 (Forced Evictions, 1997), No. 12 (The Right to Food, 1999), and the *Pinheiro Principles on Housing and Property Restitution* (2005). Together, they recognize land, forests, fisheries, and territories as essential to human rights and ecological sustainability, affirming that redistributive tenure policies and agrarian reform are obligations under international law. In the context of the Habitat II Agenda (1996) and subsequently developed through normative processes, States have also explicitly recognized that tenure rights are a continuum, meaning that people's relationships with land, housing, and territories exist along a spectrum of arrangements, ranging from informal and customary forms to more formalized rights, which may overlap and none of which should be considered inherently superior. Enacted in the New Urban Agenda, the continuum provides a widely accepted framework for inclusive, rights-based, and context-specific tenure governance.

In parallel, international environmental law has increasingly integrated land, fisheries, and forests in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has explicitly called on states to carry out agrarian reforms to realize the right to food in the context of climate change.⁶ Moreover, In 2015, all States in the UN System recognized and committed their development and governance policies to ensure the social and ecologic functions of land.⁷

3. The Implementation Gap

These normative advances are a stark reminder that agrarian reforms and redistributive tenure policies are not a matter of charity or policy preference – they are human rights obligations. International human rights instruments affirm that states have the duty to ensure equitable access to and control over land, fisheries, forests and water as part of the realization of their rights to food, water, housing, work, health and an adequate standard of living. Redistribution is essential to eliminate poverty, promote social inclusion, and ensure agency of marginalized groups. It must prioritize women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and those facing discrimination based on ethnicity, caste, gender, religion, class and social status.

Yet, implementation of policies, programs and mechanisms that assure the rights of rural peoples and strengthen rural development remains profoundly inadequate. States continue to prioritize corporate investment, financial speculation, and trade liberalization over the fulfillment of human rights. Land governance reforms too often

6. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2024). *Measures for minimizing the adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food. Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Human Rights Council. UN Document A/HRC/55/37*, para. 47. Available at: docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/55/37.

7. New Urban Agenda, A/RES/71/256, 25 January 2017, paras. 13 and 69, <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>.

serve private interests, while public institutions tasked with ensuring justice and redistribution are weakened, underfunded, or captured by elites. The result is a growing gap between the commitments made in international fora and the realities on the ground. Too many governments have used these frameworks selectively, applying them to legitimize technocratic land administration programs or market-based approaches that further marginalize the very communities these instruments were designed to protect.

For this reason, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Tenure Guidelines, the IPC Working Group on Land, Forests, Water and Territories called for the convening of a second ICARRD. The conference must serve as a forum where states, UN institutions, and peoples' organizations collectively assess what has and has not been done. It must renew political will to apply these existing instruments and confront the systemic barriers that block their realization. The normative architecture already exists. What is missing is the political courage to act on it – to translate the obligations and commitments of states, as well as human rights principles, into redistributive public policies that place territories under the control of those who feed, protect, and care for the world.

IV. A NEW VISION FOR AGRARIAN REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Based on a collective discussion process and building on our past positionings and statements, the IPC Working Group on Land, Forests, Water and Territories proposes an updated vision of agrarian reform and rural development for the ICARRD+20. This vision builds on the historical struggles of peoples, while responding to contemporary crises.

We envision agrarian reform as a public policy that supports a process of collective reorganization of social, economic, and ecological relations between people and Mother Earth. Our vision goes beyond the protection and redistribution of land, grazing territories, fisheries, forests, and water. It seeks to transform power structures, dismantle colonial legacies, prevent new forms of colonial control, and rebuild territories as spaces of autonomy, care, peace and solidarity. Agrarian reform, redistributive tenure policies and rural development are at the core of just transitions to sustainable and healthy food systems.

Putting redistributive agrarian reform at the center of public policies is not a return to the past nor does it promote a technocratic exercise in natural resource management. It is a profoundly political project that challenges the root causes of dispossession and exploitation – capitalism and its cohorts: patriarchy, racism, and colonialism – and builds the foundations for a just and sustainable future. Within the grassroots struggles of people and communities lie the need and seeds of systemic transformation, with communities resisting dispossession and defending territories through collective organization, agroecology and sustainable fisheries, and solidarity.

1. Territories as the Heart of Self-determination and Life

Our conception of agrarian reform and rural development is anchored in the conception of land, fisheries, forests, water and natural commons as territories, which acknowledges that natural resources and their uses are closely interconnected. Territories are not merely parcels of land or water bodies – they are living spaces that embody the complex and holistic interrelationship between people and Mother Earth. They sustain small-scale food production and dignified livelihoods, culture, identity, and spirituality. They are the spaces where communities can lead dignified lives, exercise self-determination, build economies based on care and

solidarity, nurture biodiversity, protect water and forests, develop sustainable practices and innovations, and pass knowledge from one generation to another.

Territories are therefore the spatial, material and spiritual basis of peoples' sovereignty. To defend territories is to defend life itself. This is why agrarian reform and rural development cannot be separated from broader struggles for food sovereignty, self-determination, decolonization, and economic, social, agrarian, climate, gender and intergenerational justice.

This comprehensive understanding and the concept of territories was one of the main contributions to the 2006 ICARRD by organizations of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities, and working people organized in the IPC. However, twenty years later, many states and intergovernmental institutions remain reluctant to include it in their policies and programs, resulting in isolated sectoral policies that have failed to respond to past and current challenges.

2. A Framework Rooted in Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Planetary Healing

Our vision of agrarian reform and rural development is grounded in food sovereignty – the right of peoples to define their own food and agricultural systems –, human rights, gender equality, and environmental and climate justice. They must ensure that small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and working people can live with dignity, produce healthy and culturally appropriate food, and care for the ecosystems that sustain all life, based on reciprocity between human societies and their natural environments.

Agrarian reform and rural development must therefore prioritize the just transition to food systems that are based on agroecology and the sustainable practices of small-scale fishers and pastoralists. They protect and value forests, regenerate soils and water, favor biodiversity, increase resilience and strengthen autonomy. Moreover, they challenge power structures, domination and exploitation, and represent an alternative form of production that does not serve capital accumulation, but the wellbeing of people and Mother Earth.

As such, agrarian reform and rural development is a project of ecological regeneration and a fundamental change in the way that societies relate to their natural environments. Territories under the stewardship of Indigenous Peoples, small-scale producers and other rural communities are among the most biodiverse and resilient ecosystems on Earth. Native, creole and peasant seeds, along with local livestock breeds, are the product of millennia of collective selection, conservation and use by rural communities, grounded in ancestral knowledge and innovation, and feed the world while giving life to territories.

Placing land, fisheries, forests and water under their control is not only an imperative for justice but also to secure humanity's collective future. Through agrarian reform rooted in agroecology, the sustainable management of fisheries, solidarity, and reciprocal relationships between human societies and Mother Earth, it becomes possible to replace cycles of extraction and destruction with cycles of care and renewal.

3. Building a Feminist Agrarian Reform and Economies of Care

Transformative redistributive agrarian reforms and rural development must aim to dismantle patriarchy and ensure that women and gender-diverse people enjoy full and equal rights to land, fisheries, forests, water, territories and decision-making. They must end discriminatory inheritance laws, challenge patriarchal customs, and support women's collective organizing and leadership. Such social transformation must be achieved through the support of women and community-led processes and dialogue with customary institutions, rather than patronizing top-down interventions.

By placing the wellbeing of people and ecosystems at the center of economic life, valuing and redistributing care work, strengthening women's rights to land and resources, protecting biodiversity, and supporting community-led agroecology, forest stewardship, and small-scale fisheries, feminist care economies play a fundamental role in confronting today's crises. They challenge abusive power relations, patriarchal structures, and extractive economic models. Agrarian reform and rural development must therefore break with the productivist paradigm that treats Mother Earth merely as a resource and instead recognize territories as living spaces inhabited by diverse peoples and generations striving for collective wellbeing.

4. A Vision for the Future

Agrarian reform and rural development must address the generational crisis in rural areas and promote youth as key agents of transformation. Access to, use of and control over land, fisheries, forests and water for young people is essential for the renewal of rural life, intergenerational justice and the rights of future generations. Young peasants, fishers, Indigenous People and pastoralists bring creativity, resilience, and innovation that can revitalize territories and build dynamic rural areas and communities. However, this requires that they are given the means to realize their rights, articulate their needs, and pursue their aspirations. Agrarian reform and rural development must therefore prioritize them as key actors and ensure their effective and meaningful participation at all levels.

5. Diverse Realities, Shared Struggles

We recognize that natural resource grabbing and the unequitable distribution of access to, use of and control over land, fisheries, forests, and water are a major preoccupation in all continents and world regions. Therefore, agrarian reform and rural development policies must be a priority worldwide. Yet, they must respond to diverse historical, socio-economic, and ecological contexts. In some countries, collective and customary tenure systems remain vibrant but unprotected; in others, private ownership has become the norm, often fracturing social bonds and increasing inequalities. Some regions face challenges of fragmentation; others struggle against high levels of landlessness and vast estates (e.g., *latifundia*), or the non-fulfilment of the socio-ecological functions of land – private or public.

A one-size-fits-all model of agrarian reform and rural development is therefore neither possible nor desirable. Instead, states must co-develop context-specific policies with the people themselves—rooted in history, culture, and the continuum of tenure rights and systems that coexist within each country. Special attention must be given to combining redistributive policies with the protection, strengthening and promotion of collective or communal forms of tenure, use and management, which have long ensured ecological sustainability and social cohesion.

Agrarian reform and rural development policies must also prevent the repetition of past mistakes – reforms that excluded Indigenous Peoples and small-scale fishers, undermined pastoralist mobility, or intensified divisions among rural constituencies. Agrarian reform and rural development must strive to heal the wounds of colonization, conflict, violence, criminalization and dispossession through the recognition of the diversity and complexity of social and ecological interrelations, and the promotion of dialogue, cooperation, solidarity and reconciliation.

The diversity and complexity of tenure, use, and management systems found in rural areas worldwide reflect the richness of rural communities' ways of living, knowledge, practices, and innovations. Although this diversity can, at times, generate tensions or conflicts, it has long sustained rural societies in which diverse groups and communities coexist and live together. Agrarian reform and rural development must recognize, value, and protect this diversity rather than impose homogenizing policies that undermine it.

We strongly oppose any attempts to use land and resource redistribution or settlement as a means of perpetuating dispossession, or of “divide and rule policies” that seek to divide different constituencies or groups of rural and working people for the benefit of the ruling classes and elites.

6. Reclaiming and Broadening the Understanding of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

Throughout the centuries, agrarian reforms were fought for and implemented in many regions – often won through mass mobilization and in the context of decolonization. Yet, in recent decades, many redistributive policies have been abandoned or reversed. The increasing financial and political power of corporations, combined with neoliberal policies, has transformed the very idea of “rural development” into a widened terrain of investment, extraction, markets and competition for corporations.

We reject this distortion, which is epitomized by so-called market-based agrarian reform programs, which have failed rural and working people. Redistributive agrarian reform is not a market mechanism but a democratic, transformative process that transfers control over land, fisheries, forests, and water to those who depend on them for their livelihoods and who act as stewards to ensure their social and ecological functions. It aims to ensure a broad, equitable, and sustainable distribution of resources and to create social relations based on justice, equity, cooperation, and ecological balance. Agrarian reform and rural development must be comprehensive and emancipatory, aiming to promote social and cultural life across the rural-urban continuum, support well-being and good coexistence within the existing kaleidoscope of groups, communities and working people, reclaim science, technology, and innovation. In addition, they must contribute to establishing new relationships between people and their environments, while supporting equitable and just food systems that provide healthy and culturally appropriate food and nutrition for all.

Based on the guiding principles of responsible tenure governance enshrined in the Tenure Guidelines,⁸ which emphasize states’ obligations to

- a) Recognize and respect all legitimate tenure rights holders and their rights;
- b) Safeguard legitimate tenure rights against threats and infringements;
- c) Promote and facilitate the enjoyment of legitimate tenure rights; and
- d) Provide access to justice to deal with infringements of legitimate tenure rights,

we propose to develop and implement agrarian reform and rural development policies that are centered around the following priorities:

Recognition: respect Indigenous Peoples’, small-scale food producers’ and rural communities’ tenure rights and management systems, especially recognizing and protecting collective and customary rights and tenure systems. Special attention must also be paid to recognizing and protecting communal or publicly-owned land, fisheries, forests and water that are collectively used and managed (in some contexts referred to as commons), including grazing territories and transhumance routes.

Redistribution: ensure broad, equitable and sustainable distribution of land, fisheries, forests, and water, countering trends toward increasing concentration and inequality in land, fisheries and water. Agrarian reform and rural development must be redistributive in the deepest sense: not only of land, fisheries,

⁸. Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, para. 3.1.

forests, and water but of power, wealth, and decision-making. It must address structural patterns of discrimination and inequalities – class, gender, ethnic, race, cast and generation – and guarantee the collective rights of peoples and communities.

Restitution and reparation: restoring access, control, and use of land, fisheries, forests, and water where populations and communities have been deprived of them against their will. Particular attention must be paid to dispossession and displacement related to colonization and forced evictions, including the payment of the historical debt owed by states to Indigenous peoples. Restitution must be embedded in comprehensive, just, and human rights-based remedy and reparation policies.

Regulation: States must deploy a range of public policies and measures to limit the influence of market forces on land, fisheries, forests, and water, including through public interest regulation of land markets and land prices, caps/ceilings on land ownership, moratoriums and/or laws restricting corporate land ownership, adequate and progressive taxation of large landholdings, effective corporate accountability frameworks, simplified procedures for accessing and/or securing tenure rights for small-scale food producers and Indigenous Peoples, protection and facilitation of rights to use public lands, fisheries, and forests, reform of access and allocation systems in fisheries, and participatory and inclusive land-use planning, among others.

These and other measures must be part of a broader public policies for rural development and transformation, which ensure essential services and appropriate infrastructure such as healthcare, education, transportation, and communications, among others. Only when rural territories become spaces of opportunity and dignity will people, especially the youth, be able to provide their families, communities and society at large with healthy, nutritious and culturally adequate food, while playing their critical role as stewards of ecosystems and natural, agricultural and animal biodiversity. Support programs, such as public procurement policies, access to credit, insurance, infrastructure, and markets must be designed for small-scale producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and working people, not corporate interests. This requires the creation and implementation of mechanisms that ensure the effective and autonomous participation of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and working people, represented through their own organizations.



V. OUR PROPOSALS AND DEMANDS TO ICARRD+20

The world stands at a decisive juncture. The convergence of persistent hunger and malnutrition, escalating inequality, climate collapse and ecological degradation, proliferation of conflict, war and occupation, and structural discrimination demands more than rhetorical commitments – it requires a structural transformation of how land, water, and natural resources are governed. ICARRD+20 must be a turning point: a space for evaluation and accountability, not commemoration; for public policies that are based on states' human rights obligations, not voluntary pledges.

We, the IPC Working Group on Land, Forests, Water and Territories, bring forward the following demands and proposals to states, UN institutions, and the broader international community. These are grounded in the struggles and aspirations of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and working people, and all those who defend territories and life.

1. Acknowledge the Root Causes and Structural Drivers of the Crisis

Governments must begin by recognizing the scale and structural nature of the crisis. Natural resource grabbing, land concentration and inequality, and environmental destruction are not isolated incidents, but expressions of an unjust global order rooted in extractivism, exploitation, capitalist concentration, patriarchy, and colonial domination. ICARRD+20 must name these realities openly and commit to addressing the structural drivers that perpetuate them. This is a key contribution to the realization of the right to food and nutrition through food sovereignty, tackling the environmental crises, ensuring social and economic sustainability, and promoting peace and wellbeing.

This requires an honest and participatory assessment of the past two decades – to recognize efforts and achievements but also to identify why implementation of existing policy instruments has remained patchy. The views of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic groups and rural communities are essential to this assessment. States must acknowledge past failures and recognize the structural obstacles that prevent the realization of the human rights to land, water, natural resources and territories, as a learning process and the basis for new approaches.

2. Commit to Structural Transformation, Not Technocratic Fixes

We reject superficial or market-based approaches that treat land, fisheries, forests and water as commodities and tenure governance as a matter of technical management. ICARRD+20 must therefore commit to real, structural change: public policies that shift power from corporations to people, from speculation to stewardship, from profit to life.

Governments must commit to agrarian reform and rural development policies that secure the collective control of territories by those who live and work with the land, fisheries, forests, and water, while nurturing natural, agricultural and animal biodiversity and ecosystems. These policies must address not only access to land, fisheries, forests, and water, but the broader redistribution of wealth, resources, and decision-making power. The human rights instruments and other international commitments (such as CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD etc.) that have been developed over the past years and decades (see chapter III.2) provide concrete guidance in this regard.

At ICARRD+20, states must commit to developing comprehensive agrarian reform and rural development plans through participatory processes, which should be accompanied by timelines, indicators, and accountability mechanisms that serve as the basis for periodic progress assessments.

3. Implement Public Policies for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development at Country Levels

To turn their commitments into reality, states must develop, adopt, and enforce comprehensive public policies for agrarian reform and rural development through genuinely participatory, inclusive, and democratic processes. These processes must ensure the autonomous and effective participation of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, women, workers, and rural communities, treating them as rights holders and key partners with agency, not passive recipients to be merely consulted. Their organizations must have decisive influence over the design, implementation, and monitoring of all related policies and programs. The Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples and the right to participation of all people and communities must be respected at all times.

Based on this conception, we call on states to conduct participatory processes to assess the situation of tenure and its governance, in order to identify priority actions and develop national agrarian reform and rural development plans.

Agrarian reform and rural development policies must conform to the local sociocultural contexts, while upholding fundamental human rights principles of non-discrimination, equity and justice, prioritizing vulnerable and marginalized groups and responding to the rights, needs, and aspirations of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and working people, giving special attention to women and youth. Based on these principles and the priorities of recognition, redistribution, restitution and reparation, and regulation, states should envisage a wide array of public policy measures, such as:

- . **Legally recognize and protect collective and customary tenure rights** by demarcating and securing the lands, fisheries, forests, waters and territories of Indigenous Peoples and rural communities through participatory processes that respect self-determination and all legitimate tenure and use rights, including those relating to communally or publicly owned but collectively used and managed resources (commons).
- . **Implement redistributive**, gender-sensitive agrarian reforms that prioritize women, youth, landless peasants, agricultural and food workers, Indigenous Peoples and ethnic communities, correct gendered inequalities in tenure systems, and facilitate generational renewal and agricultural succession. Such reforms should allow for the expropriation or redistribution of landholdings that fail to fulfill social and ecological functions, contribute to human rights abuses or environmental destruction, or are controlled through opaque financial arrangements.
- . **Strengthen participatory, community-based governance mechanisms** by introducing simplified procedures and preferential rights that enable small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples and rural communities to access, control and sustainably manage land, fisheries, forests and water, with particular attention to women, youth and gender-diverse people, and by promoting dialogue with customary authorities to address discriminatory norms and practices.
- . **Regulate and limit corporate and financial control over land, fisheries, forests, and water** through audits of existing concessions, the introduction of moratoria where necessary, and effective measures to restrict or prohibit excessive ownership or control of land, fisheries, forests and water by companies, financial institutions and affiliated actors.
- . **Recognize and secure pastoralist and mobile livelihoods** by legally protecting grazing lands, migration and transhumance routes and shared water points as communal resources, strengthening pastoral mobility as a climate resilience strategy, and developing policies in genuine partnership with pastoralist organizations to uphold their rights, knowledge systems and stewardship of dryland ecosystems.
- . **Protect small-scale fisheries and aquatic territories** by reforming access and allocation systems – including licensing regimes and quota allocation – introducing safeguards against the privatization and financialization of fishing rights, and supporting community-managed conservation and the sustainable use of coastal lands and marine and freshwater ecosystems. Extractive and infrastructure developments should be subject to clear “go/no-go” rules that prohibit activities disrupting fish passage or rearing habitat, while prioritizing river and stream restoration—including dam removal—to support the recovery of migratory fish and the communities that depend on them.
- . **Uphold labor rights and dignified working conditions** across food systems by adopting and enforcing measures to end the exploitation of agricultural, fishing and food workers, including migrant workers, in accordance with ILO standards.
- . **Safeguard tenure rights in contexts of conflict, occupation, and war** by protecting access to and control over natural resources during conflicts and crises, ending processes of occupation and colonization,

ensuring accountability for violations of human rights and humanitarian law, providing restitution and reparations to affected populations, and supporting community-led rehabilitation and regeneration of land and ecosystems.

- . **Ensure public-interest and community control over critical ecosystems** by reclaiming public-interest governance of forests, savannahs, mangroves, riverbanks and coastal lands for community conservation and sustainable use.

- . **Safeguard the tenure human and rights of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities, and workers in the context of digitization processes**, regulating digital technologies, land registries, and infrastructure development to protect collective and customary tenure, prevent new forms of resource grabbing, and avoid environmental impacts such as land conversion, water extraction, ecosystem degradation, and greenhouse gas emissions.

4. Integrate Agrarian Reform and Rural Development across Key Policies

Public policies for agrarian reform and rural development must integrate food, agriculture (including livestock), fisheries, forestry, mining, climate, energy, and finance sectors to ensure human rights coherence and justice. Policy coherence means ensuring government policies, across different departments and levels, work together harmoniously to achieve common goals, especially sustainable development (economic, social, environmental). States must ensure that agrarian reform and rural development serve the public good – not private interests – and rebuild public institutions capable of fulfilling their redistributive and regulatory functions, while including rights holders in public policies – from their development to their implementation.

Climate, biodiversity and environmental policies: Agrarian reform and rural development policies are indispensable to confronting the climate and biodiversity crises. Territories governed and managed by Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers, rural communities and working people are proven spaces of resilience, carbon storage, and protection of natural, agricultural and animal biodiversity. Therefore, ICARRD+20 must demand that states and international institutions integrate land, tenure and agrarian justice into all climate, biodiversity and environmental strategies. This means, among others:

- . Acknowledging the critical stewardship role of Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers and rural communities as essential to achieving climate and biodiversity goals, recognizing agrarian reform and redistributive tenure policies as key responses to climate, biodiversity and environmental crises.

- . Recognize and support redistributive agrarian reform and rural development policies as key pillars of just transitions to just, healthy and sustainable food systems that are based on agroecology and the sustainable management practices of small-scale fishing communities.

- . Rejecting “green/blue grabbing” and strictly regulating the use of land, fisheries and forests for the production of energy crops as well as offsetting and carbon credit schemes to ensure that they do not dispossess people and communities in the name of climate change mitigation and conservation.

- . Recognize and protect areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and pastoralists, and ensure that the establishment of wildlife reserves or renaturalization projects fully respects and protects their human and tenure rights.

- . Replacing market-based mechanisms, including carbon and biodiversity offsetting and credit schemes, with rights-based and community-driven conservation and management approaches, based on

participatory processes and ensuring the respect, protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers, rural communities, and working people.

. Ensuring adequate reparation to small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and working people for losses and damages related to climate change, environmental destruction, soil and water degradation, including the relocation of displaced people and communities.

Corporate accountability and financial justice: Corporate resource grabs and related human rights and environmental crimes as well as the capture of tenure governance and public institutions must end. ICARRD+20 must support the development of binding regulations that limit corporate power and ensure the accountability of economic actors, across borders and throughout value chains and investment webs. Land, fisheries, forests and water must be removed from the logic of financial speculation, and ICARRD+20 should commit to definancializing land, fisheries, forests, water, and nature, halting the conversion of living ecosystems into tradable assets.

This includes:

. Putting in place and enforcing strict safeguards and limits for land and resource markets and transactions, particularly large-scale land deals by corporations and investment funds.

. Dismantling opaque investment structures and holding transnational corporations legally accountable for violations throughout their global supply chains and investment webs.

. Embedding redistributive tenure policies within broader fiscal justice frameworks that create fiscal space for redistributive policies, including progressive taxation of land ownership and benefits from land use, taxation of economic activities that entail high greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity reduction and ecosystem destruction, and debt cancellation policies that allow debtor states to redirect financial resources toward social, ecological, agrarian and food system transformation, including through support to small-scale food production and agroecology.

Rural development policies: Agrarian reform and redistributive tenure policies must be embedded in comprehensive, human rights-based rural development policies that ensure dignified livelihoods and vibrant rural societies. Rural territories must be spaces where young people can build futures of dignity, equality, and creativity. This means:

. Public investment in rural infrastructure such as schools (including primary schools, middle schools, high schools, and universities), healthcare, water and sanitation, transportation, and communications to ensure essential services to rural people and communities, with a special focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized.

. Public and participatory support programs for agroecological production and transformation, irrigation, territorial markets based on social solidarity economy, and the strengthening of community-controlled processing and distribution infrastructure, alongside fair pricing mechanisms, including public procurement programs that prioritize small-scale food producers.

. Programs to promote dignified livelihoods and job opportunities, while protecting the rights of agricultural and food workers and eliminating exploitation, discrimination and forced labor, including for migrants and refugees.

Protection for Human Rights Defenders: ICARRD+20 must also recognize and protect those who defend land, territories, and nature. Across the world, thousands of community leaders, Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth activists face threats, imprisonment, and assassination for standing against natural resource grabbing and corporate violence. Without safety for defenders, there can be no justice.

This means:

- . Recognizing their role as guardians of the Earth and of humanity's future.
- . Ensuring full protection and justice for defenders and their families, ending impunity for crimes committed against them.

5. Establish Strong Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

Commitments made at ICARRD+20 must be subject to binding follow-up. Without accountability mechanisms, commitments remain symbolic. As noted above, there are sufficient human rights-based policy instruments to guide States and United Nations institutions to respect, protect, and promote the tenure rights of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities, and working people. However, their implementation has been a major challenge. ICARRD+20 must therefore agree on concrete mechanisms for implementation monitoring, evaluation, and accountability at the national, regional, and global levels.

We propose:

- . That States commit to ensuring that the outcomes of ICARRD+20 are reported to the CFS, as well as to the relevant FAO technical committees (COAG, COFI, and COFO) and the FAO Council, for further deliberation on how to integrate them into CFS and FAO procedures and activities. Moreover, the outcomes of ICARRD+20 should be reported to all relevant UN institutions, including the UN Human Rights System, the Rio Conventions (CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD), UNCTAD, IFAD, UNDP etc.
- . That States and the Rome-based UN agencies strengthen the role of the CFS in monitoring the implementation of the Tenure Guidelines and the outcomes and commitments of ICARRD+20, among others by organizing regular monitoring events.
- . To reform FAO's Global Land Observatory (GLO) to transform it into a participatory platform for data collection and analysis, knowledge building and sharing, and monitoring, in order to inform the programs and interventions of the FAO, IFAD and other relevant UN agencies. The reformed GLO should have a mechanism to ensure the autonomous and effective participation of organizations of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, working people and rural communities as rights holders, and should report regularly to the CFS and relevant FAO bodies (e.g., COAG, COFI, COFO, and the FAO Council).
- . That states establish national and regional mechanisms (observatories) to monitor progress in agrarian reform and rural development policies and plans, ensuring transparency and the effective participation of organizations of small-scale food producers and Indigenous Peoples as rights holders, including in the context of data related to land, fisheries, forests, water and food. Such observatories should collect information on land ownership transfers (according to clearly established economic, social and environmental criteria, and including real estate sales and transfers of company shares), identify beneficial owners, monitor land prices and trends, link ownership and tenure to resource use, biodiversity, and degradation, among others.

. That states establish an international cooperation and finance mechanism to support states that want to implement agrarian reform and rural development policies and programs. Such a mechanism, which should be part of the regular program of the FAO and could be established as a component of the Global Alliance Against Poverty and Hunger, must ensure the effective participation of organizations of small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and working people, as well as mechanisms to ensure that reforms are developed and implemented in line with highest human rights standards (in particular the UNDRIP, the UNDROP and General Recommendation No. 34 of CEDAW), the Tenure Guidelines and the ICARRD+20 vision and principles.

. That states initiate participatory processes to establish governance frameworks that regulate the development and use of digital and data-based technologies, including so-called artificial intelligence (AI), in agriculture and food systems, particularly in the context of governance and management of land, fisheries, forests, and water. These processes should take place, among others, within the CFS, FAO committees, and other relevant UN bodies, including through the CFS High-Level Forum on “Harnessing Artificial Intelligence, Digitalization and Data Governance for Food Security and Nutrition”, to be held in 2026, and taking into account the *CFS Policy Recommendations on strengthening collection and use of food security and nutrition data and related analysis tools to improve decision-making in support of the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security (2023)*, with a view to ensure equitable, inclusive, participatory, transparent, and accountable use of technology and data governance in agriculture and food systems.

. That states and the FAO organize a follow-up ICARRD in a few years to assess progress in implementing the outcomes and commitments of ICARRD+20 and take stock of the situation regarding agrarian reform and rural development.

VI. CONCLUSION

We, the IPC Working Group on Land, Forests, Water and Territories, raise our collective voice at this historic crossroad. The struggles for land, fisheries, forests, water and territory are not relics of the past; they are the defining battles of our time. In every region of the world communities are resisting dispossession and building alternatives grounded in dignity, solidarity, and care for Mother Earth. Their courage illuminates the path forward.

ICARRD+20 is an opportunity to build a broad alliance for redistributive and ecological justice, linking agrarian reform to feminist, decolonial, and climate struggles. The lives of billions of people and of humanity itself depends on our collective ability to reclaim territories as spaces of life, not profit.





Peoples' Control over Land, Water and Territories: Agrarian Reform for Food, Life and Dignity

Position paper for the Second International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20)

Working Group on Land, Forests, Water and Territories of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)

Illustrations: Carlos Julio Sánchez - MNCI Somos Tierra/La Vía Campesina.

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