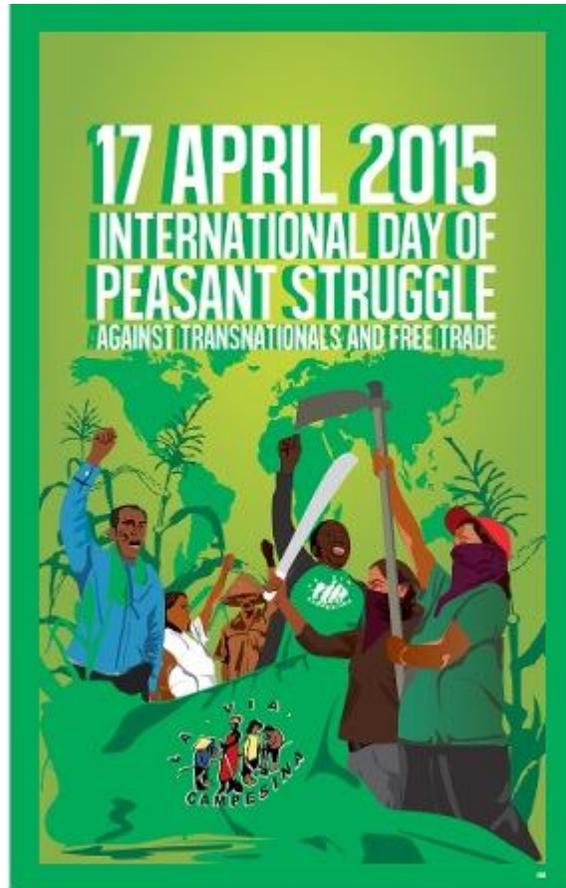


On 17th April, We Struggle Against Transnational Companies and Free Trade Agreements

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(Zimbabwe, Harare, March 30, 2015) La Via Campesina declared April 17th as the International Day of Peasant Struggle in order to highlight the struggle and to denounce the criminalization of protests. Peasant and farmers are persecuted and suffer violence on a daily basis as a result of the actions of agribusiness and the implementation of neoliberal policies in the countryside. For the International Peasant and Farmer Movement, it is urgent to speed up the approval of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people living in rural areas. The Declaration will be a tool to support the struggle for life and dignity in the countryside.

This April 17th 2015, La Via Campesina will focus its mobilizations on the impacts of Transnational Corporations and Free Trade Agreements on peasant and small-scale agriculture and national food sovereignty. We are calling for the further strengthening of social struggle and of the world-wide organization of peoples, in order to demand a genuine agrarian reform and to assert the ancestral right to lands and territories, a central element of Peasant Agriculture and Peoples' Food Sovereignty.

Since 1996 - in honour of the 19 landless peasants massacred in Brazil - the International Peasant Movement has celebrated this global day of action and mobilization. It is a day to celebrate and strengthen people's solidarity and resistance, and to deepen the alliance between city and countryside in support of a societal project based on social justice and the dignity of peoples.

We, the women and men peasants and small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, and landless people of the world are struggling to build a model of production based on peasant and small-scale agriculture and food sovereignty. Free Trade Agreements run counter to this project; they further increase the displacement, expulsion, and disappearance of peasants by promoting a capitalist industrialised mode of production heavily reliant on agrochemicals. These agreements are negotiated under the influence, and for the interests, of a handful of transnational corporations; the voice of the people is excluded.

For La Via Campesina, policies that aim to open up and deregulate markets only serve the interests of transnational corporations. These commercial and trade agreements - be they multi- or bi-lateral - basically seek to protect foreign companies by establishing a set of conditions, measures, and rules to protect their investments. Meanwhile, the liberalization of markets has severe social and economic impacts on peasants and farmers in the North and in the South. Free Trade Agreements put the rights of commerce over all other rights and concerns.

To provide just one example, the European Union, the United States, and Canada are currently negotiating the most significant Free Trade Agreements in history. Those agreements will liberalize trade and investment markets. They will have a global impact and define, in a way that is favourable to business, the new rules by which transnational companies can operate. If passed, these agreements will provide corporations with the new tools that they need to manipulate regulations, norms, and public policies in order to increase their profits, namely the Investor-State Dispute Resolution and the Regulatory Cooperation Council. As a result, states, regions and communities will lose the power to protect their own citizens and environments.

In this context, we denounce the "arbitration" mechanism being used by these transnational companies to globalize, transnationalize, and privatize the world's judicial systems. Private corporations are being allowed to write the laws and to pursue a strategy aimed at weakening states and national sovereignty. Meanwhile, the World Trade Organization (WTO) is currently trying to reinvent itself and has launched a new offensive against national food production, distribution, and reserve systems, which is aimed at weakening the public systems that protect the people.

On this Global Day of Action, La Via Campesina calls on its member organizations, friends and allies to take action in their countries and regions to strengthen our international struggle. These actions can be mobilizations, land occupations, seed exchanges, food sovereignty fairs, forums, cultural events, etc.

You can register these actions and send us information about the planned events by sending a mail to lvcweb@viacampesina.org

Please also send us pictures, videos, posters, flyers

We will publish a map of all actions on www.viacampesina.org

Globalize the struggle, globalize hope!
For People Food Sovereignty,
Against Transnational Companies and FTAs!