

IX International Agroecology Short Course Declaration **Mérida, Mexico, July 11, 2008**

The participants of the IX International Agroecology Short course, originating from six countries from around the world (Mexico, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Columbia, and the United States), reunited at the Autonomous University of the Yucatan in Mérida, DECLARE the following before the local, national and international community:

1. Facing the challenges of the food and energy crisis and of global change, an agroecological focus helps us find options grounded in the local, but combined with clear ecological and social analyses, to advance towards sustainable development.
2. We understand Sustainable Development as a legitimate aspiration of the entire population, urban as well as rural, who seek a full life that allows them access to economic development with equity, with respect toward diversity, with an agroecological management of the environment and the strengthening of the institutionalization of democracy.
3. To face the food crisis and global change we propose and share the following strategies both short and long term:
 - a. Short term at a local level: Maintain and insure production for self-sufficiency and diversification. Conserve and share germ plasm. Negotiate financing for sustainable production. Revalue the consumption of regional food and the consciousness towards the relationships of production, distribution, and consumption.
 - b. Short term at a regional and global level: Strengthen the production of basic foods (free of transgenics), revalue the uses and traditional customs related to the production system in order to obtain food sovereignty.
 - c. Long term at a local level: Promote the self-esteem of indigenous communities and revalue their cultures. Establish and develop model farms, local markets, and promote access to the land.
 - d. Long term at a global level: Endorse the organizational process of indigenous communities. Invest in communication systems (radio, internet, and diverse mediums) to socialize effective results and strengthen global agroecology networks.
4. To have real social participation, it is necessary to go from talk to action, through the socialization of information that allows decisions to be made equitably, by means of transformative education towards the creation of a common ecological consciousness, as well as through the respect and support of the organization of civil society and the construction of new democratic models of participation in sustainable development.
5. We recognize, based in local experiences and the investigation of international organizations, that the production of food systems around the world demand an agroecological focus.

6. We reaffirm that Agroecology is a valid and necessary way to achieve Sustainable Development, that it allows the design and management of agroecosystems towards the development of sustainable food systems.
7. For the application of Agroecology the following is necessary, a) on the one hand increase efficiency in the use of inputs, reducing not only the economic cost but also the environmental; b) substitute inputs and conventional practices with sustainable alternatives; c) re-design agroecosystems so they function based within ecological processes; and d) make the transition from dominant ethics and values towards ones that are sustainable, taking into account all aspects from the production to the consumption of food.
8. We recognize the importance of promoting participatory action research (PAR) as an effective means to revalue and share community strategies and achieve food security and sovereignty, while considering that through its use self-determination and social empowerment is generated.
9. We consider that the starting point to generate the process of authentic development is through taking up local knowledge, traditional technology, and that local interests and needs must prevail in the investigation process.
10. On this note, we alert different organizations, governments and the population in general about the risks of biopiracy and the manipulation and illicit appropriation of goods and tangible and non-tangible resources that are local and indigenous property: seeds, germ plasm, and ancestral knowledge, among others.
11. We recognize the necessity to generate and spread educational programs which will help transform the behavior of our current society towards another that considers the protection of the environment at all levels. We recommend that the educational programs have a strong link to the local, a great commitment to rural communities, and a cross-sectional component that is inter-institutional and international with an interdisciplinary focus.
12. All the recommendations listed above must consider interculturality, intraculturality, and gender and other intersections of diversity, in promoting the enterprising spirit of all the participant actors.

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