



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RURAL ADULT CATHOLIC MOVEMENTS

# VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

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## THE AGROFUELS

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**VMR**

**Rédacteur en chef:**

Mme Daisy HERMAN

**Secrétariat:**

FIMARC aisbl  
rue Jaumain 15  
5330 ASSESSE  
BELGIQUE

Tél/fax: 32-83-65 62 36

www.fimarc.org  
fimarc@skynet.be

**Compte bancaire:**

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*Coverpage : Corn*

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highlights the rural world's life and activities of the member  
Movements belonging or not to the Federation

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*In the editorial of the last VMR issue, we dealt with the food crisis and the energy crisis and we are now in the midst of a financial crisis. All of that concerns us very much because many people will be greatly affected by these crises, but it clearly backs up our proposals, be it in the case of family farmer agriculture, solidarity economy or food sovereignty.*

*These issues are very often complex and we need to pursue our trainings in the movements so that everyone can grasp what is at stake in the face of these situations, especially in the rural areas.*

*This VMR's dossier will focus on agro-fuels. The theme is not new and there is abundant literature in the various media on this aspect.*

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*However, it is sometimes very difficult to form an opinion between those who present them as a solution to the problem of lack of fossil fuel energy and those who denounce them as being in direct competition with food products which are necessary for human beings and cattle. FIMARC's position is in line with that of the former UN Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler who stated that he was extremely concerned by this competition.*

*This dossier is largely based on a more complete dossier, prepared by the FIMARC Human Rights Working Group mandated by the Executive Committee members. We invite you to consult this dossier on the FIMARC website: [www.fimarc.org](http://www.fimarc.org) . The first echoes we have received on the dossier clearly show the need to give precise and legible information to the members of our groups and this is why the group has already been mandated to produce a document on global warming, which will also be the theme of a VMR issue in 2009.*

*This issue's interview will be that of Gérard Boinon, member of the Human Rights Group and a retired farmer who contributed to Honorine Périno's film « Cultivons la terre » - « Let us Farm the Land » which presents viable alternatives for the development of a clean agriculture. This film which is currently very successful in France should soon be translated into Spanish.*

*We are also at the end of the VMR's year. We hope to meet you again in 2009 with new dossiers, interviews, information...*

*We wish everyone of you a very good holiday season and already a very happy 2009.*

*Daisy Herman  
Secretary General*



## Action of the Movements

### Madagascar

Doubling rice production in Madagascar is feasible immediately. By following the Intensive Rice-growing System (SRI – System of Rice Intensification), the farmers of all regions can have yields of more than 6t/ha. This is what FEKTRITAMA committed to doing with the publishing of a small instruction manual on the SRI. The brochure uses simplified graphs, that are easy to read and in Malagasy for the farmer members to work on in small groups called Study Circles.

### Senegal

Six months after having launched its plan on food self-sufficiency in Senegal, President Abdoulaye Wade is now working on the speculation on farming products. For the Senegalese Head of State, it is necessary to « *allow the farmers not to sell off their harvests* » and to make sure that the income they get from the land goes to themselves. During the Harvest Celebration, in a speech he made in front of the farmers, the Senegalese President presented the arguments of his plan – called GOANA, the Great

Agricultural Offensive for Food and Abundance – with the need to face three challenges : the general mobilization of the whole population, a good harvest and abundance – all this to face the current world food crisis and make sure that the people do not have to face food shortages. For the President, the Senegalese have faced this challenge without even a single dollar from bilateral aid nor from any help of an international institution.



Goana - Poster, Dakar (Senegal)

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## Tanzania

The Hadzabe represent a population of 1,500 to 2,000 people and are one of the most ancient African peoples. They are currently threatened by negotiations between the government and a safari company which aims at obtaining a 3,975 km<sup>2</sup> concession in the Yaida Valley where the Hadzabe have been living for thousands of years. Their survival as hunter-gatherers will strongly depend on them having sufficient territory and natural resources. Until the 1950s, they lived only from hunting and gathering in small nomad camps and had no Chief nor any formal type of organization. An old Hadzabe said : *"We did not die from hunger when we had the full use of our land. But now that most of our land is occupied and that it stays occupied, many Hadzabe are hungry"*.

## Sri Lanka

The civil war in Sri Lanka is one of the bloodiest forgotten conflicts on the planet. The Colombo army has intensified its offensive since the summer around the area of Killinochchi, a bastion of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the movement which took up arms since 1983 to give the Tamil minority an Independent State in the East and North of the country.

On the ground, the humanitarian situation is appalling. The Army has blocked many combat zones, thus trapping many civilians. Since the fighting resumed in 2006 – thus making the Norway-lead Peace Process fail – around 230,000 people have become internal refugees, worsening the humanitarian toll which was already alarming. In twenty-five years, the civil war has killed 70,000 people.



LTTE Tigers action area  
Sri Lanka - 2007



## India

The struggle to get the Panchami land is gaining ground. A systematic mapping of this land was sent to the Minister for Rural Development in Delhi and to the Prime Minister of the Tamil Nadu State. With this data, the Tamil Nadu Prime Minister contacted the concerned district collectors asking them to take all necessary measures in order to give back this unjustly occupied land back to its legitimate and ancestral owners. One of the immediate results was the granting of ownership titles to 210 Dalit women. This action also allowed for a resurgence of confidence in the struggle to claim this land back.

## South Korea

Since 1982 the second Advent Sunday is dedicated to Human Rights in the Korean Catholic Church. In 2007, for the 25th Anniversary of this celebration, Mgr Boniface Choi Ki-San criticized the liberal policies pushed forward by the Government, which – according to him – are the cause for the growing socio-economic polarization in the country. After the 1997-1998 financial crisis, the FMI aid and the policies set up by the Korean Authorities triggered profound changes

with grave consequences for the middle classes. In spite of this situation, the neo-liberal policies were maintained and even strengthened. Nowadays, two out of ten Koreans live under the poverty threshold and the suicide rate in Korea has become the highest among OECD countries.



*Korean farmers, 2006*



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## Mexico

According to an NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Study, the "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico could this year extend over a surface of more than 22,100 km<sup>2</sup>.

One of the reasons evoked by the authors to explain the particularly high nitrogen concentrations this year is the corn culture intensification. The growing interest for bio-fuels and notably bioethanol is indeed the reason for a more than 15% growth in the corn crops surfaces. And yet, these crops require an abundant use of fertilizers. The increase of this dead zone surface is thus to be foreseen for the years to come.

## Haïti

A demonstration with more than 1,000 people and the signing of a petition in favor of national foodstuff production – against the envisaged agro-fuel programmed – have closed the Congress of the 35th Anniversary of the Mouvement Paysan de Papaye (MPP–Papaye Farmers Movement), last 20 March. A tank filled with ethanol corresponds to what would feed a person on corn per year, a situation that is totally unacceptable. The Movement claims for a series of actions to be

taken within the Haiti social movement in order to change the objective rapports in the society and transform the ways the State functions for a sovereign Haiti at all levels, especially on the food level.



## El Salvador

Even though plant production for the making of agro-fuels is not extensively developed in El Salvador, many organizations struggle for maintaining their local crops and to try and avoid the development of agro-fuel crops. This is why a Platform for Sustainable Agriculture proposes a training for the phyto-genetic improvement of marginalized crops, as a strategy to reduce the food vulnerability of El Salvador.





## Romania

The fall of the Communist Block in the 1990s and very soon after the European Union Entry negotiations have triggered many important changes in the farming and food practices of the country. The international competition has led to the development of large-scale farms

and use of GMOs, Romania now being the second GMO producer in Europe. Faced with the consequences of these new production methods, alternative movements are being set up in order to develop organic farming through small-scale family farming.



*Some participants - European Seminar, September 2008 - Croatia*

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## Portugal

The ACR organized its National Council in Castelo Branco from 11 through 13 July. This Council gathered representatives from 13 dioceses where ACR is present and defined the Movement's orientations for the future, focusing especially on the urgent need for the Movement to continue to contribute to the themes linked with the environment and the rural milieu, the economic unbalances, education and citizenship. The ACR Movement also reaffirmed its proposal to dream, design and most of all contribute to building a better future.

## France

The CMR Movement, with 15 other French organizations have elaborated a text to take up a position on the CAP debate : « Assessment : we need another Common Agricultural Policy for the preservation of a sustainable and solidarity agriculture ». The CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) will be subjected to a health assessment in the course of the year for a future revision in 2013.



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## **Agrofuels : Our Cars Versus Our Food Needs**

*The debate on agrofuels is very real these days. Some present it as the solution to the problem of the lack of fossil fuels. Others denounce agrofuels because they will be in direct competition with the food products necessary both to human beings and cattle-breeding. FIMARC's position is the same as that of the former Rapporteur on the Right to Food, M. Jean Ziegler, who says he is very worried about this competition...<sup>(1)</sup>*

*« The Special Rapporteur is very worried about the fact that biofuels will provoke hunger. [This production] could very well lead to a competition between food and fuels which will leave the poor and hunger-stricken in the developing countries at the mercy of increasingly high prices of food, land and water. The use of methods from the agro-industrial sector for transforming food into fuels will lead to unemployment and to the violation of the right to food »*

*Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food at the United Nations Human Rights Council – 2008 Report on the Right to Food – N°53*

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<sup>(1)</sup> The content of this dossier is extracted from a document produced by FIMARC in September 2008 "Agrofuels: our cars versus our food needs". You can ask for this document by contacting FIMARC office or download it from our Web site : [www.fimarc.org](http://www.fimarc.org)

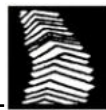
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## TO PRODUCE MORE AND MORE FUELS ?

In Europe, it is foreseen that carburant from agricultural products will cover 20% of the road fuel used in 2020. Ambitious objective but is it realistic? The OCDE (Organization for the cooperation and economic development) underlines in this report dated February 2006 (page 41) : if Europe want to introduce 10% of agrofuels in the road fuel, it will be necessary to dedicate 72% of the agricultural superficies of the European countries. What will does remain as available land to produce alimentation products for the persons?



This means that if the European Union wants to reach this objective, it will be necessary to find he agrofuels in other countries. Thus in Southern countries where vast land are available for this cultivation. And again we raise the same question: if the land with a vocation for alimentation is dedicated to agrofuels, how will we feed the actual and future population of our planet?



The production of ethanol from sugar cane in Brazil costs twice less than in the United. What could be an incitation to produce more agrofuels in the Southern countries. As a consequence Brazil wants to multiply by 5 its land used for sugar cane production, which means recession of dry tropical forests, drying out of vast wet zones and climate change.

### Some key words

**Agrofuel or biofuel** : See « Definitions » on page 18

**Agro diesel** : Fuel produced from oleaginous plants (colza, sunflower, groundnut, and soya) by low-temperature pressure). Added to diesel oil, it can be used in diesel engines

**Agro ethanol** : Fuel obtained from vegetal material (cereal, sugar beet, sugar cane, wood) that can be added to gasoline

**Biomass** : Material from vegetal or animal origin which is used from producing electricity, heat or fuel. E.g. : wood, composting waste or from water purification plants, cultivated plants

**Esterisation** : Extraction (for instance from oil) through a chemical process – contrary to pressure which is a physical extraction

**Fermentation** : Transformation with yeasts (naturally present or added) into ethyl alcohol

**Hydrolysis** : Decomposition of certain chemical components through water

### To envisage another way of live, less greedy in energy

In Burkina Faso, a company massively produces jatropha seeds, a rich oil plant to produce fuel. This enterprise wants to create tree nurseries in order to introduce this crop in the whole country. This means that there also the production of agrofuels could take the place of food crops and that the local population would be the victim of choices decided by companies who are totally external to the agricultural and farmers world.

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Another source for agrofuel is the palm oil tree. Indonesia and Malaysia provide 85% of the world agrofuel production from oil palms. These two countries want to increase their production by 6 million tons a year to respond to the countries in demand. This agro-industry employs in South-East Asia more than one million people and generates billions of dollars in revenues.

Those examples in between others raise the question: shall we continue to consume that much of energy - whether from petroleum, whether from agrofuels – or should we foresee another way of live, less greedy in energy?

But we have to notice that the petroleum, cereal and transgenic producers groups (GMO) reinforce their presence in all the productive chain from the production, to the processing and commercialization of agrofuels. Shall we let the multinational companies lead out world? What about the situation of human rights of the persons and the human communities?

*Questions proposed to the groups and the movements?*

- *What are the cultures for the production of agrofuels in your region, in your country? What do you concretely know about it?*
- *What are the reactions of the farmer's communities in regards with this reality?*
- *Who are the promoters of agrofuels cultivation? Who are the financers or the financial society who are intervening in the agrofuel chain?*
- *What is the position of the State, of Public powers in regards with agrofuel development?*



## THE AGROFUELS AGAINST THE HUMAN RIGHTS

Intensive monocultures for agrofuel production make food-producing cultures disappear and do not leave any room for food self-sufficiency. This competition endangers the right to food, land, drinking water, farm seeds, natural resources, as well as the right to produce, process and sell products in a fair way. It endangers the right to live in dignity without repression, violence or torture; it questions the right for indigenous people to live in their ancestral land and the right for communities to live in peace in a healthy environment.

### The right to food

Let's start with a reminder: The right to an adequate diet requires everyone to have access – physically and economically – to sufficient food from a nutritional point of view.

It imposes on the governments the obligation to respect, protect and ensure the implementation of this right.

The traditional function of agriculture is in grave danger. It is no longer used to provide food to human beings, but rather to hijack from the food chain raw material – that is essential to life – to the benefit of the automobile industry. Many countries of the South already have a deficit in food production for their population.

The development of the agrofuel industries will only reinforce their food « insecurity ».





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The poorest people spend 50 to 80% of their earnings on food. They suffer when food prices rise due to the high prices of fuel-producing cultures. Every time the price of food rises by 1%, 16 million people fall into food insecurity. If the current trend continues, 1.2 billion inhabitants could chronically suffer from hunger by 2025. In that case, international food aid will probably not be a great help since our agricultural surpluses will go ... into our fuel tanks.

« After the production of foodstuffs, the renewable energy culture is about to become the second objective of Fribourg farmers » says a Swiss agricultural representative. The Swiss movement – ACAR – thus poses the question of a society choice: « There is indeed a risk that our food will increasingly come from products from elsewhere, which means : transport, high costs, pollution. Do we want the short food channel to prevail? And what, then, of the food sovereignty we defend? »

## **The right to the land**

The development of agrofuels creates conflicts in the access to the land: expropriations, land allocated to agrofuel production, to the detriment of local and indigenous communities. Hundreds of thousands of people – farmers and indigenous – are displaced in a geographic area called « The Soya Republic » (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia). The expulsions are brutal, often with the help of paramilitary brigades, trade-unionists, social and farmer leaders are murdered, massacres and unforeseen disappearances occur, money is laundered.

In Indonesia, indigenous tribes who live from hunting, fishing and plant-picking are chased away in large proportions from their forest villages by fires; their land-ownership rights are not recognized.

## **The right to health, to a safe environment**

The health of the population is directly endangered by those cultures and the way of cultivation. In Indonesia, those who work in the plantations and extraction plants do so in very bad salary and status conditions and are in a dependency situation.



There are dangers to the health: skin and nail illnesses, nosebleeds, eye infections, stomach ulcers, fertility and pregnancy problems, etc. provoked by the use without precautions of more than twenty pesticides.



*Assesse - Belgium 2007*

Oil palm production is not very remunerative for producers: the preparation of the land is expensive and so are the seeds. Most farmers go into debt to make the necessary investments. The reimbursement of their loans cut their modest earnings by 30%.

Important destruction of the forests: In Malaysia, between 1985 and 2000, the development of oil palms for agrofuel production was responsible for 87% of the deforestation. In Indonesia, the oil palm plantations are the main cause of forest decline; by around 2020, these surfaces will have tripled, to reach 16.5 million hectares (the surface covered by England and Wales together) with a loss of 98% of the forest area.

## **Agrofuels: what are we talking about?**

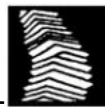
We talk about agrofuels to refer to the fuels made from agricultural produce. They are liquid, solid or gas fuels, which can replace, in engines, oil-derived fuels. Hence the importance of the terms used to designate them.

The term « biofuels » is used by the industrial players and public authorities, within the framework of the marketing set up for their promotion. There isn't an ounce of « bio » in these productivist industries: huge monocultures, massive use of fertilizers and pesticides, GMOs foreseen, etc.

Another term used is « necro fuels », because they can provoke death: agrofuels are made from agricultural products destined to feed millions of people, mainly in the most vulnerable regions.

Agrofuels are used in three main industries :

- For gasoline engines: ethanol and its derivatives from cereals (wheat, corn) or sugar plants (sugar beet, sugar cane)
- For diesters (diesel engines) : extracts from vegetable oil, animal fats and derived products (diester), extracts of oleaginous plants (oil palm tree, jatropha, soya, colza, sunflower, etc)
- For biogases: methane which is made from the fermentation of organic matter (food waste, straw, crop products, etc).



The industrial cultures used for agrofuel production require massive spreads of fertilizers. These are produced from oil – their world consumption is of 45 million tons a year. Each ton of palm oil contains as much carbon dioxide as oil.

Ethanol produced from sugar cane cultivated on cleared tropical forests releases more greenhouse gas than the production and use of the equivalent quantity of gasoline.

*Questions proposed to the groups and the movements?*

- *In your country, in your region, what are the consequences of the development of agrofuels production on the different human rights?*
  - *Right to food*
  - *Right to the land*
  - *Right to health, to a safe environment (deforestation, pollution, biodiversity)*
- *Who are the main victims of this rights violations?*
- *How does the concerned populations react and how are they struggling for the preservation of their rights?*  
*With whom are they allied?*
- *What are the results obtained in this struggle?*

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## TO IMPLEMENT ACTIONS AGAINST THE AGROFUELS

The production of agrofuels is unacceptable if it triggers more hunger and water shortages, as well as human rights violations. What, then, can we do? This is not a catalogue of possible actions but rather a series of ideas and perspectives for possible actions. It is up to each movement to find on the ground the means to have human rights respected and to ensure the future of humanity.

### Are the agrofuels necessary ?

Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food in the UN Human Rights Council, in his 2008 report, recommends that the States observe a 5 year moratorium in agrofuel production.

In his report, J. Ziegler says : « *The States should impose a 5 year moratorium on all initiatives aiming at producing biofuels from foodstuffs. They should make sure that biofuels are produced from non-food producing plants, agricultural and vegetal waste rather than food crops, in order to avoid a massive increase of food, water and land prices and to avoid the use of these resources for any other end than food production. For this, they will have to immediately and massively invest in « second generation » technologies to produce biofuels ».*

(Report A/HCR/7/5 – N° 77 e).<sup>(2)</sup>

It is the first question to ask ourselves in our own country's situation. Locally, what are the possibilities to develop truly alternative energy sources, without depending on agrofuels ? How to act in order to make sure that the right to food and the right to food sovereignty are respected and implemented?

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<sup>(2)</sup> Let us underline here that J. Ziegler uses the term « biofuel » where we believe the term agrofuel « agrofuel » should be used (see page 18)



It is necessary to raise the awareness of the public opinion on the need to reduce global energy consumption. Collective actions is necessary to obtain sensitive results, especially by consuming « our » local biomass and our urban and rural waste.

## **Agrofuels can be a response to local needs**

We have to develop local productions of energy sources, which are not in competition with food cultures on relatively reduced surfaces which do not infringe on food cultures; Within the framework of projects implemented and managed by local communities, so that a real ownership can take place among producers, users and beneficiaries – the only guarantee for success: utilization of cotton seeds in Burkina Faso, substitution of groundnuts by sunflowers in Senegal. And to settle up strategies at the short, middle and long terms. The local production can respond to the local energy needs by supplying generators for the essential energy needs, such as running a mill or a husking plant, lighting the maternity ward or the study group for children in the evenings, maintaining the cold chain...



*Jatropha Curcas*

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It's important to adopt technologies that use non food cultures, specifically those which can be cultivated in arid regions. This would be the case of the « jatropha curcas ».

We should however be very careful : many large surfaces are deforested, and people are starting to use arable land to increase the jatropha yield. Always in the name of productivity, people use more and more water – which is precious in the semi-arid regions. Moreover, many projects were taken over by the TNCs and no longer benefit the poorest local populations.

And finally, we have to make sure that agrofuels are produced by a family and farmer agriculture rather than industrial agriculture.

*Questions proposed to the groups and the movements:*

- *What is the situation of the agrofuels production in your country?*
- *What are the means at your disposal to analyze the situation and to plan actions?*
- *Which obstacles do you meet in your action? Obstacles coming from the State, from the local or international economic power? (TNC's, Lobby groups, etc.)*
- *Which actions did you lead to struggle against the agrofuels development? With whom? With which results?*





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**For this VMR, we have interviewed  
G rard Boinon, member of the FIMARC  
Human Rights Working Group.**

***G rard, could you introduce  
yourself to the VMR readers?***

My name is G rard Boinon, and I am a retired farmer. I am 59 years old, I am married and we have 5 children.

In 1972, I started to work as a multi-crop farm-owner and bovine breeder. We live in the Ain Department in South-East France, close to Geneva, where the headquarters of the UN Human Rights Council are based.



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For thirty years I worked in the GAEC (Groupement agricole d'exploitation en commun – Common Agriculture Group).

This means that with my brother and father – in the beginning – we started working together on the same farm, each having our autonomy.

When my father retired, I continued running the farm with my brother, then with my brother and one of my sons.

Today the GAEC continues with my brother and my son who succeeded me on the farm.

My four other children work in other fields they wanted to explore.

I would like to say also that since 1984 I am a member of the FIMARC Human Rights Working Group. This work has allowed me to gather a lot of knowledge on the situation of farmers and rural people of the world.



*FIMARC Human Rights working group - Brussels May 2007*



It motivates me in the commitments I have made towards the building of an agriculture that is more respectful of people and nature, i.e. what we call family farmer agriculture.

Lastly, I am also a member of the farmer trade union « Confédération paysanne », which is a member of Via Campesina.

***Precisely, let us go back to your work as a farmer and breeder. Which have been your successive choices in agricultural models?***

Until 1984, I worked in intensive agriculture, i.e. using fertilizers and chemicals and whatever was necessary to produce more and more.



In 1984, I was the victim of chemical poisoning due to an insecticide used for treating wheat. This made me ask myself many questions.

Over a few years, I radically called into question intensive agriculture.

I acted on two levels : gradually reducing the chemical products used and favoring all organic fertilizers (manure, auxiliary insects, etc). But always with professional success in mind, so as to keep the farm's income.

It this way I can testify in the European agricultural world that another way of "doing agriculture" is viable.

Then we took another turn : we decided, 5 farms altogether, to put our agricultural material to common use, within the framework of a cooperative.

Together, from 17 tractors in 1994/1995 we are now down to 4, for the same surfaces. This means a clear cost reduction for a similar work.

***How did you take an interest in agro-fuels ?***

It is also the FIMARC Working Group that lead me to take an interest in agro-fuels, but not only.



*Colza field*

On the farm, we have always wanted to have high-performing equipment, to protect the farmers from chemicals when they needed to use them.

The evolution of our farm lead us to lie some surfaces of land fallow (to rest) where we cultivated colza (=rape) for energy purposes.

The colza was sold to produce fuel which we sold to provide for additional income.

The reflection work in FIMARC lea me to question the fallow surfaces.

We then decided to use them for cultivating plants that help struggling against cereal parasites. And the land became the habitat for auxiliary insects.

***I believe that you are also in a group struggling against GMOs ?***

Everything is linked. It is clear to me that the development of GMO crops – namely colza and soya – is destined to agro-fuel production.

Which leads to intensive agriculture, with chemicals and which is controlled by the trans-national companies.



The financial capital wins and the farmers loose their autonomy and responsibility as producers of food for humans. It is thus logical for me to struggle against agro-fuels, which divert the land and food crops that should be used to produce food for humans.

At the same time, I want to testify that another family farmer agriculture is possible.

Its vocation is to produce food for the local populations, within the framework of food sovereignty.

Agro-fuel production goes against this objective of the farmers and food-producers for humans.

It is what this VMR's dossier denounces, same as the FIMARC Human Rights Group's document on agro-fuels.

For me, all these struggles for another type of agriculture go hand in hand to reach one single goal : defending human beings everywhere and always.



*Presentation of the DVD "Let us farm the land" - October 2008*

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\*\*\* 2009 \*\*\*

It's time to wake up,  
Time to wake up and join hands,  
Time to build the future.

*(extracted from the song of the Korean farmers)*



*The Bureau of the FIMARC  
wishes you  
a very happy New Year*



## General Information



The Bureau members met in Argentina from 19 to 29 September. The two main items on the meeting's agenda were the organization of the next World Assembly and the funding of FIMARC. The Bureau participated to the 50th Anniversary of the Argentinean MRD Movement and to some meetings, either with the national team of the Movement or with the «Autoconvocados» Group, a group which gathers various associations that started to claim for a farming policy in Argentina.

The European Coordination met in Paris on 3 November to assess the European Seminar organized in Croatia and to plan the rest of the Coordination's work, namely the contacts follow-up with the East and Central European countries. We should like to thank the NAUK

organization from Croatia who leheartedly for all its efforts in the preparation and successful organization of this Seminar.

The FIMARC Human Rights Working Group has organized a training in Bonn on 18 October on the Human Rights Mechanisms, and more specifically on the setting up of the new Human Rights Council. One of these tools is briefly presented to you in « Your Section » on this issue's page 31.

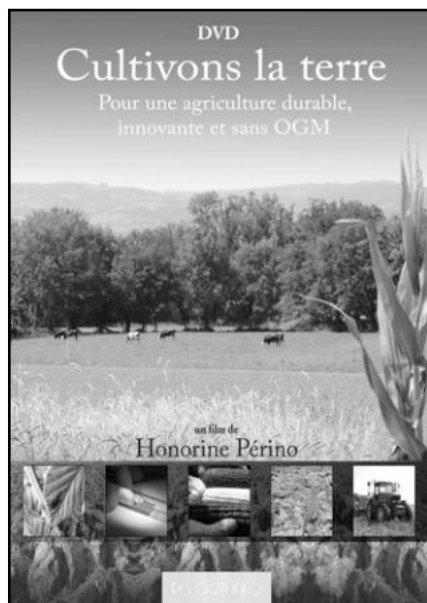
France's CCFD in cooperation with OXFAM, Friends of the Earth and 4 partners from the South have launched a public opinion campaign on agro-fuels. The Southern partners say they are alarmed by the disastrous impact of a large-scale agro-fuel development on the environmental, social and food levels. Scientists have voiced their doubts on their environmental advantages of agro-fuels, and especially on their contribution to reducing greenhouse gases. To learn more and sign the petition which will be given to M. Sarkozy – the current European Union President – go to <http://www.agrocarb.fr>





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The film «Let us Farm the Land : For a Sustainable, Innovative and GMO-free Agriculture» is very successful. During the after-film sessions, Gérard, a member of the Human Rights Group and one of the film's authors has had many opportunities to present the document written by the HRWG on agro-fuels and to debate it with the audience.



Via Campesina organized its 5th International Conference In Maputo, Mozambique from 16 to 23 October. The priority for Via Campesina, between 2009 and 2012, will be

to counter the trans-national companies and the tools used to take hold of the world's resources and economies, such as the so-called free-trade agreements and programs to privatize natural resources and ancient knowledge and which destroy certain cultures.

The UN General Assembly President, Miguel D'Escoto, announced the setting up of a high-level working group, presided by the Nobel Prize of Economics, Joseph Stiglitz, to examine the world's financial system – among which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) currently in the eye of the storm. The group of experts will suggest the measures to be taken by the Member States «to allow for a more stable world economic order». According to Mr D'Escoto, the voices and interests of the developing countries are not currently represented as they should be in the world's institutions of economic governance. «The developing countries would benefit from a democratic financial system based on rules, with efficient financial mechanisms and impartial financial institutions able to give adequate and timely political advice» he states.



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## Your column

### **What is the « Universal Periodic Review » (UPR) ?**

The UPR is a new mechanism set up by the Human Rights Council within the framework of the Human Rights Commission reform. It allows the HRC to examine the human rights situation in each UN member country. The main objectives being the improvement of the Human Rights situation on the ground and the assessment of the difficulties encountered. Each State will be reviewed every four years. Three sessions a year, of two weeks each, will allow for the review of 192 States, i.e. 16 per session and 48 per year.

### **How Does this Review Work ?**

During the Council's specific session, each country will be the subject of a three-hour debate that will allow to address draft recommendations to the reviewed State or to set up a draft resolution.

Each country's situation review will be based on three documents :

- A twenty-page report presented by the reviewed country, who is « encouraged » in order to prepare this report to « proceed to large-scale consultations at national level with all parties involved to gather the information » ;
- A ten-page report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights summarizing the information gathered by the UN on this country ;
- A ten-page report by the Office of the High Commissioner, coming from the other involved parties – among which the NGOs – on the basis of credible and bona fide information.

The review is conducted inside a Working Group, composed of 47 States, members of the Human Rights Council. A group of three rapporteurs (called troika) is designated at random among the HRC members. Its mission will be to facilitate the review of each country and to prepare the final Working Group Report. Each country reviewed has its own troika.

### **What is the NGOs' Role in this Process ?**

The NGOs can contribute to the report drafted by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Non-Governmental Organizations can take part in the Review and take the floor in the plenary session before the final recommendations are adopted.

It is thus possible for us as a Movement or Organization of FIMARC to contribute to this work.

### **To Know More About the UPR**

You will find all the information on the sessions planned until 2011 on the UPR website, with the list of countries per session that will be submitted to a UPR, as well as all the useful information to allow you to either contribute to the report or to consult your country's results. <http://www.upr-info.org>



*Bureau Members during the meeting of “Autoconvocados group”  
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**Editeur responsable**

Daisy HERMAN, rue Jaumain 15 - 5330 ASSESSE (BELGIQUE)