

VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

2009/01 N° 93

PATENTS ON LIVING ORGANISMS

VMR

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Summary

Editorial	3
Action of the movements	5
Dossier	11
Interview	23
<i>Naiyana VICHITPORN, Thailand</i>	
General Information	29
Your column	31

Coverpage : Collection of seeds (Thailand)

Periodical published by FIMARC in 4 languages which
highlights the rural world's life and activities of the member
Movements belonging or not to the Federation

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Strawberry field - Croatia (2008)

It is a pleasure to get together again with this first issue of The Voice of the Rural World with the renewed ambition to provide you, all year long through the four issues of the VMR, with a file on a topical issue close to our movement's concerns and to rural world association's preoccupations; data on our member's activities, interviews of activists and your column.

This first issue of the 2009 VMR will focus on patents on agricultural seeds and in a more general way on patents on living organisms.

Throughout the world, there are approximately 240,000 different plant species out of which a little over 3,000 species are domesticated by men. People use them to feed themselves or for other purposes. However, only 150 species are commonly grown.

The current diversity of seed varieties is the result of years of farmers and human communities' work. Nevertheless, this species diversity is the focus of a great battle between a few multinational companies which wish to seize and control the whole seeds field.

This file will give you a few elements to explain the situation, patents and the dangers they put the farmers in. We will offer some alternatives to safeguard the biodiversity and the freedom of the men and women of the Earth against the power of money.

Our interviewee is Naiyana Vichitporn, from Thailand, who has been working for many years in the Northern part of country, close to the Karens people who are trying to safeguard both their genetic and cultural heritage but are facing the aggressions of our economic system very hard as for almost all autochthonous people,.

Your column will give you data to complete the file by briefly introducing you the main bodies that deal with patents management. May we remind you that this column is your space? We would like for you to take part in it either with specific requests for information or with letters to the editors to react on some articles or situations you face in your countries.

We would like to thank Misereor that, once again, contributes greatly to the publication of your journal this year as it understood the importance of the training and the data we try to convey to you through these columns.

Have a good reading.

*Daisy Herman
Secretary General*



Action of the Movements

Germany

In the framework of the International Green Week Berlin, ILD, the development help organization of the KLN movement, organized from January 15th to 17th a last seminar on the topic of patents on plants and local knowledge. The patent's issue is not simple. Patents can be considered as a protection means to the benefit of the people but witnesses, from both the North and South, highlighted the danger

represented by patents on living organisms that, for the most part, are in the hands of large companies in developed countries even though 90% of the world's biological wealth is located in developing countries

Spain

The MRC movement held its general assembly in last February. Its main reflection topic was "an identity, an organization, a future". At the end of the meeting, a manifesto was published highlighting the need



OKIO program, Germany - January 2009

to review one's organization to better tackle the challenges both the society and the movement are facing, the need to work along with other groups and activists for "another possible world". It also calls out to civil society and Church's organizations so that they give concrete answers to the victims of globalization and the current crisis.

Belgium

The ACRF which has been analyzing for many years the issue of financial speculation called out to the Belgian Prime Minister and the Presidents of French speaking parties. The events of the last few weeks prove us that we urgently need to implement a finance regulation through the political sphere. Financial speculation allows some people to get richer shamelessly. The ACRF underlines the fact that it is unacceptable that such attitudes might be accepted all the more when financial bodies play with their clients' money. Even though the movement understands some rapid political decisions that allowed to save banks along with the jobs and the assets of the customers, one cannot help but wonder at how easy it is to release billions in such a short notice to solve this kind of crisis whereas it is so complicated

to allocate a few hundred million Euros to raise low wages, small old-age pension and social benefits..

Brazil

Hundreds of female farmers without land staged a sit-in on Monday, March, 9th in the Ministry of Agriculture demanding an agrarian reform and denouncing the Government's pro-entrepreneurial policy. This female farmers' protest action represents a call for Brazil to stimulate its national market rather than focusing its activities on exports. The agrarian reform and small farmers are the solutions to face the economic crisis through employment creation and by allowing an increase in the food production.





Argentina

Argentina, the second world producer of transgenic products and the third world producer of soy, suffers from ever more aggressive attacks from the multinational corporation Monsanto to collect what it believes “belongs to it” as royalties for the use of its patent on transgenic soy. Monsanto owns the European patent n° 301.749 that works as a “species patent”: it grants its owner the exclusive monopoly on all genetically modified soy varieties and seeds, without taking into consideration the genes or the technique used. The patent has never been recognized in Argentina because Monsanto did not go through with the procedure at the national registry in the appropriate time. However, this did not prevent Monsanto to receive royalties in a restrictive way when selling the seeds as the royalties’ percentage is included in the price.

El Salvador

On March, 15th, El Salvador held its elections with high hopes for a Government change. This country is a typical example of the USA intervention in the Cold War framework and since the end of the civil war in the socio economic fabric in

promoting the private sector’s development. For the Conservatives, El Salvador is shown as a very good example of peace, democracy and development. The Government speaks about 38% of poor people while civil society organizations estimate that the actual percentage is between 60 to 70%. This situation leads to a massive migration, to the USA mainly, which allows the Government not go bankrupt thanks to the money sent by the migrants which represents approximately 17% of the GDP.



*Mauricio Funes, President,
El Salvador - March 2009*

Uganda

The World Bank has decided to invest 75 million dollars in the second “Energy for Rural transformation Project” plan. This project aims at increasing the access to renewable

energies and to Communications and Information Technologies (CIT) in rural areas in order to contribute to companies' productivity and to the households' standard of living. The PEAP, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan, depends on the supply of the infrastructure and the functioning of social services to promote growth, reduce poverty and offer an easy and cheap access to modern energy services and CITs which still is a challenge for the Government.

Madagascar

According to articles in the *Courrier International*, the Financial Times and other media, the South-Korean industry giant Daewoo Logistics struck a deal with the Malagasy government in July 2008 to rent 1.3 million hectares – half of the cultivable acreage of the Great Isle - to grow maize and produce palm oil for 99 years. The level of rent remains secret but there are rumors alluding to a very low level and even zero. Thus the South-Koreans intend to strengthen their own food safety, South-Korea being the fourth larger maize importing country. In return, Madagascar will make do with the jobs created by the exploitation and will content itself with the investments made by the company

in the road infrastructure, irrigation, crops storage facilities. The maize production should start as soon as 2009 on 2,000 hectares. In the end, one million hectares of land will be used for it and 300,000 hectares for palm oil. Daewoo aims at developing the cultivation of these arable soils for fifteen years with South African workers and seeds, likely to be genetically modified, supplied by the United States of America.

The FAO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, warns us in view of the dangers of “neo-colonialism” from the numerous foreign companies occupying huge African lands to ensure their food supply or to refuel the growing international market of agrofuels.



Madagascar



Democratic Republic of Congo

“Violence against women must not be tolerated, no matter the kind of violence, the context or the circumstances, by any political leader or government”, declared the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon on 5th March 2009, three days before the International Women’s Day. He added that a woman out of five in the world is a victim of rape, a barbarous deed... “Stop rape”, that is the slogan of a women’s organization based in the USA (now an international one), VDAY (Vagina Day) which sent a letter to President Obama asking him to do whatever is in his power to protect women in DRC and encourage the international community to clamp down on Congolese leaders who use mass rapes as a war weapon.

India

The IRDS and the Land Right Federation keep on fighting the rights of the Dalits in the state of Tamil Nadu. After a seven-year long struggle, on 17th August 2008 eighty families of the Thozhupedu village received their title deed. It really is a historical victory for the Dalits of this village. They also received a water

tank. In this village, the inhabitants, thanks to some foreign funds, have managed to build 51 houses and will continue this building process little by little. Meanwhile, they are worried about their village’s environment and have planted 200 coconut plans along the streets. This symbolic act was made on World Food Day (October, 16th). Moreover, they also want to develop an organic garden which will be managed by the women of Thozhupedu.

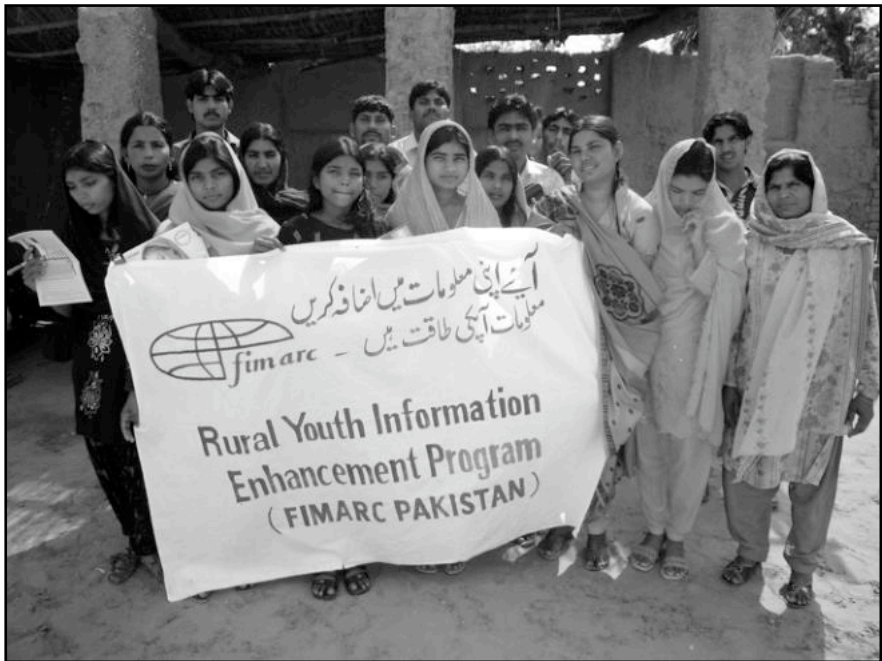
Indonesia

Because of the fall in exports (-36% in January) the unemployment issue is becoming more and more crucial. In an attempt to tackle the crisis, the population is creating small family businesses the government claims to be willing to support. The official figures show 38,000 losses of job in the course of the two first months of 2009, mainly in the sector of manufactured goods for exports. Stalls selling traditional food such as soy cakes or tofu dishes are one of the activities that seem to be developing. It attracts the city-dwellers that would rather buy cheap and quality food rather than going to fast foods.

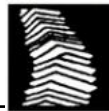
Pakistan

In the framework of trainings provided by our contact association in Pakistan, a workshop for young people living in rural areas was organized on 1st March in village of Chowk Munda.

It taught them to write official letters. The next step is to show them how to analyze various journals, leaflets... to develop their judgment and thus be better able to defend their rights.



Workshop in Chowk Munda village, Pakistan 2009



Patents on agricultural seeds. Threats on biodiversity And farmer's rights.

Throughout the world, there are approximately 240,000 different plant species which means that our planet has a huge diversity of plants of any kind. A little over 3,000 species are "domesticated" by men; humanity uses them to feed itself and for other purposes. However, only 150 of these species are commonly cultivated. The current diversity of the seeds' variety is the result of years of farmer's and human communities' work. For 10,000 years, men have been able to reproduce, select and reseed the best adapted plant species to meet the needs of human populations.

Nevertheless, this species diversity is the focus of a great battle between a few multinational companies which wish to seize and control the whole seeds field at the expense of the farmers and human communities' freedom.

This file will give you a few elements to explain the situation, patents and the dangers they put the farmers in. We will offer some alternatives to safeguard the biodiversity and the freedom of the men and women of the Earth against the power of money.

MULTINATIONALS COMPANIES AGAINST FARMERS' RIGHTS

There are 6 billion inhabitants in our planet. About 1.3 billion are affected by agriculture, but 1 billion farmers or rural people only work their land with rudimentary tools or hand tools. For millenniums farmers have been reusing and exchanging the seeds they preserve from one year to another in order to improve their crop to meet the nutritional requirements of both their families and their communities.

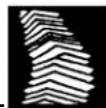
In developing countries, common seeds are generally in free flow. However, if we look at the global cereals situation, maize and sunflower seeds are almost entirely controlled by multinational companies (MC). There are virtually no more farm seeds, i.e. those selected, preserved and sown by the farmers themselves. As far as small grains are concerned (wheat, oat, rye, etc.), farmers can still reproduce and use their seeds each year. This is what we call « farm seeds ».



Beans - Croatia (2008)

Can a bean cultivated for centuries be “invented” in 1998 ?

The agricultural seed is the first link in the food chain; the seed is at the base of the food production, thus it has to be protected.



Let us use an example to explain this:

In 1996, an American agro processing company leader spotted a wax bean in Mexico and bought a sack of it. In 1998, he was granted an American patent on these wax beans. Mexican people are forbidden to export them because the patent entitles this company leader with the exclusive global right to produce and export this kind of bean which became his “property”. He has had a Mexican exporter convicted who declared: “How is it possible for that man to have invented that bean grown by Mexicans for centuries?” Thus, through patents, Western countries seize both genetic and food resources from developing countries.

Farmers’ universal and millenary practices are being threatened by agricultural resources’ privatization and particularly patents on seeds created by some multinational companies.

What is a patent ?

Patents are legal titles that protect inventions by giving their holder a 20-year ownership’s period (monopoly) on the invention’s commercial use. During that 20-year period, the holder can forbid any other company or person to manufacture, use, sell or import the patented product. He is entitled to transfer his right by yielding his patent or granting licenses. In return of this right, he must publicly describe his invention so that a skilled person might produce it.

This definition clearly states how agrochemical and agro-processing companies, via exclusive patents, take over the decision-making power on agricultural practices and farmers

If the farmers lose their control over seeds, the whole production will be in the hands of a few multinational companies. Consequently, farmers will have no other choice than to surrender to the multinational companies’ dictates which will have repercussions on the ultimate consumers.

Multinationals' financial voracity

Three actors play a role in the patents' procedures: the plant breeder who create varieties known as "new" based on laboratory works; the manufacturing sites of the seeds obtained in that way and intended to be sold; distribution facilities that sell the patented seeds to the farmers and private individuals, for example for gardens.

In France, a law states that the reproduction of seed in a farm is a counterfeit even though it is an ancestral method. In 2000, the Dupont Company (USA) submitted a patent on maize with an "improved oily composition". The Dupont Company holds the global monopoly on a maize variety. In India, the *neem* has been known for centuries for its biological properties; its cultivation is coveted by western multinational companies for its efficient organic weed killer based components.

Thus, the companies that submit patents on traditional plants benefit a lot from them whereas it ruins farmers who cannot make any profit from the plants they contributed to protect during millenniums.

Questions asked to the groups and movements :

- *What are the traditional cultivations selected by farmers in your countries ?*
- *How do they organize themselves to make them known and preserve them ?*
- *What are the actions undertaken by multinational companies to impose them on the farmers ?*



“LIFE IS NOT A GOOD”

Southern countries own most of the plant resources in their diversity and Northern countries covet these same resources to develop their research and make profit out of the patents. Patents on living organisms are becoming a tool to control biodiversity and even its decrease. Indeed, companies submit patents on what is the most profitable for them.

This patents' biotechnology matches economic matters. For multinational companies, it is about finding and exploiting new resources, multiplying on a large scale the profitable varieties to obtain controlled seeds and thus developing intensive farming, based on fertilizers, pesticides and GMOs. The consequences of that model on farmers are a dependence vis-à-vis the agrochemical system, processing products providers, the agro processing system that ensures the trade of the products by forcing productions standards, prices, etc. on them.



In the framework of the 1995 Agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPs), multinational companies seek to promote patents on living organisms and thus claim their exclusive right on seeds in the framework of their trade. Their goal is to privatize organic resources.

To have food sovereignty succeed

It is a major issue for farming because it has an influence not only on the use of the land – intensive farming on family and peasant farming – but also the preservation of agro-biodiversity and thus food safety of millions of people. The food sovereignty of the people is at stake.

At the opposite of this intensive and productivist model, thousands of farmers are developing a peasant farming. It allows farmers to freely reseed the harvested grains and exchange it freely with other farmers and village communities. This system, based on the farmers' ancestral practices, preserve the crop diversity adapted to the fields.

Peasant farming has three fundamental dimensions.

A social dimension, because it ensures jobs in the rural and agricultural area, allowing regions to maintain their human, social and economic vitality; it creates a farmers' solidarity between regions and with farmers of the world and favoring food sovereignty, it respects the right to produce the right amount of goods to meet the needs of each family and region.

It has an efficient economic dimension, giving the products of the land an added value, allowing the farmers to live with dignity from their work thanks to healthy and quality products.

Finally, it respects both consumers and nature, not only because of the quality of the products but also through the preservation of biological, landscape and biodiversity balances.



Human Rights' Privacy

Many voices are rising against the patents' development and the plundering of the South's genetic resources claiming that living organisms – be it animal or plant – must not be part of a commodification process. Life is not a good.



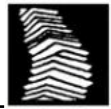
WSF 2007, Nairobi (Kenya)

The International Organization of African Unity declares that “all life forms are at the base of human survival. Consequently, patentability of life forms or the exclusive appropriation of any life form (...) violates the fundamental right of a human being to life”. It is about safeguarding the right to life in its human, animal and plant diversity. The right to financial profit – the one MCs are pursuing – cannot surpass the people's right to eat and have access to health services. It is a matter of ethics and thus Human Rights.

A few definitions

Some terms used in this file should be explained:

- Sustainable agriculture: it is based on the non-depletion of natural resources; the agricultural practices are based on the use of shared resources (land, water, biodiversity) in solidarity approach between Southern and Western countries and between generations;
- Agro processing: series of activities consisting in the processing, transformation and conditioning of agricultural products of goods intended to the feeding industry;
- Agrochemical: set of activities of the chemical industry providing products for farming, for example fertilizers and pesticides;
- Biodiversity (or biological diversity): diversity of living forms (wildlife, flora and micro organism), genes and ecosystems;
- Biotechnologies: set of techniques and procedures that allow to make a profit out of living organisms and particularly micro organisms;
- Patent: title of ownership registered for an invention. This title gives the patent holder a 20-year period of exclusive use;
- Sustainable development: its aim is to “meet the present needs without compromising the future generations’ capacity to fulfill their own needs”;
- Farmer’s privilege: traditional farmers’ right to reseed their field with part of their previous year’s harvest;
- Life-form: every living organism: animal, plant or micro organism.



This is a fight to conquer new rights in the food sovereignty framework, through completely different standards for the exchanges and the farming policies and by reinforcing the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

The rejection of any patent on a life form (animal, plant) is based on the economic aspect developed by peasant farming and on the social ethics which impose human rules for all. We need to fight to prevent any life form to be transformed into a good.

Questions asked to the groups and movements :

- *What are the actions undertaken by your organization to preserve and defend the farmers' rights to use farm seeds ?*
- *Which organization did you form an alliance with for these actions ?*
- *What are the obstacles you are facing – political or economic obstacles, MC pressures, etc. – to achieve results to help the farmers ?*



THERE ARE ALTERNATIVE WAYS

In contrast with the practices of agrochemical and agro processing companies' practices imposed by patents, there are alternative ways that lie in the perpetuation and dissemination of traditional practices of seed selection and exchange. Sometimes it consists in rediscovering these ancient methods. The aim is to preserve farm seeds, exchange them between farmers and communities, disseminate them and reuse them.

In The Philippines, a farmers' network was set up to build a sustainable farming system. In over three years, 39 rice varieties and 18 maize varieties have been collected and preserved in seed banks. Thanks to this seed bank, an agricultural community has developed a self-sufficient agriculture based on various crops: traditional rice, maize, local roots, bananas. In Thailand, a cultivated varieties' improvement and conservation network allowed the member farmers to collect and sow local varieties of rice in order to provide for the communities.



Select and disseminate traditional varieties

In France, a farmer grows biologically 5 non hybrid traditional maize varieties. The grains selection allows him to keep maize varieties adapted to each region. The leguminous plants' cultivation (peas, beans, lentils, etc.) with maize provides the soil with sufficient nitrogen and proteins which allow avoiding using fertilizers and pesticides and still keeping almost the same yield as industrial maize cultivations.

Peru's, Bolivia's and Chile's Andean communities have always preserved biodiversity by growing many potatoes varieties. This has been possible thanks to grains' exchanges that take place during different meetings between communities.



Potatoes

In Brazil, the House of Creole varieties is a space for the promotion of family farming and its production systems. Families select their own traditional varieties. The House of Creole varieties distributes these varieties through an exchange system based on barter.

In Benin, traditional healers have developed medicinal plants' botanical gardens. They look for plants in nature and transplant them in their garden. This is how they contribute to the preservation of endangered medicinal species. They have created a joint medicinal botanical garden for the healers of the region. This common garden promotes the exchange and the dissemination of knowledge between healers in order to help local communities.

A new standard's hierarchy

In France, a company is growing and distributing forgotten vegetable seeds. These are produced and multiplied according to specific standards ensuring their correspondence with traditional seeds: no GMOs, no fertilizers and no synthetic pesticide.

In another French region, an association is struggling for the unrestricted use of farm seeds. It aims at preserving the genetic resources' biodiversity in the field of plants and food seeds. It puts seeds from an ancient vegetable variety at the farmers' disposal and also sends seeds to rural communities of Southern countries, out of any patent. It is promoting a research center for genetic resources which goal is to train farmers and teach them how to produce and distribute these seeds. It also created a University of tropical countries' agrobiolology.

In the end, it is about the struggle to preserve biodiversity and the rights of both the farmers and the communities to maintain and develop their own production system based on farm seeds. It is about setting up a new standards' hierarchy: Human Rights' supremacy over commercial rights in the food sovereignty framework.

Questions asked to the groups and movements :

- *In your country or region, do you know alternative ways to preserve traditional local seeds ?*
- *What means do they use to advertise and develop their actions ?*
- *What are the networks they can join to have more power and more action opportunities ?*
- *What are the economic and political obstacles they are facing in their work ?*



**For this VMR interview,
we gave the floor to
Ms Naiyana Vichitporn from Thailand,
coordinator of the Catholic Commission
for Women in Chiang Mai Diocese.**

***Naiyana could you introduced
your self?***

My name is Miss Naiyana Vichitporn, I'm based in Chiang Mai, Northern part of Thailand. I'm the coordinator of the Catholic Commission for Women in ChiangMai Diocese.

I'm also one of the Executive Committee member of the FIMARC as a representative of CCHD/ Caritas Thailand .



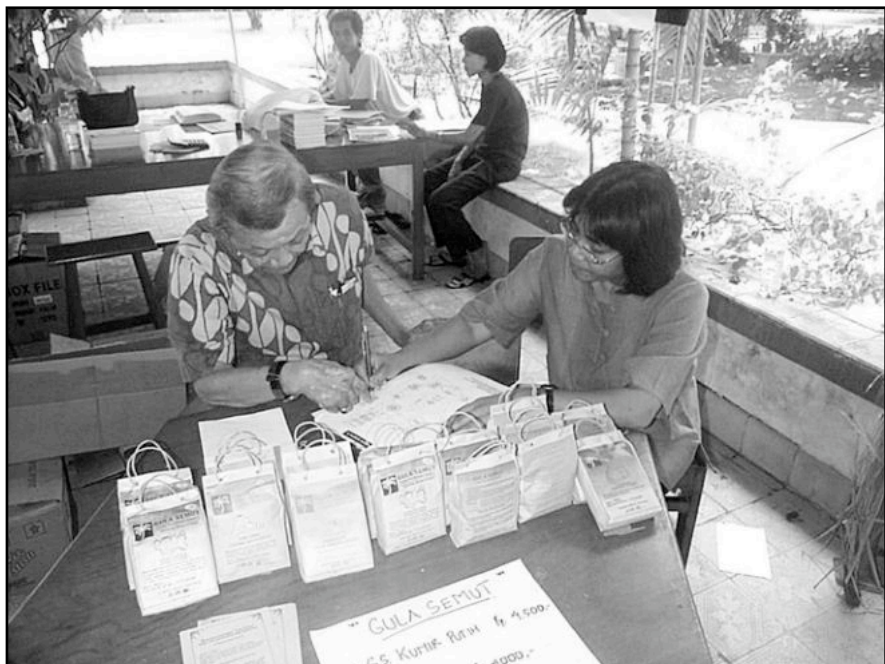
Can you please explain us the position of CCHD/Caritas Thailand in regards with patents?

I think that best is to give the floor to the women. So you will discover lived-experience of doing agriculture of CCHD/Caritas Thailand.

How it has been done by the members of sustainable agriculture based on local knowledge and wisdom of the women of the diocese of Chiang Mai which has been done both at the family and network level concerning on patents on seeds and familial agricultural.



Women of the diocese of Chiang Mai, Thailand 2009



Collection of seeds

The community seeds bank acts as the centre of exchange and learning from each other's experiences concerning on agriculture both level of individual and interesting group.

At the same time, there is a learning and sharing in the concept or idea of food sovereignty and family agriculture which emphasis on production for self-consumption/family consumption.

What is the concrete way of conserving seeds?

For more than 3-4 years we have tried to organise the local people, reviving traditional values.

Each family consistency collect their own seeds for the next cultivation and also share or exchange to other people both within the community and at the network level in the occasion of they gather together



Sharing and transmission of local knowledge

The collection of local seeds of the house-wives of the diocese of Chiang Mai also corporate with Northern Farmer Network (NFN) which the NFN has been collected their local seeds in form of Community Seeds Bank (CSB) for already 3 years.

Why do you consider this conservation of seeds so important ?

The restoration of multi-local wisdom of the community concerning on production is also become a common concern and crucial for the house-wives.

This is considered as a discourse against the policy of the government and trans-national companies which strongly emphasis on mono-crop production for marketing.

The introduction of mono-crop production system totally change the way of life of the community from self-sufficiency to money centred-economy system which bear great impact to the people and the degradation of environment and other natural resources especially land, forest and water which are considered as life support system of all living being.



The involvement in mono-crop production system also destroys the reciprocity and sharing system of the community and leads to individualism and lost of local control over community resource management and affects the food sovereignty concept and family agriculture. For example, the crisis of rice which occurred everywhere and in the case of the government declare of 13 species of local crops which are considered as dangerous crops which in fact is not true. Therefore, every sector struggle against the government to cancel the declaration over such crops.

So we can understand that mono crop cultivation is not the solution...

In order to maintain the way of life of the community based sufficiency agriculture we, the women and man have to stand up and challenge against mono-crop production system by bringing the concept of Culture-Agriculture which has been practiced by the community based on their local knowledge and wisdom and encompass with the dimension of values and spirituality in all step of production process.



Can you explain us a little bit more what is the concept of “culture – agriculture” ?

The concept of Culture-Agriculture has been implementing by the women and man as well as the young people and are continuing transmitting to the future

generations and widening the concept from Culture-Agriculture to Culture-and social capital.

There is a linkage campaign with other concern groups particularly with Northern Farmer Network to leveling our campaign at wide level.





General Information

The Bureau of the FIMARC gathered in Belgium in April to prepare the Executive Committee. Two very important issues were mentioned by the ExCo members : the preparation of our 2010 World Meeting and FIMARC's funding. As far as the World Meeting is concerned, a year from now, everything has to be decided : the location, the topic, the re-election of the teams. In the coming weeks, you will receive all the documents that will allow you to be involved in this preparation process. The funding debate is primary because the numerous NGOs' requests to funding bodies are more and more sizeable. Thus we will probably have to redefine our project, target our training mission of actors of change.

The European coordination gathered in early May making the most of the European members' attendance at the ExCo in Assesse. One of the items on the agenda was the setting up of a joint seminar with KLB Bavaria that should be held in October.

During 2009, we hope we will be able to bring together all continental coordinations so that all FIMARC's member countries will get involved in the World Meeting preparation, assess the Taejon's work plan and set the beacons for coming years.

The United Nations Conference on Climate Change was held in Poznań, Poland from the 9th to the 13th December 2008.

Its goal was to set up a new post Kyoto agreement. Two questions lead the debates: who/what finances the measures to fight against climate change? How to apply the greenhouse gas emissions trading system between industrialized nations and developing countries?



Last 27th February, Entraide & Fraternité, MIJARC and FIMARC launched a petition asking the Belgian Minister of Energy and Climate to support an international agreement which aims at reducing greenhouse gases and supporting the populations for a sustainable development. The three organizations met the minister Maignette's personal staff to tell them about these demands and hand him over an umbrella, symbol of the necessity to protect us from greenhouse gases. One of the next VMR issues will focus on climate changes and we will further explain our organizations demands and our participation to the Copenhagen conference set to take place next December.

The ExCo members were actively involved in the Social and Solidarity Economy Forum which took place in Luxembourg on April 2009. FIMARC ran a workshop on Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Economy. In the current crisis context it is more obvious than ever that we need to develop the solidarity economy sector. A social and solidarity economy world is a world where financial gain is not the only determining factor in the companies' decision making process and where social services are not only available to those who can afford them. It is an economy which takes roots at the local level and does not avoid profitability decreases. It is a society that refuses to be dual and to reduce the poor to serve the rich. It is first and foremost a food-producing agriculture that respects the environment and turns towards food sovereignty. A world for the people who are living in it now and for the generations that will in the future. A world that cares for the well-being of the vast majority of its inhabitants.

The Justice et Paix Pontifical Council organizes the 6th Migrants Congress in Rome in next November. FIMARC has been invited to join that Congress which topic will

be "a pastoral response to the migrants' phenomenon of the globalisation era".

FIMARC's Secretary General was involved in an immersion and dialogue program in Zambia in last March. This program was organized at the initiative of "Exposure und Dialogprogramme" Germany and used an interesting methodology: to live for four days with small scale farmers and afterwards attend a seminar to share the points of view of the various actors who took part in the program: political officials, business officials, NGOs and Christian organizations workers. Its topic was "international trade between food safety, energy production and market liberalization".



Zambia, March 2009



Your column

Let us remind you that this column is an open space for you to share your experiences, to request specific documents, to exchange and it can also be used as a letter to the editors.

To complement your file, you will find here a brief introduction of some bodies that are directly dealing with the patent's issue.

EPO: The European Patent Office is an intergovernmental organization established on 7th October 1977 and based on the Convention on the Grant of European Patents (EPC) signed in Munich in 1973. It is made of two bodies: the European Patent Office and its administrative Council which monitors the Office's activities. This organization currently has 35 member states.

WIPO: The World Intellectual Property Organization is a United Nations specialized agency which mission is to create a balanced and accessible international system of intellectual property that rewards creativity, stimulates innovation and contributes to economic development while preserving public interest. The WIPO was founded in 1967 to promote the intellectual property's protection throughout the world through cooperation between States and by collaborating with other international organizations. Its headquarters are located in Geneva.

UPOV: The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants is an intergovernmental organization based in Geneva. UPOV was established by the International Convention on the Protection of New Varieties of Plant. The Convention was adopted in Paris in 1961, reviewed in 1972, 1978 and 1991. Its goal is to protect new varieties of plants through the issue of New Variety Certificates. These are different from patents because they specifically protect plant varieties whereas patents are supposed to reward the efforts to find a solution to a technical problem expressed by functions or specific or generic means.

USPTO: The United States Patent and Trademark Office is the administrative board in charge of issuing patents and trademarks submitted in the United States. It is considered to be the most important office in the field of patents, mostly due to the economic dimension of the American market.



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