Brussels, 2 February 2024

Joint statement of the undersigned organisations in solidarity with farmers in Europe

Building momentum for agroecological farming

On 1 February 2024, civil society organisations gathered in Brussels in front of the European Parliament in solidarity with peasants. In response to a call from the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) and the Belgian farmers' union Fédération Unie de Groupements d'Eleveurs et d'Agriculteurs (FUGEA), organisations expressed their support for food sovereignty, organic agriculture, agroecology, peasant rights, and fair food prices.

Decades of national and EU agricultural and commercial policies have created an unsustainable, market-driven, and trade-oriented agricultural model. Farmers are locked into industrialisation and intensification that causes negative externalities. Agribusiness and food industry lobbies have been prioritising profits while opposing sustainable, resilient practices and lower input dependency, at the expense of farmers. As a result, farmers face immense pressure to increase yield and remain competitive at all costs. The price of food does not reflect the true costs of its production. Treating food as a commodity lies at the root of this structural problem. Granting systematic derogations to basic conditionality requirements of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), such as GAEC 8, not only harms ecosystems and could further reduce agricultural prices - exacerbating farmers' income problems - but also distracts attention from the real systemic solutions that farmers need.

The social, environmental, and economic sustainability of European food systems depends on the dignity, viability, and wellbeing of the farming community. Farmers are not only stewards of the land but also providers of our most important common good: food. As farmers' livelihoods depend on nature, the farming community would be the first to benefit from the transition to agroecological, local food systems. At the same time, preservation of natural resources and ecosystem services is essential for the health and well-being of citizens and future generations.

Our ambition is to co-create a common vision for the future of EU food systems, hand in hand with farmers embracing their ecological and traditional knowledge, innovation, and agroecological practices. Our unity and capacity to engage in dialogue at this historical moment is decisive. The cost of inaction is too high for current and future generations to whom we are accountable.

While about one third of EU public funds are allocated to agriculture, most of it goes to 20% of farmers, the largest and richest agricultural holdings. Moreover, these funds fail to stimulate sustainable practices and the supply of public goods. The EU needs to be consistent across policies and align the CAP with the EU Green Deal. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas can provide guiding principles for policy development in response to the needs of farmers.

The EU Food Policy Coalition advocates for a food systems approach. **The undersigned organisations commit to sharing the responsibility for a consensus-based transition and to improving the dignity and livelihoods of farmers and farm workers. The burden of the transition must not lie solely on them. All food system actors must be involved to make food sovereignty, organic agriculture, agroecology, integrated pest management, and peasant rights a reality. It is important that family farmers, who are often drowned out by more powerful voices from the agricultural sector, have a front seat in the transformation.**

As signatories, we distance ourselves from any malicious acts or degradation of public space that occurred concurrently.

Signatories:

Agroecology Europe

The Biodynamic Federation Demeter International

Corporate Europe Observatory

CIDSE – International family of Catholic social justice organisations (International)

Fair Trade Advocacy Office

FIAN European Section

Friends of the Earth Europe

Feedback EU

IFOAM Organics Europe

Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy Europe

European Community of Consumers Cooperatives (Euro Coop)

Pesticide Action Network Europe (PAN Europe)

Slow Food

Zero Waste Europe

BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

FERN

Greenpeace

European Environmental Bureau

WWF Europe