

LATIN AMERICAN DECLARATION ON GMO AND FOOD AID

Quito, August 2001



The organizations that attended the "Second Meeting o GMO and Food Aid", with the sole purpose of establishing their principles and demands in regards to Food Aid declare: **CONSIDERING:** That the Precautionary Principle, recognized by several international juridical instruments, establishes that the lack of scientific evidence should not prevent to take measures, in order to avoid the risks of an action or omission that can cause negative impacts in the environment as well as on human health.

That food aid has served as an instrument for the donor, whether they were countries, international organizations, industries or people. Food Aid intervenes, damaging the alimentary sovereignty of the receiving country. It causes the destruction of their systems of production and creates dependency. These programs have proven to be a successful way to re-introduce transgenic food, as well as other rejected supplies into the countries they came from. That food aid, provided without considering the reality and needs of the population who receives it; generates social, economical, cultural and political impacts on local agriculture and environment, such as: erosion and loss of bio-diversity, loss of traditional knowledge and of alimentary sovereignty. Food Aid diminishes the capacity for individual and collective self-reliance, it generates exodus and unemployment, and it promotes drastic changes in the production mode and consumption habits. That food aid should be established as cooperation on the part of one country, international organization, industry or person, to others that have needs or deficiencies of food in a determined time and place. Therefore, it should not take away the alimentary sovereignty of those who receive the assistance. That the World Food Program does not have a clear policy in relation with genetically modified food. Hence, this organization has become an instrument for illegitimate introduction of transgenic food through food aid programs. That food sovereignty is one of the fundamental pillars of the sovereignty of countries and nations. Its political objective is to determine and provide food requirements for its people, using local and national production. The defence of the Alimentary Sovereignty translates into the capacity of self-provision, guaranteeing physical and economical access to harmless and nutritional food for families, locations, and the country in general. This is to be done through controlling the production in an autonomous manner, by promoting and or recovering traditional rituals and technology that assure the conservation of bio-diversity and the protection of local and national production. This is to be done by guaranteeing access to water, land, genetic resources, and fair and equitable markets with the support of government and society. That the Media should play an important roll in strengthening alimentary sovereignty, communicating and informing of poverty situations, emergencies, and disasters. That this roll could be used to weaken alimentary sovereignty by distorting reality, becoming instruments that sustain the imposition of food aid. That the international forums should protect respect and recognize fundamental human rights, along with the capacity and ability that people and communities have of responding to their food needs and demands according to their culture and the protection of bio-diversity.

WE DECLARE: We reject Food Aid that is given and received systematically and permanently by countries, international organizations, industries or people. They diminish the basis for food sovereignty and contradict the reality and needs of the people they are directed towards. In regards to the precautionary principle, we reject food pro-



grams that distribute (by action or omission) transgenic food and other products that are made using genetically modified organisms or that have transgenic ingredients, which do not comply with total security and are not utterly harmless. We also reject products that are restricted or rejected in any country for social, cultural, legal or public health reasons. All Food Aid should be labelled with complete information according to the international norm. That as an expression of sovereignty, governments and authorities that intervene in national food programs shall focus in the production and national surplus to solve the shortage that may occur during emergencies.

To do this, they shall allocate resources to stabilize the agricultural sector focusing on social agriculture that is economically and environmentally sustainable and not reliant to impositions and political, technical and economical restrictions. That food aid should only be accepted in real emergencies. It should not be used as a war weapon, to control the receiving countries, as a political and electoral instrument nor shall it be established indefinitely or create situations of paternalism and conformism. Food Aid shall be directed to establish the reconstruction of life systems and local production (that existed prior to the emergency) without diminishing its true humanitarian purpose. That Food Aid should be cultural and socially adequate, so that it will not generate changes in the customs or traditional production systems, nor create dependency, debt, depletion, erosion and loss of alimentary sovereignty in the areas where it is directed. Animals, seeds, and other reproductive materials given through food programs should not result from any kind of technology that would alter the local production systems, bio-diversity, and alimentary sovereignty. The media should promote truthful and timely broadcasting concerning poverty, emergencies, and disasters through the media thus stimulating self-sufficiency. At no time should the media become an instrument for external food intervention. We reject the evident immunity of the World Food Program of the United Nations. This program should be examined and we request that this program be subjected to auditing through an independent international organization that would examine the economic, social, technological, cultural and ecological viability of Food Aid. We demand transparency in the access and handling of information about food programs, as well as a guarantee of civil society participation. We also demand the monitoring and vigilance of its implementation.