

RIGHT TO FOOD, RIGHTS OF PEASANTS : FOOD SYSTEMS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BELGIUM

◁ SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS UPR CYCLES

Few recommendations have addressed the right to food or rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.

In the 2nd cycle:

- *Bolivia - Consider debating and adopting the framework of the law on the right to food (noted)*
- *Bolivia - Promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples, peasants and other people working in rural areas (accepted)*
- *Ecuador - Comply with recommendations of the CESCR to prepare studies on the impact on the human rights of local communities in third countries of agro-fuel projects promoted by Belgian companies (noted)*

Multiple Special Rapporteurs have also called for efforts to implement the right to food, highlighting agroecology as a key solution. Belgium must uphold its responsibility to protect, guarantee and fulfill human rights, by enabling action for fairer and more sustainable food systems.



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RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD AND NUTRITION



RIGHTS OF PEASANTS AND RURAL WORKERS



SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE AND CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY



HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW FRAMEWORK

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food.

Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

- A binding agreement on the fundamental right to be free from hunger and on distributing global food supplies in an equitable manner.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People working in rural areas (UNDROP)

- Adopted in 2018, recognized by Belgium in 2023

General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food (CESCR, 1999)

Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security (FAO, 2004)

Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (FAO, 2012)

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

- **SIGNIFICANT DETERIORATION IN FOOD ACCESSIBILITY**, driven by rising food prices, austerity measures, and structural weaknesses in the food system.
- **BUDGET CUTS TO FOOD AID, NO STRUCTURAL ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS.** Food aid schemes remain inadequate to realize the right to food and are increasingly strained by budget cuts.
- **MALNUTRITION AND OBESITY** are both symptoms of unequal access to healthy food, and the product of highly permissive food environments dominated by ultra-processed products and aggressive marketing.
- **LACK OF COHERENT POLICIES** across sectors and levels of governance.
- **OVER-RELIANCE ON VOLUNTARY MEASURES** instead of binding measures for the agri-food industry concerning health, social and environmental impacts.

- **TRANSITION TO AGROECOLOGY IS UNDERFUNDED** and poorly coordinated across levels of governance.
- **RAPID DECLINE OF FARMS**, issues with land governance enabling rapid concentration of property and artificialisation of soil.
- **SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES FOR SMALL FARMERS**, including precarious livelihoods, persistent barriers of access to land, climate change...
- **NO SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTING UNDROP**, nor established monitoring mechanisms.

- **RESTRICTIVE MEASURES AND BUDGET DECISIONS** affecting civil society organisations' ability to participate in democratic decision-making and to protect human rights.
- **GROWING USE OF SLAPPs** without effective protection and complaint mechanisms for civil society.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BELGIUM DURING THE PRE-SESSIONS

RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD AND NUTRITION

- **Provide financial and technical support** for research and pilot projects on the feasibility of food social security ;
- **Impose mandatory regulatory measures** for the food industry including banning advertising for junk food.

RIGHTS OF PEASANTS AND RURAL WORKERS

- **Promote and implement UNDROP** in Belgium, including via the participation in decision-making processes of the most vulnerable rights holders (seasonal and migrant workers, women, young people);
- **Produce an analysis of the coherence of Belgian agricultural, commercial and development policies with regards to UNDROP** (following the example of Spain);
- **Appoint a Human Rights Officer within the Ministry of Agriculture;**
- **Support the installation of small farmers and their transition to agroecology** (regulation of land markets to control speculation);
- **Adopt holistic strategies at federal and regional levels** to implement right to food obligations through the transition to agroecology (targets indicators, timelines and a dedicated budget).

SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE AND CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Set an example of strong action on corporate due diligence** by maintaining the original application scope of the CSDDD including companies of 1.000 or more employees and €450 million net turnover ;
- **Strengthen the protection of civic space and fundamental freedoms**, including the rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and strike ;
- **Effectively transpose the European Directive** on the protection of persons participating in public debate against clearly unfounded or abusive legal proceedings (SLAPP).

FIAN Belgium stands in solidarity with all peasants around the world who see their lands being destroyed or stolen, which constitutes a grave violation of their human rights.

In light of multiple reports on the use of hunger as a weapon of war in Gaza, and of continued establishment of new illegal Israeli settlements, we will also recommend that Belgium should:

- **Take measures to improve traceability in order to completely ban imports**, including of agricultural products, from illegal settlements ;
- **Increase support for Palestinian organizations in the reconstruction** of local, sustainable and resilient food systems.

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