



TRADE UNION POLICY PROPOSALS ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, DESERTIFICATION, DROUGHT, LAND AND AFRICA

AT THE 17th COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CSD-17

Food and energy crises, resource depletion and climate change, and the lack of access to services and infrastructure, have a cumulatively devastating impact on poor communities, especially in Africa.

Food prices have diminished somewhat but the food crisis has not gone away: as long as the factors that caused it have not been tackled, it remains all too likely to return in the near future. And almost one billion people live in constant hunger. With the attention of the international community turned to the global financial and economic crisis, the real danger is that the world hunger situation may deteriorate even further.

The trade union movement demands more investment in the agricultural sector and universal social protection, coupled with respect for core labour standards, to bring about the decent and sustainable production of food and other agricultural products. The right to food must be considered as a basic human right for everyone.

The problems of poverty wages in the agricultural sector, hazardous working conditions, discrimination against women and the lack of decent work across large parts of the globe must be tackled.

In this context, the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development needs to promote the following policies and actions:

Democratic governance and respect of fundamental rights, including labour rights as well as the equitable provision oversight and regulation of public services. Governments must engage in national and local dialogue with all Agenda 21 partners.

'Decent Work' for combating poverty, reducing vulnerability to economic, social and environmental changes and for empowering communities. This ILO concept includes the respect of rights at work, secure employment, social protection, and social dialogue.

Opportunities for 'green and decent job' creation, along with sustainable agricultural production patterns. Action needs to be undertaken against occupational injuries and diseases in agricultural work, which kill 170,000 workers every year. Governments must ratify ILO Conventions 155 on Health and Safety, 170 on Chemicals and 184 on Health and Safety in Agriculture, as well as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Planned transition to protect workers in environmentally-vulnerable sectors, such as agriculture and fisheries, from loss of employment or livelihood. Adaptation of agriculture to altered weather patterns, economic diversification, non-farm development, education and skills development are essential.

Worker and trade union involvement through effective workplace action for sustainable development, environmental protection and community well-being. This requires the promotion of the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles for Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.

National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) that are guided by UN indicators and involve Major Groups.

TRADE UNION SIDE EVENT IN CSD 17: "A NEW DEAL FOR AGRICULTURE"

MONDAY 11TH MAY – 18.15- 19.45

INTRODUCING "A RECIPE FOR HUNGER: HOW THE WORLD IS FAILING ON FOOD" ITUC REPORT ON THE FOOD CRISIS AT: WWW.ITUC-CSI.ORG/IMG/PDF/FOOD_CRISIS_EN.PDF

Governments must

AGRICULTURE

- ▶ Recognise the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.
 - ▶ Put sustainable food production and distribution at the heart of policies, as people's right to food needs to be recognised as both a priority and a prerequisite for development.
 - ▶ Adopt policies that emphasise food buffer stocks, higher investment in agricultural infrastructure, and respect for rights of workers, small producers and women, in order to promote the right to adequate food.
 - ▶ Ensure that food is available, distributed and guaranteed to all in need. The right to food should be centred on those who produce food, such as waged agricultural workers, not the agribusiness multinational corporations that have been benefiting from the high agricultural commodity prices so far.
 - ▶ Put in place tighter international and national regulations for preventing instability and speculation on food prices, ensuring a fair distribution of benefits and protecting the purchasing power of rural and urban workers. The global financial markets should not be allowed to gamble with the fundamental human needs of the world population.
 - ▶ Implement land reform policies to divide ownership more equitably so that tenants and landless workers can have access to land. Some countries need to implement further legal reforms to ensure equal land ownership and inheritance rights for women.
 - ▶ Take measures to enforce the rule of law and combat forced labour in rural areas. A large percentage of waged agricultural workers live in poverty despite working more than 12-14 hours a day and the rights of migrant workers in the fields and plantations are often overlooked.
 - ▶ Enforce and implement decent labour legislation in accordance with ILO standards to ameliorate conditions for peasants and agricultural workers. It is only through the creation of decent jobs and decent working and living conditions that sustainable economic development, the right to food and the elimination of poverty can be achieved.
- ▶ Focus on the most needed investment in rural infrastructure in developing countries; access to input such as seeds and fertilizer must be prioritised.
 - ▶ Phase-out toxic pesticides which put workers, consumers and the environment at risk.
 - ▶ Combat the expanded use of agrotoxics and intensive agricultural production based on unsustainable techniques and promote family agriculture.
 - ▶ Establish social safety nets to protect the most vulnerable from increased food price volatility in the future.
 - ▶ Mainstream climate change impacts. Adaptation is vital for securing the world's food supply.
 - ▶ Undertake an ecological and social assessment of the full-life cycle of agroenergy.
 - ▶ Implement policies aimed at providing rural women with equal land access, tools, technology, education, rights and credit.
 - ▶ Apply the precautionary principle to genetically modified organisms (GMO) or new chemicals for the food-chain.
 - ▶ Encourage organic farming.
 - ▶ Enforce integrated and sustainable water management, as agriculture is the largest user of global water supplies.

Governments must

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Promote decent employment and the shift from informal to formal work, thereby extending coverage of rights, social protection and social dialogue as well as increasing earnings.
- ▶ Develop appropriate systems of education, vocational training and lifelong learning policies for helping workers to find and sustain decent jobs and keep pace with changing technologies and new employment opportunities.
- ▶ Empower communities through access to quality public services, such as water, sanitation, health care and clean energy. Health care services and service providers need support to tackle HIV/AIDS and other diseases.
- ▶ Respect workers' rights, including the right to organise and bargain collectively, provide security and protect trade unionists and community leaders from violence, particularly in rural areas.

- ▶ Address agriculture and food security in education programmes. Skill-based education, such as that provided by trade unions, offers immediate results on resource efficiency and productivity, food safety and occupational health.
- ▶ Ensure adequate rural transport, in order to reduce unemployment and exclusion in rural areas.
- ▶ Reverse the trends causing losses of income of common resources-dependent communities. Privatisation, agricultural intensification, population growth and ecosystem degradation are some of these factors.
- ▶ Guarantee the participation of trade unions and other civil society groups in decision-making. Promote tripartite dialogue, collective bargaining and other democratic processes.
- ▶ Promote the introduction of sustainable development in education at all levels and provide adequate tools for workers to become meaningful actors of change.
- ▶ Ensure they take adequate measures to:
 - regulate companies and world markets, as it relates to the provision for sanitation, health, water, energy, housing, education and public transportation.
 - increase investments for environmental policies and their implementation.
 - Create “just transition” programmes to ensure that workers negatively affected by restructuring obtain Decent Work provisions.
 - Establish and improve the accountability and transparency of multinational enterprises and reject their double standards that “export” environmental, social and production methods to Africa that are not allowed in the countries of origin.

Governments must

DESERTIFICATION, DROUGHT AND LAND

- ▶ Ensure decent income and increased power for communities as a means to adapt to extreme weather events such as drought or to long-lasting modifications in ecosystems, such as desertification.
- ▶ Improve international cooperation, including aid for emergencies and disasters and funds for adaptation in agriculture and the food supply chain. Secure livelihoods through social protection, poverty reduction strategies and decent jobs programmes.
- ▶ Honour the commitments made at Monterrey and Gleneagles for an increase in development aid and for greater accountability by governments to deliver fully on their commitments.
- ▶ Promote synergies between different UN Conventions (UNFCCC, UNCD and UNCBD) and institutions (ILO, FAO, OECD). Trade union participation in these bodies must be ensured and expanded.
- ▶ Make water a priority. Promote universal, equitable, egalitarian and environmentally sound access to basic resources such as water and energy as essential components of human rights.
- ▶ Ratify ILO and UN Conventions². Adopt the Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management (SAICM) and call for a global ban on asbestos use, for its proper handling and disposal in accordance with the Basel Convention and for its inclusion in the Rotterdam Convention.
- ▶ Promote accountability to promises for universal access in connection to HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases and help address these through workplace-based approaches.

Governments must

AFRICA¹

- ▶ Clarify that decent work embraces also environmental sustainability.
- ▶ Make the rights of workers and their unions a central feature of sustainable development strategies.
- ▶ Ensure gender equity and women workers’ issues as indicators of sustainability.

1 The content of this section is derived from a Resolution agreed by the 2006 Trade Union African Conference on Labour and the Environment. Sixty-two union members representing twenty-four national centres from nineteen countries met for the First African Trade Union Conference on Labour and the Environment, held in Johannesburg, 28-29 July, 2006.

2 Mentioned in first page

KEY AMENDMENTS FOR THE CHAIRMAN'S DRAFT NEGOTIATING DOCUMENT

AGRICULTURE

- ▶ Under (2) Enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability
- (h) *[Integrate occupational health and safety and the sustainable management of chemicals in agricultural policies and] institute effective pesticide monitoring...*
- (new para) *Promote the extension of national labour laws to all rural workers, including agricultural workers, migrant workers and indigenous peoples, where appropriate, through a programme of advocacy, capacity building and technical assistance.*
- ▶ Under (6) Provide secure access to food and social safety nets
- (new para after (a)) *Develop and enhance social safety nets and social protection, including the provision of employment insurances and health services to reduce the vulnerability of rural communities to environmental and economic stresses, taking into account national circumstances.*

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Under (8) Build social capital and resilience in rural communities
- (new para after b) *Respect workers' rights including the right to organise and bargain collectively, provide security and protect trade unionists and community leaders from violence, particularly in rural areas.*
- ▶ Under (11) Stimulate the creation of new [decent] jobs and income opportunities in rural areas
- (new para) *Promote the formalisation of work in rural areas without hindering the livelihoods of the rural poor.*
- (new para) *Encourage a coherent and integrated approach to employment promotion and poverty in rural areas among all relevant government ministries and agencies at all levels of governments*

AFRICA

- ▶ Under (28) Revitalise agriculture as the basis for sustainable rural development
 - (h) *Improve land governance, [rule of law] and reduce land conflicts;*
 - ▶ Under (35) Improve income distribution and promote social development
 - (new para) *Promote decent work for combating poverty, reducing vulnerability to economic, social and environmental changes and for empowering communities. Decent work includes the respect of rights at work, secure employment, social protection, and social dialogue.*
- Inter-linkages, cross-cutting issues and means of implementation**
- ▶ Under (39) Revitalising agriculture (...)
 - (d) *Undertake measures to improve and sustain the livelihoods of vulnerable groups such as women, [urban and rural working poor], (...).*