



THE RIGHTS OF  
PEASANTS

# Manual on the implementation of the *UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)* in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

A TOOL DESIGNED FOR GOVERNMENTS, PUBLIC SERVANTS, PEASANTS AND SMALL  
SCALE FAMILY FARMERS ASSOCIATIONS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, DONORS,  
CIVIL SOCIETY AT LARGE AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



United Nations  
Decade of  
**FAMILY  
FARMING**  
2019-2028





# THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS

AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS

## **Manual on the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)* in Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

A TOOL DESIGNED FOR GOVERNMENTS, PUBLIC SERVANTS,  
PEASANTS AND SMALL SCALE FAMILY FARMERS ORGANIZATIONS,  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, DONORS, CIVIL SOCIETY AT  
LARGE AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

**Author:**

Ramona Duminicioiu (Eco Ruralis)

**Co-author:**

Olena Borodina (URDN)

**Contributors:**

Simon Blondeau (FAO)

Ion Bulgac (FAO)

Anna Befus (FAO)

Morten Hartvigsen (FAO REU)

Omar Benammour (FAO)

Anatolii Albini (Grădina Moldovei)

Andrea Ferrante (Schola Campesina)



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



United Nations  
Decade of  
**FAMILY  
FARMING**  
2019-2028



# Table of content

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	I.1. Current context of human rights in rural areas	1
	I.2. Key terms and concepts	6
<b>II.</b>	<b>The United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)</b>	<b>11</b>
	II.1. The scope of UNDROP	12
	II.2. The content of UNDROP	16
	<i>Art. 1: Definition of peasants and other people working in rural areas</i>	17
	<i>Art. 2: General obligations of States</i>	19
	<i>Art. 3: Equality and non-discrimination</i>	21
	<i>Art. 4: Rights of peasant women and other women working in rural areas</i>	21
	<i>Art. 5: Rights to natural resources and the right to development</i>	24
	<i>Art. 6: Right to life, liberty and security of person</i>	25
	<i>Art. 7: Freedom of movement</i>	25
	<i>Art. 8: Freedom of thought, opinion and expression</i>	26
	<i>Art. 9: Freedom of association</i>	28
	<i>Art. 10: Right to participation</i>	29
	<i>Art. 11: Right to information with regard to production, marketing and distribution</i>	31
	<i>Art. 12: Access to justice</i>	32
	<i>Art. 13: Right to work</i>	33
	<i>Art. 14: Right to safety and health at work</i>	35
	<i>Art. 15: Right to food and food sovereignty</i>	37
	<i>Art. 16: Right to a decent income and livelihood and the means of production</i>	41
	<i>Art. 17: Right to land and other natural resources</i>	43
	<i>Art. 18: Right to a safe, clean and healthy environment</i>	49
	<i>Art. 19: Right to seeds</i>	51
	<i>Art. 20: Right to biological diversity</i>	55
	<i>Art. 21: Rights to water and to sanitation</i>	56
	<i>Art. 22: Right to social security</i>	57
	<i>Art. 23: Right to health</i>	62
	<i>Art. 24: Right to adequate housing</i>	63
	<i>Art. 25: Right to education and training</i>	64
	<i>Art. 26: Cultural rights and traditional knowledge</i>	65
	<i>Art. 27: Responsibility of the United Nations and of other international organizations</i>	67
	<i>Art. 28: General Obligations</i>	68
<b>III.</b>	<b>UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028)</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Agroecology</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Ways forward for the implementation of UNDROP</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>97</b>



## I. Introduction

Peasants and rural populations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) face critical challenges that include the limited access to natural resources used as means of production, such as land, seeds and water, but also other resources. Another main issue is their ability to participate in decision making processes for food security related public policies. In addition, there is a lack of actors with the ability to train the local communities on sustainable agricultural practices and to provide knowledge to both the communities and the national governments. The historical problems, such as poverty and inequality, lack of access to land and land grabbing, lack of access to basic services, gender inequality, the effects of the climate crisis, discrimination with regards to social and economic development, have been aggravated by war and armed conflicts around the region, generating instability and food crisis in some areas and driving deeper the peasantry into poverty and despair.

This Manual was produced under the project *Enhancing policy-making on rural development and smallholder support through the UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028*. The project was developed by the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO REU) and Eco Ruralis Association from Romania. One of the main objectives of the project was to build the capacity of ministries of agriculture staff and other relevant agencies enhanced at regional and national level, on the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas (UNDROP) and on the UN Decade for Family Farming (UNDDFF, 2019-2028). Furthermore, the project aims to provide support for the capacity development on rural development policies in the region. Therefore, the Manual is addressed to governments, peasants and small scale family farming organizations, international organizations, donors, civil society at large, academic institutions and the private sector.

This document is the result of consultations between a team of experts from academia and from peasants associations, in consultation with senior officers and legal experts from FAO and FAO REU. This team decided on the outline of the report and defined its thematic focus. The content of the Manual was also informed by result of three workshops which took place within the project named above, with the participation of experts, public servants, representatives of relevant departments in Ministries of Agriculture, Parliaments and Presidential Offices, peasants, civil society organizations and academia from Eastern European, Western Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asian countries.

This Manual is important for several important reasons:

a) *Awareness and Education*: Many people, including peasants and rural communities themselves, may not be fully aware of their rights as peasants. This Manual can serve as an educational tool to inform them about their entitlements, empowering them to assert their rights. Equally, it serves as a education tool for decision makers, as they are one of the main target audiences.



b) *Legal clarity*: Peasants' rights encompass a wide range of social, economic, cultural and political rights. This Manual provides clear, concise explanations of these rights, making legal concepts more accessible to peasants and to the general population.

c) *Policy Development*: Governments and policymakers can benefit from this Manual that describes the rights encompassed in UNDRO, outlining international standards, concepts and frameworks related to peasants' rights. This can inform the development of policies that better protect and promote these rights.

d) *Legal Protection*: This Manual can be a reference point for legal professionals, judges and lawyers handling cases related to peasants' rights. It can help ensure that legal proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects and upholds these rights.

e) *Advocacy and Activism*: This Manual can serve as a resource for peasants, grassroots organizations, advocacy groups and NGOs working on issues related to peasants' rights. It equips these organizations with information and arguments to advocate for policy changes and legal reforms.

f) *Conflict resolution*: In regions where land disputes and conflicts over resources are encountered, this Manual can provide guidance on how to resolve disputes peacefully and in accordance with UNDROP principles, reducing the potential for violence and instability.

g) *International Frameworks*: This Manual can help countries align their laws and practices and incorporate in future international frameworks the international standards defined by UNDROP.

h) *Empowerment*: Knowledge of human rights is a form of empowerment. When peasants and rural communities understand their rights, they are more likely to engage in effective dialogue and demand accountability from governments and institutions, leading to better protection of their rights.

i) *Preventing Exploitation*: Peasants are often vulnerable to exploitation by powerful actors, such as landlords, states or corporations. This Manual can help them recognize and resist exploitation, fostering a more equitable distribution of resources and benefits.

j) *Cultural Preservation*: Peasants' rights also include the protection of cultural and traditional practices related to use of natural resources such as land and seeds. This Manual highlights the importance of preserving these cultural aspects.

In conclusion, this Manual serves as an essential tool for education, policy development, legal protection, advocacy and empowerment. It helps governments and peasants to understand the Rights of Peasants, navigate legal systems and work towards a just and equitable food and agriculture.

The Manual is structured on seven chapters addressing the challenges and the solutions proposed by UNDROP and the framework of the UNDRFF, which require coordinated actions at regional level, that can enhance country-level impact through ongoing and future country-level work.

1. The first chapter presents an overview of the necessity of recognizing the specific rights of peasants and other people in rural areas. It also provides an analysis on the current crisis and specific challenges faced by the peasantry in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the timely need for the implementation of *UNDROP*. In addition, it presents a series of key terms and concepts which will be used in the manual.
2. The second chapter presents in detail the content of *UNDROP*, with a particular focus on the new achieved rights to natural resources – such as the right to land and the right to seeds. In addition, it makes the necessary links between international human rights law and the human rights enclosed in the Declaration.
3. The third chapter explains the ways in which the UNDRP action plan can support the implementation process of *UNDROP*. This chapter is also analyzing strategically how can the implementation of *UNDROP* contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), mainly SDG 2 - achieving zero hunger.
4. The fourth chapter presents the concept of Agroecology and how is closely intertwined with Peasants Rights, sharing common goals of promoting sustainable, equitable and culturally sensitive agricultural practices.
5. The fifth chapter looks into policy coherence, compliance with other international obligations and correlation with other agreed languages. It also explores existing tools, obstacles and opportunities in national and local legislative processes.
6. The sixth chapter presents a series of recommendations, providing guidance or courses of actions for decision makers, peasants, civil society and academia, for the process of implementation of *UNDROP*.
7. The seventh and final chapter presents references to international instruments, institutions, civil society, reports and findings relevant for better understanding the use and application of *UNDROP*.

## **I.1. Current context of human rights in rural areas**

Despite the efforts made by the society at large hoping that the world would overcome the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 and new solutions would be developed to improve food security, world hunger rose further in 2021 and 2022. According to the SOFI Report<sup>1</sup> it is estimated that between 702 and 828 million people were affected by hunger in 2021. At the time of writing the Manual, we are already experiencing the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the COVID-19 and many indicators show that hunger is raising at an alarming pace, we can only refer to data collected and processed in 2021. According to the SOFI Report 2022, since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the number of hungry people has grown by about 150 million. That includes 103 million more people between 2019 and 2020

---

<sup>1</sup> SOFI Report, 2022: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0639en/online/sofi-2022/food-security-nutrition-indicators.html>

and 46 million more in 2021. The further increase in global hunger in 2021 reflects exacerbated inequalities at national levels and between regions, due to unequal resources available and distributed for the purpose of economic recovery among countries and regions and income losses that were not recovered among those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Around 2.3 billion people in the world were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021, representing almost 30% of the global population. Looking back at previous SOFI Reports, those amounts more than 350 million compared to 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic started. Although this data shows the situation in 2021, the ongoing war in Ukraine which has global effects, poses a critical risk to the realization of the Right to Food, the attainment of Food Security, human rights as a whole and the achievement of the SDG 2 (end of hunger in the world). This is the case particularly in Ukraine and in other countries which are affected by armed conflicts and also in countries that were already facing hunger and food shortages.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the continuation of autocratic regimes in some countries from the region, followed by the liberalization of the market in some other cases, have exacerbated the historic problems faced by peasants and other people working in rural areas, depriving them from natural resources, means of production and income, criminalizing their traditional practices through state measures or capital market practices, marginalizing their voice in decision making processes and essentially working against their human rights.

The communist experience in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, followed by incomplete or unsuccessful agrarian reforms and constant lack of political and economic stability, lacking the culture of dialogue between institutions and the people, disempowered and confused the peasants who have built hopes for a better reality. Their vulnerability is a mirror for the society as a whole. The engagement of the rural people in consultations and decision making processes is essential for guaranteeing the construction of democratic societies where people can enjoy human rights.

Beyond the communist history, various studies<sup>2</sup> explain that peasants, smallholder farmers, landless people, agricultural workers and people living from traditional fishing, hunting and herding activities are among the most vulnerable people. They all depend on natural resources and agriculture for their livelihood and experience social and economic exclusion, discrimination, isolation and political disempowerment.

The youth population (15–24 years old) has reached the unprecedented figure of 1.2 billion, accounting for 16 percent of the world's population (31 percent when adopting the 15–35 age range). Youth are three times as likely as adults to be unemployed and are overrepresented among the most vulnerable categories of workers. Around one in five of the world's youth are not in employment, education or training with young women outnumbering young men two to one. In rural areas, the education, vocational education and training system may be disadvantaged by the underdevelopment or lack of certain services.

---

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Council, Preliminary Study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the advancement of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. Doc. A/HRC/16/63. 2011



Rural populations are also subject of those following risks and vulnerabilities<sup>3</sup>:

- heightened risk of income and multidimensional poverty, leaving households vulnerable to other social risks, in particular food insecurity, malnutrition and use of child labour;
- limited access to decent jobs, pushing large sections of the working-age population, especially women, towards low productivity and precarious on- or off-farm employment;
- widespread labour migration from rural areas, as a result of poverty and lack of decent jobs;
- increased exposure to the risks associated with environmental degradation, natural disasters and climate change; and
- livelihoods disruption risks arising from the impact of war, regional geopolitical tensions and conflicts.

The problem of poverty affects mostly peasants and people working in rural areas. Approximately 45% of the global population still lives in rural areas and most of them are among the poorest of the world. According to the mentioned SOFI Report, not only did global extreme poverty increase, but also global income inequality for the first time in 20 years. Considering that (at the time of writing this Manual) we don't have data available for the situation in 2022, the expectations for the future are among the most pessimistic.

Extreme poverty is also highly prevalent among agricultural wage workers. Women and children are often amongst the most vulnerable. *UNDROP* gives visibility to the historical marginalization of all persons living in rural areas and the new challenges they face, such as climate change. In the same time it expresses deep concern at the structural discrimination faced by peasants and other people working in rural areas, including family farmers, who disproportionately suffer from, inter alia, poverty, hunger and malnutrition, forced evictions, displacements, criminalisation, and it recognizes an important number of rights to overcome that situation.

The global Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic highlighted weaknesses, gaps and inequalities in food systems, the urgent need for systemic efforts in their transformation and the crucial role that small scale, peasant family farmers play in eradicating hunger and shaping our future of food.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia is a very diverse region, but having in common an agriculture based on peasant, small scale family farmers who practice agroecology. In this region, peasant farming is a mainstream food production system, not a niche. This model of agriculture engages the overwhelming majority of people who are active in rural areas and it represents an opportunity and a pillar of strength for food security.

Peasant farming respects the majority of the principles of sustainability, that ensure the long-term health and viability of agricultural systems while minimizing negative environmental, social and

---

<sup>3</sup> Improving social protection for rural populations in Europe and Central Asia: Priorities for FAO.  
<https://www.fao.org/3/cc1925en/cc1925en.pdf>

economic impacts. Among the key elements of sustainability of the peasant model of production are: the food quality, nutritious, diverse, fresh, culturally appropriate and healthy, crucial for ensuring public health and safety. The sustainable agroecological practices which maintain natural resources in good conditions and contributes to the biodiversity, responding to the climate crisis. The productivity and high efficiency in using the resources and means of production have been recognized by FAO and other international institutions. It is oriented towards local markets, affordable prices for vulnerable consumers and consolidates local economy which is essential in the current times of crisis. It generates high levels of employment in the agricultural sector, the majority of people from rural areas being employed by small scale family farmers and peasants.

## **I.2. Key terms and concepts**

### **Terms and concepts**

**AGROECOLOGY.** Agroecology is a holistic and integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agriculture and food systems. Agroecology represents an overarching and comprehensive systems framework to guide public policies towards sustainable agriculture and food systems. See the chapter IV – Agroecology, for further details.

**CIVIL RIGHTS:** The rights of citizens to liberty and equality (such as: freedom to access information or to vote).

**CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS:** Also known as first generation rights, these are the rights of citizens to liberty and equality (such as: freedom to think and express oneself, to vote, to take part in political life and to have access to information).

**CULTURAL RIGHTS:** The right to preserve and enjoy one's cultural identity and development.

**CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL LAW:** This is a type of law that gains binding status on states through customary practice rather than written agreements. When a sufficient number of states consistently behave in a manner that treats something as law, it becomes legally recognized as a source of international law.

**DECLARATION:** Written document, negotiated and agreed by UN members states, consistent with and complementary to international law standards. The Declaration is not, by itself, a legally binding instrument, but countries have the moral obligation and the opportunity to implement it. In addition, the Declaration contains a series of principles and rights that are based on human rights standards enshrined in other international instruments that are legally binding.

**ECONOMIC RIGHTS:** Rights that concern the production, development and management of material for the necessities of life.

**ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL RIGHTS:** Sometimes referred to as third generation rights, these rights recognize that people have the right to live in a safe and healthy environment and that groups of people have the right to cultural, political and economic development.

**FAMILY FARMING.** FAO's definition on Family Farming. Substantive definition: Family farming is "a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family capital and labour, including both women's and men's. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions." Statistical definition: "A family farm is an agricultural holding which is managed and operated by a household and where farm labour is largely supplied by that household." See chapter III – UN Decade of Family Farming for further details.

**HUMAN RIGHTS:** The rights all people are entitled to simply because they are human beings, from birth until death, regardless of their citizenship, nationality, color, ethnicity, language, sex, religion, abilities or any other status. They range from the most fundamental - the right to life - to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to food, education, work, health and liberty. Human Rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent and they must be applied without discrimination.

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE UN SYSTEM.** Human rights is a cross-cutting theme in all UN policies and programmes in the key areas of peace and security, development, humanitarian assistance and economic and social affairs. As a result, virtually every UN body and specialized agency is involved to some degree in the protection of human rights. Some examples are the right to development, which is at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals; the right to food, championed by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, labour rights, defined and protected by the International Labour Organization, gender equality, which is promulgated by UN Women, the rights of children, indigenous peoples and disabled persons.

**INALIENABLE:** Describes rights that inherently belong to every person and cannot be deprived from them under any circumstances.

**INDIVISIBLE:** Signifies that each human rights law carries equal significance. No one can be deprived of a right based on a subjective judgment that it is of lesser importance or dispensable.

**INTERDEPENDENT:** Refers to the interconnected and complimentary nature of human rights law. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education and even to obtain the necessities of life.

**MEMBER STATES:** Countries that are member of the United Nations.

**NON-BINDING:** A document, like a DECLARATION, that carries no formal legal obligations. It may, however, carry moral obligations or attain the force of law as international customary law.



**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:** A non-governmental organization (NGO) is an organized citizens group, that is formed independent from government, to address issues in support of the public good. NGOs are generally defined as non-profit and they are also called “civil society”. NGOs are classified by orientation - developing activities involving human rights, environmentalism, health, or development; they can also be classified by the level of operation, which indicates the scale at which an organization works: local, regional, national, or international. A framework exists for the participation of NGOs in many United Nations human rights mechanisms, such as the granting of consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, which allows them to participate in the Human Rights Council. NGOs have also made an important contribution to promoting the recognition and implementation of human rights worldwide.

**PEASANTS:** A peasant is a person who lives or is connected to rural areas, is integrated in the community, it depends on the land and the natural resources for sustaining it's way of life, for producing food and for contributing to the development of it's community. According to *UNDROP*, a peasant is any person who engages or who seeks to engage alone, or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence and/or for the market and who relies significantly, though not necessarily exclusively, on family or household labour and other non-monetized ways of organizing labour and who has a special dependency on and attachment to the land. The definition of peasant applies to any person engaged in artisanal or small-scale agriculture, crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, hunting or gathering and handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area. It also applies to dependent family members of peasants, to indigenous peoples and local communities working on the land, transhumant, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities and the landless, engaged in the above-mentioned activities. Furthermore, the definition also applies to hired workers, including all migrant workers regardless of their migration status and seasonal workers, on plantations, agricultural farms, forests and farms in aquaculture and in agro-industrial enterprises.

**PEASANTS' RIGHTS:** Peasants' rights refer to all human rights specifically aimed at protecting and promoting the well-being of peasants. These rights recognize the unique challenges and vulnerabilities faced by rural communities involved in agriculture and aim to address issues such as land tenure, access to resources, fair labor practices and social and economic development in rural areas. These rights have gained recognition and support from the United Nations, which adopted *UNDROP* in 2018. The implementation of these rights can vary from one country to another and rural communities often continue to face numerous challenges in their pursuit of social and economic justice. See article 1 – *UNDROP*, for further details.

**POLITICAL RIGHTS:** The right of people to participate in the political life of their communities and society such as by voting for their government.

**RIGHTS' HOLDERS:** Individuals or groups of people who possess or are entitled to specific rights under the law, typically within the context of human rights or legal frameworks. These individuals

or groups are the beneficiaries of the rights and are recognized as having legally protected entitlements. Rights holders are entitled to exercise and enjoy their rights and they can seek legal remedies or protection if their rights are violated. These rights are intended to ensure that individuals and groups can live with dignity, equality, freedom and that they have the means to seek redress if their rights are violated.

**SOCIAL RIGHTS:** Rights that provide people security as they live together and learn together, within settings such as families, communities, schools and other institutions.

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS:** Sometimes categorized as security-oriented or second-generation rights, these are rights that give people social and economic security. Examples include the right to food, shelter and health care.

**UNIVERSAL:** Refers to the application of human rights to all people everywhere regardless of any distinction or differences.

### **Institutions and instruments** (see chapter VII – References, for further details)

**FAO.** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. FAO' goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. With 195 members - 194 countries and the European Union, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide.

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL.** The Human Rights Council (HRC), established in 2006 by the UN General Assembly and reporting directly to it, replaced the 60-year-old UN Commission on Human Rights as the key UN intergovernmental body responsible for human rights. The Council is made up of 47 State representatives elected with mandates of 3 years and is tasked with strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe by addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them, including responding to human rights emergencies. The most innovative feature of the Human Rights Council is the Universal Periodic Review, a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member states, once every four years. Before its adoption, *UNDROP* was negotiated in the HRC between 2012 - 2018.

**UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.** The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) exercises principal responsibility for UN human rights activities. The High Commissioner is mandated to respond to serious violations of human rights and to undertake preventive action. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the focal point for United Nations human rights activities. It serves as the secretariat for the Human Rights Council, the treaty bodies (expert committees that monitor treaty compliance) and other UN human rights organs. It also undertakes human rights field activities.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948, as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected. Since its adoption, the UDHR has been translated into more than 500 languages - the most translated document in the world - and has inspired the constitutions of many newly independent States and many new democracies. The UDHR, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols (on the complaints procedure and on the death penalty) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its Optional Protocol, form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights.



## II. The United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)

### *Brief history*

In the context presented above, the adoption of the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) represents a great victory for the evolution of human rights and for the struggle against injustice and the abuse of power.

In 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), adopted the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) obtaining the supporting vote of 121 countries.

It is worth noting that the process towards the adoption of UNDROP lasted for almost 20 years of mobilization and 6 years of negotiations in the Human Rights Council<sup>4</sup>. It started at the initiative of La Via Campesina<sup>5</sup>, an international peasant movement. Peasants from Indonesia ignited an international call for attention to the historic discrimination against peasants and the need for a specific instruments that address their problems and vulnerabilities from a human rights perspective and they were gradually joined by peasants organizations from all the regions in the world., including from Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The initial steps within the UN system were taken in 2001 when La Via Campesina first called for peasants' rights on debates on the "right to development" in the UN Human Rights Commission.<sup>6</sup> The following years, La Via Campesina organized regional and global consultations which lead to a popular declaration that defined all the rights that peasants considered essential for their existence.

The 2008 financial and food crisis put on the spot the grave situation of food security around the world and motivated the Human Rights Council start working on the negative impact on the realization of the right to food of the worsening of the world food crisis<sup>7</sup>. Within the UN system, the initiative was welcomed by the Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Human Rights Council, a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, is responsible for promoting universal respect for and the defense of all human rights.

<sup>5</sup> La Via Campesina (LVC) is an international movement bringing together over 200 millions of peasants, small and medium size farmers, landless people, rural women and youth, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world. [www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org)

<sup>6</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2019.1672665>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/SpecialSessions/Session7/Pages/7thSpecialSession.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> *The Rights of Peasants* by Jean Ziegler, former Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food: <http://www.righttofood.org/work-of-jean-ziegler-at-the-un/the-rights-of-peasants/#:~:text=In%20his%20capacity%20as%20UN,reform%20and%20the%20right%20to>

At the request of the Human Rights Council (HRC), in 2010, its Advisory Committee made a study on ways and means to advance further the rights of people working in rural areas, which was presented in the final version in 2012.<sup>9</sup> The study concluded that it was necessary to elaborate a new legal instrument on the rights of the people living in rural areas and even included a draft declaration on the Rights of Peasants, based on the contributions of La Via Campesina.

After a process of consultations, the process of negotiations in the HRC was set in motion in 2012. An open-ended intergovernmental working group was established, with the mandate of negotiating, finalizing and submitting to the Human Rights Council a draft United Nations declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. 5 formal sessions of negotiations took place between 2013 to 2018 and the content of what became *UNDROP* evolved with each session.

Finally, on 27 September 2018, HRC considered the resolution A/HRC/RES/39/12 and decided to adopt the *UNDROP*. The resolution also suggested that UN General Assembly follow the same procedure. Consequently, *UNDROP* was considered for vote by the General Assembly at its 73rd session and on 17 December 2018, the plenary of UNGA confirmed the adoption of the Declaration.

## **II.1. The scope of *UNDROP***

*UNDROP* represents a landmark achievement for millions of peasants around the world, centralizing a series of important rights to overcome the situation of structural discrimination that affects the peasantry and other people who work in rural areas. *UNDROP* can rightfully be considered one of the most relevant and progressive instruments of human rights law adopted by the United Nations in recent years.

The reasons to consider this, start with the recognition of peasants as specific subjects of human rights or rights-holders. The second reason is the reaffirmation of existing standards and rights that respond to the reality of people living and working in rural areas. Finally, *UNDROP* brings a groundbreaking contribution to the development of international law, recognizing basically a new category of human rights – to natural resources as means of production – such as the right to seeds, the right to land, the right to water – defining them in a complex matter and addressing existing gaps in the protection of the rights of peasants rights. In addition the use of this innovative instrument can contribute to poverty reduction and food security, in line with the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the strategies of the UN Decade on Family Farming.

The Declaration holds immense significance not only for people living in rural areas but for societies as a whole, acknowledging the pivotal role that peasants fulfill in ensuring food security and driving socio-economic progress. Smallholders provide an essential part of the food consumed

---

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, Final study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the advancement of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, 2012. Doc A/HRC/19/75.

worldwide, achieving this while using fewer resources such as land and water.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, rural areas serve as a critical reservoir of employment opportunities, especially for youth and women, contributing to social stability and preserving cultural heritage. The development of sustainable agriculture and food value chains has the potential to create profitable entrepreneurship and wage employment opportunities for young women and men in both farm and off-farm value adding activities. The sector is predicted to grow in tandem with the population and rising food demand. For youth to harness these opportunities, action has to focus on addressing critical constraints, including rural youth's limited access to training, credit, markets and business development services and poor policy and programmatic coordination.

Given the context of climate distress, it is imperative for societies to prioritize the conservation of agricultural diversity, a heritage cultivated by peasants over millennia, through the selection of resilient seeds. The role of peasants and other people working in rural areas is central, as it directly impacts food security and fosters social cohesion, particularly in developing countries.

### ***International Recognition of Peasants and People Living in Rural Areas as Rights' Holders***

UNDROP provides international recognition of the distinct identity, needs and unique contributions of peasants and people living in rural areas to societies, as extensively defined in article 1. Through UNDROP, peasants become subjects of international law – rights' holders. UNDROP consolidates within a single document, the comprehensive spectrum of the human rights pertinent to people living in rural areas, alongside the recommended actions that States can undertake to protect, promote and respect these rights. Notably, UNDROP broadens the spectrum of right-holders, includes not only persons working in small-scale agriculture but also people engaged in crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, hunting or gathering, handicrafts or related occupations in the rural areas. Importantly, UNDROP extends recognition to indigenous peoples and local communities who also perform those activities.

Furthermore, the Declaration highlights the critical contribution of peasants to societies, emphasizing their significant contributions to biodiversity conservation and food provision. UNDROP also underscores the developmental, social and cultural importance of people living in rural areas, recognizing their vital role in shaping and enriching societies.

### ***Reaffirmation of Existing Standards from the perspective of Peasants and Rural People***

Another main accomplishment of UNDROP lies in the reaffirmation of internationally recognized standards aimed at ensuring a dignified life for people living in rural areas. The rights included in the Declaration are firmly rooted in existing norms contained in core human rights treaties, as well as in relevant ILO and FAO documents, agreed by Member States. UNDROP contributes to the strengthening of international human rights norms by emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of human rights. It reinforces the principle that economic, social and cultural rights are as fundamental as civil and political rights, further promoting the indivisibility of

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bq853e.pdf>



human rights. The Declaration reaffirms those rights and further develops their content to address the specific needs of rural people. For example:

- a) Article 4 reaffirms *Women's Rights* as women in rural areas play a crucial role in sustaining livelihoods and contributing to the realization of the right to food.
- b) Article 10 reiterates the right to active and free *Participation* of peasants in policies that may affect their lives, lands and livelihoods.
- c) Article 15 reaffirms the *Right to adequate Food*, holding a particular significance for people living and working in rural areas, given their crucial contribution to food security and and heightened vulnerability to food-related crises.
- d) Article 22 reinforces the *Right to a Social Security*, which is a fundamental right for peasants to access financial and social assistance, ensuring a basic standard of living and protection against the high risks associated with the hard work in agriculture.
- e) Article 23 reiterates the *Right to Health*, emphasizing the right of peasants and rural people to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, a vital consideration, considering the inequalities in access to health services between the rural and urban regions.

### ***Development of International Law***

The Declaration contributes to the development of international law in areas where existing international instruments fell short in addressing the specific circumstances of peasants and other people living in rural areas. While these rights had previously received recognition in other internationally agreed documents and legally binding instruments, the Declaration goes further by expanding its recognition to people living in rural areas, while also explaining the specific obligations that accompany these rights, as for example:

- a) The *Right to Land* described in Article 17 emerges as a cornerstone of UNDROP. Land stands as a fundamental element for the subsistence of peasants and other people living in rural areas, as well as a key factor for poverty alleviation.
- b) The *Right to Seeds* from article 19 includes the right to save, use, exchange and sell their farm-saved seed or propagating material, in addition to the right to maintain, control and protect their own seeds and traditional knowledge.
- c) The *Right to a Decent income and livelihood and the means of production* from article 16 refers to the right to an adequate standard of living and facilitated access to tools and resources needed as means of production.

Moreover, UNDROP is advancing a Rights-Based development and encourages international cooperation. UNDROP aligns with the broader global agenda of sustainable and rights-based development. By recognizing the rights of peasants and rural populations, it supports efforts to address issues such as food security, poverty reduction and social justice within a human rights

framework. UNDROP recognizes the significance of international cooperation in realizing its objectives. It calls for collaboration between states, international organizations, civil society and peasant organizations to support the rights of peasants and rural populations.

### ***Categories and the character of human rights***

Human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent. The principle of universality means that these rights are applicable to all people, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion or any other distinguishing characteristic. The principle of inalienability describes that these rights are inherent to every individual by virtue of their humanity and they cannot be taken away, transferred or surrendered in any circumstances. The principle of indivisibility means that each human rights law carries equal significance and no one can be deprived of a right based on a subjective judgment that it is of lesser importance or dispensable. The principle of interdependence means that human rights are interconnected, they are not isolated or separate from one another, as each right complements and supports others. These principles are an essential aspect of human dignity and worth.

The United Nations system has defined and recognized a broad spectrum of internationally accepted human rights, including social, cultural, economic, political and social rights<sup>11</sup>. It's important to note that these categories are not rigid and there is ongoing debate about the classification and scope of certain rights. These rights are regulated through a variety of international and national instruments. The UN and the member states established mechanisms at various levels, that promote and protect these rights and ensure their use, monitoring and implementation.

Economic, social and cultural rights are the freedoms, privileges and entitlements that people and communities require to live a life of dignity. These human rights include the rights to food, housing, health, education, cultural identity and more.

Also known as first generation rights, civil and political rights are the rights of citizens to liberty and equality (such as: freedom to think and express oneself, the right to a fair trial, to vote, to take part in political life and to have access to information).

While UNDROP reaffirms these well established categories of human rights, it also contributes with a novelty represented by the new categories of rights to natural resources. These natural resources include primarily land, seeds and water that are inherently used as means of production. The very existence of peasants depends on the recognition of these rights.

The rights defined by UNDROP are interconnected and can only fully realize the peasants' rights for the purpose of improving the lives and the livelihoods of peasants if they are applied holistically<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights in the UN system: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

<sup>12</sup> The holistic approach of Human Rights was strengthened by the results of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 1993. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/history/vienna-declaration>

## II.2. The content of *UNDROP*:

The UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural areas (*UNDROP*) is structured in 28 articles, consisting in a definition of the right-holders, 24 specific rights and 3 articles dedicated to the responsibilities and general obligations of states and other international organizations for the process of implementation.

- Art. 1: *Definition of peasants and other people working in rural areas*
- Art. 2: *General obligations of States*
- Art. 3: *Equality and non-discrimination*
- Art. 4: *Rights of peasant women and other women working in rural areas*
- Art. 5: *Rights to natural resources and the right to development*
- Art. 6: *Right to life, liberty and security of person*
- Art. 7: *Freedom of movement*
- Art. 8: *Freedom of thought, opinion and expression*
- Art. 9: *Freedom of association*
- Art. 10: *Right to participation*
- Art. 11: *Right to information with regard to production, marketing and distribution*
- Art. 12: *Access to justice*
- Art. 13: *Right to work*
- Art. 14: *Right to safety and health at work*
- Art. 15: *Right to food and food sovereignty*
- Art. 16: *Right to a decent income and livelihood and the means of production*
- Art. 17: *Right to land and other natural resources*
- Art. 18: *Right to a safe, clean and healthy environment*
- Art. 19: *Right to seeds*
- Art. 20: *Right to biological diversity*
- Art. 21: *Rights to water and to sanitation*
- Art. 22: *Right to social security*
- Art. 23: *Right to health*
- Art. 24: *Right to adequate housing*
- Art. 25: *Right to education and training*
- Art. 26: *Cultural rights and traditional knowledge*
- Art. 27: *Responsibility of the United Nations and of other international organizations*
- Art. 28: *General Obligations*

## **Art. 1: Definition of peasants and other people working in rural areas**

- 1. For the purposes of the present Declaration, a peasant is any person who engages or who seeks to engage alone, or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence and/or for the market, and who relies significantly, though not necessarily exclusively, on family or household labour and other non-monetized ways of organizing labour, and who has a special dependency on and attachment to the land.*
- 2. The present Declaration applies to any person engaged in artisanal or small-scale agriculture, crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, hunting or gathering, and handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area. It also applies to dependent family members of peasants.*
- 3. The present Declaration also applies to indigenous peoples and local communities working on the land, transhumant, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, and the landless, engaged in the above-mentioned activities.*
- 4. The present Declaration further applies to hired workers, including all migrant workers regardless of their migration status, and seasonal workers, on plantations, agricultural farms, forests and farms in aquaculture and in agro-industrial enterprises.*

This article defines the scope and identity of the people to whom the Declaration applies. Peasants stand apart from other agricultural practitioners due to their small scale production, reliance on family or non-monetized labour force and their profound connection to the land. This distinction is important for the identity of peasants and it prevents the Declaration from being exploited to favor large scale, highly mechanized and chemically-intensive farming models that have emerged at the expense of family peasant farming.

A peasant is a person who lives or is connected to rural areas, is integrated in the community, it depends on the land and the natural resources for sustaining it's way of life, for producing food and for contributing to the development of it's community. The definition speaks for itself, having intentionally a very inclusive approach. It reflects the diversity of needs and people from peasant rural communities, all the aspects of life, occupations, social and economic conditions of peasants. Paragraph 1 sets the terms: *a peasant is any person who engages or who seeks to engage alone, or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence and/or for the market, and who relies significantly, though not necessarily exclusively, on family or household labour and other non-monetized ways of organizing labour, and who has a special dependency on and attachment to the land.* Paragraph 2 defines the diversity of peasants: *the definition of peasant applies to any person engaged in artisanal or small-scale agriculture, crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, hunting or gathering, and handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area (...) and dependent family members of peasants.* Paragraph 3 extends the definition of peasants to the following special categories of food producers: *indigenous peoples and local communities working on the land, transhumant, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, and the landless, engaged in the above-mentioned activities.* Furthermore,

in Paragraph 4, the definition also applies to *hired workers, including all migrant workers regardless of their migration status, and seasonal workers, on plantations, agricultural farms, forests and farms in aquaculture and in agro-industrial enterprises.*

The term “peasant” rather than “farmer” is used in response to the historical discrimination against peasants, being the explicit preference of peasant organizations to restore it’s meaning and the rightful recognition and dignity of peasants in society.

The recognition of the peasant identity can enable international human rights law to properly address structural drivers and patterns of human rights violations that disproportionately affect peasants and people working in the rural world.

We would like to give a particular attention to the status of migrants and seasonal workers. Worldwide, 16.7 million international migrant workers are engaged in agriculture, representing 11.1% of international migrant workers.<sup>13</sup> The share of migrant workers in agri-food systems is large in most high-income countries.<sup>14</sup>

The majority of migrant workers in agriculture in Europe, come from Eastern Europe. Also world-wide, migrant agricultural workers in high-income countries are employed in a variety of agricultural sub-sectors. In North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, migrant workers are mostly employed in fruit and vegetable production, but also in livestock and the meat industry (e.g. in the USA, Germany and the Netherlands), forestry (e.g. in Sweden) and fisheries and aquaculture (e.g. in Finland and Canada). Migrant workers also comprise a large share of agri-food workers in some middle-income countries. Indeed, some Asian, African and Latin American countries depend on migrant workers from poorer or lower-wage areas within their own countries or from neighbouring countries to fill jobs in agriculture, fisheries and forestry. In Malaysia, international migrants from countries like Indonesia and Bangladesh make up most of the workers in large-scale agriculture operations, such as palm oil and rubber plantations. In Thailand, the fishing and seafood industry heavily relies on migrant workers, especially from Cambodia and Myanmar<sup>15</sup>. Many workers from countries such as Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali migrate to other countries in West Africa with greater agricultural opportunities (including on pineapple and cacao plantations), such as Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire.

Migrant workers in agri-food systems around the world have a diverse set of characteristics. They come from many different countries and are diverse in age, gender, ethnicity and migration status.

---

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Council, Preliminary Study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the advancement of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. Doc. A/HRC/16/63. 2011 Martin, P. L. (2016). Migrant workers in commercial agriculture. *International Labour Office, Sectoral Policies Department, Conditions of Work and Equality Department, Geneva.*

<sup>14</sup> IOM, Thailand Migration Report 2019; ILO, Ship to Shore Rights Baseline research findings on fishers and seafood workers in Thailand, 2018. <https://shiptoshorerights.org/wp-content/uploads/baseline-research-findings-english.pdf>; Transnational Institute (TNI) (2020), Myanmar’s cross-border migrant workers and the Covid-19 pandemic: Their life stories and the social structures shaping them.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.cetim.ch/product/the-right-to-non-discrimination/>

Men out-number women among international migrants employed in agriculture in high-income countries, but many migrant women and girls also work in the sector.<sup>16</sup>

There is a great variety of legal administrative status among migrants employed in agri-food systems. These include seasonal migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants with residence permits for purposes other than agricultural work and undocumented migrants.

They also migrate through a variety of pathways, within countries and abroad, including both through regular and irregular channels, on permanent or temporary visas and as asylum-seekers. They carry out many different functions across a variety of subsectors, including in agriculture, fisheries, livestock and forestry.

In summary, this article provides a foundational definition of peasants and other people who live in rural areas, highlighting their vital contribution to the society, their dependency on agriculture and natural resources and the importance of protecting their rights. This article sets the stage for the subsequent provisions of the Declaration, which go on to detail the specific rights and protections afforded to peasants and rural people.

## **Art. 2: General obligations of States**

- 1. States shall respect, protect and fulfill the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. They shall promptly take legislative, administrative and other appropriate steps to achieve progressively the full realization of the rights of the present Declaration that cannot be immediately guaranteed.*
- 2. Particular attention shall be paid in the implementation of the present Declaration to the rights and special needs of peasants and other people working in rural areas, including older persons, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities, taking into account the need to address multiple forms of discrimination.*
- 3. Without disregarding specific legislation on indigenous peoples, before adopting and implementing legislation and policies, international agreements and other decision-making processes that may affect the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with peasants and other people working in rural areas through their own representative institutions, engaging with and seeking the support of peasants and other people working in rural areas who could be affected by decisions before those decisions are made, and responding to their contributions, taking into consideration existing power imbalances between different parties and ensuring active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of individuals and groups in associated decision-making processes.*

---

<sup>16</sup> Reference: Martin, P. L. (2016). Migrant workers in commercial agriculture. International Labour Office, Sectoral Policies Department, Conditions of Work and Equality Department, Geneva.



*4. States shall elaborate, interpret and apply relevant international agreements and standards to which they are a party in a manner consistent with their human rights obligations as applicable to peasants and other people working in rural areas.*

*5. States shall take all necessary measures to ensure that non-State actors that they are in a position to regulate, such as private individuals and organizations, and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, respect and strengthen the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.*

*6. States, recognizing the importance of international cooperation in support of national efforts for the realization of the purposes and objectives of the present Declaration, shall take appropriate and effective measures in this regard, between and among States and, as appropriate, in partnership with relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, in particular organizations of peasants and other people working in rural areas, among others. Such measures could include:*

*(a) Ensuring that relevant international cooperation, including international development programs, is inclusive, accessible and pertinent to peasants and other people working in rural areas;*

*(b) Facilitating and supporting capacity-building, including through the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, training programs and best practices;*

*(c) Facilitating cooperation in research and in access to scientific and technical knowledge;*

*(d) Providing, as appropriate, technical and economic assistance, facilitating access to and sharing of accessible technologies, and through the transfer of technologies, particularly to developing countries, on mutually agreed terms;*

*(e) Improving the functioning of markets at the global level and facilitating timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help to limit extreme food price volatility and the attractiveness of speculation.*

In essence, article 2 defines the obligations of states to implement *UNDROP*. The overarching responsibilities outlined for states in this article, concerning the rights of peasants, serve a dual purpose: first, to rectify the power imbalances prevailing in rural areas and second, to ensure that states commit to respecting, safeguarding and fulfilling the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. These rights have often been marginalized within the frameworks of international, regional and national laws and policies. State obligations play a critical role in addressing the various forms of discrimination and longstanding disadvantages that have endured within peasants and rural populations for too long.

However, it is imperative to stress that these state obligations should not be implemented in isolation from the meaningful involvement of peasants and rural workers themselves. Their active participation must be guaranteed during the implementation of the *UNDROP*. They shall participate, directly and/or through their representative organizations, in all decision-making

processes that may affect their lives, lands and livelihoods. This ensures the effectiveness of public policies and a more equitable and inclusive approach to rural development.

### **Art. 3: Equality and non-discrimination**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other international human rights instruments, free from any kind of discrimination in the exercise of their rights based on any grounds such as origin, nationality, race, color, descent, sex, language, culture, marital status, property, disability, age, political or other opinion, religion, birth or economic, social or other status.*
- 2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies to exercise their right to development.*
- 3. States shall take appropriate measures to eliminate conditions that cause or help to perpetuate discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, against peasants and people working in rural areas.*

The general principle of equality and non-discrimination is a fundamental element of international human rights law. It embodies the concept that every person is entitled to equal treatment and protection under the law, without any form of discrimination or prejudice. The various forms of discriminations described in the article are critical obstacles in realizing peasants' rights. The principle of equality can in certain circumstances require a state to take affirmative action in order to diminish or eliminate conditions that cause or help to perpetuate discrimination.

These rights can be effective only if they are guaranteed to all, without discrimination. If this principle is not applied, human rights become a privilege and lose all relevance. Discrimination “consists of different treatment for two persons, or groups of persons, when both are in a comparable situation. Conversely, treating equally two persons or groups of persons when both are in different situations can also constitute discrimination.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Art. 4: Rights of peasant women and other women working in rural areas**

- 1. States shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against peasant women and other women working in rural areas and to promote their empowerment in order to ensure, on the basis of equality between men and women, that they fully and equally enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms and that they are able to freely pursue, participate in and benefit from rural economic, social, political and cultural development.*

---

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.cetim.ch/product/the-right-to-non-discrimination/>

*2. States shall ensure that peasant women and other women working in rural areas enjoy without discrimination all the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the present Declaration and in other international human rights instruments, including the rights:*

- (a) To participate equally and effectively in the formulation and implementation of development planning at all levels;*
- (b) To have equal access to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including adequate health-care facilities, information, counseling and services in family planning;*
- (c) To benefit directly from social security programs;*
- (d) To receive all types of training and education, whether formal or non-formal, including training and education relating to functional literacy, and to benefit from all community and extension services in order to increase their technical proficiency;*
- (e) To organize self-help groups, associations and cooperatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;*
- (f) To participate in all community activities;*
- (g) To have equal access to financial services, agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities and appropriate technology;*
- (h) To equal access to, use of and management of land and natural resources, and to equal or priority treatment in land and agrarian reform and in land resettlement schemes;*
- (i) To decent employment, equal remuneration and social protection benefits, and to have access to income-generating activities;*
- (j) To be free from all forms of violence.*

Rural women around the world often face multiple forms of discrimination and inequality due to their gender, as well as their rural status. This article contains critical provisions that aim to address the particular vulnerabilities of rural women and girls.<sup>18</sup> It draws inspiration from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other relevant human rights resolutions. Moreover, it incorporates the right to equal access to, use and management of land and natural resources, as well as equal or priority treatment in land distribution and and agrarian reform initiatives.

Some of the key forms of discrimination and challenges that rural women experience<sup>19</sup>, addressed by this article, include:

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25439&LangID=E>

<sup>19</sup> Report HRC, Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food, Oliver de Schutter *Women's Rights and the right to food*, 2012 - [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/AHRC2250\\_English.PDF](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/AHRC2250_English.PDF)

- Economic discrimination: unequal pay and limited or restricted access to resources, such as land, credit and productive resources, limiting their decisions and opportunities. Rural women often bear the primary responsibility for unpaid care work, including childcare, eldercare and household chores, which can limit their time for income-generating activities and personal development.
- Land rights and ownership: either excluded from inheritance rights or facing land grabbing where their lands are taken away without adequate compensation or consultation. This form of discrimination holds particular significance, because less than 2% of all landholders at global level are women.<sup>20</sup>
- Education: limited access to quality education resulting in lower literacy rates and reduced opportunities. Early marriage and pregnancy often disrupt the education of rural girls, perpetuating gender disparities in education.
- Healthcare: limited access to healthcare services, including maternal and reproductive healthcare, leading to higher maternal mortality rates, in association to risks of malnutrition due to limited access to nutritious food.
- Gender-based violence: rural women may experience domestic violence, having limited access to support services and legal remedies. Women working in agriculture or informal labor sectors can face sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Access to decision making: women in rural areas are often underrepresented in local, national and global decision-making processes, limiting their ability to influence policies and programs that affect their lives. Cultural norms and traditions in some rural communities may restrict women's participation in public life.
- Climate change and environmental challenges: rural women are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, which can disrupt their livelihoods and exacerbate poverty.
- Migration and displacement: rural women may be more vulnerable to forced migration and displacement due to conflict, environmental factors, or economic pressures, leading to heightened risks and challenges.

Women play a pivotal role in the world's food production, responsible for activities such as cultivation, plowing, harvesting, animal husbandry, which contribute to more than 50% of the world's food<sup>21</sup>. Women in rural areas are instrumental in sustaining livelihoods and contributing to the realization of the right to food. Unfortunately, women face discrimination and violence and represent 70% of the world's hungry. Women bear a disproportionate burden of malnutrition and food insecurity, enduring various forms of mistreatment, including verbal abuse, physical and sexual violence, unequal access to property and wage disparities.

---

<sup>20</sup> Pruitt, LR. (2011), *Deconstructing CEDAW's Article 14: Naming and Explaining Rural Difference*, William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law, Vol. 17, p. 347.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food to the General Assembly, 14 December 2015, A/ HRC/31/5. Para. 5.

Around 60 % of the world's undernourished people are women and girls. Their limited and precarious access to natural resources like land, forests, water and seeds, coupled with restricted access to education and decision-making, endemic health issues, gender-based violence and the weight of unpaid caregiving, compound gender inequalities in rural contexts.<sup>22</sup>

Peasant and other rural women are especially vulnerable due to persistent traditional attitudes that relegate women to subordinate roles in many rural and peasant communities. Furthermore, they confront elevated levels of gender-based violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict scenarios.

Women peasants and rural women are integral to the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, including agroecology. Their unique local knowledge as female food producers must be respected and acknowledged to facilitate the transition to equitable food systems. To enable women's contribution to this transition, their meaningful participation in political decision-making at local, national and global levels, especially for those with caregiving responsibilities, should be enhanced.

A holistic approach addressing the needs and multiple forms of discrimination faced by rural women is essential to reinforce the recognition of their rights. This approach aims to empower rural women to freely determine their own political status and pursue their economic social and cultural development. Addressing these forms of discrimination and challenges faced by rural women requires comprehensive strategies and policies that promote gender equality, enhance access to resources and services and empower women in rural communities.

#### **Art. 5: Rights to natural resources and the right to development**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to have access to and to use in a sustainable manner the natural resources present in their communities that are required to enjoy adequate living conditions, in accordance with article 28 of the present Declaration. They also have the right to participate in the management of these resources.*

*2. States shall take measures to ensure that any exploitation affecting the natural resources that peasants and other people working in rural areas traditionally hold or use is permitted based on, but not limited to:*

*(a) A duly conducted social and environmental impact assessment;*

*(b) Consultations in good faith, in accordance with article 2.3 of the present Declaration;*

*(c) Modalities for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of such exploitation that have been established on mutually agreed terms between those exploiting the natural resources and the peasants and other people working in rural areas.*

---

<sup>22</sup> BRIDGE (2014). Gender and Food Security. Towards Gender-Just Food and Nutrition Security. Overview Report.

This article is strongly related to the articles related to rights to natural resources such as land, seeds and water. It aims to address historical injustices and disparities in resource access and empower rural communities to pursue sustainable livelihoods and development. Peasants and rural workers are a group that is particularly susceptible to violations of these rights particularly when they resist the expropriation of land and natural resources. This vulnerability is amplified by the fact that they often face extreme forms of violence from both state authorities and non-state actors, including powerful transnational agri-food corporations.

In the context of third-party involvement, it is imperative that states not only establish clear legal frameworks defining the circumstances under which land can be reclaimed from peasants or communities but also diligently oversee such cases to prevent any instances of abuse. It is important to note that an outright prohibition on land reclamation would render essential agrarian reform measures unworkable. However, in cases where there is an overarching public interest that necessitates land reclamation, this interest must be exceptionally well-defined and all alternative options should be exhaustively explored. Furthermore, adequate compensation should always be offered to affected parties as a matter of principle.

#### **Art. 6: Right to life, liberty and security of person**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.*

*2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas shall not be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and shall not be held in slavery or servitude.*

The rights defined in Article 6 are unequivocal and constitute a fundamental cornerstone of human rights. It re-affirms the fundamental human rights of peasants and rural people to life, liberty and security of person. It aims to protect them from violence, displacement and persecution, while also ensuring access to justice and the right to seek asylum when needed. The right to life, liberty and security of the person entails that no entity, whether it be a state or a non-state actor, has the authority to infringe upon these rights.

States are prohibited from depriving people of their right to life, liberty, or security and they bear the responsibility to take all necessary measures to prevent third parties from doing so. This article underscores the importance of creating a safe and secure environment for rural communities to thrive and exercise their rights.

#### **Art. 7: Freedom of movement**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to recognition everywhere as persons before the law.*



*2. States shall take appropriate measures to facilitate the freedom of movement of peasants and other people working in rural areas.*

*3. States shall, where required, take appropriate measures to cooperate with a view to addressing transboundary tenure issues affecting peasants and other people working in rural areas that cross international boundaries, in accordance with article 28 of the present Declaration.*

In the first paragraph, the Declaration establishes the right of peasants and rural workers to be recognized everywhere as persons before the law. Such recognition serves as a fundamental prerequisite for any person to possess a "formal" legal identity and to exercise certain rights and responsibilities. It enables peasants and rural people to assert these rights, such as entering into contracts or pursuing legal actions in a court of law. Additionally, legal recognition is essential when crossing international borders.

In the second paragraph, the declaration places an obligation on states to implement measures that facilitate the movement of peasants and rural workers, both within their own national boundaries and across international borders. It underscores that movement within a particular state should not be subject to arbitrary restrictions and peasants and rural workers should always retain the ability to return to their countries of citizenship or nationality. This right is essential for rural communities to access resources, markets and opportunities for employment or education.

This article can be used for the protection of traditional and seasonal movements of pastoralists and other rural communities and their rights to maintain their way of life which might include access to grazing lands and water sources.

In summary, Article 7 of *UNDROP* enshrines the right to freedom of movement for peasants and rural communities. It safeguards their ability to move within rural and urban areas, across borders and between their lands and homes., aiming to protect the diverse movements and livelihoods of rural populations while ensuring that their rights are respected and upheld.

#### **Art. 8: Freedom of thought, opinion and expression**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to freedom of thought, belief, conscience, religion, opinion, expression and peaceful assembly. They have the right to express their opinion, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of their choice, at the local, regional, national and international levels.*

*2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right, individually and/or collectively, in association with others or as a community, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

*3. The exercise of the rights provided for in the present article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided for by law and are necessary:*

*(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;*

*(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.*

*4. States shall take all necessary measures to ensure protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threat, retaliation, de jure or de facto discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise and defense of the rights described in the present Declaration.*

To exercise their rights as outlined in the Declaration, peasants and rural workers must have the ability to freely express themselves. This, in turn, hinges on their capacity to form and articulate their thoughts and opinions without restraint and the Declaration guarantees both of these crucial elements.

It's noteworthy that a fundamental facet of this freedom is the right to engage, either individually or collectively, in "peaceful activities" as stated in paragraph 2. This encompasses gatherings in both private and public settings. This includes the right to come together with others, such as in associations or as a community, to advocate for their rights and freedoms. Essentially, this means they are free to hold their beliefs, express their opinions and assemble peacefully, whether through spoken or written word, artistic expression, or any other chosen medium. Importantly, this right extends to the local, regional, national and international levels. Any efforts to silence people whose messages challenge the prevailing discourse of power, whether it be political, economic, or religious, or to impede access to differing opinions, constitute violations of this fundamental right.

UNDROP encompasses rights that peasants are entitled to make their own. The most effective way to achieve this is to disseminate the text widely and assert those rights through the exercise of freedom of expression.

Paragraph 3 enumerates the customary restrictions on these freedoms. They cannot be enjoyed if their exercise would obstruct others from enjoying their own rights, harm the reputation of others, or pose a threat to the security of the State. These restrictions are considered legitimate only when they are explicitly defined in law, in a manner consistent with the spirit and intent of UNDROP.

Furthermore, beyond the conventional obligations to respect, protect and enforce human rights, States are additionally responsible to protect the defenders of peasants' rights from any form of retaliation, as articulated in paragraph 4.

## **Art. 9: Freedom of association**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to form and join organizations, trade unions, cooperatives or any other organization or association of their own choosing for the protection of their interests, and to bargain collectively. Such organizations shall be independent and voluntary in character, and remain free from all interference, coercion or repression.*
- 2. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*
- 3. States shall take appropriate measures to encourage the establishment of organizations of peasants and other people working in rural areas, including unions, cooperatives or other organizations, particularly with a view to eliminating obstacles to their establishment, growth and pursuit of lawful activities, including any legislative or administrative discrimination against such organizations and their members, and provide them with support to strengthen their position when negotiating contractual arrangements in order to ensure that conditions and prices are fair and stable and do not violate their rights to dignity and to a decent life.*

Freedom of association, like freedom of thought and expression, stands as an essential prerequisite for the political mobilization of peasants and rural workers. The collective power of people joining together surpasses the influence of a solitary person, rendering freedom of association both invaluable and influential.

Paragraph 1 of this article establishes the basic principle: associations formed by peasants and rural workers can assume any shape or form and serve various purposes, including advocating for their interests and engaging in collective bargaining.

Similar to the freedoms defined in Article 8, freedom of association may be subject to limitations to safeguard the security of the State and the rights of others. However, invoking concerns about State security should not be done loosely, as has been witnessed in the past few decades with the proliferation of so-called anti-terrorist laws that have sometimes been used to suppress criticism.

Furthermore, this article outlines the responsibilities of States. They are obligated to foster the creation of organizations through measures like subsidies or training. States must also eliminate barriers that hinder the formation of organizations, such as burdensome authorization procedures. Moreover, subtler impediments like unjustifiable administrative delays or the imposition of fees should also be eliminated.

Paragraph 3 goes on to specify that in the context of contractual negotiations, such as those between a wholesaler and a cooperative, States have a duty to support peasants' organizations to ensure that these negotiations are conducted fairly, resulting in outcomes that uphold their rights, particularly the right to dignity and decent living conditions. It's important to note that Article 9

should be read in conjunction with Article 10, which addresses the right to participation, as these provisions complement each other.

In summary, Article 9 of *UNDROP* recognizes and safeguards the freedom of association for peasants and rural workers. It guarantees their right to form and participate in associations and organizations of their choice, protect their interests and actively engage in decision-making processes related to rural development. Additionally, it underscores the need to protect the rights defenders who work on behalf of rural communities. This article aims to empower peasants and rural workers to collectively advocate for their rights, promote rural development and participate in shaping policies that affect their lives.

#### **Art. 10: Right to participation**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to active and free participation, directly and/or through their representative organizations, in the preparation and implementation of policies, programs and projects that may affect their lives, land and livelihoods.*

*2. States shall promote the participation, directly and/or through their representative organizations, of peasants and other people working in rural areas in decision-making processes that may affect their lives, land and livelihoods; this includes respecting the establishment and growth of strong and independent organizations of peasants and other people working in rural areas and promoting their participation in the preparation and implementation of food safety, labour and environmental standards that may affect them.*

The right to participation for peasants and rural workers, as outlined in Article 10 of *UNDROP*, is a fundamental right that draws its origins from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 22). This right holds significant importance for peasants and its reaffirmation in *UNDROP* is crucial.

Article 10 should be read in conjunction with Article 9, which addresses the right of association. The right to association is essential for peasants and rural workers to collectively organize and advocate for their interests effectively.

In order for peasants to participate freely and actively, they must have access to information. Article 11 of *UNDROP* recognizes the right to information, which encompasses the right to seek, receive and share information and knowledge. This right ensures that peasants are well-informed about the issues that affect them and allows them to freely share this information with others.

The article seeks to redress the historical marginalization of peasants in political decision-making processes. Peasants have often been excluded from political discussions, with most decisions affecting rural areas made in urban centers. This exclusion is compounded by the fact that few elected politicians come from rural backgrounds, leading to a lack of representation for rural populations.

The right to participate in political decision-making is invaluable and *UNDROP* provides an opportunity for peasants to have a voice in decisions that impact their lives. Participation means active involvement, allowing peasants to attend debates, express their opinions and make proposals. This active and free participation can take various forms and should not be restricted by authorities.

Peasants' participation can be direct or indirect. Direct participation occurs when peasants attend in person, while indirect participation is through representative organizations. These organizations, which can take various forms, must be representative of the community's interests. The type of participation is acknowledged in paragraph 1 and elaborated upon in paragraph 2 of the article. The specific characteristics of representative organizations are not explicitly defined in the text. It can be inferred that these organizations may encompass a variety of forms, including trade unions, associations, or informal groups. However, the essential criterion is that these organizations must genuinely represent the interests and concerns of the community they serve.

Peasants should participate not only in the development but also in the implementation of public decisions. These two stages are equally important and interconnected, as they shape the purpose, objectives, means and consequences of decisions. These two stages are pivotal moments in shaping a decision, encompassing discussions and determinations regarding its intent, goals, methods and repercussions. Therefore, the presence of those who will be impacted by the decision is crucial. Importantly, it's worth noting that the implementation phase isn't solely a technical step where further decisions are unnecessary. On the contrary, the effective and just execution of a public decision can only be achieved when those it affects are actively engaged in the process.

The range of decisions in which peasants and rural workers can participate is vast, covering all aspects of their lives and rights. Importantly, it is up to the peasants themselves, rather than authorities, to determine what concerns them and impacts their lives. This means decisions at all levels, whether national or local and ranging from general agricultural policy, through the most technical of regulatory changes, to the use of agricultural land for construction. Also, is not only about decisions that affect their lives, but also decisions that affect their rights.

States have an obligation to actively promote the right to participation, which goes beyond merely inviting people to participate. States must ensure that peasants not only have the opportunity to participate but also feel empowered to do so. Special efforts should be made to reach marginalized groups, including women and migrants.

The right to participation extends to non-formal settings and authorities must not exclude peasants from informal negotiations or events initiated by peasants themselves.

Furthermore, Article 10 emphasizes the importance of strong and independent representative organizations for peasants and rural workers. These organizations must be free from external influence or interests to effectively advocate for the rights and interests of rural communities.

States have an obligation not only to respect these organizations but also to encourage their establishment and growth. This support is vital for peasants to exercise their right to participate fully in decision-making processes.

In summary, Article 10 of *UNDROP* upholds the right to participation for peasants and rural communities, allowing them to engage in decision-making processes that directly impact their lives and well-being. It emphasizes inclusivity and meaningful participation, encouraging the involvement of all community members. States are encouraged to provide support and capacity-building measures to facilitate participation and the article underscores the need to protect rights defenders who work on behalf of rural communities. This right to participation is fundamental in empowering rural communities to shape their own futures and advocate for their rights and interests.

#### **Art. 11: Right to information with regard to production, marketing and distribution**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to seek, receive, develop and impart information, including information about factors that may affect the production, processing, marketing and distribution of their products.*
- 2. States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas have access to relevant, transparent, timely and adequate information in a language and form and through means adequate to their cultural methods so as to promote their empowerment and to ensure their effective participation in decision-making in matters that may affect their lives, land and livelihoods.*
- 3. States shall take appropriate measures to promote the access of peasants and other people working in rural areas to a fair, impartial and appropriate system of evaluation and certification of the quality of their products at the local, national and international levels, and to promote their participation in its formulation.*

The right to information includes the right to seek, produce, receive and disseminate information. These actions are closely tied to the freedom of thought, opinion and expression, as discussed earlier. The right to information serves as both a component and a prerequisite for ensuring that freedom.

Article 11 of the *UNDROP* further elaborates on the rights and obligations pertaining to information. Notably, States bear a fundamental responsibility to ensure that peasants and rural workers are well-informed. This obligation is rooted in the aim of preserving their political autonomy and enabling their meaningful involvement in decisions that impact their lives, land and livelihoods, as emphasized in paragraph 2.

We note also the importance of ensuring that this right, as well as others, can be exercised in a language that empowers peasants and rural people to do so effectively. Therefore the work of translation and popularization of *UNDROP* in suitable languages and dialects is essential.



## **Art. 12: Access to justice**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to effective and non-discriminatory access to justice, including access to fair procedures for the resolution of disputes and to effective remedies for all infringements of their human rights. Such decisions shall give due consideration to their customs, traditions, rules and legal systems in conformity with relevant obligations under international human rights law.*
- 2. States shall provide for non-discriminatory access, through impartial and competent judicial and administrative bodies, to timely, affordable and effective means of resolving disputes in the language of the persons concerned, and shall provide effective and prompt remedies, which may include a right of appeal, restitution, indemnity, compensation and reparation.*
- 3. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to legal assistance. States shall consider additional measures, including legal aid, to support peasants and other people working in rural areas who would otherwise not have access to administrative and judicial services.*
- 4. States shall consider measures to strengthen relevant national institutions for the promotion and protection of all human rights, including the rights described in the present Declaration.*
- 5. States shall provide peasants and other people working in rural areas with effective mechanisms for the prevention of and redress for any action that has the aim or effect of violating their human rights, arbitrarily dispossessing them of their land and natural resources or of depriving them of their means of subsistence and integrity, and for any form of forced sedentarization or population displacement.*

Access to justice is a fundamental right that serves as the bedrock for all other rights, touching upon various aspects of a person's life that may become subject to legal proceedings. *UNDROP* recognizes an extensive right to justice, encompassing several critical dimensions.

In the first instance (paragraph 1), *UNDROP* asserts that peasants and rural workers should have the right to approach any court of their choice to initiate legal actions. This entails two fundamental principles: the absence of discrimination, ensuring that all persons have equal access and the effectiveness of this access, guaranteeing that it genuinely enables legal recourse.

As articulated in paragraph 2, the courts themselves must meet specific criteria to ensure the right to justice. They must be impartial, demonstrating neutrality; competent, possessing the requisite expertise; timely, ensuring that proceedings are not unduly protracted; affordable, preventing financial barriers to access; and effective, yielding just and enforceable outcomes. Furthermore, courts should operate in the language understood by the parties involved, eliminating linguistic obstacles.

To bolster the effectiveness of access to justice and promote non-discrimination, paragraph 3 underscores the importance of support mechanisms. This may include legal assistance or legal aid,

which can help peasants to navigate legal processes and alleviate the financial burden associated with legal proceedings.

In paragraph 4, States are strongly encouraged to enhance their institutions responsible for safeguarding human rights, including those defined in the present Declaration. This highlights the imperative of continually strengthening the mechanisms that protect and uphold the rights of peasants and rural workers within the broader framework of human rights.

In summary, access to justice is essential for peasants and rural communities to protect their rights, seek remedies for violations, participate in decision-making and ensure that they are treated fairly and equitably under the law. It is a fundamental element of human rights and social justice for these communities.

### **Art. 13: Right to work**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to work, which includes the right to choose freely the way they earn their living.*
- 2. Children of peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to be protected from any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to a child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.*
- 3. States shall create an enabling environment with opportunities for work for peasants and other people working in rural areas and their families that provide remuneration allowing for an adequate standard of living.*
- 4. In States facing high levels of rural poverty and in the absence of employment opportunities in other sectors, States shall take appropriate measures to establish and promote sustainable food systems that are sufficiently labour-intensive to contribute to the creation of decent employment.*
- 5. States, taking into account the specific characteristics of peasant agriculture and small-scale fisheries, shall monitor compliance with labour legislation by allocating, where required, appropriate resources to ensuring the effective operation of labour inspectorates in rural areas.*
- 6. No one shall be required to perform forced, bonded or compulsory labour, be subject to the risk of becoming a victim of human trafficking or be held in any other form of contemporary slavery. States shall, in consultation and cooperation with peasants and other people working in rural areas and their representative organizations, take appropriate measures to protect them from economic exploitation, child labour and all forms of contemporary slavery, such as debt bondage of women, men and children, and forced labour, including of fishers and fish workers, forest workers, or seasonal or migrant workers.*

This is a fundamental human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adapted to the context of peasants and rural realities. It is associated with article 14, related to safety and health at work, for ensuring appropriate, healthy and decent conditions of work.

The right to work is significant for several reasons: economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, enabling the dignity of the people, protection against exploitation, promoting gender equality and supporting sustainable development.

The right to work is a fundamental component of economic empowerment. It ensures that peasants and rural workers have the opportunity to engage in gainful employment, which is crucial for their livelihoods and well-being. Access to work enables rural populations to generate income, reducing poverty and improving their quality of life. This right is particularly essential in regions where agriculture and rural labor are the primary sources of income.

The right to work is tied to the dignity of people. It affirms that peasants and rural workers, like all individuals, have the right to engage in work that respects their dignity and basic human rights. Art. 13 underscores the importance of ensuring that peasants and rural workers are not subjected to exploitative or degrading working conditions. It calls for fair and just labor practices, including against child labor and all forms of contemporary slavery. In many rural areas, women play a significant role in agricultural and rural work. The right to work, as outlined in *UNDROP*, reinforces the importance of gender equality in access to employment opportunities and fair treatment at work.

Promoting the right to work also aligns with the development of sustainable agriculture. When rural workers have access to decent work and fair compensation, they are more likely to invest in sustainable farming practices. Employment opportunities in rural areas contribute to overall social development. It helps retain populations in rural regions, mitigating urban migration and supports the development of rural communities. In addition, the right to work is closely linked to access to land and natural resources, which are critical for rural livelihoods.

*UNDROP* recognizes right to choose what work to do, to access the work chosen and to perform it safely, in these terms: “the right to choose freely the way they earn a living” (paragraph 1). For a peasant, this means being able to choose to remain a peasant and to practice agriculture (or any other activity such as fishing, livestock raising, gathering, etc.) employing their preferred methods and securing an adequate income from these endeavors. Importantly, this work must be a voluntary choice and not imposed upon them.

Additionally, the article safeguards the rights of children in rural areas, including the offspring of peasants and other rural workers. It ensures that children are not involved in work that hinders their access to education, disrupts their studies, or harms their overall development (paragraph 2). The provision regarding children reflects a balanced approach between recognizing children's rights, which could entail a complete prohibition on child labor and acknowledging the reality that many families rely on their children's assistance in rural activities.

Child labour is a human rights issue. All children have a right to childhood, including the right to protection from economic exploitation and from labour that jeopardizes their development, education or health. Children are not small adults: their bodies are developing and as such, they proportionally need more sleep and more water and they inhale more often than an adult. A task that is innocuous for an adult can have a long-term negative effect on the physical and cognitive development of a child (FAO, 2019). There is a shared responsibility to ensure that agricultural, food security and nutrition interventions do not cause any harm to children and offer sustainable alternatives to child labour.

Further Facts on child labour<sup>23</sup>:

Across the world, 152 million children are exploited in child labour. Some 70 percent of them – nearly 108 million boys and girls – work in agriculture. > A total of 45 million girls and 63 million boys are in child labour in agriculture, but girls shoulder a disproportionate responsibility for household chores. > Most girls and boys trapped in child labour (70 percent) are “invisible” unpaid family workers. > The number of child workers in agriculture increased by 10 million between 2012 and 2016, driven in part by conflicts and climate-induced disasters. The incidence of child labour in countries affected by armed conflict is 77 percent higher than the global average. > In the next decade, up to 175 million children are likely to be affected every year by natural disasters brought about by climate change (UNICEF, 2010).i > Agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors, together with mining and construction. Globally, 73 million children are involved in hazardous work.

The Declaration places specific responsibilities on States concerning the right to work, mostly consisting of conventional obligations. To fulfill this right, States are required to create a socio-economic environment that facilitates the availability of quality job prospects. Moreover, they must guarantee that people receive compensation for their labor that enables them to maintain a satisfactory standard of living (paragraph 3). Furthermore, States are tasked with overseeing the adherence to labor regulations (paragraph 5).

It is important to note that States are expected to take proactive steps within their economies to establish these systems, rather than relying solely on the goodwill of economic entities.

In summary, Art. 13 recognizes the importance of work as a means of empowerment, poverty reduction and human dignity for peasants and rural workers. It promotes fair labor practices, gender equality and sustainable development in rural areas.

#### **Art. 14: Right to safety and health at work**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas, irrespective of whether they are temporary, seasonal or migrant workers, have the rights to work in safe and healthy working conditions, to participate in the application and review of safety and health measures, to select safety and*

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/ca9502en/ca9502en.pdf>

*health representatives and representatives in safety and health committees, to the implementation of measures to prevent, reduce and control hazards and risks, to have access to adequate and appropriate protective clothing and equipment and to adequate information and training on occupational safety, to work free from violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, to report unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, and to remove themselves from danger resulting from their work activity when they reasonably believe that there is an imminent and serious risk to their safety or health, without being subject to any work-related retaliation for exercising such rights.*

*2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right not to use or to be exposed to hazardous substances or toxic chemicals, including agrochemicals or agricultural or industrial pollutants.*

*3. States shall take appropriate measures to ensure favorable safe and healthy working conditions for peasants and other people working in rural areas, and shall in particular designate appropriate competent authorities responsible, and establish mechanisms for intersectoral coordination for the implementation of policies and enforcement of national laws and regulations on occupational safety and health in agriculture, the agro-industry and fisheries, provide for corrective measures and appropriate penalties, and establish and support adequate and appropriate systems of inspection for rural workplaces.*

*4. States shall take all measures necessary to ensure:*

*(a) The prevention of risks to health and safety derived from technologies, chemicals and agricultural practices, including through their prohibition and restriction;*

*(b) An appropriate national system or any other system approved by the competent authority establishing specific criteria for the importation, classification, packaging, distribution, labelling and use of chemicals used in agriculture, and for their prohibition or restriction;*

*(c) That those who produce, import, provide, sell, transfer, store or dispose of chemicals used in agriculture comply with national or other recognized safety and health standards, and provide adequate and appropriate information to users in the appropriate official language or languages of the country and, on request, to the competent authority;*

*(d) That there is a suitable system for the safe collection, recycling and disposal of chemical waste, obsolete chemicals and empty containers of chemicals so as to avoid their use for other purposes and to eliminate or minimize the risks to safety and health and to the environment;*

*(e) The development and implementation of educational and public awareness programs on the health and environmental effects of chemicals commonly used in rural areas, and on alternatives to them.*

The right to work is complemented in *UNDROP* by article 14, on the right to a safe, healthy working environment. In paragraph 1, this comprehensive article grants peasants and rural workers the right: safe and healthy working conditions; measures for hazard and risk prevention,

reduction and control; participation in formulating and implementing measures for this right; access to protective equipment; access to information regarding their working conditions; representation in decisions regarding their health and safety. Article 14 also gives them the right to be free from all forms of violence in their workplace, including sexual violence. Furthermore, it affirms the right of peasants to report hazards and remove themselves from danger without facing retaliation.

In line with this article, States are obligated to appoint supervisory authorities and establish a labor inspectorate responsible for monitoring working conditions in agriculture and ensuring worker health and safety (paragraph 3).

Many migrants and seasonal workers work in conditions with extreme safety hazards, as employers often fail to implement or enforce safety measures. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is not always provided by employers and even when it is, it may be up to the worker to purchase the equipment. Moreover, workers themselves sometimes elect not to wear PPE due to poor fit or the belief that the equipment interferes with the work. If payment is tied to targets (as in the case of piece rates), many workers may decide to put their own health at risk to meet higher targets and reach a decent pay. Safety trainings may also be missed or misunderstood by workers due to the migratory nature of their work (which means they are not always present) or language and cultural barriers. Migrant workers also experience physical hazards, such as high rates of musculoskeletal injury resulting from handling large farm animals, crush injuries, repetitive motion and falls as well as cuts from sharp tools. Moreover, fatalities from working with heavy equipment, tractors, or other machines are common.

The final paragraph of Article 14 focuses on the actions that States are required to take concerning the use of chemicals in agriculture. These actions encompass regulating and overseeing the use of chemicals, as well as offering information about available and potential alternatives.

#### **Art. 15: Right to food and food sovereignty**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to adequate food and the fundamental right to be free from hunger. This includes the right to produce food and the right to adequate nutrition, which guarantee the possibility of enjoying the highest degree of physical, emotional and intellectual development.*
- 2. States shall ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas enjoy physical and economic access at all times to sufficient and adequate food that is produced and consumed sustainably and equitably, respecting their cultures, preserving access to food for future generations, and that ensures a physically and mentally fulfilling and dignified life for them, individually and/or collectively, responding to their needs.*
- 3. States shall take appropriate measures to combat malnutrition in rural children, including within the framework of primary health care through, inter alia, the application of readily*

*available technology and the provision of adequate nutritious food and by ensuring that women have adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation. States shall also ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to nutritional education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge on child nutrition and the advantages of breastfeeding.*

*4. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to determine their own food and agriculture systems, recognized by many States and regions as the right to food sovereignty. This includes the right to participate in decision-making processes on food and agriculture policy and the right to healthy and adequate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods that respect their cultures.*

*5. States shall formulate, in partnership with peasants and other people working in rural areas, public policies at the local, national, regional and international levels to advance and protect the right to adequate food, food security and food sovereignty and sustainable and equitable food systems that promote and protect the rights contained in the present Declaration. States shall establish mechanisms to ensure the coherence of their agricultural, economic, social, cultural and development policies with the realization of the rights contained in the present Declaration.*

The right to food is already established in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, specifically in Article 11, which addresses the right to an adequate standard of living. The right to an adequate standard of living includes the right to food and to freedom from hunger. The latter right, freedom from hunger, is essential as it directly relates to the right to life and cannot be denied to any individual.

Article 15 of *UNDROP* underscores the significance of the right to food, especially for people living and working in rural areas. Their vital role in ensuring food security and their heightened susceptibility to food-related crises are both acknowledged. The article emphasizes the importance of creating sustainable and equitable food systems that liberate peasants from the grip of hunger.

The right to food encompasses both individual and collective dimensions, guaranteeing that every human being has the right to feed him or herself in dignity. It involves not only the right to produce one's own food but also encompasses the right to land, to seeds, to water and to other natural resources required for food production. Recognizing that not everyone possesses the means, skills, or inclination to grow their own food, the right to food extends to the ability to acquire food through purchasing. In such cases, people must have the financial resources and access to reasonably priced food products to fulfill their right to an adequate diet.

Paragraph 1 also establishes the right to produce food. This expansion of the right to food is pivotal in preventing it from being reduced to mere financial assistance. Its core purpose is not solely to provide peasants with the means to purchase food or to rely on food aid. Instead, its



primary objective is to empower them to engage in food production to nourish themselves and their communities.

The inclusion of the right to produce food as an integral component of the right to food has been advocated for by successive United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the right to food. The fact that this right is now formally embedded in *UNDROP* marks a significant legal advancement. This recognition is further bolstered by the stipulation in paragraph 2, requiring States to acknowledge the right of access to food, not only from an economic perspective but also in terms of physical accessibility. The goal is not to make every farm fully self-sufficient, recognizing that this may not always be feasible. Rather, the emphasis is on promoting local food production within communities.

Paragraph 2, states that access to food should encompass both physical and economic dimensions. It mandates that states go beyond mere food distribution and take proactive measures to ensure that peasants have the necessary conditions in place to access food, either physically or economically. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of sustainable access to food, not only for today's generation of peasants but also for those in the future. This necessitates the protection of arable land, the environment and biodiversity, among other considerations.

The right to food carries particular significance for children. Setting aside the moral obligation to prevent child hunger, it's crucial because undernutrition or malnutrition during childhood can lead to severe health issues in adulthood.

Paragraph 3 of the article places a specific emphasis on the responsibility of States to prioritize the provision of adequate nutrition for rural children, as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women. Additionally, it underscores the importance of disseminating information regarding child nutrition. However, the paragraph highlights that information alone is insufficient; individuals must also have the means to put their knowledge into practice.

Women should be protected and covered with maternity leave and adequate health insurance in order to be able to have a safe and protected pregnancy and maternity.

While giving due attention to children and pregnant or breastfeeding women is essential, States must not neglect their broader obligations. In reality, hunger disproportionately affects girls and women across all age groups. Hence, it is imperative to safeguard the well-being of girls and women throughout their entire lives, not solely during maternity.

The right to food and the right to food sovereignty are inherently linked. Evolving and maturing over time, food sovereignty has become a central idea for peasant organizations, encapsulating their political vision for the future of global peasant communities. Importantly, food sovereignty does not advocate for isolationist stances where each country solely produces for itself while disregarding the food needs of less fortunate nations. Nor does it imply the rejection of international trade; rather, it seeks to address and provide solutions to the challenges posed by global trade dynamics.

In practice, the principles of food sovereignty are built upon six foundational pillars:

- Priority on food for all people: the right to food for all must be the central focus of agricultural and food policies.
- Recognition of food producers: the rights of peasants and other food producers must be protected and their essential roles in society must be acknowledged and valued.
- Creation and promotion of local production systems: peasants primarily produce food for their local communities, shifting away from heavy reliance on international trade standards to meet nutritional needs.
- Empowering local control: food producers manage the territories and resources vital to their livelihoods, enabling greater local autonomy
- Preservation of knowledge and know-how: the knowledge and expertise held by food producers are crucial for sustainable production and must be passed on to future generations.
- Working with Nature: rejecting technologies that harm the environment and adopting practices that promote respect and cooperation with nature are fundamental principles of food sovereignty.

Peasants' principal right is the right to decide what they eat and produce; how to produce it and how much to produce. Food sovereignty, as previously described, is not an isolated, individualistic entitlement where each person can independently make decisions without consideration for others. Instead, it encompasses the right of peasants to shape their food and agricultural systems, which inherently includes the freedom to abstain from adopting practices or methodologies that do not align with the fundamental essence of peasant agriculture. This right is not confined to individual actions; it primarily constitutes a collective entitlement. Peasants possess the collective prerogative, working collaboratively, to conceptualize, structure and enact the food and agricultural systems that resonate with their preferences and aspirations.

Food sovereignty encompasses all levels of decision-making regarding agriculture and food (agrarian reform, natural resource management, fair trade arrangements with no dumping in third countries, etc.). This implies that these matters should once again assume a central position within the sphere of democratic deliberation, where the perspectives of peasants are given a distinctive significance.

The goal of food sovereignty is to ensure adequate nutrition for all. To that end the involvement of peasants is a *sine qua non*. In pursuit of this objective, the active participation of peasants is an absolute necessity. Food sovereignty explicitly demands that nutrition be both substantial and healthy, aligning with the definition of the right to food, which stipulates that nutrition should enable people to attain the highest level of personal development. Furthermore, this nutrition must be generated using ecologically responsible and sustainable practices that honor the cultural heritage of the communities involved, as emphasized in paragraph 4.

The concentration of food systems under a limited number of entities has aggravated power imbalances, undermining the self-sufficiency and independence of small-scale farmers. Additionally, the subsidization of industrial agriculture, predominantly championed by Northern nations, has become a trap for many developing countries, diminishing their ability to compete and heightening susceptibility to the fluctuations in international commodity prices.<sup>24</sup> As articulated by the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the surge in agricultural product prices in 2008 led to an increase of food aid in many countries, further reducing local farmers' possibilities to make a decent living out of their work. National or regional policies that seek to address these issues in isolation seem to be inadequate. Consequently, there is a call for collaborative endeavors spanning various levels, advocating for the promotion of "public policies at the local, national, regional and international levels" to confront these complex issues (paragraph 4).

States' primary obligation with regard to the right to food is to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate food. That's where this right is linked to the right to social security as well as to the right to a decent income. Access must first and foremost protect against hunger and then ensure the highest possible level of development for every person. To achieve this, food must be adequate, healthy and culturally appropriate.

In order to protect both the right to food sovereignty and the right to adequate food, States must implement new public policies in collaboration with peasants and other rural workers. Such a collaboration should go beyond mere consultation, where the viewpoints of those impacted are merely acknowledged but easily disregarded. On the contrary, the partners must have genuine power to put forward proposals and take decisions.

In numerous countries, the realization of the right to food sovereignty and the right to adequate food will necessitate the development of novel policies and legislation. In summary, the Right to Food is a fundamental human right that not only ensures access to food but also promotes human dignity, health, well-being and social justice. It plays a crucial role in addressing poverty, inequality and global food security while fostering sustainable and responsible agricultural practices. States should strive to ensure that their national laws recognize and implement to the fullest the provisions of *UNDROP*.

#### **Art. 16: Right to a decent income and livelihood and the means of production**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, and to facilitated access to the means of production necessary to achieve them, including production tools, technical assistance, credit, insurance and other financial services. They also have the right to engage freely, individually and/or collectively, in association with others or as a community, in traditional ways of farming,*

<sup>24</sup> Olivier De Schutter, "The political economy of food systems reform". *European Review of Agricultural Economics*, Volume 44, Issue 4 (September 2017), pp. 1-27.

*fishing, livestock rearing and forestry and to develop community-based commercialization systems.*

*2. States shall take appropriate measures to favor the access of peasants and other people working in rural areas to the means of transportation, and processing, drying and storage facilities necessary for selling their products on local, national and regional markets at prices that guarantee them a decent income and livelihood.*

*3. States shall take appropriate measures to strengthen and support local, national and regional markets in ways that facilitate, and ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas have, full and equitable access and participation in these markets to sell their products at prices that allow them and their families to attain an adequate standard of living.*

*4. States shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that their rural development, agricultural, environmental, trade and investment policies and programs contribute effectively to protecting and strengthening local livelihood options and to the transition to sustainable modes of agricultural production. States shall stimulate sustainable production, including agroecological and organic production, whenever possible, and facilitate direct farmer-to-consumer sales.*

*5. States shall take appropriate measures to strengthen the resilience of peasants and other people working in rural areas against natural disasters and other severe disruptions, such as market failures.*

*6. States shall take appropriate measures to ensure fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value, without distinction of any kind.*

This article is intrinsically linked to the previous article of *UNDROP* (article 15). It is important to shed a light on each individual right enshrined in this article. This article refers to the right to an adequate standard of living and facilitated access to means of production. The reasoning behind this right lies in the difficulties that many peasants around the world face to enjoy a dignified life due to the scarcity of suitable production tools, financial resources, modes of transportation, storage facilities and the ability to reach markets. While the means of production are theoretically accessible to everyone within a free-market framework, the stark reality is that they may remain financially out of reach or even unavailable in the most economically disadvantaged communities. Consequently, this article assumes pivotal significance by emphasizing the necessity for governments to implement appropriate measures aimed at promoting an acceptable standard of living in rural regions.

The rights to an adequate standard of living and to means of production are grounded in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Within this covenant, Article 7 explicitly acknowledges the rights of everyone to favorable working conditions that guarantee a respectable livelihood for themselves and their families. The right to an adequate standard of living is furthermore is guaranteed above all in the article 11 of ISECSR. By shedding the light on both rights and both articles, it reinforces the complexity of this article and its

linkages with other articles in the Declaration. According to various specialized UN agencies<sup>25</sup>, storage facilities, transportation systems and access to market opportunities can have a substantial impact on improving productivity and income for small- scale farmers.

UNDROP also calls States to implement suitable measures aiming that their policies related to rural development, agriculture, environment and trade and investment, can contribute to bolstering local livelihoods and the transition into sustainable modes of agriculture. In essence, UNDROP encourages a shift away from the conventional approach that prioritizes trade and investment goals over the human development aspirations of rural areas. Although UNDROP doesn't prescribe a specific rural development model, it places a strong emphasis on sustainable and agroecological modes of production that align with the promotion of local livelihoods, environmental well-being and public health objectives.

This article gives attention to the rise of natural disasters, the effects of climate change, pandemics (such as Covid-19, Ebola), in which peasants and rural people are particularly vulnerable. Against that threat, the Declaration calls upon States to strengthen resilience against natural disasters in rural areas. In addition, the Declaration also foresees the need for States to take action in support of peasants against market failures.

#### **Art. 17: Right to land and other natural resources**

- 1. Peasants and other people living in rural areas have the right to land, individually and/or collectively, in accordance with article 28 of the present Declaration, including the right to have access to, sustainably use and manage land and the water bodies, coastal seas, fisheries, pastures and forests therein, to achieve an adequate standard of living, to have a place to live in security, peace and dignity and to develop their cultures.*
- 2. States shall take appropriate measures to remove and prohibit all forms of discrimination relating to the right to land, including those resulting from change of marital status, lack of legal capacity or lack of access to economic resources.*
- 3. States shall take appropriate measures to provide legal recognition for land tenure rights, including customary land tenure rights not currently protected by law, recognizing the existence of different models and systems. States shall protect legitimate tenure, and ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas are not arbitrarily or unlawfully evicted and that their rights are not otherwise extinguished or infringed. States shall recognize and protect the natural commons and their related systems of collective use and management.*
- 4. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to be protected against arbitrary and unlawful displacement from their land or place of habitual residence, or from other natural resources used in their activities and necessary for the enjoyment of adequate living conditions. States shall incorporate protections against displacement into domestic*

---

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Council, Doc. A/HRC/WG.15/4/3, 2017, p. 44, para 2016-2020.

*legislation that are consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law. States shall prohibit arbitrary and unlawful forced eviction, the destruction of agricultural areas and the confiscation or expropriation of land and other natural resources, including as a punitive measure or as a means or method of war.*

*5. Peasants and other people working in rural areas who have been arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived of their lands have the right, individually and/or collectively, in association with others or as a community, to return to their land of which they were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived, including in cases of natural disasters and/or armed conflict and to have restored their access to the natural resources used in their activities and necessary for the enjoyment of adequate living conditions, whenever possible, or to receive just, fair and lawful compensation when their return is not possible.*

*6. Where appropriate, States shall take appropriate measures to carry out agrarian reforms in order to facilitate broad and equitable access to land and other natural resources necessary to ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas enjoy adequate living conditions, and to limit excessive concentration and control of land, taking into account its social function. Landless peasants, young people, small-scale fishers and other rural workers should be given priority in the allocation of public lands, fisheries and forests.*

*7. States shall take measures aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of land and other natural resources used in their production, including, among others, through agroecology, and ensure the conditions for the regeneration of biological and other natural capacities and cycles.*

The Right to Land stands as a cornerstone of *UNDROP*, eagerly anticipated and passionately debated during the United Nations negotiations. For peasants, land is not just a basic tool; it is their very life's foundation, the place where their existence unfolds. Article 17, comprised of seven paragraphs, establishes a comprehensive and robust right that aligns with the aspirations of peasants and rural workers. It is vital to understand the Right to Land in conjunction with other articles, such as Article 2, which outlines the general obligations of States, Article 5, addressing the exploitation of natural resources, Article 21, guaranteeing the right to water and Article 24, securing the right to housing. These interconnected articles further fortify the Right to Land within the Declaration.

Access to land and other natural resources stands as an essential requirement for peasants, shaping the foundation of their livelihoods and their very existence. It is a fundamental prerequisite for the exercise of various human rights. As articulated in paragraph 1 of Article 17, access to land and natural resources should empower peasants to attain a decent standard of living, secure a place of residence characterized by security, peace and dignity and nurture their cultural identities. In essence, the right to access land not only safeguards the fundamental rights to life and dignity but also supports the realization of other critical rights such as those related to food, shelter and cultural expression. *UNDROP* solidly establishes land and natural resources as the cornerstone upon which the edifice of peasant rights is built. To this end, this article guarantees not only access to these resources but also their safe and responsible use.

Article 17 is unequivocal: "Peasants and other people living in rural areas possess the entitlement to land, whether individually or collectively..." This entitlement encompasses access to land and additional natural resources. This right is elaborated in subsequent paragraphs. Access may manifest either individually or collectively, adopting diverse legal or non-legal forms, provided it facilitates an adequate standard of living conducive to the realization of other fundamental human rights for peasants. The right to land can be exercised and upheld either individually or in collaboration with others. The collective right to land among peasants isn't merely an aggregation of individual rights held by members of the collective; it signifies a shared ownership of land by a group of individuals. The land is collectively owned, managed and transferred within the framework of this collective right.

The individual right to land is applicable to a person or a family, whereas collective access might extend to a community with shared grazing lands and water sources. It is also a right that may be claimed from the State by all peasants individually, whether they own land or not.

Paragraph 1 also affirms the peasants' right to use and manage land and other natural resources in a sustainable manner. This implies that they can decide, for example, the purpose and methods of utilizing these resources. The issue here is peasants' sustainable use of land and other natural resources. The emphasis here is on the sustainable utilization of land and natural resources by peasants, which differs from the approaches employed in industrial agriculture. Industrial agriculture relies heavily on mechanization and chemical inputs, prioritizing short-term profits for agribusiness and often depleting natural resources. The list in article 17, paragraph 1, is not exhaustive; there could be other resources covered by this right. To identify these, one should consider whether peasants and other rural workers require a specific resource to carry out their work. If so, they have a legitimate claim to that resource.

This paragraph signifies that States are required to implement measures for the conservation of land, not solely as a productive asset but also as an integral component of an ecosystem. It further implies the promotion of agroecological practices. Beyond the conservation of land and natural resources, this obligation ensures that the right to land primarily benefits peasants who can manage these resources sustainably over the long term, as opposed to companies engaging in intensive agriculture that may harm ecosystems. Additionally, States must refrain from compelling nomadic communities to settle down.

The protection of legitimate tenure rights is of primary importance as it lays the foundation of secure and sustainable land tenure systems worldwide. These rights provide people and communities with a sense of security and ownership over their land and other natural resources, encouraging responsible land stewardship and long-term investment in agriculture and rural development. In this context, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT), serve as a valuable reference point. The VGGT offer comprehensive guidance for governments, peasants, civil society and stakeholders on how to establish and uphold secure land tenure rights, ensuring that land is used equitably and in the best interest of communities, particularly benefiting vulnerable groups such as peasants and

indigenous peoples. Ultimately, the protection of legitimate tenure rights is essential for promoting social justice, reducing land-related conflicts and advancing SDGs.

The inclusion of a reference to agrarian reform within the context of the right to land in *UNDROP* was an uncompromising demand from peasant organizations. Consequently, its prominent presence in the declaration signifies a triumph. Article 17, paragraph 6, highlights agrarian reform as a State obligation, which, by extension, can be regarded as a right of peasants.

Based on this article, peasants can require the State to take steps to have land redistributed so that their right to land is respected, protected and fulfilled. In essence, this means that States are not only responsible for ensuring that peasants are not barred from accessing land but also obligated to actively facilitate their access to it. States should facilitate access to land in particular to those groups that currently have difficult access (peasants, youth, rural women etc.), for example through the land markets or to use state land (e.g. in some countries in Central Asia where the state is the owner of the land and decides to whom to allocate the use rights to state land).

The obligation imposed on States serves two primary purposes: to facilitate equitable access to land and to deter the concentration of land ownership among a select minority or agribusinesses. This underscores the recognition of the social function of land.

The concept of the social function of land emphasizes that land is not merely a commodity but serves the greater benefit for society as a whole. Decisions regarding land use must be subject to democratic discourse and States are accountable for their role in land use. They cannot evade their responsibilities by invoking private property rights or market forces. By affirming the social function of land, the Declaration establishes the grounds for demanding the distribution of land in a manner that consistently meets societal needs, prioritizing them above all else.

The inclusion in one and the same paragraph of the obligation to implement land reforms and the recognition of the social function of land should compel States to initiate mandatory land reforms. This goes beyond mere encouragement and involves requiring the redistribution of land.

To ensure the right to land is genuinely effective, it cannot be limited to just access. Peasants regard the loss of land as a direct infringement of this right. Paragraph 3 establishes the obligation of States to acknowledge tenure rights. For example, in Central Asian countries, the allocation of land rights to use state land often is not secure. Insecure tenure rights have several negative impacts of which one is the lack of necessary investments in development of farms.

This paragraph encompasses the various forms of land tenure that States must acknowledge, including customary land tenure rights that may not currently have legal protection. It emphasizes that tenure rights are not necessarily ownership rights but encompass the right to use the land. States are obliged to recognize all legitimate forms of tenure, even if they differ from their own established systems. The aim is to ensure comprehensive protection of peasants' land rights.



By mentioning "legitimate rights," this paragraph acknowledges that rights not yet officially recognized by any authority are still valid and deserving of protection.

The concept of legal certainty means that the State must acknowledge peasants' land use and guarantee its continuity. Once the State recognizes the right to use the land, individuals or communities can assert this right in case of disputes, seeking resolution through a court or other relevant authority. Consequently, peasants can demand that their State establish a mechanism for recognizing various land rights. States are prohibited from converting these rights into private property rights, particularly to benefit private actors or corporations, including transnational agribusiness corporations. Instead, they must safeguard these rights, even when challenged by such companies or in cases of peasant evictions.

States should also recognize collective systems of land use and land management. Furthermore, under this paragraph, they must "recognize and safeguard natural commons and their associated systems of collective utilization and management."

Paragraph 2 stipulates that States must prevent discrimination of any kind from impeding access to land. This provision ensures that all persons have an equal right to access land.

This paragraph underscores various forms of discrimination that often hinder land access, including discrimination resulting from changes in marital status, limited legal capacity, or inadequate access to economic resources. However, it's important to note that these three types of discrimination are not the only ones that should be eliminated. Peasants should also be shielded from other forms of discrimination, such as those rooted in ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender and so forth.

Paragraph 4 of this article references international human rights and humanitarian laws, as well as existing legislation in this domain, including the Geneva Conventions and, notably, article 17 of Protocol II<sup>26</sup>. It extends the right not to be arbitrarily or unlawfully evicted, a right already established in international law within the context of the right to housing, to peasants and their access to land. Similar to how eviction contravenes the right to housing, expelling peasants infringes upon their right to land. This safeguard against eviction represents a fundamental aspect of the right to land. Moreover, paragraph 4 also affords protection from forced displacement. Forced displacement differs from eviction in that it tends to be collective, often impacting an entire community or group, whereas eviction typically affects individuals or families.

Paragraph 5 addresses a very specific situation, namely that of peasants who have been deprived of their land by force. It establishes the entitlement of peasants to reclaim their land, provided

---

<sup>26</sup> Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), adopted on 8 June 1977 by the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law applicable in Armed Conflicts. Entry into force, 7 December 1978. Article 17. Prohibition of forced movement: "1. The displacement of the civilian population shall not be ordered for reasons related to the conflict unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand. [...] 2. Civilians shall not be compelled to leave their own territory for reasons connected with the conflict."

that their eviction or displacement from that land was executed unlawfully or arbitrarily. Illegality or arbitrariness arises when legal procedures are not followed or when an authoritative decision lacks a legal foundation.

The right to return extends to land that peasants were deprived of, regardless of the circumstances, whether it resulted from warfare, land appropriation, or natural disasters, as long as it occurred in an illegal or arbitrary manner. This right also applies to peasants who were compelled to leave their land "voluntarily," such as populations displaced due to armed conflicts. By ensuring the right to return to the same land, this provision indirectly acknowledges the strong connection between peasants and a specific territory.

Further compelling reasons why the Right to Land is of paramount importance for peasants and rural communities are:

- To support the peasants livelihoods and food security. Land is the primary source of livelihood and food production for many peasants. Secure access to land is critical for ensuring food security, reducing poverty and achieving sustainable rural development.
- Cultural and social identity. Land often holds deep cultural and social significance for peasants and rural communities. It is tied to their heritage, traditions and ways of life. The right to land is not just about economic well-being but also preserving cultural identity and community cohesion.
- Economic empowerment and rural development. Land ownership or secure land rights empower peasants to make long-term investments in their farms and in their communities, improve agricultural productivity, which can lead to increased income and economic stability, improved infrastructure, better access to education and healthcare and overall improvements in the quality of life in rural areas.
- Gender equality. Ensuring women's rights to land is a crucial aspect of the Right to Land. In many rural societies, women are responsible for food production and play a central role in agriculture. Secure land rights for women can help promote gender equality, reduce gender-based violence and improve overall family well-being.
- Sustainable agriculture. Peasants often have a deep connection to the land and rely on sustainable agricultural practices. When they have secure land rights, they are more likely to manage their land in environmentally friendly ways, promoting conservation and biodiversity.
- Protection from land grabbing. In many parts of the world, there is a threat of land grabbing, where large corporations or powerful interests take control of land, displacing local communities. The Right to Land helps protect peasants from such practices and ensures that their interests are safeguarded.
- Social stability. Landlessness or insecure land tenure can lead to social unrest and conflicts in rural areas. Recognizing and protecting the Right to Land can contribute to social stability by reducing disputes over land and promoting peaceful coexistence.

In summary, the Right to Land is pivotal for peasants and rural communities as it not only secures their livelihoods and food security but also safeguards their cultural identity, empowers them economically, promotes gender equality, supports sustainable agriculture and contributes to social stability and rural development. It is a fundamental right for peasants, playing a critical role in their well-being and the sustainable development of rural areas.

#### **Art. 18: Right to a safe, clean and healthy environment**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands, and of the resources that they use and manage.*
- 2. States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas enjoy, without discrimination, a safe, clean and healthy environment.*
- 3. States shall comply with their respective international obligations to combat climate change. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to contribute to the design and implementation of national and local climate change adaptation and mitigation policies, including through the use of practices and traditional knowledge.*
- 4. States shall take effective measures to ensure that no hazardous material, substance or waste is stored or disposed of on the land of peasants and other people working in rural areas, and shall cooperate to address the threats to the enjoyment of their rights that result from transboundary environmental harm.*
- 5. States shall protect peasants and other people working in rural areas against abuses by non-State actors, including by enforcing environmental laws that contribute, directly or indirectly, to the protection of the rights of peasants or other people working in rural areas.*

The right to a healthy environment, unlike most of the other rights outlined in *UNDROP*, is not explicitly recognized in international human rights conventions. However, it has been widely recognized as a well-established human right for several decades. Although environmental concerns were not a major focus for governments in the first half of the 20th century, the significance of this right has grown over time and is now recognized as an independent and fundamental human right.

Environmental issues have gained prominence in recent decades and there is a broad consensus that everyone has a right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. This consensus led to the appointment of a Special Rapporteur by the UN Human Rights Council in 2012, specifically tasked with examining human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment”<sup>27</sup>.

---

<sup>27</sup> Human Rights Council resolution 19/10, adopted by consensus on 22 March 2012.

UNDROP establishes the right to a healthy environment as an inherent and standalone human right for peasants. This recognition represents a significant advancement in international law, as it opens the door to extending this right to other populations and all nations.

Recognizing the right to a healthy environment is crucial, especially for peasants who are highly reliant on both local and global ecosystems. A clear example of this interdependence is the alarming decline in pollinating insects, which significantly impacts crop production worldwide. What occurs on farms is intricately connected to the broader natural and environmental context. While industrial activities can influence the environment, the environment, in turn, has a substantial impact on peasants and their way of life.

Peasants and rural workers share a symbiotic relationship with their environment, which serves as both their workplace and their home. Preserving this environment is of utmost importance, as it directly impacts their livelihoods. Additionally, this relationship extends to animals, as peasants work within a broader ecosystem that includes various living beings.

Peasants have the right to demand the protection and conservation of their environment. Paragraph 1 of the Declaration emphasizes that this encompasses preserving the land's productive capacity and natural resources. Conservation implies allowing the natural cycles of the environment to continue undisturbed, while protection involves preventing external interventions that could harm its continued existence. The responsibility for conservation and protection falls not only on the State but also on peasants and rural workers, as they are the primary stakeholders. They should be actively engaged in the decision-making processes and actions that affect their lives, including those related to environmental conservation and protection.

A State's environmental policy is not a mere bureaucratic procedure. Instead, it can have real-life consequences, potentially leading to the displacement of peasants and rural workers from the natural spaces they rely on for their livelihoods or causing harm to the environment itself. Environmental conservation and protection policies must always be in line with human rights principles in general and the rights of peasants and rural workers in particular.

In all instances, a fundamental aspect of States' environmental policies should revolve around the preservation of the land's productive capacity and the conservation of natural resources. This conservation effort should take a long-term perspective, ensuring that agricultural and fishing practices that exert excessive pressure on the environment, such as monoculture and the intensive use of chemicals, are halted. The land and natural resources upon which peasants and other rural workers depend are integral parts of the environment to which they hold a rightful claim.

Paragraph 3 introduces climate change into the framework of the right to a healthy environment by granting peasants and rural workers the right to actively participate in the development and implementation of national and local climate change adaptation and mitigation policies. This inclusion underscores the interconnectedness of environmental issues and their impact on the livelihoods and well-being of these communities.

The inclusion of climate change in the context of the right to a healthy environment is of utmost importance. Climate change poses a substantial and widely recognized threat, already inflicting significant and in some cases, irreversible damage. Its adverse effects on the environment are particularly impactful for peasants, who rely heavily on ecological and climatic balance for their livelihoods. Consequently, their active involvement in decisions that exert such a profound influence on their work and lives is imperative.

Furthermore, this paragraph acknowledges that peasants may contribute “through the use of practices and traditional knowledge”. These practices are intricately tailored to specific ecosystems and have evolved and adapted over time, imparting resilience to environmental changes. This recognition underscores the idea that not all solutions hinge on technology; environmentally friendly practices, such as those practiced by peasants, can also yield effective responses to climate-related challenges.

#### **Art. 19: Right to seeds**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to seeds, in accordance with article 28 of the present Declaration, including:*

*(a) The right to the protection of traditional knowledge relevant to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;*

*(b) The right to equitably participate in sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;*

*(c) The right to participate in the making of decisions on matters relating to the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;*

*(d) The right to save, use, exchange and sell their farm-saved seed or propagating material.*

*2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their own seeds and traditional knowledge.*

*3. States shall take measures to respect, protect and fulfill the right to seeds of peasants and other people working in rural areas.*

*4. States shall ensure that seeds of sufficient quality and quantity are available to peasants at the most suitable time for planting, and at an affordable price.*

*5. States shall recognize the rights of peasants to rely either on their own seeds or on other locally available seeds of their choice, and to decide on the crops and species that they wish to grow.*

*6. States shall take appropriate measures to support peasant seed systems, and promote the use of peasant seeds and agrobiodiversity.*

*7. States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that agricultural research and development integrates the needs of peasants and other people working in rural areas, and to ensure their active participation in the definition of priorities and the undertaking of research and development, taking into account their experience, and increase investment in research and the development of orphan crops and seeds that respond to the needs of peasants and other people working in rural areas.*

*8. States shall ensure that seed policies, plant variety protection and other intellectual property laws, certification schemes and seed marketing laws respect and take into account the rights, needs and realities of peasants and other people working in rural areas.*

The Right to Seeds holds a central and potentially transformative role within the *UNDROP*. When appropriately enforced, it stands as one of the most profound rights in the declaration.

Peasants' work encompasses more than just the act of sowing and harvesting; it includes the intricate practice of seed selection. Peasants, drawing from their extensive knowledge and centuries of experience, engage in the critical task of seed selection. The principles underpinning the concept of peasant seeds, characterized by their variability, adaptability and capacity for evolution, are rooted in the use of seeds sourced from local harvests within peasants' own fields.

The critical task of selecting and sharing seeds faces significant obstacles due to the virtual monopoly held by transnational corporations (TNCs) over seeds.<sup>28</sup> This monopoly restricts peasants from cultivating their preferred seed varieties. The Right to Seeds serves as a powerful tool to counter these challenges and protect the peasants' prerogative to choose which seeds they want to cultivate while rejecting those they perceive as detrimental economically, ecologically, or culturally.

Peasants also have the liberty to choose their agricultural practices, implying the right to reject industrial methods and the freedom to select their preferred technologies. This selection of technology must adhere to the principles of environmental preservation and biodiversity conservation, taking into account the genuine circumstances of peasants. Article 19 of the *UNDROP* reinstates the rightful position of peasants in the realm of seed work. It draws from various existing international legal provisions but is framed more expansively to align with the specific requirements and reality of peasants.

The privatization of seeds, driven by the interests of large industrial and commercial entities, has had severe consequences for peasants. It has not only stripped them of a fundamental aspect of their livelihood but has also led to a significant reduction in the diversity of crop varieties. This, in turn, has negatively impacted ecosystems and the diversity of our diets.

This right serves a dual purpose: to empower peasants by granting them control over their seeds and to underscore their involvement in decisions concerning this matter. In essence, it enables

---

<sup>28</sup> The report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, A/HRC/46/33, dated 24 December 2020, submitted to the 46th session of the Human Rights Council, paras. 78 and 79.

peasants to gain greater independence from TNCs, a crucial step toward dignified living and the provision of healthy and nutritious food for humanity.

Paragraphs 1.d, 2 and 5 comprehensively address all aspects of seed work and the control of seeds, effectively reinstating seeds as the focal point of peasants' work.

In paragraph 1.d, peasants are granted the right to save, use, exchange and sell their farm-saved seeds or propagating material. These provisions establish these activities as recognized rights for peasants, encompassing all facets of their seed-related work, whether it be for personal use or the benefit of their community. These rights restore practices that were once commonplace but were subsequently co-opted and prohibited for the profit of private seed producers. Peasants are now reempowered to reclaim these practices, liberating themselves from the prevailing philosophy of private ownership that had stifled, if not eradicated, the traditional seed exchange and sales networks that had thrived within farming communities. This restoration of rights paves the way for the reestablishment and legitimacy of these vital seed circulation systems.

The right to choose and have control over seeds, as outlined in paragraphs 2 and 5, is a fundamental aspect of restoring power to peasants over seeds. Peasants should not only have the liberty to use seeds but should also possess the right to “use their own seeds or other local seeds of their choice and decide which crops and species they want to cultivate.” The requirement to restrict themselves to a limited selection of varieties owned by major private entities is nonsensical from the perspective of peasants. In reality, the transition to industrial agriculture led to the abandonment or takeover of peasant practices.

To move beyond the current system and return seeds to the control of peasants, it is imperative that article 19, paragraph 2, establishes the right to “maintain, control, protect and develop their own seeds and traditional knowledge.” This right empowers peasants to cultivate or revive their traditional seeds and even develop new ones, entirely independently. This recognized right for peasants, which includes the right to select their seeds, marks a significant advancement and poses a challenge not only to the dominance of agricultural transnational corporations over peasants but also to the catalog system and certification processes<sup>29</sup>.

Protection of traditional knowledge, as indicated in paragraph 1.a, is another crucial dimension of the Declaration. It affirms peasants' entitlement to the “protection of traditional knowledge relevant to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture”.

Large seed-producing conglomerates are increasingly interested not just in seeds themselves but in the genetic codes of these seeds. However, they are unable to discern the specific attributes of a particular plant without access to peasants' knowledge. The safeguarding of this knowledge can

---

<sup>29</sup> In the European Union, as an illustration, the sale of seeds from regulated species, which includes a majority of commonly grown varieties, necessitates conformity with strict standardization criteria (DUS) and inclusion in an official catalogue. This approach effectively excludes diverse, chemical-free peasant-produced seeds that possess the adaptability to thrive under various and varied growing conditions. In countries that lack such a catalogue, an alternative requirement often involves obtaining certification to demonstrate adherence to these standardized norms.

act as a barrier against companies attempting to appropriate plants, copy their genetic codes and secure patents on them.

The right to protection, already acknowledged in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITGRFA), serves as a safeguard for peasants' knowledge, shielding it from potential appropriation. It underscores that an individual cannot unilaterally decide to sell or disseminate knowledge when the other holders of that knowledge are not adequately protected.

According to paragraph 1c, peasants' right to seeds includes the right to participate in decision-making with regards to seeds and their use: "The right to participate in the making of decisions on matters relating to the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture". This right should enable peasants to be involved in all decisions that could impact their right to seeds. Currently, the legal framework in this domain is highly unfavorable to peasants, as their perspectives are often disregarded. This Declaration finally makes it feasible for peasants to have their voices heard.

"The right to equitably participate in sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture" is also adopted from the ITGRFA. Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture encompass the genetic codes of plants used or potentially useful for food and agriculture. This right is designed to ensure that peasants receive a portion of the profits generated from any commercial use of their seeds by other entities.

Article 19 explicitly spells out the obligations of States. For instance, in paragraph 3, States are reminded of their overarching duty, which applies to all human rights, to "respect, protect and fulfill the right to seeds."

Moreover, these responsibilities are framed as rights that peasants can assert regarding seeds. As previously mentioned, this is exemplified in paragraph 5, which mandates States to acknowledge peasants' liberty to choose the seeds they wish to use.

The other obligations mentioned in this article include the State's duty to facilitate access to seeds, encourage peasant farming systems and revise their legislation to account for the needs and realities of peasants.

Ensuring access to seeds (paragraph 4). This obligation refers to peasants' right to the seeds of their choice. States must ensure not only that peasants can make choices about seeds but also that they have access to these seeds. Furthermore, they must ensure that "seeds of sufficient quality and quantity are available to peasants at the most suitable time for planting and at an affordable price". This obligation directly addresses the issue of peasant indebtedness stemming from purchasing seeds season after season. With the right to seeds, States are obligated to ensure that seed procurement, when necessary, occurs on equitable terms and does not result in financial dependence for peasants. Depending on national circumstances, this obligation can manifest in various forms.



Promoting and fostering peasant farming systems (paragraph 6). Prior to the involvement of major private companies in seed trade, peasants had their own established systems for producing, exchanging and selling seeds. Those systems that have managed to endure have faced severe challenges in recent decades due to the liberalization of agricultural markets, driven by neoliberal policies that favor agribusiness. Paragraph 6 mandates States to safeguard and encourage these systems while also promoting "the use of peasant seeds and agrobiodiversity." Consequently, States must implement policies aimed at establishing and sustaining these systems.

Accommodating peasant needs and realities in laws, treaties and regulations (paragraph 8). To uphold the right to seeds, States are compelled to review their existing legislation. As mentioned earlier, the predominant legal framework in place today supports seed trade and seed privatization. Its widespread adoption is largely due to the utilization of common international standards that are then integrated into national laws. Paragraph 8 place an obligation on States to amend their regulations to legalize peasant practices once more and put an end to the private appropriation of seeds. Peasants can no longer be subjected to any international system of intellectual property rights, certification, or similar measures that undermine their needs and the biodiversity.

In essence, the Right to Seeds empowers peasants to maintain their agricultural traditions, preserve biodiversity, adapt to changing environmental conditions and assert their food sovereignty in the face of corporate seed monopolies. It is an essential component of the broader rights recognized in the *UNDROP*.

#### **Art. 20: Right to biological diversity**

- 1. States shall take appropriate measures, in accordance with their relevant international obligations, to prevent the depletion and ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in order to promote and protect the full enjoyment of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.*
- 2. States shall take appropriate measures to promote and protect the traditional knowledge, innovation and practices of peasants and other people working in rural areas, including traditional agrarian, pastoral, forestry, fisheries, livestock and agroecological systems relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.*
- 3. States shall prevent risks of violation of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas arising from the development, handling, transport, use, transfer or release of any living modified organisms.*

Agricultural biodiversity arises from the intricate interplay between cultural diversity and biological diversity across diverse ecosystems. It has been shaped by the cumulative wisdom of small-scale food producers over generations. Therefore, agricultural biodiversity stands as a foundational element of the food systems crafted by knowledgeable small-scale food producers.

Biodiversity plays a crucial role in upholding various human rights, including the rights to food, water, work, health and culture. These rights are intrinsically linked to both the preservation of diverse ecosystems and the harmonious coexistence of humans with other living entities such as plants, animals, insects and microorganisms. Peasants and rural populations, in particular, assume the role of guardians of agricultural biodiversity. This form of biodiversity represents a dynamic and ever-evolving relationship among people, various life forms and the environment, adapting to changing circumstances over millennia. It is essential to recognize that the rights to seeds and biological diversity are intricately interconnected with the broader right to land and access to natural resources.

Protecting biological diversity is not only vital for rural communities but also for the planet. It contributes to the global effort to conserve biodiversity, mitigate climate change and achieve sustainable development goals.

In summary, Article 20 of *UNDROP* is essential because it acknowledges the critical role of agricultural biodiversity in supporting the livelihoods, food security and sustainability of rural communities while contributing to broader global environmental and developmental objectives.

#### **Art. 21: Rights to water and to sanitation**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the human rights to safe and clean drinking water and to sanitation, which are essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights and human dignity. These rights include water supply systems and sanitation facilities that are of good quality, affordable and physically accessible, and non-discriminatory and acceptable in cultural and gender terms.*

*2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to water for personal and domestic use, farming, fishing and livestock keeping and to securing other water-related livelihoods, ensuring the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of water. They have the right to equitable access to water and water management systems, and to be free from arbitrary disconnections or the contamination of water supplies.*

*3. States shall respect, protect and ensure access to water, including in customary and community-based water management systems, on a non-discriminatory basis, and shall take measures to guarantee affordable water for personal, domestic and productive uses, and improved sanitation, in particular for rural women and girls, and persons belonging to disadvantaged or marginalized groups, such as nomadic pastoralists, workers on plantations, all migrants regardless of their migration status, and persons living in irregular or informal settlements. States shall promote appropriate and affordable technologies, including irrigation technology, technologies for the reuse of treated wastewater, and for water collection and storage.*

*4. States shall protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes, from overuse and contamination by harmful substances, in particular by industrial effluent and concentrated minerals and chemicals that result in slow and fast poisoning.*

*5. States shall prevent third parties from impairing the enjoyment of the right to water of peasants and other people working in rural areas. States shall prioritize water for human needs before other uses, promoting its conservation, restoration and sustainable use.*

The right to water has been recognized by the UNGA in 2010, while it has often been argued at international level that a number of human rights treaties (ICESCR, CEDAW, CRC for instance) provides for it. *UNDROP* has proudly reinforced or strengthened the international recognition of the human right to water.

This article serves as a fundamental safeguard to ensure fair and unrestricted access to this vital resource. Its purpose extends beyond personal consumption to safeguard the livelihoods of peasants. In an era marked by heightened competition for water resources<sup>30</sup>, States have a primary duty to prioritize the promotion and protection of this basic human right. This commitment is crucial to prevent the most economically disadvantaged segments of society, such as peasants, from being unjustly deprived of access to water.

*UNDROP* provides a comprehensive perspective on the indispensable role of water for people living in rural areas. These communities rely heavily on water for their sustenance, engaging in activities like small-scale farming, fishing and livestock keeping, all of which are critically dependent on water resources. This article places specific emphasis on addressing the needs of vulnerable groups within rural settings, including rural women, girls, plantation laborers and migrant workers, irrespective of their legal status.

Additionally, this article advocates for the advancement of irrigation technologies that hold the potential to significantly enhance productivity while conserving water resources. These technologies have the capacity to bring about substantial improvements in rural livelihoods by boosting income levels and reducing their dependence on unpredictable weather conditions.

In summary, *UNDROP*'s articulation of the right to water is significant because it ensures equitable access to this vital resource, protects the livelihoods of rural communities and reinforces the international commitment to this fundamental human right. It reflects the evolving global recognition of water as a human right essential for all aspects of life.

## **Art. 22: Right to social security**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to social security, including social insurance.*

---

<sup>30</sup> FAO, Water for Sustainable Food and Agriculture. A report produced for the G20 Presidency of Germany (Rome, 2017).

*2. States shall, according to their national circumstances, take appropriate steps to promote the enjoyment of the right to social security of all migrant workers in rural areas.*

*3. States shall recognize the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas to social security, including social insurance, and, in accordance with national circumstances, should establish or maintain their social protection floors comprising basic social security guarantees. The guarantees should ensure at a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security, which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level.*

*4. Basic social security guarantees should be established by law. Impartial, transparent, effective, accessible and affordable grievance and appeal procedures should also be specified. Systems should be in place to enhance compliance with national legal frameworks.*

Social security, also known as social protection, is a comprehensive system of social benefits crafted to assist people in coping with life's uncertainties and challenges. This vital framework emerged as a hard-won achievement during the industrial era, primarily linked to formal employment and designed to address various crises, including workplace accidents and illnesses. It serves the dual purpose of providing a structured response to emergencies while institutionalizing societal solidarity, reducing dependence on charitable aid.

Over time, social security has expanded its scope to encompass a broader array of risks and contingencies. Today, it extends beyond addressing accidents and illnesses to cover issues like unemployment, maternity, old age, disability, income loss, family and child support and benefits for survivors and orphans.

The recognition of the right to social security is enshrined in numerous international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 22), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 9) and several International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, such as Nos. 102 and 168. However, despite these acknowledgments, the realization of this right remains elusive for the majority of the global population. It is essential to recognize that social security, while not a distinct economic or social right on its own, serves as a protective safety net, safeguarding these rights and preserving the dignity of every individual in all circumstances.

Moreover, the foundational principles on which social security schemes were built, namely full employment and full-time work, are often not fulfilled. Consequently, there is a growing demand for universal social security, perceived as a potent tool in the battle against poverty, inequality, social exclusion, hunger and the impacts of climate-related shocks.

Despite the fact that the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 14.2.c) is explicitly addressing social security programs for rural women, a significant proportion of peasant women lack access to social security. They often fall into the category of self-employed persons, working on their land or their family's land, which often

exempts them from formal social security coverage. Peasants, in general, confront distinct challenges. Firstly, their livelihoods are susceptible to numerous external factors beyond their control, such as weather conditions and price fluctuations. Secondly, the physical toll of being a peasant is undeniable, as they are more prone to developing work-related health issues, stemming from the wear and tear on their bodies or exposure to toxic chemicals. In addition, in today's world, peasants are more vulnerable than ever to the whims of weather conditions, which can significantly impact their harvests. This vulnerability underscores the critical importance of including the right to social security in the Declaration.

Regarding rural workers, many of them remain unregistered as formal employees. Furthermore, a substantial portion of them can only secure seasonal employment that necessitates frequent mobility between different locations. This mobility poses a significant obstacle to their ability to visit administrative offices and access social services, further limiting their social security options. Also, the remoteness of certain rural areas and the high cost of having social services could constitute barriers to access social protection. Other specific barriers<sup>31</sup> that need to be addressed are: the exclusion from existing legal frameworks, low administrative capacities, lack of awareness and education and a high degree of fragmentation within social protection schemes.

Both peasants and rural workers live out in the countryside, i.e. in areas that are often geographically distant not only from health and social services, but also from the administrations that can help them claim their social security entitlements.

Nowadays, peasants are more than ever at the mercy of the weather and cannot always count on a harvest. It was therefore imperative that the right to social security should be included in the Declaration.

To understand the concept affirmed in paragraph 1 “the right to social security, including social insurance” for peasants and rural workers, we can refer to its interpretation by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. According to the Committee, a social security system must meet several essential conditions to fulfill this right effectively:

- Availability: There must be a functioning social security system in place that enables individuals to address various risks and contingencies and this system should be accessible to all at all times.
- Coverage: The social security system should encompass nine key areas: healthcare, sickness, old age, unemployment, employment injury, family and child support, maternity, disability and support for survivors and orphans.
- Adequacy: The benefits offered by the system, including their type, amount and duration, should be sufficient to ensure the realization of other fundamental rights.

---

<sup>31</sup> Extending social protection to rural populations: Perspectives for a common FAO and ILO approach. 2021. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb2332en/CB2332EN.pdf>

- Accessibility: Social security should be accessible to everyone, ensuring that people have the means to access and benefit from these programs.<sup>32</sup>

- In addition we would add the Responsiveness: A condition that can allow social protection to be responsive to covariate shocks (for example community level shocks – typically natural disasters like floods, draughts or epidemics) and not idiosyncratic ones (caused by macroeconomic fluctuations or sectorial shocks).

Moreover, we would like to refer to climate related risks which are often affecting the livelihoods of peasants and rural people and remain largely unaddressed by social security schemes.

According to paragraph 3, States have a duty to “establish or maintain their social protection floors comprising basic social security guarantees”. It emphasizes that peasants require social security not only to gain access “to essential healthcare” but also to ensure “basic income security” over the course of their lives.

In the agricultural sector, a significant number of laborers originate from countries different from the ones where they work. As migrant workers, they are particularly susceptible to exploitation due to their vulnerability. In fact, it is often their vulnerability that makes them attractive to employers, as it facilitates the exploitation of their labor. This vulnerability stems in part from their lack of access to social security benefits, which constitutes a blatant violation of established international norms.

The limited duration of stay in the country of destination acts as the greatest barrier to equal treatment for seasonal migrant workers in relation to unemployment and family benefits. The temporary nature of the stay of seasonal migrant workers means that in some cases they are not able to meet the criteria and minimum contributory periods required to access these benefits. Seasonal migrant workers are in a relationship of dependence with their employers because their work permit/ authorization is tied to their employment. As a result, seasonal migrant workers could be more reluctant to report infringements by employers. This is the reason why seasonal migrant workers are under-reporting infringements or exploitation from employers related to their temporary stay in the country.<sup>33</sup>

To rectify this systemic breach and address the unique circumstances faced by migrants residing in rural areas, paragraph 2 explicitly mandates that States should establish social security systems that are accessible to migrant rural workers. Importantly, this obligation applies to both migrant workers with regular and irregular immigration status, as outlined in Article 1.4. The provisions of this article are also supported by the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families<sup>34</sup>.

---

<sup>32</sup> UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 19, adopted on 23 November 2007 (cf. E/C.12/GC/19, 4 February 2008).

<sup>33</sup> European Migration Network (2020). Attracting and protecting the rights of seasonal workers in the EU and the United Kingdom – Synthesis Report. Brussels: European Migration Network.  
[https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/en?file=2020-12/00\\_eu\\_seasonal\\_workers\\_study\\_synthesis\\_report\\_en\\_1.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/en?file=2020-12/00_eu_seasonal_workers_study_synthesis_report_en_1.pdf)

Often, seasonal agricultural migrant workers aren't granted access to representation mechanisms, due to the short-term of the work contract, resulting in a complete lack of representation of their interests and demands.

Achieving comprehensive social protection for all people within a nation demands the establishment of intricate administrative frameworks and substantial political and economic commitments from governments. This undertaking calls for a combination of political resolve, legal proficiency, efficient administration and financial resources.

Even in situations where States may lack some of these resources, they are still duty-bound to make every possible effort to institute a social security system. Article 2 from ICESCR is a reminder of states' obligations in relation to the guarantee of the right to social security. While it's evident that the realization of this right cannot be instantaneous, initial steps toward its fulfillment must be taken without delay. Even in the direst circumstances are not a valid justification for inaction.

It is important to mention the need to build social protection system based on the humanitarian assistance in fragile states. Also, focusing on creating a fiscal space is essential for funding the expansion of social protection, as well as adapting the level of contribution to the income of rural areas.

Paragraph 4, establishes the parameters of the social security system to be instituted. Primarily, it should be enshrined in law, necessitating the involvement of the legislature, not solely the executive branch. Enacting legislation facilitates a democratic debate that is instrumental in ensuring the social security system's democratic character. to effectively serve its purpose, it must encompass the perspectives of those directly affected. Consequently, it is necessary to inform and involve first and foremost the beneficiaries and also the other relevant stakeholders such as ministries, including Ministries of Agriculture, workers' unions, cooperatives, civil society organizations etc.

The essence of this paragraph is not merely the establishment of the system itself but also the imperative of implementing mechanisms for monitoring and improving it. States are obligated to create procedures for grievances and appeals. The underlying concept is that these procedures should be employed when individuals are denied some form of social protection, thereby safeguarding against violations of the right to social security and preventing people from being left in need.

In summary, the right to social security is vital for peasants as it provides economic stability, access to healthcare, support in old age or disability, promotes gender equality, helps alleviate poverty and upholds their basic human rights. It is a crucial component of ensuring the well-being and dignity of peasants and rural communities.

---

<sup>34</sup> The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers>

## **Art. 23: Right to health**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. They also have the right to have access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.*
- 2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to use and protect their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including access to and conservation of their plants, animals and minerals for medicinal use.*
- 3. States shall guarantee access to health facilities, goods and services in rural areas on a non-discriminatory basis, especially for groups in vulnerable situations, access to essential medicines, immunization against major infectious diseases, reproductive health, information concerning the main health problems affecting the community, including methods of preventing and controlling them, maternal and child health care, as well as training for health personnel, including education on health and human rights.*

This article is linked with Article 12 of ICESCR which recognizes “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”. Within *UNDROP*, we note the connection with the Right to Social Security, defined in article 22.

It reinforces the fundamental right of peasants and people working in rural areas to enjoy the highest possible standard of physical and mental health. This right holds immense significance due to the enduring disparities in healthcare access between rural and urban regions. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), rural areas face substantial deficits in per capita health spending, resulting in twice the healthcare access gap compared to urban areas. Consequently, approximately half of the global rural population lacks access to critical medical care.

*UNDROP* underscores the state's responsibility to ensure non-discriminatory access to healthcare services. The pursuit of universal health coverage, as emphasized in the Sustainable Development Goals, presents a promising avenue for advancing the realization of the right to health in rural areas.

Healthcare inequalities extend beyond rural-urban divides and persist on a global scale. Approximately 2 billion people worldwide, primarily in developing nations, face challenges in accessing essential medicines<sup>35</sup>. *UNDROP* reaffirms the crucial role of access to these medications in upholding the right to health. In a contemporary world, where intellectual property rights often take precedence over health considerations, the Declaration champions the prioritization of human rights over commercial interests.

---

<sup>35</sup> Xenia Scheil-Adlung Ed., Global evidence on inequities in rural health protection: new data on rural deficits in health coverage for 174 countries – Geneva: 2015. (Extension of Social Security series No. 47), International Labour Office, Social Protection Department, p. xiii.



In summary, the right to health is essential for peasants and rural populations to lead healthy, productive lives, maintain food security and uphold their dignity and human rights. It addresses healthcare disparities, helps alleviate poverty and contributes to the well-being of entire rural communities.

#### **Art. 24: Right to adequate housing**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to adequate housing. They have the right to sustain a secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity, and the right to non-discrimination in this context.*
- 2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to be protected against forced eviction from their home, harassment and other threats.*
- 3. States shall not, arbitrarily or unlawfully, either temporarily or permanently, remove peasants or other people working in rural areas against their will from the homes or land that they occupy without providing or affording access to appropriate forms of legal or other protection. When eviction is unavoidable, the State must provide or ensure fair and just compensation for any material or other losses.*

Peasants often engage in agriculture as their primary livelihood. Access to secure housing is crucial for storing agricultural tools, seeds and harvested crops. It also provides a stable base for managing livestock. Without secure housing, peasants may face difficulties in maintaining their agricultural activities, which can affect food production and income. Housing is not just about shelter; it also plays a central role in family and community life. Adequate housing allows rural families to live together in a safe and healthy environment, fostering stronger social bonds and community cohesion.

The right to housing, a frequently violated human rights, not only in urban slums but also in rural areas, especially in the case of seasonal agricultural workers, who lack stable homes.

For peasants and rural workers, the right to housing entails access to suitable dwellings within their communities, where they can live in dignity and tranquility (paragraph 1). Additionally, it safeguards them against unjust evictions and actions that might lead to eviction (paragraph 2).

States bear the primary responsibility of upholding this right by refraining from arbitrary or unlawful eviction of people or communities from their residences or land. In cases where eviction becomes inevitable, such as for reasons of public interest, equitable and fair compensation must be provided (paragraph 3). While not explicitly stated in this article, it is incumbent upon States to formulate policies that ensure housing for all people.

Migrant workers are often subjected to poor accommodation, in overcrowded settlements, with lack of access to clean water, sanitation or heating and located in remote and isolated areas. Temporary employment conditions, a lack of legal status and discrimination by locals can make it

difficult for migrants to rent decent accommodations or integrate into the local communities. In other cases, decent accommodation may simply not exist. In some cases, migrant and refugee workers live in slums and makeshift camps close to the fields or plantations. For example, in some countries, refugees (often entire families) live in tents, collective shelters, unfinished buildings and makeshift camps very close to the agricultural fields where they are employed.

In summary, the right to housing is crucial for peasants because it provides them with shelter, protects their livelihoods, fosters community life, ensures good health, upholds their dignity and human rights and enhances their resilience to challenges like climate change. It is an integral component of rural development and well-being.

### **Art. 25: Right to education and training**

- 1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to adequate training suited to the specific agroecological, sociocultural and economic environments in which they find themselves. Issues covered by training programs should include, but not be limited to, improving productivity, marketing, and the ability to cope with pests, pathogens, system shocks, the effects of chemicals, climate change and weather-related events.*
- 2. All children of peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to education in accordance with their culture, and with all the rights contained in human rights instruments.*
- 3. States shall encourage equitable and participatory farmer-scientist partnerships, such as farmer field schools, participatory plant breeding, and plant and animal health clinics to respond more appropriately to the immediate and emerging challenges that peasants and other people working in rural areas face.*
- 4. States shall invest in providing training, market information and advisory services at the farm level.*

This article is interconnected with the Right to Social Security defined in article 22.

Education empowers individuals with knowledge and skills. For peasants, this means gaining the expertise to improve agricultural practices, manage resources sustainably and adapt to changing environmental conditions. It allows them to make informed decisions about crop choices, land management and other agricultural activities, ultimately enhancing productivity and food security. Access to education and training can break the cycle of poverty. Peasants who receive education are more likely to diversify their income sources and improve their overall economic well-being.

Education is a key driver of gender equality. It enables rural women to access information, participate in decision-making processes and challenge traditional gender roles. Promoting education for girls and women in rural areas is particularly important for achieving gender equality and empowering women.

Education fosters community development. When peasants are educated and trained, they can actively engage in local development initiatives, advocate for their rights and contribute to the overall progress of their communities. Education also plays a role in preserving traditional knowledge and cultural practices. It can help transmit indigenous agricultural wisdom and cultural heritage to younger generations, ensuring the continuity of valuable traditions.

The right to education and training primarily focuses on providing peasants with the knowledge and skills related to agriculture (paragraph 1). Peasants should have access to lifelong education tailored to their specific agroecological, socio-cultural and economic contexts. The primary objective of this article is to ensure that peasants can access knowledge that empowers them to develop their agricultural practices according to their preferences and needs, ultimately enabling them to earn a sustainable livelihood.

Additionally, there is a separate provision in paragraph 2 addressing the right to education for children of peasants and rural workers. Just like children worldwide, they have an inherent right to education.

Regarding the responsibilities of States, paragraph 3 highlights the establishment of partnerships between the government, scientists and peasants. These partnerships should be characterized by fairness and a mutual exchange of knowledge. In other words, these collaborations should be reciprocal, recognizing that peasants also contribute valuable insights to scientific research and innovation.

## **Art. 26: Cultural rights and traditional knowledge**

*1. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to enjoy their own culture and to pursue freely their cultural development, without interference or any form of discrimination. They also have the right to maintain, express, control, protect and develop their traditional and local knowledge, such as ways of life, methods of production or technology, or customs and tradition. No one may invoke cultural rights to infringe upon the human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope.*

*2. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right, individually and/or collectively, in association with others or as a community, to express their local customs, languages, culture, religions, literature and art, in conformity with international human rights standards.*

*3. States shall respect, and take measures to recognize and protect, the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas relating to their traditional knowledge, and eliminate discrimination against the traditional knowledge, practices and technologies of peasants and other people working in rural areas.*

Cultural rights are fundamental for the dignity and well-being of peasants. They allow individuals to live in a manner consistent with their cultural values and traditions, promoting psychological

and emotional well-being. Cultural rights allow peasants to maintain and celebrate their unique cultural identities. They encompass the right to practice traditional customs, speak native languages and participate in cultural activities. For peasants, this is vital for preserving their heritage and passing down their cultural practices to future generations. Cultural rights foster a sense of belonging and community among peasants. They provide a space for cultural expressions and rituals that strengthen social bonds and cooperation within rural communities. This cohesion is often essential for collective efforts such as communal farming or resource management.

Peasants often possess invaluable traditional knowledge about farming, resource management and medicinal plants. These insights have been developed and refined over generations and are crucial for sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation. Cultural rights protect the ability of peasants to continue practicing and sharing this knowledge. Many traditional agricultural practices and crop varieties have been adapted to local conditions over centuries. These practices contribute to food security by promoting crop diversity and resilience to changing environmental conditions. Also, traditional knowledge plays a significant role in biodiversity conservation. Indigenous and peasant communities have been effective stewards of ecosystems because their traditional practices are often closely aligned with nature's cycles. Preserving these practices is vital for overall environmental conservation.

The Declaration encompasses various cultural rights, both traditional and innovative, that warrant attention. Peasants have the right to preserve, express, oversee and shield their culture (paragraph 1). Of particular significance is the safeguarding of traditional and local knowledge, especially regarding production methods and technology. The knowledge integral to peasants' work is an intrinsic part of their culture and heritage, deserving protection not only from obliteration but also from appropriation by external entities. It is a known fact that numerous industries incorporate peasants' knowledge into industrial processes, while seed companies continuously seek to develop crop varieties. With the rising trend of patenting genetic codes, safeguarding peasants' knowledge becomes even more imperative.

In the realm of cultural rights, it is paramount for States to show utmost respect for the culture of peasants and rural workers. It is essential to emphasize this, as the culture of peasants is frequently subjected to prejudice and stigma when compared to urban culture. Consequently, States must eradicate discrimination against this culture and any discrimination based on affiliation with it. For example, States should refrain from compelling nomadic communities to settle down.

Article 26 stands as the final article outlining rights for peasants within the Declaration, yet it carries immense significance. Cultural rights lie at the heart of *UNDROP*, as envisioned by organizations representing peasants and rural workers. The Declaration fundamentally seeks to protect the culture and way of life of peasants. Being a peasant entails more than just a profession; it encompasses participation in a rich tapestry of cultures that merit recognition, safeguarding and the freedom to flourish. Recognizing and respecting these rights is crucial for the dignity and prosperity of peasants and the sustainability of rural life.

**Art. 27: Responsibility of the United Nations and of other international organizations**

*1. The specialized agencies, funds and programs of the United Nations system, and other intergovernmental organizations, including international and regional financial organizations, shall contribute to the full realization of the present Declaration, including through the mobilization of, inter alia, development assistance and cooperation. Ways and means of ensuring the participation of peasants and other people working in rural areas on issues affecting them shall be considered.*

*2. The United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programs, and other intergovernmental organizations, including international and regional financial organizations, shall promote respect for and the full application of the present Declaration, and follow up on its effectiveness.*

The UN plays a central role in promoting and monitoring the implementation of international human rights instruments, including *UNDROP*. It provides a global platform for member states, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to discuss and advance the rights of peasants and rural workers. This oversight is essential to ensure that states are held accountable for fulfilling their obligations under *UNDROP*.

The UN and other international organizations can offer technical assistance and expertise to member states in implementing *UNDROP*. This may include capacity-building, sharing best practices and providing guidance on how to integrate the rights of peasants into national policies and legislation.

These organizations can advocate for the rights of peasants at the international level, raising awareness about the challenges faced by rural populations and mobilizing support for their rights. They can also facilitate dialogue between governments, civil society and rural communities to promote understanding and cooperation.

The UN and its specialized agencies can conduct research and collect data on the situation of peasants and rural workers worldwide. This information is essential for assessing progress, identifying areas of concern and developing evidence-based policies and programs.

International organizations can allocate resources and funding to support initiatives aimed at implementing *UNDROP*. This can include financing development projects in rural areas, supporting access to education and healthcare and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

In regions where land conflicts and disputes are common, international organizations can play a role in conflict resolution and mediation efforts. Resolving land-related issues is integral to protecting the rights of peasants and rural communities.

International organizations can help build the capacity of rural communities and their organizations to advocate for their rights effectively. This includes training on human rights, legal literacy and organizing skills.

UN agencies can assist member states in developing and revising policies and legislation to align with *UNDROP*. They can offer guidance on creating an enabling environment for rural development and the protection of peasants' rights.

The UN, through its treaty bodies and mechanisms, can encourage member states to submit periodic reports on their progress in implementing *UNDROP*. This reporting process allows for accountability and provides a platform for reviewing challenges and successes.

In conclusion, the responsibility of the United Nations and other international organizations is vital for the effective implementation of *UNDROP*. They play a multifaceted role in promoting, protecting and monitoring the rights of peasants and rural workers, ultimately contributing to the well-being and dignity of rural communities worldwide.

### **Art. 28: General Obligations**

*1. Nothing in the present Declaration may be construed as diminishing, impairing or nullifying the rights that peasants and other people working in rural areas and indigenous peoples currently have or may acquire in the future.*

*2. The human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, without discrimination of any kind, shall be respected in the exercise of the rights enunciated in the present Declaration. The exercise of the rights set forth in the present Declaration shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law and that are compliant with international human rights obligations. Any such limitations shall be non-discriminatory and necessary solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others, and for meeting the just and most compelling requirements of a democratic society.*

General obligations provide the legal framework for states to fulfill their commitments under *UNDROP*. They establish the foundation for incorporating the rights of peasants into national laws, policies and practices.

States are obligated to involve peasants and their organizations in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This promotes democracy, participatory governance and ensures that policies are responsive to the needs and aspirations of rural communities.

The general obligations of states under *UNDROP* provide a comprehensive framework for safeguarding the rights of peasants and rural workers. They serve as a guide for states to create policies, allocate resources and take concrete actions to improve the well-being and livelihoods of rural communities. These obligations are essential for promoting social justice, reducing inequalities and achieving sustainable rural development.

### III. UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028)

Family farming enjoyed global attention since 2014, which was designated the United Nations' International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). Given the positive results of the IYFF in 2017, the UN General Assembly unanimously proclaimed the UN Decade of Family Farming (UNDAFF) 2019-2028. This important achievement was facilitated by a successful campaign coordinated by the Government of Costa Rica and the World Rural Forum, supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and many other partners.

The UN resolution proclaiming the UNDAFF stressed the importance of innovating, reformulating and reforming agricultural policies and strategies in order to ensure that the critical role of family farmers in food security and nutrition is recognized, particularly recognizing the youth and the women. It underlined the role of family farming to ensure productive employment and contribute to combating climate change; and encouraged all States to develop, improve and implement public policies on family farming and share their experiences and best practices of family farming.

In essence, the UNDAFF serves as a framework for countries to develop public policies and investments to support family farming and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. States are urged to develop, improve and implement public policies on family farming, as well as to share with other States their best practices and experiences in the field of family farming.

#### **Who are the family farmers and do they identify as peasants and other people working in rural areas?**

Often in public communications peasant organizations use both terms when referring to their constituency. Also, the term peasant is increasingly used in processes related to food security, family farming and public policies at national, regional and international levels. Through *UNDROP* and the UNDAFF resolution, there is a clear political recognition of both concepts at UN level.

The concept of Family Farmers overlaps with the definition of peasants and other people working in rural areas defined by *UNDROP*. Both definitions recognize the social and cultural diversity of the food producers and also the diversity of food production (agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture and others), also complementing each other.

According to FAO, globally, family farming employs 2.6 billion people, or 30 percent of the world's population and produces over 80 percent of the world's food in value terms<sup>36</sup> and are described in the UNDAFF as key agents of development strategies. Recent estimations made by FAO show that that there are more than 600 million family farms around the world<sup>37</sup>. These farms are mostly

---

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/i4040e/i4040e.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Lowder, Sánchez and Bertini, 2019

operated at small-scale level considering that 95 percent of existing farm units are less than 5 hectares and more than 98 percent of farms are less than 20 hectares (HLPE, 2020).

As explained in the previous chapter, the definition of peasants is addressed to all small scale agroecological food producers and people involved in all aspects of food production and distribution in rural area, often facing poverty, conditioned by marginalization and discrimination. According to FAO<sup>38</sup>, 80% of the world's poorest live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Despite their vulnerabilities, peasants representing the overwhelming majority of family farmers contribute significantly to the realization of the right to food.

Concept of Family Farming and Farmers	Definition of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas
<p>Family Farming (including all family-based agricultural activities) is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production that is managed and operated by a family and is predominantly reliant on the family labour of both women and men. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions. This includes the different dimensions of family farming which are not limited to production, but include diverse non-agricultural activities, to ensure the security of family consumption, the sustainability of agroecosystems and landscape management and the transmission of locally and traditionally rooted knowledge, cultural heritage and social values. The notion of family farming refers to all types of family-based production models in agriculture, fishery forestry, pastoral and aquaculture and include peasants, indigenous peoples, traditional communities, fisher folks, mountain farmers, forest users and pastoralists.</p>	<p>A peasant is any person who engages or who seeks to engage alone, or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence and/or for the market and who relies significantly, though not necessarily exclusively, on family or household labour and other non-monetized ways of organizing labour and who has a special dependency on and attachment to the land. The definition expanded to other people working in rural areas includes also any person engaged in artisanal or small-scale agriculture, crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, hunting or gathering and handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area. It also applies to dependent family members of peasants, to indigenous peoples and local communities working on the land, transhumant, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities and the landless, engaged in the above-mentioned activities. Most importantly it applies to hired workers, including all migrant workers regardless of their migration status and seasonal workers, on plantations, agricultural farms, forests and farms in aquaculture and in agro-industrial enterprises.</p>

**Governance.** The International Steering Committee of the UNDDFF (UNDDFF ISC)<sup>39</sup> is the governing body for the UNDDFF and was set up to oversee its implementation. The Committee consists of

<sup>38</sup> FAO Framework on rural extreme poverty, 2019 - <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en?details=ca4811en%2f>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.familyfarmingcampaign.org/en/gobernanza/>



representatives of the Member States of the United Nations that act on behalf of different regions. Each region is represented by two countries that change every 11 months. The Committee also includes family farming organisations (La Vía Campesina, the World Rural Forum (WRF), the World Farmers Organisation (WFO) and 5 regional family farming organisations, including COPROFAM, AFA, ROPPA, PIFON and La Via Campesina Europe), FAO, IFAD and WFP. The UNDDF ISC is supported by the FAO and IFAD joint secretariat.

**Action.** In the early stage of the Decade, a **Global Action Plan** was developed, detailing various ways that can support governments and family farmers to transform the UNDDF into reality. It ultimately aims to contribute to a world free of hunger and poverty, in which natural resources are managed sustainably and to leave no one behind.

*Content and scope.* The Global Plan of Action for the Decade aims to support States to put family farming at the center of their interventions over a period of ten years, between 2019 to 2028. It describes interconnected actions around 7 pillars.

The series of actions that were recommended in the action plan are interconnected, from local to the global level, built around the 7 pillars of work which mutually reinforce their actions and effects. Pillar 1 is central for ensuring the functionality of the entire Action Plan.

The Action Plan promotes multi-actor collaboration and national, holistic and contextualized **National Action Plans** of the UNDDF. The goal is that 100 national action plans should be developed by governments in negotiation with family farmers' organizations and / or with National Committees for Family Farming by 2024.

Until now, FAO reports<sup>40</sup> that 10 countries have already approved National Action Plans, while 43 others are actively engaging in developing theirs. Another significant result is that 186 laws, policies and regulations have been developed and approved. Complementary, in several regions such as Africa, Asia and Latin America are working on the implementation of Regional Action Plans, that are meant to support coordination between national levels. There are currently 3 Sub regional Action Plans elaborated, 1 Sub regional Action Plan in the drafting process and mobilization efforts in 2 more Sub-regions.

The process of the Decade enjoys wide participation from peasant organizations around the world who see in it the opportunity to address the issues of inequality, poverty and to propose the elevation of human rights across public policies. It is reported that 1853 family farmers' organizations and federations are involved in the UNDDF.

Unfortunately Eastern Europe and Central Asia have not been so present in this process, despite the wide small scale family farmers that exist in the region. This shows that the popularization of this framework remains the main priority at the moment.

---

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/first-global-forum-of-the-un-decade-of-family-farming/en>

## A schematic corroboration between the UN Decade for Family Farming ACTION PLAN and the UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

In the schematic presentation below we identified the most relevant connections between the main pillars of the Action Plan and specific articles from UNDROP, with the understanding that these connections are not limited to the ones presented.

As the objectives of the UNDIFF coincide with the rights defined by UNDROP, the harmonization between the two processes is only a matter of mobilization and resources. UNDROP provides an excellent base of support for the content of legal provisions, while UNDIFF offers the framework for conducting such a process.

UN Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF)		UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP)
Pillar Action Plan	Objectives Pillars	Linkages with Articles
<b>Pilar 1.</b>  <b>Develop an enabling policy environment to strengthen family farming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement coherent <b>policies</b>, investments and institutional frameworks.</li> <li>Promote inclusive and effective <b>governance mechanisms</b> and timely and geographically relevant <b>data</b> for well-targeted policy design and implementation.</li> <li>Guarantee sustained <b>political commitment</b> and adequate resourcing by state and non-state actors.</li> <li>Shift from sectoral policies to <b>context-specific strategies</b> and programmes to address the rights and multi-dimensional role.</li> </ul>	Art. 2: General <b>obligations</b> of States Art. 8: Freedom of <b>thought, opinion and expression</b> Art. 10: Right to <b>participation</b> Art. 11: Right to <b>information</b> with regard to production, marketing and distribution Art. 27: <b>Responsibility</b> of the United Nations and of other international organizations Art. 28: <b>General Obligations</b>
<b>Pilar 2.</b>  <b>Support youth and ensure the generational sustainability of family farming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve <b>access to land and natural resources</b>, productive assets, education, capacity development programs and financial services</li> <li>Strengthen youths' <b>participation in family farmers' organizations</b> and collective actions</li> <li>Inclusion of youth in <b>decision-making processes</b></li> <li>Facilitate the <b>intergenerational transfer</b> – interconnect traditional knowledge with innovative ideas</li> </ul>	Art. 10: Right to <b>participation</b> Art. 25: Right to <b>education</b> and training Art. 17: Right to <b>land</b> and other natural resources Art. 26: <b>Cultural</b> rights and traditional knowledge

<p><b>Pillar 3.</b></p> <p><b>Promote gender equity in family farming and the leadership role of rural women</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure <b>equal rights and opportunities</b> for women and men in family farming</li> <li>• Guarantee <b>access to social rights</b>, education, health and social protection for women and their children</li> <li>• Increase <b>access to natural resources</b>, (re-)productive assets, financial services and markets</li> <li>• Promote <b>leadership and enhance participation</b> in their organizations and in policy-making processes</li> <li>• Reduce all forms of <b>violence against women and girls</b> in family farming and in rural areas</li> </ul>	<p>Art. 4: Rights of peasant <b>women</b> and other women working in rural areas</p> <p>Art. 17: Right to <b>land</b> and other natural resources</p>
<p><b>Pillar 4.</b></p> <p><b>Strengthen family farmers' organizations and their capacities to generate knowledge, represent farmers' concerns and provide inclusive services in rural areas.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened <b>governance and organizational capacities</b> of family farmers' organizations</li> <li>• Improve <b>technical expertise and capability to access and provide</b> (both farming and non-farming related) <b>services</b></li> <li>• Support <b>collective actions</b> by strong, transparent and inclusive organizations</li> <li>• <b>Improve communication</b>, ICTs capacities and services to ensure that family farmers' voices are heard</li> </ul>	<p>Art. 8: Freedom of <b>thought, opinion and expression</b></p> <p>Art. 9: Freedom of <b>association</b></p> <p>Art. 10: Right to <b>participation</b></p>
<p><b>Pillar 5.</b></p> <p><b>Improve socio-economic inclusion, resilience and well-being of family farmers, rural households and communities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale up human rights-based <b>social protection interventions</b></li> <li>• Develop <b>public policies to improve access to and control of natural resources</b> and productive assets</li> <li>• Promote programs for disaster and risk management and <b>capacity development to strengthen resilience and economic viability</b></li> <li>• Develop and implement policies to <b>improve income-generating opportunities</b> and support access to domestic and local markets to guarantee continuous and structured demand for family farmers' products and services</li> </ul>	<p>Art. 11: Right to <b>information</b> with regard to production, marketing and distribution</p> <p>Art. 13: Right to <b>work</b></p> <p>Art. 14: Right to <b>safety</b> and health at work</p> <p>Art. 15: Right to <b>food and food sovereignty</b></p> <p>Art. 16: Right to a <b>decent income</b> and livelihood and the means of production</p> <p>Art. 22: Right to <b>social security</b></p> <p>Art. 23: Right to <b>health</b></p> <p>Art. 24: Right to adequate <b>housing</b></p>

<p><b>Pillar 6.</b></p> <p><b>Promote sustainability of family farming for climate resilient food systems.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public policies to <b>improve family farmers' rights to use, manage and control natural resources</b> (water, land, ocean, genetic resources, forest resources, aquatic systems, nutrients, energy)</li> <li>• Promote <b>innovative and integrated farming practices</b> to increase productivity in a sustainable manner, optimizing the diversity of species and genetic resources</li> <li>• Promote <b>farmer-to-farmer exchange</b> ; indigenous and traditional knowledge</li> <li>• Develop <b>inclusive market environment</b> for family farmers</li> <li>• Promote institutional arrangements for <b>inclusive and fair value chains</b> with improved conditions for family farmers</li> </ul>	<p>Art. 5: Rights to <b>natural resources</b> and the right to development</p> <p>Art. 16: Right to a <b>decent income</b> and livelihood and the means of production</p> <p>Art. 17: Right to <b>land</b> and other natural resources</p> <p>Art. 18: Right to a safe, clean and healthy <b>environment</b></p> <p>Art. 19: Right to <b>seeds</b></p> <p>Art. 20: Right to <b>biological diversity</b></p> <p>Art. 21: Rights to <b>water</b> and to sanitation</p> <p>Art. 26: <b>Cultural</b> rights and traditional knowledge</p>
<p><b>Pillar 7.</b></p> <p><b>Strengthen the multidimensionality of family farming to promote social innovations contributing to territorial development and food systems that safeguard biodiversity, the environment and culture.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve <b>synergies between production systems</b> (fisheries, aquaculture, forestry, crops, livestock)</li> <li>• Enhance the different <b>ecosystem services</b> provided by family farmers</li> <li>• Strengthen family farmers' role in promoting <b>social innovation and diversification of employment opportunities</b></li> <li>• Improve interconnections between <b>rural and urban</b> areas</li> <li>• Promote innovative <b>economic opportunities and market solutions</b> to take advantage of the multi-dimensional services and goods provided by family farmers</li> </ul>	<p>Art. 11: Right to <b>information</b> with regard to production, marketing and distribution</p> <p>Art. 20: Right to <b>biological diversity</b></p> <p>Art. 26: <b>Cultural</b> rights and traditional knowledge</p>

*Example of Action.* In countries affected by the lack of access to land (caused by land grabbing, liberalization of land market, restrictive policies, poverty), governments and other relevant institutions can work together with peasant family farmers organizations and the assistance of international agencies (ex. FAO) to review existing legislation or promote new legal tools that enable affordable and inclusive access to land, prioritizing the interests of the most vulnerable categories, such as women and youth or other marginalized constituencies of food producers. A such a process, once developed, can be used to foster political dialogue between governments and right-holders for broader issues. We can note the immediate links between basically all pillars (as women and land and natural resources are addressed in various ways by all the pillars of work) and several articles of UNDROP, particularly 4 and 17. By implementing articles of UNDROP we can achieve the realization of the objectives of the UNDDFF and viceversa.

## IV. Agroecology

### What is Agroecology?

Agroecology is a complex system that guides the peasant agricultural model, both on a practical level and as an organization. Agroecology has gone through a process of development, currently being recognized at the UN level as a science, agricultural practice and socio-political movement.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has defined, through negotiations with UN member governments, a formal framework for Agroecology<sup>41 42</sup>, which contains 10 component elements: a) Diversity (of species and genetic resources); b) Co-creation and sharing of knowledge and practices, science and innovation; c) Synergies (between crops, livestock, aquatic animals and trees; and also among actors); d) Efficiency (in the use of natural resources); e) Recycling (of nutrients, biomass and water, to reduce waste, emissions and costs); f) Resilience (of people, communities and ecosystems to extreme weather events, such as drought or floods, which will increase with climate change, to pest and disease attacks and to economic shocks); g) Human and social values (agroecology can empower people to overcome poverty, hunger and malnutrition and improve opportunities for women and youth); h) Culture and food traditions (agroecology improves diets and nutrition, reminding of cultural values and eating habits in different cultures); i) Responsible governance (as necessary to create an enabling environment for the transition to agroecology, including secure access to land and natural resources); and j) Circular and solidarity economy (to reconnect producers and consumers, create local solutions and sustainable markets).

Agroecology is currently being promoted in the European Union and many countries in various legislative processes, both in agricultural and environmental policies. Although we are far from decisively influencing these policies, the current crisis motivates us to continue the pressure on the decision-makers.

Many peasant organizations define Agroecology<sup>43</sup> based on the 10 guiding elements of FAO and further elaborating it. For peasants, Agroecology is a way of life and a complex vision, which is based on the knowledge and wisdom of the peasants, transmitted from generation to generation and at the same time incorporates new thinking and values adapted to the current reality.

#### ***The three pillars of agroecology for peasants:***

**A. A practice.** It includes how peasants work with the soil, with animals and other common goods (water, seeds, etc.), but also how they interact with each other, with other farmers and other people who work in the rural areas and the consumers. Their relationships are based on mutual respect and trust, inclusion, equality, non-discrimination and cooperation to thrive together. At the same time, peasants practice small-scale and family farming and encourage and contribute to

---

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.fao.org/agroecology/overview/overview10elements/en/>

<sup>42</sup> [https://gradinamd.files.wordpress.com/2022/11/agroecology\\_10\\_elements\\_booklet\\_ro\\_final.pdf](https://gradinamd.files.wordpress.com/2022/11/agroecology_10_elements_booklet_ro_final.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.ecoruralis.ro/programe/agroecologie/>

the development of local, circular economy and short food chains, in which small food producers are fairly rewarded for their work. Peasant agroecology does not support the use of GMO crops, patents on seeds, plants and animals or the use of toxic substances. It supports biodiversity as harmony and synergy between the natural system, the social system and the cultural system.

**B. A Peasant Science and Innovation.** Since the beginning of agriculture, peasants have contributed to the knowledge and understanding of growing food in relation to the living environment, constantly offering new and creative solutions to countless challenges. This process continues today, creating a common fund of traditional peasant knowledge in different contexts and realities. So peasant's innovation work in the field, based on observation and constant improvement of their practices and agrobiodiversity. Their learning and knowledge transmission processes often take place in informal spaces, meaning in their households and villages, from one peasant to another and between generations. Peasants also value exchanges with peasants from other regions or countries, as well as creating their own agroecology learning spaces and schools.

**C. A social and political movement.** Peasant agroecology considers the rights of peasants a priority. All peasants and small scale food producers should be empowered and involved at all levels in decision-making processes regarding public decisions and policies that concern and affect them. The agroecological model respects local agriculture in communities everywhere, as it is based on solidarity and cooperation between all regions and all peasants and rural people.

## **UNDROP recognizes Agroecology**

UNDROP encompasses several rights that are of utmost importance for the promotion of agroecology. These rights include, but are not limited to:

Article 5 - *Right to natural resources*: Peasants are entitled to utilize natural resources sustainably. This right complements agroecology's emphasis on responsible resource management.

Article 15 - *Right to Food and Food Sovereignty*: The declaration recognizes the right to food sovereignty, which is closely linked to agroecology's focus on local, community-based food production and self-reliance.

Article 17 - *Right to Land*: Peasants and rural communities have the right to secure and access land. This right is fundamental for practicing agroecological farming methods.

Article 18 - *Right to a safe, clean and healthy environment*: UNDROP guarantees the right to preserve and protect the environment. Agroecology inherently promotes environmentally friendly farming practices, making this right integral to its implementation.

Article 19 - *Right to Seeds*: UNDROP recognizes the right to seeds, which is vital for the preservation and exchange of diverse, traditional seed varieties, an essential aspect of agroecological farming.

Article 20 - *Right to Biodiversity*: The declaration safeguards the right to preserve and protect biodiversity. This right aligns with agroecology's principles of fostering biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems.

Article 21 - *Right to Water*: *UNDROP* acknowledges the right to access water for irrigation. Adequate irrigation is crucial for sustaining agroecological practices, especially in regions with seasonal variations in precipitation.

Article 25 - *Right to education and Training*: Peasants have the right to receive suitable training tailored to their specific agroecological contexts. This empowers them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively practice agroecology.

The realization of these rights not only supports the transition towards agroecology but also vice versa. Implementing agroecological practices contributes to the fulfillment of these rights, creating a mutually reinforcing relationship. As a result, *UNDROP* serves as a robust framework for advancing agroecology while simultaneously upholding these fundamental rights.

## **States obligations related to Agroecology in *UNDROP***

Within the framework of the right to active and free participation, states are further instructed to respect the involvement of peasants' organizations in the formulation of environmental standards that may have an impact on their interests (article 10).

In the context of fulfilling the right to adequate food and food sovereignty, states are obligated to ensure the participation of peasants and rural communities in decision-making processes related to food and agriculture policies. Moreover, states should guarantee the right to healthy and adequate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods that respect the cultural practices of peasant and rural communities (article 15).

In accordance with the obligations laid out in *UNDROP*, it is incumbent upon states to encourage sustainable production methods, including agroecological and organic approaches, whenever feasible (article 16, paragraph 4). These guidelines align with the responsibilities assigned to states regarding the management of natural resources. For instance, states are required to implement measures aimed at conserving and sustainably utilizing land and other natural resources essential for peasant production, including practices like agroecology. States should also create conditions conducive to the regeneration of biological and other natural capacities and cycles (article 17, paragraph 7).

Peasants and rural communities should also have access to training programs associated with agroecological practices. Importantly, these programs should equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to address challenges such as pests, pathogens, system shocks, the consequences of chemical use, climate change and weather-related events effectively (article 25).

## **How Can UNDROP Serve as an Instrument to Advance the Promotion of Agroecology?**

UNDROP offers a comprehensive human rights framework that can be effectively utilized to promote and advocate for the adoption of agroecology as a sustainable agricultural approach. By doing so, it reinforces the interconnectedness between agroecology, the right to food, international environmental law and international human rights law. The declaration places peasants, rural workers and communities at its core, ensuring their central role in shaping policies and legislation.

UNDROP serves as a vital source for offering interpretative guidance to existing binding laws and has the potential to exert a substantial influence on policymaking decisions and judicial rulings concerning agroecology. It strengthens the arguments and advocacy efforts of those championing sustainable agricultural practices by grounding them in a well-established human rights framework. As a result, UNDROP is a potent tool for advancing the global transition towards agroecological farming systems.

Based on this, protection and fulfillment of the rights of peasants and other people working and or living in rural areas is therefore essential in order to move towards agroecology.



## V. Ways forward for the implementation of the Declaration

In order to have effective impact on the lives and wellbeing of peasants and rural people, the Declaration will need to be implemented at the national, regional and international levels through solid legal, policy and institutional frameworks – which will form the backbone of strategies and programs. Promoting the Declaration involves a critical role for various stakeholders, including governments, regional and international organizations, peasant movements, civil society groups and many others.

The adoption of a legal instrument like *UNDROP* is not a standalone achievement. Its success depends on a robust joint implementation strategy and the political commitment of governments to enact its provisions. Without these elements, *UNDROP* may remain ineffective.

It is now incumbent upon states, peasant organizations and relevant institutions to collaborate and initiate the next crucial phase: implementation. This undertaking represents a long-term commitment to translate into action the principles, agreements and rights that have been the subject of discussions, negotiations and advocacy over many years.

### ***1. Raising awareness***

The initial step in implementing the Declaration is to enhance awareness among peasant and rural communities. Moreover, it is crucial to disseminate knowledge of *UNDROP* not only among national and local executive authorities but also among parliamentarians and the judiciary.

Peasants and rural communities, in particular, must familiarize themselves with the Declaration, its contained rights and its envisioned path. Understanding one's rights is profoundly empowering and can serve as a catalyst to engage in the struggle for their realization. The rights enshrined in *UNDROP* are the result of the collective struggle of peasants, making it natural for them to claim and protect these rights.

Information dissemination entails crafting strategies to make the Declaration widely known, showcasing its relevance to all segments of society. Rights holders, including peasants and others working in rural areas, must be aware of *UNDROP* and actively advocate for its implementation. In this manner, the Declaration can serve as a guiding framework toward more equitable and sustainable rural development, aligned with the broader development goals of our societies.

However, it remains imperative to not only inform those who are already interested, such as peasant organizations and activists dedicated to promoting peasants' rights, but also a broader audience. This is not solely a practical necessity but also a political one. Elected officials and authorities at all levels - national, regional and international - should be well-acquainted with *UNDROP* because they will be responsible for its implementation. Legal professionals, human

rights organizations, labor unions, educators, students and the general public should also be educated about UNDROP to ensure that the rights of peasants and their societal contributions are acknowledged universally.

Widespread awareness can generate public support for the implementation of UNDROP. When the general public understands and supports the rights of peasants and rural workers, there is greater pressure on governments and institutions to take action. Awareness campaigns can influence policymakers and government officials to prioritize the rights of peasants and rural workers. They can create political will and encourage leaders to allocate resources and enact legislation that aligns with UNDROP.

To facilitate this, advertising and advocacy campaigns could be employed, including initiatives like poster campaigns, radio advertisements promoting the Declaration and its rights, newspaper articles and books on the subject. More direct actions, such as marches or peasant fairs featuring informational booths, can also be organized.

Without effective publicity, people may not fully embrace these rights, leading to a lack of understanding and respect for them. UNDROP serves as an educational tool, shedding light on the plight of peasants and the global agricultural and food systems. It also exemplifies peasants' aspirations for the future, making it an ideal vehicle to place peasants and rural workers at the heart of discussions on agriculture, food, the environment and ecology.

Given that the Declaration was crafted in collaboration with the peasants it seeks to protect, it stands as a prominent example of grassroots efforts in shaping international law.

In summary, awareness raising is a foundational step in the implementation of UNDROP. It informs, empowers, mobilizes support, influences policymakers, monitors progress and holds stakeholders accountable, all of which contribute to the effective realization of the rights of peasants and rural workers.

## ***2. Training and Capacity building***

Informing, educating and providing training play pivotal roles in fostering public awareness regarding the paramount significance of peasants' rights. These endeavors form the bedrock for collaboratively and rationally crafting a shared roadmap and staying up-to-date with the initiatives and legal instruments needed to protect and promote the content of UNDROP.

To accomplish this, it is imperative to organize and conduct workshops and training seminars dedicated to comprehending the substance and implications of UNDROP. Initially, these sessions should target peasants' organizations, enabling them to embrace these rights fully. Simultaneously, they should be extended to encompass other civil society groups, interested parties and governmental authorities responsible for legislating and incorporating UNDROP's provisions into the national legal framework. These educational initiatives serve as catalysts for empowerment, understanding and collective action.

Peasants, especially in rural areas, may have limited access to legal resources and information. Training can provide them with the legal literacy necessary to understand their rights, navigate legal processes and advocate for themselves effectively. Training empowers peasants by equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to claim and defend their rights. It instills confidence and a sense of agency, enabling them to actively participate in decision-making processes and demand accountability from authorities.

Trainings should be organized to strengthen the capacity of government institutions responsible for rural development, agriculture and land administration to effectively implement *UNDROP*. Governments and policymakers may need guidance on how to develop and implement policies that promote peasants' rights. Capacity-building initiatives can provide them with the necessary insights and expertise.

Moreover, trainings can be provided to judges, law enforcement agencies and local authorities on peasants' rights and the legal framework established by *UNDROP*. Training can ensure that they understand the nuances of *UNDROP* and apply its provisions appropriately in legal proceedings.

Civil society organizations and human rights defenders often monitor the implementation of international agreements. Training in data collection, reporting mechanisms and accountability frameworks can enhance their ability to assess and report on the status of peasants' rights.

In summary, training and capacity building are essential tools for translating *UNDROP*'s principles and rights into practical actions and outcomes. They empower peasants and their advocates, enable local authorities to fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to the overall success of *UNDROP*'s implementation.

### **3. Advocacy**

Advocacy is a strategic process through which individuals, groups, organizations, or communities seek to influence and bring about change in policies, practices, or attitudes related to a particular issue or cause, in our case the Rights of peasants and rural people. Advocacy typically involves efforts to raise awareness about the issue, shape public opinion and ultimately influence decision-makers, such as government officials or legislators, to adopt policies or take actions that align with the advocate's goals or objectives.

Advocacy can take various forms, including public awareness campaigns, lobbying, coalition building, research and data analysis, grassroots mobilization, legal action, among others. It plays a crucial role in the democratic process by allowing people and groups to participate in shaping public policies and holding decision-makers accountable for their actions.

There is no universally applicable, one-size-fits-all plan that can work across all countries and contexts. Each rural organization and network of organizations must devise its unique strategy based on the specific needs and conditions of the country and its particular circumstances. Nevertheless, several common elements will be integral to all these strategies.

Advocacy often involves building partnerships and alliances with other stakeholders, including civil society organizations, international bodies and grassroots movements. These partnerships can amplify advocacy efforts, share resources and create a unified voice for promoting peasants' rights. This coordination is fundamental for a collective, impactful and politically influential implementation process.

Advocates can provide legal support and guidance to peasants and rural workers facing rights violations. This can include assisting peasants in filing complaints, seeking legal remedies and advocating for fair compensation in cases of land dispossession or eviction.

Advocacy organizations can engage with international organizations, such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies, to ensure that *UNDROP* is integrated into global development agendas and discussions. This can lead to increased international support and pressure on governments to fulfill their obligations. In cases of severe rights violations, advocacy organizations may pursue legal action or support legal cases on behalf of peasants and rural workers. Litigation can be a powerful tool to hold perpetrators accountable and secure justice.

Overall, advocacy plays a vital role in creating an enabling environment for the implementation of *UNDROP* by mobilizing support, raising awareness and holding governments and institutions accountable for upholding peasants' rights.

#### **4. Research**

Research helps in comprehending the specific challenges, needs and conditions faced by peasants and rural workers in different regions and countries. It provides insights into the economic, social, cultural and environmental factors that affect their livelihoods and rights.

Research involves collecting and analyzing data related to peasants' rights, such as land tenure, access to resources, working conditions and social protection. Reliable data is essential for assessing the status quo and monitoring progress in the implementation of *UNDROP*.

Through research, barriers and gaps in the protection and realization of peasants' rights can be identified. This information is crucial for policymakers, civil society organizations and advocates to develop targeted interventions and policies.

Research findings can inform the development of policies, legislation and programs that align with *UNDROP*'s principles and objectives. It helps policymakers make evidence-based decisions to promote peasants' rights.

Research serves as a foundation for monitoring and evaluating the progress and impact of initiatives aimed at implementing *UNDROP*. It helps assess whether policies and programs are effectively advancing peasants' rights.

In summary, research plays a pivotal role in advancing the implementation of *UNDROP* by providing the knowledge, evidence and insights needed to design and implement policies and

programs that protect and promote the rights of peasants and rural workers. It is a fundamental tool for ensuring that the declaration's principles translate into meaningful change on the ground.

## ***5. Legal Reforms and Policy Development***

UNDROP sets out a comprehensive framework of rights and protections for peasants and rural workers and the corresponding obligations of States. Legal reforms and policies are necessary to align national laws and regulations with the principles and provisions of UNDROP. This ensures that international standards are upheld at the national level.

Legal reforms provide a legal basis for the protection of peasants' rights, including land rights, access to natural resources, social protections and the right to a decent standard of living. They enable peasants to seek legal remedies when their rights are violated.

Policies and legal frameworks establish the mechanisms and procedures required for implementing UNDROP. They define the roles and responsibilities of government agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders in realizing peasants' rights.

Legal reforms create avenues for peasants and rural workers to access justice when their rights are infringed upon. This includes establishing courts, tribunals, or other dispute resolution mechanisms to address grievances related to land, labor and other rights.

Legal reforms may necessitate capacity building for legal professionals, government officials and rural communities to understand and implement the new legal provisions effectively.

Legal frameworks can establish mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of UNDROP and holding governments accountable for progress or failures in realizing peasants' rights.

Conducting a thorough review of national laws and regulations is the initial step in identifying gaps and inconsistencies with UNDROP. This process helps in understanding the existing legal framework and areas where alignment with UNDROP is needed. In this regard, a comprehensive assessment or study is necessary, involving a review of each State's domestic laws in light of UNDROP and an examination of the specific circumstances faced by peasants within that State. This process enables the identification of gaps between existing legislation and the standards set by UNDROP. UNDROP serves a dual purpose here: as a benchmark to evaluate current laws and as a model for crafting future legislation.

At the national level, States will need to define their strategies and priorities for the implementation of the Declaration with the participation of relevant stakeholders. Elaborating such strategies will require coordinating with various entities or Ministries. Domestic policies encompassing laws, regulations, strategies, programs and plans should adopt a comprehensive, multidimensional and cross-sectoral approach for effectively implementing the Declaration. These policies should not be limited to human rights, agriculture and rural development institutions alone. Instead, they should engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including those responsible for trade, health, education, labor, transportation, environment and infrastructure.

The active involvement of peasant organizations in shaping these policies is pivotal, as it enables the identification of their unique needs, opportunities and actionable steps. Ideally, national development plans should seamlessly integrate the Declaration, providing the necessary institutional and budgetary support. Moreover, the establishment of national monitoring mechanisms is essential to track and assess progress in implementation.

Developing new laws or amending existing ones to align with *UNDROP*'s principles and provisions is crucial. This ensures that the legal framework explicitly recognizes and protects peasants' rights as outlined in the declaration.

For example, if a State's seed law prohibits the exchange of farm seeds among peasants, it would be contrary to Article 19 of *UNDROP*, which recognizes the right to seeds. In response, this article can be invoked to demand the amendment or repeal of the law, or it can serve as a foundation for new legislation.

The legal framework should explicitly recognize and protect peasants' rights to land, food, seeds, education and cultural heritage. This recognition provides a strong legal basis for enforcing these rights and seeking remedies when violations occur.

Peasant organizations and their allies can collaboratively develop concrete proposals for authorities to enhance the implementation of peasants' rights. One possible proposal is to transpose the content of *UNDROP* into binding law, allowing for legal action against any entity, public or private, failing to uphold *UNDROP*'s principles. Depending on the country, additional legislation, regulations, implementing decrees and a comprehensive policy framework may be necessary for effective implementation. Attention must also be given to the allocation of financial and human resources to ensure practical implementation.

Developing national policies and action plans that promote rural development, poverty reduction and the protection of peasants' rights is essential. These policies provide a roadmap for implementing *UNDROP*'s principles at the national level. *UNDROP* should serve as the guiding framework for rural development policies. Any reforms or initiatives that may impact peasants' well-being should be evaluated in terms of their alignment with the rights outlined in *UNDROP*. This approach establishes *UNDROP* as the definitive standard for the rights of peasants and rural workers.

Beyond its legal significance, *UNDROP* is a potent political instrument that can be wielded in the advocacy for peasants' rights. By invoking human rights, the debate surrounding peasants' rights can be reframed within the political and moral domains. *UNDROP* shifts the discourse from purely economic considerations to one that recognizes peasants as rights holders. This perspective makes it challenging for those opposed to peasants' interests to disregard the moral underpinning of human rights. *UNDROP* can be employed to critique the actions of private actors, such as transnational corporations and to tip the scales in favor of peasants' rights.

While in States where *UNDROP* has not been incorporated into domestic law, it may not directly compel implementation through the courts, it can still be used as a persuasive argument in favor of peasants' rights. In individual cases, *UNDROP* can be invoked to ensure its consideration when applying existing laws to persons. Moreover, it can be used in higher courts to advocate for broader legal changes that benefit everyone. For instance, in a hypothetical scenario involving land grabbing, where an individual has been denied access to land by an authority for non-agricultural purposes, Article 17 of *UNDROP*, recognizing the right to land and the social function of land, could be utilized in court to challenge the authority's decision by demonstrating its inconsistency with the duty to safeguard the public interest.

In conclusion, legal reforms and policy developments provide the necessary legal and institutional foundation for translating *UNDROP*'s principles into actionable rights and protections for peasants and rural workers. They are essential for ensuring that the declaration's goals are achieved and that peasants' rights are upheld at the national level.

## ***6. Participation and Consultation***

Actively involving rural communities and their organizations in decision-making processes related to rural development ensures that policies and initiatives are informed by the needs and priorities of the people they affect. This participatory approach aligns with *UNDROP*'s principles of recognizing peasants as rights' holders and respecting their right to participate in shaping their own destinies.

Organizing regular consultations and dialogues with peasants serves as a crucial mechanism for identifying their evolving needs and priorities. This ongoing engagement allows for real-time adjustments to policies and programs, ensuring they remain responsive to the dynamic challenges faced by rural communities.

Establishing mechanisms for feedback and complaints regarding the violation of peasants' rights creates accountability and transparency in the implementation of *UNDROP*. Peasants can report any violations or shortcomings and these grievances can be addressed promptly. This empowers peasants to assert their rights and safeguards against potential abuses.

Incorporating these strategies into the implementation process fosters a collaborative and inclusive approach that aligns with the spirit and objectives of *UNDROP*. It ensures that the rights of peasants are not only recognized in principle but also actively upheld and protected in practice, thereby contributing to the achievement of the Declaration's goals.

## ***7. Resource Allocation***

Resource allocation is needed for awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy efforts and educational initiatives aimed at promoting *UNDROP*'s principles. This ensures that rural communities, civil society organizations and policymakers are well-informed and engaged in the implementation process.

Allocating resources for training and capacity building programs is essential. These programs can empower rural communities and relevant authorities with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively enforce and protect peasants' rights.

In some cases, legal reforms may be necessary to align national laws and policies with *UNDROP*'s principles and provisions. Allocating resources for legal reviews, consultations and amendments is essential for legal harmonization.

Implementing the rights and protections outlined in *UNDROP* often requires financial resources. For example, ensuring access to education, healthcare and social services for rural communities may require budget allocations to build and maintain infrastructure, train personnel and provide necessary facilities.

To ensure compliance with *UNDROP*, resources are needed to establish and maintain monitoring mechanisms. These mechanisms help track progress, identify violations and hold accountable those responsible for upholding peasants' rights.

Implementing *UNDROP* may involve legal action to address violations of peasants' rights. Resources are needed to support legal processes, provide legal aid to vulnerable people or communities and ensure access to justice.

Resource allocation for research and data collection is essential to understand the specific challenges faced by rural communities and to inform evidence-based policies and programs.

Investments in rural infrastructure, such as roads, irrigation systems and agricultural support services, are often necessary to improve the living conditions of peasants and support sustainable rural development.

Allocating resources for social protection programs, including healthcare, unemployment benefits and pension schemes, is vital to ensure that peasants have a safety net in times of need.

In summary, resource allocation is essential for translating *UNDROP*'s principles into tangible actions and outcomes that benefit rural communities. Without adequate resources, the effective implementation of peasants' rights may remain an unrealized goal.

## **8. Monitoring**

A critical subsequent phase in the implementation process involves monitoring. Vigilant and ongoing monitoring of *UNDROP*'s implementation remains essential, as it is the only means to detect and address deviations and violations comprehensively. A mere superficial or formal implementation process is insufficient. Instead, rural organizations, their allies and all stakeholders with an interest in this matter must maintain a vigilant watch over *UNDROP*'s implementation to ensure it effectively addresses the needs of peasants.

To facilitate this, a range of tools and initiatives can be developed, including:



- Regular reports that provide an overview of the status of peasants' rights in various countries, regions, or localities.
- Thorough analyses of national policies and legislation related to the protection of peasants' rights, evaluating their alignment with the principles outlined in *UNDROP*.
- Concrete recommendations presented to authorities, suggesting ways to rectify shortcomings or gaps in agricultural and rural policies.

These efforts aim to ensure that *UNDROP*'s implementation remains dynamic, responsive and consistent with the rights and well-being of peasants and rural communities. Monitoring serves as a vital mechanism to maintain accountability and promote effective policy adjustments when needed.

## ***9. United Nations monitoring mechanism***

Monitoring should take place at all levels, in all countries, as appropriate to the specific circumstances and needs of the community concerned.

It is essential to have monitoring mechanisms in place at both the national and international levels, each playing a complementary role and providing support to the other.

At the international level, a future objective is to establish a monitoring body dedicated to *UNDROP* within the United Nations. This body would serve as a valuable resource for the implementation of *UNDROP*, fulfilling multiple functions:

*Facilitating Discussion and Cooperation:* The international monitoring body would serve as a forum for discussion and collaboration, coordinating implementation efforts among countries. It could publish documents clarifying the interpretation of the Declaration and propose specific strategies for both national and international implementation.

*Handling Complaints:* The body would receive complaints from individuals and communities whose rights, as outlined in the Declaration, are still being violated. It would function as a mechanism for dialogue with the respective States involved. In situations where national mechanisms for protection fail, affected parties could turn to this international body to hold their governments accountable.

*Sustaining Agenda Focus:* Importantly, the international monitoring body would help maintain the prominence of peasants' rights within the agendas of various UN bodies and procedures. The adoption of the Declaration should not be perceived as a resolution of the issue but rather as the beginning of a continued commitment. The implementation of *UNDROP* should remain a subject of debate and discussion within the UN Human Rights Council and among its member States.

## ***10. Coordination and cooperation among states and international organizations***

In this regard, States may consider aligning their investments and international collaborations with the principles of *UNDROP* as integral components of their Development Strategies.

On a regional and international scale, several opportunities warrant exploration by countries. First and foremost, relevant UN Agencies, including FAO, CFS, ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNEP and UN Women, should collaborate to assist nations in implementing *UNDROP*. They should take this instrument into account when defining their priorities and programs.

Furthermore, UN member states can engage in discussions within pertinent regional or multilateral forums, such as the General Assembly, WIPO, WTO, WHO, among others, to enhance international norms and standards so that they align with the rights and obligations outlined in *UNDROP*. States might contemplate adopting additional rules or measures within the multilateral system to support the realization of *UNDROP*.

The global human rights framework, spanning regional and international levels, will play a pivotal role in overseeing the implementation of *UNDROP*. Existing mechanisms like the Universal Periodic Review, Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures have a critical role to play in advancing the rights of peasants. These mechanisms can provide tailored recommendations to States based on their individual needs and characteristics.

A collective of human rights experts recently marked the one-year anniversary of *UNDROP*'s adoption with a joint statement<sup>44</sup>. They pledged to integrate its implementation into their work and offer guidance to States in fulfilling the rights and obligations encapsulated in *UNDROP*. Significantly, the joint statement by human rights experts called for the establishment of a new special procedure dedicated to the rights of peasants and other persons working in rural areas. This aligns with the request from peasant movements advocating for a similar special procedure, such as a Special Rapporteur or a Working Group of experts, tasked with monitoring *UNDROP*'s implementation. The role of a new special procedure would be instrumental in offering specific attention to this instrument, preparing thematic reports and providing personalized recommendations. A Working Group could benefit from diverse perspectives and insights from experts across different regions. Conversely, a Special Rapporteur might enjoy greater visibility and have the capacity to conduct country visits. Ongoing debates concerning the effectiveness and budget of the Human Rights Council may influence the consideration of these new procedures. Within this context, countries could explore innovative and improved means to showcase their progress and needs, effectively channeling international cooperation to support the realization of *UNDROP*.

Additionally, countries may contemplate establishing a United Nations Fund, similar to the one established for indigenous peoples, to facilitate the participation of peasants in relevant discussions, ensuring regional and gender balance. Also, seeking technical assistance and financial

---

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2019/12/joint-statement-un-human-rights-experts-1st-anniversary-adoption-un-declaration>

support from international organizations and donors to implement UNDROP effectively is highly important.

By fostering coordination and cooperation at various levels, including local, national, regional and international, states and international organizations can maximize their collective efforts to advance the implementation of UNDROP. This collaborative approach enhances the prospects for achieving the rights and well-being of peasants and rural workers worldwide.

## ***11. Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities***

Indigenous and local communities often have well-established networks and advocacy organizations. Partnering with these groups can amplify advocacy efforts to raise awareness about UNDROP, peasants' rights and rural development issues at local, national and international levels. Collaborative initiatives empower rural communities, including peasants, by involving them in decision-making processes. This engagement ensures that policies and programs related to rural development are shaped by the people directly affected by them.

Indigenous peoples and local communities often have a deep understanding of sustainable agriculture, traditional farming practices and natural resource management. Collaboration allows for the exchange of knowledge and practices, contributing to more sustainable and context-appropriate rural development strategies.

Indigenous peoples and local communities frequently face land tenure challenges, similar to those experienced by peasants. Collaboration can help address land tenure issues by sharing strategies for securing land rights, protecting territories and preventing land grabbing.

Indigenous and local communities often have experience in conflict resolution and negotiation with governments and external actors. Their expertise can be valuable in resolving conflicts related to land, resources and peasants' rights.

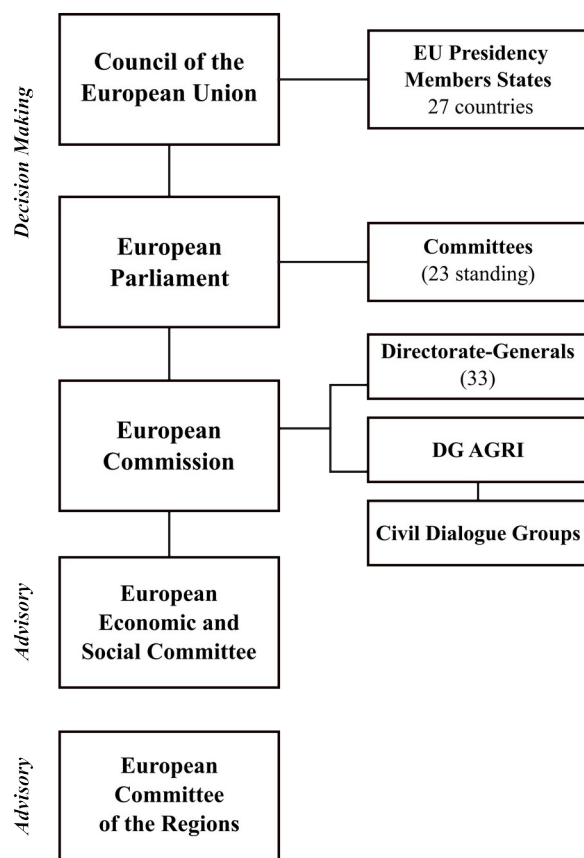
Collaborative efforts can include capacity-building programs for indigenous and local community leaders, peasants and civil society organizations. Training in advocacy, legal literacy and organizing can strengthen the collective voice of rural communities.

Collaboration fosters solidarity among marginalized rural groups, including peasants, indigenous peoples and local communities. A unified voice can be more effective in advocating for their rights and interests.

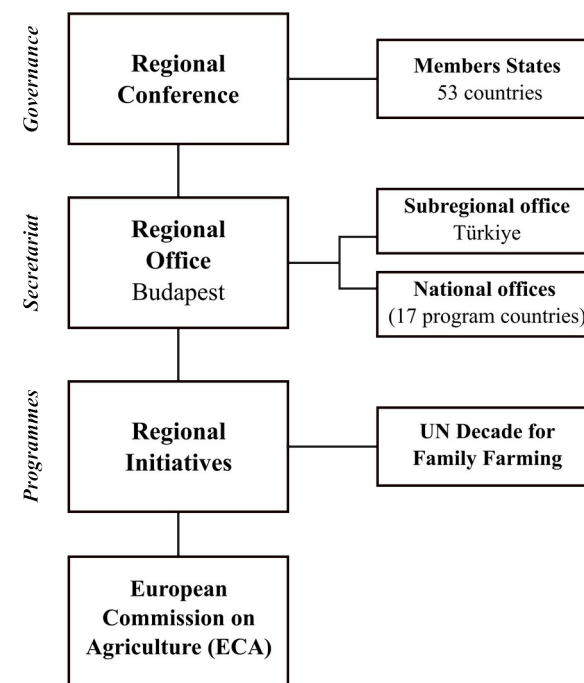
Overall, collaboration with indigenous peoples and local communities not only enriches the implementation of UNDROP but also ensures that the rights and well-being of all rural populations are advanced in a holistic and inclusive manner. It promotes the principles of equity, social justice and sustainability at the heart of UNDROP's objectives.

# Regional political spaces and processes relevant for the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas* in Europe and Central Asia

## European Union



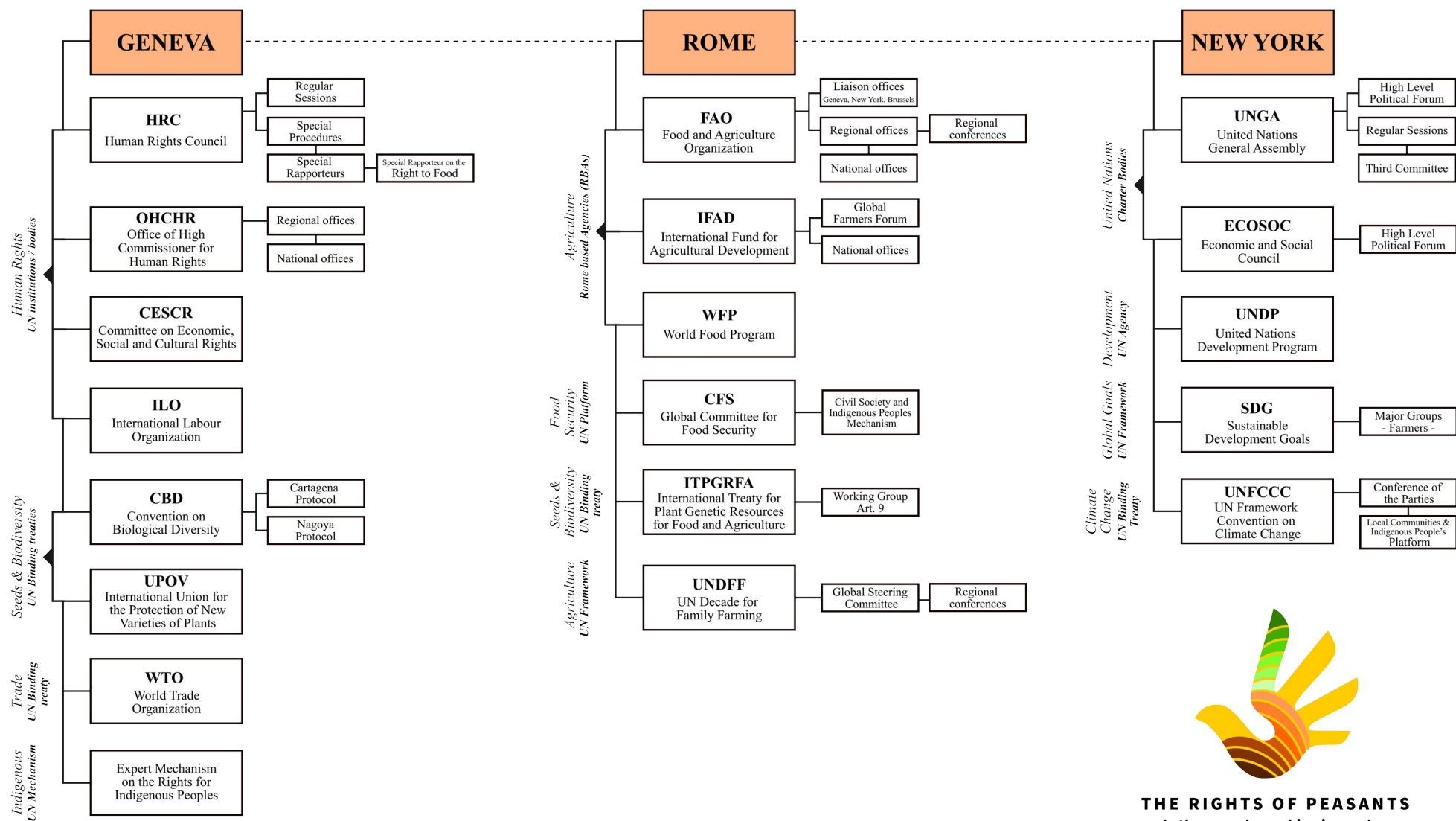
## FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia



**Europe and Central Asia FAO region:** 53 members states of which 17 are **programme countries** (Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan).

**European Union:** 28 member states (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden).

# Global political spaces and processes relevant for the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas*



**THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS**  
and other people working in rural areas

## VI. Recommendations

### For Governments and public servants:

- a) *Incorporate UNDROP into Domestic Legislation.* States should review their existing laws and regulations to identify gaps and inconsistencies with UNDROP. They should then amend or develop legislation to align with the principles and provisions of UNDROP.
- b) *Strengthen Peasant Organizations.* States should recognize and support the role of peasant organizations in advocating for the rights of peasants. They should facilitate their participation in decision-making processes related to food and agriculture.
- c) *Raise Awareness and Build Capacity.* States should engage in awareness-raising efforts to inform the public, public servants and rural communities about UNDROP and its implications. They should also invest in capacity-building for public servants responsible for implementing the declaration.
- d) *Consult with Peasants and Rural Communities.* States should engage in regular consultations and dialogues with peasants and rural communities to identify their needs and priorities, ensuring that policies and programs are tailored to their specific contexts.
- e) *Support Sustainable Agricultural Practices.* States should promote and support sustainable agricultural practices that prioritize agroecology, food security and environmental sustainability.
- f) *Establish Grievance Mechanisms.* States should establish mechanisms for receiving and addressing complaints regarding the violation of peasants' rights, ensuring that these mechanisms are accessible and effective.
- g) *Coordinate Across Government Agencies.* States should ensure that different government agencies, including those responsible for agriculture, rural development, health, education and human rights, coordinate their efforts to implement UNDROP effectively.
- h) *Report and Monitor Progress.* States should develop reporting mechanisms to monitor progress in the implementation of UNDROP. This may include regular reporting to international bodies or establishing national monitoring frameworks.
- i) *Seek Technical Assistance and Financial Support.* States should explore opportunities to seek technical assistance and financial support from international organizations and donors to facilitate the implementation of UNDROP.
- j) *Support Research and Data Collection.* States should support research and data collection efforts to better understand the situation of peasants and rural workers in their country and to track progress in the implementation of UNDROP.

k) *Engage in International Cooperation*. States should engage in international cooperation and collaboration to align their policies and practices with the principles and provisions of *UNDROP*. This includes participating in relevant regional and multilateral forums.

## **For peasants and peasants movements:**

a) *Know Your Rights*. Peasants should familiarize themselves with the rights outlined in *UNDROP*, including rights to land, seeds, education, healthcare and cultural heritage. Understanding these rights is the first step in advocating for their fulfillment.

b) *Organize and Advocate*. Peasants should consider forming or joining peasant organizations or movements to collectively advocate for their rights. Strength in numbers can be a powerful tool for bringing about change.

c) *Participate in Peasant Networks*. Peasants should consider participating in regional or international peasant networks and alliances to share experiences, knowledge and strategies for advancing peasants' rights.

d) *Participate in Decision-Making*. Peasants should actively participate in local and national decision-making processes related to rural development, agriculture and land management. Their input and voices should be heard and considered.

e) *Document Violations*. Peasants should keep records and document any violations of their rights, such as land grabs or discrimination. This documentation can serve as evidence when seeking legal redress.

f) *Seek Legal Assistance*. If peasants face violations of their rights, they should seek legal assistance and advice from relevant organizations, legal aid providers, or human rights advocates to explore legal remedies.

g) *Report Violations*. Peasants should report any violations of their rights to relevant authorities, human rights organizations, or ombudsman offices to seek redress and support for their grievances.

h) *Engage in Awareness-Raising*. Peasants should engage in awareness-raising efforts to inform their communities and the wider public about *UNDROP* and the rights it affirms. This can help build support for the implementation of these rights.

i) *Participate in Training and Education*. Peasants should take advantage of educational and training opportunities related to agriculture, agroecology and sustainable farming practices to enhance their livelihoods.

- j) *Monitor Government Actions*. Peasants should monitor government actions and policies related to rural development and agriculture, holding authorities accountable for their commitments to peasants' rights.
- k) *Stay Informed and Engaged*. Peasants should stay informed about developments related to *UNDROP*, including legal reforms and policy changes that may affect their rights. They should remain engaged in advocacy efforts.
- l) *Build Solidarity*. Peasants should build solidarity with other marginalized communities, indigenous peoples and social movements advocating for land and human rights. Collective action can be a powerful force for change.

### **For International Organizations:**

- a) *Familiarize with UNDROP*. International organizations should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the provisions and principles of *UNDROP* to better understand the rights of peasants and rural workers.
- b) *Incorporate UNDROP into Policies and Programs*. International organizations working in rural development, agriculture, human rights and related areas should integrate the principles and rights outlined in *UNDROP* into their policies, programs and projects.
- c) *Support Peasant Organizations*. International organizations can provide financial and technical support to peasant organizations and movements, enabling them to play a more active role in advocating for their rights.
- d) *Support Awareness-Raising*. International organizations can support awareness-raising efforts aimed at educating rural communities, civil society and governments about the rights affirmed in *UNDROP*.
- e) *Foster Dialogue and Cooperation*. Facilitate dialogue and cooperation among governments, peasant organizations and civil society to address rural development challenges and implement *UNDROP* effectively.
- f) *Provide Technical Assistance*. International organizations can offer technical assistance and capacity-building support to governments and local organizations in implementing *UNDROP*. This may include sharing expertise on land tenure, sustainable agriculture and rural development.
- g) *Provide Legal Expertise*. Offer legal expertise and guidance to governments and legal institutions in drafting and amending laws and regulations that protect and promote peasants' rights.
- h) *Advocate for Policy Reforms*. Encourage and advocate for policy reforms and legal changes at the national and regional levels that align with the principles of *UNDROP*.



- i) *Support Implementation Mechanisms*. Encourage the establishment of national and regional mechanisms for the implementation of *UNDROP* and offer support as needed.
- j) *Monitor and Report on Progress*. Track and report on the progress of *UNDROP* implementation in various countries, highlighting best practices and identifying areas where further action is needed.
- k) *Support Research and Data Collection*. Support data collection, research and studies related to rural development, land tenure and the well-being of peasants to inform evidence-based policies.
- l) *Promote Sustainable Agriculture*. Advocate for and support sustainable agricultural practices that enhance the livelihoods of peasants while respecting environmental and ecological considerations.
- m) *Coordinate with Other UN Agencies*. Collaborate with other United Nations agencies, such as FAO, UNDP and UNICEF, to ensure a coordinated approach to rural development and the protection of peasants' rights.
- n) *Ensure Inclusivity*. Ensure that the perspectives and voices of peasants and rural communities are included in international forums, conferences and decision-making processes.
- o) *Advocate for Funding*. Advocate for funding and resources dedicated to initiatives aimed at implementing *UNDROP* and improving the well-being of peasants.

## **For Academia:**

- a) *Research and Documentation*. Conduct research and document the conditions, challenges and needs of peasants and rural communities to provide evidence-based support for *UNDROP* implementation.
- b) *Education and Training*. Integrate *UNDROP* principles and the rights of peasants into academic curricula and provide training opportunities for students and professionals in relevant fields.
- c) *Policy Analysis*. Analyze existing policies and legislation in the context of *UNDROP* and provide recommendations for alignment and improvement.
- d) *Support Peasant Movements*. Collaborate with peasant organizations and movements by offering expertise, research findings and analytical insights to strengthen their advocacy efforts.
- e) *Publish Research*. Publish research findings, reports and academic papers that highlight the importance of *UNDROP* and provide guidance on its implementation.
- f) *Engage in Public Discourse*. Participate in public discourse, conferences and seminars to promote the understanding and significance of *UNDROP* among academics, policymakers and civil society.

- g) *Interdisciplinary Cooperation*. Foster interdisciplinary cooperation among academics from various fields, such as law, agriculture, sociology and economics, to comprehensively address peasant rights.
- h) *Promote Dialogue*. Organize dialogues, symposia and conferences that facilitate discussions between academia, civil society, policymakers and rural communities on UNDROP-related topics.
- i) *Advocate for Funding*. Advocate for funding and resources to support academic research and initiatives related to the implementation of UNDROP.
- j) *Policy Recommendations*. Develop and share policy recommendations based on research findings to guide governments and international organizations in implementing UNDROP effectively.

### **For Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):**

- a) *Raise Awareness and Advocate*. CSOs should actively raise awareness about UNDROP and advocate for its implementation by engaging with local communities, governments and international organizations.
- b) *Mobilize and support Peasant Communities*. Work closely with peasant organizations and communities to mobilize them in understanding and asserting their rights as outlined in UNDROP.
- c) *Capacity Building*. Provide and support training and capacity-building programs to empower rural communities and organizations in advocating for their rights effectively.
- d) *Monitor Implementation*. Establish mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of UNDROP at the local, national and international levels and document violations or gaps.
- e) *Collaborate and Network*. Collaborate with other civil society organizations, both locally and globally, to share knowledge, resources and strategies for UNDROP implementation.
- f) *Legal Assistance*. Offer legal assistance and support to peasants and rural workers facing land disputes, evictions or other violations of their rights.
- g) *Engage in Policy Dialogues*. Engage in policy dialogues with governments, peasants, international organizations and academia to influence the development of pro-peasants' rights policies and legislation.

## VII. Refferences

*Since 1948, a growing number of international and regional instruments have been adopted to promote sustainable development, protect human rights, biological diversity, food security and to improve the governance of natural resources used as means of production. They offer a good basis for laying the grounds of a complex implementation process for UNDROP.*

*These instruments recognize and protect, from different perspectives, smallholders, peasant family farmers and their vital role in addressing some of today's most important global challenges, linking human rights with food and agriculture. They are interconnected and should be implemented in a mutually reinforcing manner.*

*Also, the process of negotiation of UNDROP produced a flow of information and resources that can be further used for the promotion and implementation. Since the adoption of UNDROP in 2018 various academic institutions, professional and civil society organizations created numerous publications, guides, analysis and documents that can assist all relevant actors in the process of education and implementation of the rights of peasants at national levels.*

### **Relevant international instruments:**

#### ***Human Rights:***

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 1948
2. European Convention on Human Rights. 1950
3. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. 1965
4. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. 1966
5. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. 1966
6. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. 1979
7. Convention on the Rights of the Child. 1989
8. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. 1990
9. European Social Charter. 1996
10. UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. 2007
11. UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. 2018

#### ***Food and agriculture:***

1. Convention on Biological Diversity. 1992
2. International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. 2001
3. FAO Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. 2004

4. Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. 2010
5. Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. 2012
6. Food security and climate change. Policy recommendations, 2012
7. Social protection for food security. Policy recommendations, 2012
8. Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security. Policy recommendations, 2013
9. Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. 2014
10. Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems. 2014
11. Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises. 2015
12. Water for Food Security and Nutrition. Policy recommendations, 2015
13. Connecting Smallholders to Markets. Policy recommendations, 2016
14. Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition. 2017
15. The Resolution on the UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028. 2018
16. Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. Policy recommendations, 2021
17. Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition. 2021

**General framework instruments:**

1. The Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 2015

**Documents resulted from UNDROP negotiation process:**

1. Open-ended intergovernmental working group on a United Nations declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. Studies by the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee and sessions of negotiations.

**Relevant publications and reports**

***By the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:***

1. Right to Food Methodological Toolbox. 2008-2014
2. A tool for gender-sensitive agriculture and rural development policy and programme formulation. Guidelines for Ministries of Agriculture and FAO on the implementation of CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. 2013

3. Responsible governance of tenure and the law. A guide for lawyers and legal service providers for the use of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. 2016
4. Tailoring rural advisory services for family farming. 2016
5. The future of food and agriculture. Trends and challenges. 2017
6. Putting the Voluntary Guidelines on Tenure into practice. A learning guide for civil society organizations. 2017
7. FAO's work on Family Farming. Preparing for the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028). 2018
8. Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). Combining agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, traditional farming practices and cultural identity. 2018
9. United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028. Global Action Plan. 2019
10. Empowering smallholders and family farms in Europe and Central Asia. 2019
11. Food and agriculture Key to Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Europe and Central Asia. 2019
12. Right to adequate food in constitutions. Legal brief for parliamentarians in Africa. 2019
13. Putting family farmers at the centre to achieve the SDGs. 2019
14. Smallholders and family farms – country reports. 2020. Albania. Armenia. Georgia. Kyrgyzstan. Republic of Moldova. Serbia. Tajikistan.
15. COVID-19 and smallholder producers' access to markets. Legal considerations in the context of responses to COVID-19 to mitigate the risk of food insecurity. Legal mechanisms to contribute to safe and secured food supply chains in time of COVID-19. 2020
16. Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia 2021.
17. Legislative and regulatory frameworks for family farming. 2021
18. Legal brief on family farming. 2022
19. The State of Food and Agriculture 2022 (SOFA Report).
20. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022 (SOFI Report).

***Other FAO Resources:***

1. FAO LEX. Comprehensive legislative and policy database.
2. FAO Gender and Land Rights Database.
3. Family Farming Knowledge Platform.
4. FAO Agroecology Knowledge Hub.

***By the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security:***

1. Land tenure and international investments in agriculture. 2011
2. Food security and climate change. 2012
3. Social protection for food security. 2012
4. Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security. 2013
5. Water for food security and nutrition. 2015
6. Nutrition and food systems. 2017
7. Agroecological and other innovative approaches. 2019
8. Impacts of Covid-19 on food security and nutrition: developing effective policy responses to address the hunger and malnutrition pandemic. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2021
9. Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems. 2021
10. Critical, emerging and enduring issues for food security and nutrition. 2022
11. The impacts on global food security and nutrition of the military conflict in Ukraine. 2022

***By Geneva Academy – Academy of International Humanitarian law and Human Rights:***

1. Research brief. The implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. March 2019
2. The Right to Seeds in Europe. UNDROP and the protection of the Right to Seeds in Europe. 2019
3. Research brief. The Role of Human Rights Mechanisms in Monitoring the UNDROP. 2020
4. Research brief. The Right to Seeds and intellectual property rights. 2020
5. Research brief. The Right to Seeds and Food Systems. 2020
6. Research brief. The Right to Land and other natural resources. 2020
7. The Right to Land and the UNDROP. How can we use the UNDROP to protect the Right to Land? 2020
8. Practical Manual on the Right to Seeds in Europe. 2021

***By the Institute of Economics and Forecasting of NAS Ukraine***

1. The social importance of land for the present and future of Ukraine. 2019
2. Land reform and human rights. 2021

***By the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security (CSMI):***

1. Connecting Smallholders to markets: an analytical guide. 2016

2. Civil Society Report on the use and implementation of the Right to Food Guidelines. 2018
3. Towards Smallholder-oriented Public Policies: Independent report by CSMI monitoring the use and implementation of CFS policy recommendations on smallholders. 2019
4. Voices from the ground: from Covid-19 to radical transformation of our food systems. 2020

***By the Centre Europe – Tiers Monde (CETIM):***

1. UNDROP: a Tool in the Struggle for our Common Future. 2019
2. Training sheets on peasants' rights. 2021

***By FIAN International:***

1. Legal toolkit: Covid-19 and The Right to Food. A list of international obligations. 2020
2. Peasants' rights briefings. 2021
3. Legal and institutional frameworks for the Right to Food and Nutrition. 2022

***By South Centre:***

1. UNDROP: One Step Forward in the Promotion of Human Rights for the Most Vulnerable. 2020
2. Policy brief. The Implementation of UNDROP: what is next? 2021