



Young Farmers for the Future Online Forum

Joint Declaration

- final draft -

In these extraordinary times, young farmers are more important than ever. Our voice is crucial and we are not only working hard to build the future and to become the leaders of tomorrow but we already take charge of leadership today. This Declaration serves a tool of inspiration for anyone involved in the public policy process on food and agriculture, providing fresh insights from young farmers' day to day reality accompanied by recommendations and solutions for European policymakers.

We are young farmers across Europe and every day we challenge a problematic food and agriculture political framework that declares to support us, but in practice limits more and more our basic rights.

The revival of the European food systems cannot be achieved without full participation of youth and without respecting our fundamental rights. This is not simply only a matter of financial resources, but a struggle that young people face on a broad range of agricultural policy-levels.

This declaration calls upon all of society to build a sustainable food system in which we desire to play a central role as main actors. We have and can offer much more and we do not wish to be limited to the role of solely a simple implementer of technology, a simple tool of a food supply chain, while our position as farmers becomes more and more marginal.

There is no future for sustainable food systems without farmers and there will be no farmers if young farmers are not allowed to work and develop. All we, the young farmers of Europe, are offered are empty policies that declare our important role in the future of agriculture in name only and deny the reality of its unfriendly political framework in our daily practices.

We, young farmers, are hopeful. We want to be masters of our own future, of our way to produce and be a central component of the society. We will guarantee the right to food for all, utilizing our knowledge, our capacity to produce for all, without harming nature and putting our knowledge and capacities at the heart of our production model.

We are the innovation in every sense of the word, we bring the renewal in the future sustainable food systems that we so desperately need and we will not accept to lose the control of our production.

We want to enjoy our rights to land and water, to a decent life. We want to create sustainable food systems that respect nature and all natural resources, that allow us to produce safe and quality food for all, help those that feel disconnected from nature and oppose those that intend to destroy it for their own gain. We want our farms to be active participants in society, which fulfills multiple needs - from being a solution to climate change to providing food to consumers.

We want all our farms to work together, to be supported collectively and to facilitate our access to markets and other facilities, such as processing and food transformation possibilities in order to add value to our products and to ensure access to good food for all.

To change the political framework and to achieve sustainable food systems centered on the rights of the farmers and the consumers we need to address the following elements:

AN EU FOOD AND FARMING POLICIES FOR THE FUTURE WITH YOUNG FARMERS AS CENTRAL ACTORS

We need **new criteria** to transform invisible young farmers into visible ones. We want a new definition that is not only linked to age and dimension of the farm, but also the will to start a new profession.

Knowledge and competences. We want the right to our knowledge to be recognized, not only the formal ones. We need an agricultural basic education to comprehend the relationship between the soils – plants/vegetables – and animals and the circulation between them and practical agricultural knowledge to be transferred from the very early child age (i.e. practical grafting workshops in the kindergarten or school). We recognize farmers' knowledge as essential and transfer of this knowledge between generations as a central part of our training. We want to support more transfers of knowledge through horizontal relations.

Recognize young **farmers' demands as central in the governance of food and agriculture** and to be heard at the local and European level. The current programs for young farmers are very difficult to access, due to bureaucracy and inefficiency, and are insufficient to our needs in terms of access to land, knowledge transfer, access to market, credit and grants.

A better future for farming has to be based on **social justice** and stop all direct and indirect support to all industrialization processes like biofuels or giant animal husbandry hubs. The unfair CAP payment system based on per area payment has to be stopped.

The **public funds** need to become democratically accessible to youth. Bureaucracy and corruption are the predominant obstacles we face and we need immediate action to actively stop corruption and directly simplify all bureaucratic obstacles to access funds.

Direct payments (subsidies) made from public funding must prioritize small scale local farmers (producers) while protecting local communities' right to development. **Social conditionality** (the number of people and high standards of decent work conditions) must be the main criteria for accessing subsidies.

Public policies at all levels (including CAP) must protect the local communities, prioritizing small scale agroecological young farmers, from the phenomenon of **land grabbing**, while ensuring **equitable and fair access to land** at local national, regional level and reducing inequalities within and between countries in Europe.

Also, the public system in regard to welfare schemes must be improved, especially those related to maternity and parental leave and policies in case of illness, in order to ensure viability of family planning and farm investment at the same time.

DEVELOP MARKETS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

We need a **legislative framework**, such as the ones concerning food processing, that guarantees safety for our consumers, but that will not create another bureaucratic obstacle, especially for those among us producing at a small scale level.

Especially small scale producers face an extraordinary amount of difficulties while processing food, that are bound to their production size and completely unnecessary.

Current legislation does not support us, but facilitates corruption, and demands a huge bureaucratic and financial burden.

To guarantee health and quality food to all. The relation between the right to food and the right to health have to be put at the center of all policies concerning access to markets.

Fair and affordable prices for all. The real cost of food production has to include the issue of hidden costs. It has to be clear the hidden social costs (the exploitation of migrant workers for example), environmental (abuse of pesticides, pollution of water and land) in the hyper cheap food. The role of public procurement has to improve access to quality products for low income communities and we also need a better regulation of markets to avoid unfair competition of super- and hypermarkets .

Diverse models and schemes of accessing the market including public procurement and consumers' awareness;
Investment policies to support short value chains - including loans, investments in infrastructures;

Knowledge - we need to facilitate the ways in which we can share our experiences and strengthen our knowledge; The farmers' cooperative represent also a unique starting point for developing and sharing knowledge about sustainable agriculture and also tools and other resources.

Prioritization of local markets with the support of public policies. Markets at all levels must function based on a **democratic process**, putting food producers at the center, ensuring safeguards against conflicts of interest and against unfair commercial practices, protecting the small scale young agroecological's farmers access to markets.

GUARANTEE OUR RIGHTS TO NATURAL RESOURCES – LAND, SEEDS, WATER to ENSURE A VIABLE FUTURE FOR YOUNG FARMERS

Recognition of rights. The need to have our rights recognized, acknowledged and respected and to have the opportunity to exercise our rights as peasants.

Raising awareness regarding the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP). We need to raise awareness among other peasants and with regards to the state. We want action and policies that put the UNDROP in practice and create tools to monitor its implementation.

The right to land. The right to land is the basic and inalienable right that allows us to be farmers. The few positive examples that recognize the right to land have to be spread all over Europe and its examples copied and implemented.

The right to seeds. We want to produce, share and sell our own seeds and we need to safeguard and share knowledge on how to produce our own seeds.

The right to water. Bureaucratic and economic barriers on access to water have to be lifted and water should be managed at a community level to overcome conflict and privatization of water. **Small scale fisheries' right to water must be promoted and protected.**

Reference for food and agriculture policies. The new food and agriculture policies should be based **on** UNDROP and we need to abandon the old trade approach that has characterized these policies in the past, making farmers poorer and the environment polluted, without stopping hunger in the world.

SUPPORT TO YOUNG FARMERS to WORK TOGETHER and TO INNOVATE AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE CREATIVELY

Digital gap. Rural areas are less well connected than towns, because the private sector invests less capital in broadband infrastructure, having in mind the risks in the short term or profiting only in the long term. This derives the drawback in the process of digitalization, where current broadband speed is far behind Europe 2020 goals for rural network coverage. We want to advocate for expanding public investment in telecommunications, e-mobility and 'soft' infrastructure that links rural communities, and promote 'smart entrepreneurship'. We demand to have local digital solutions to close the gap between urban and rural areas. Gender and age equity in the usage of digital instruments should be ensured through digital growth.

Digitalization on Data Ownership. Data privatization, data rights, concentration of the economy, dematerialization; all those issues have to be addressed immediately before we continue on the process of digitalization of agriculture. Those are the obligations of legislators, on all levels of governments, regarding data ownership of farmers.

We demand social criteria to evaluate innovation for positive progress. These will have to be assessed in four ways: 1) Impact on labor and livelihoods, 2) disconnection from nature, 3) the relation of innovation with communities, 4) how can technology be used to protect our rights

The role of the young farmers in the innovation process is central. We are users of technology made by others, but we are also the generators of innovation and therefore its transfer agents. We want young farmers' ideas and data to be protected. We need young farmers to have better possibilities to organize common work, networking through digital innovation and to keep the control of the process in our hands.

Digitalization of markets and re-localization of food markets. We have new ways to access the market that we are exploring, many experiences are already in practice, such as short supply chains that are directly benefiting the local communities. We can also find many examples of eco-tourism that are managed digitally by young farmers. We need to share more on those possibilities and have specific public support.

Innovation is key also to have a horizontal and democratic model of **education, knowledge transfer, public awareness**, such as including traceability of food - back to the source.

This Declaration was conceived as part of the EU Horizon2020 project BOND – Bringing Organizations & Network Development to higher levels in the Farming sector in Europe. The process of consultation involved young farmers from dozens of European countries, taking part in the Young Farmers for the Future Forum organized between July – September 2020.

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