

Food Sovereignty: Asserting Farmers' Right to Self-determination and Ownership of Productive Resources

The neoliberal era has ushered in heightened control over the former colonies through industrialized countries' control over their productive sectors, especially the food and agriculture sector. Institutions like the World Bank, IMF, WTO have developed new mechanisms of control that threaten the lives and livelihoods of small and landless farmers, especially women farmers.

The dairy and livestock sector has also been a prime target of neoliberal globalization: corporatization of the dairy sector is threatening local food culture (e.g. consumption of fresh milk) as well as farmers' sustainable practices for livestock care and maintenance, including animal-crop farming, maintaining small herd sizes and the careful conservation of indigenous livestock breeds, a system which has its roots in indigenous knowledge. Essentially, this vicious corporate capture is destroying the very crux of rural society. In its place, we demand a system that rejects corporate control, upholds the sovereignty of farmers and livestock keepers, ensures the protection of livestock biodiversity and promotes equitable food production and consumption for all, and environmental justice.

Ever since the formation of the WTO, people's movements, farmers, indigenous, workers, the women have stood up to fight for their rights and resist corporate capture of natural and productive resources. The people are determined to fight and end draconian WTO agreements such as TRIPs and SPS that allow the monopolization of global trade by grotesque corporations.

Local movements have stood up to fight for farmers' collective rights over seeds as well other genetic resources.



Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT) has fought against seed laws in the country. In Pakistan, women farmers were at the forefront of the Anjuman-e-Mazareen struggle for land against the military. Corporate control over global milk supply has been increasing and in response, farmers' and people's resistances globally have unwaveringly stood up against corporate hegemony in the dairy sector; in Colombia, small farmers, milk vendors and consumers have staunchly protested against government regulations to pasteurize milk and against FTAs that would remove protections from the sector. In India too, popular support for fresh, farmer-produced milk has led to the establishment of farmer-controlled dairy cooperatives. Since the past two years, PKMT has also committed to fight against all neoliberal agriculture laws and policies in Pakistan that are leading to corporate control of the dairy and livestock sector.

So, what are the demands to end corporate control that are basically imperialist impositions in agriculture, dairy and livestock sector while guaranteeing safe and decent livelihood for small farmers and livestock keepers, particularly women farmers?

Ensuring women's right to own and control land, livestock and all productive resources in order to guarantee women's access to decent livelihood, adequate and healthy nutrition and implementation



of just, equitable and self-reliant sustainable food production and consumption systems;

Countries must reject the domestic implementation of WTO-enforced international food safety standards and all neoliberal food and agriculture policies that favor agribusinesses and disadvantage small producers;

Countries must implement locally contextualized food safety standards that are appropriate and democratic for local food systems and small producers;

Governments must hold the global industrial meat and dairy complex accountable for its contributions to industrial waste and climate emergency vis-à-vis greenhouse gas emissions;

Governments must take meaningful steps towards reinstating agroecological/indigenous farming and livestock practices that are slow-paced and sustainable, support local livelihoods, protect ecological wellbeing and have a low carbon footprint;

Governments must disallow foreign investments in farming, dairy and livestock sector that are encouraging the formation of large-scale,

mechanized corporate entities;

Governments must establish minimum price mechanisms for acquiring fresh milk from small farmers that covers their operating costs and allows them a decent profit margin;

Focus efforts on conserving indigenous livestock species that have adapted to low-input, low-resource rural settings and to climate change (as opposed to imported cattle breeds that require expensive feed and temperature-controlled settings to survive)

Establish markets led by small farmers' particularly women farmers.

Mobilize farmers and milk sellers/ to form unions and associations that improve farmers' bargaining power, and strengthen the movement against unfair government regulations and corporate hegemony of TNCs of capitalist countries in the dairy and livestock sector

For more information and further analysis on the ways in which global dairy corporations are snatching away the livelihoods of small and landless farmers, please refer to the other primers in this series.



Secretariat:

Roots for Equity

A-1, First Floor, Block 2, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, Pakistan


Ph: +9221 34813320

Blog: <https://pkmt.noblogs.org/>

Website: <https://rootsforequity.org/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/RootsforEquityPKMT/>

 <https://twitter.com/RootsEquity>

 <https://www.instagram.com/rootsforequity/>