

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE MANIFESTO



YOUNG
Friends of
the Earth
Europe



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www.foeeurope.org/yfoee/our-funding

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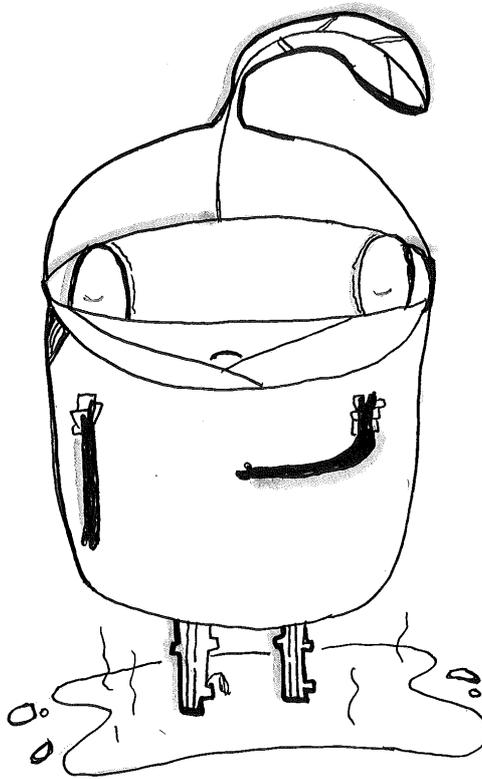
Text by countless great volunteers from the YFoEE Food & Agriculture working group
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INTRODUCTION

Our natural world is under threat and our health is declining. At the root of this deterioration is irresponsible and unfair food production in Europe and the consumerist lifestyles that many Europeans lead.

Most of the food that we eat is mass-produced and artificially treated in factory farms, where irresponsible and profit-driven practices prevail. This status-quo has considerable impacts on ourselves and future generations. It has taken too long to realise that another world is possible - a world based on respect, morality, consciousness, friendliness, helpfulness, co-operation and fairness. Young Friends of the Earth Europe envisions a food and agriculture system based on small-scale, self-sustaining settlements, balanced within the natural ecosystem which produce healthy, highly nutritional, affordable and locally distributed food. The world needs the food system to be transformed, and we as YFoEE are prepared to fight for it.



WHAT'S WRONG?

NATURAL RESOURCES AND BIODIVERSITY

Current agricultural, farming and fishing systems exploit natural resources and endanger the environment and biodiversity. The practices that overuse natural resources and jeopardise ecosystem resilience, may lead to a collapse of the entire global ecosystem. This needs to come to an end.

LAND

INTENSIVE FACTORY FARMING OF LIVESTOCK often breaches animal welfare standards, endangers public health, pollutes the environment and wastes fertile land by necessitating the production of large amounts of animal feed.

THE DEFORESTATION OF PASTURES AND DISAPPEARANCE OF IMPORTANT WORLDWIDE ECOSYSTEMS is in part caused by deforestation practices such as 'slash and burn farming', whereby woods are cleared to make room for breeding and stock farming. The results include the loss of fertile land and biodiversity.

THE INCREASING COMPETITION for the use of land, not only to produce food but also to feed livestock, produce agrofuels and biomass, etc., is leading to soil depletion, the loss of biodiversity and the increase in price of fertile lands.

THE INTENSIVE CULTIVATION OF MONO-VARIETAL CROPS leads to the use of more and more chemicals due to the extinction of natural predators and also interrupts the agricultural self-sustaining balance. Moreover, it leads to loss of biodiversity and traditional crop varieties, which were naturally selected and adapted over centuries to grow in a particular region's conditions.

ORGANIC FARMING COMPRISES ONLY 0.9% OF THE WORLD'S AGRICULTURAL LAND. Long, expensive and bureaucratic certification procedures, uncertainty, and lack of support are some of the factors behind high prices and slow growth.

WATER

UNSUSTAINABLE IRRIGATION OF CROPS leads to overuse of ground and surface water. While drinking water is becoming scarce globally, agriculture uses 70% of the world's fresh water supply.

MASSIVE USE OF FERTILIZERS is required to attain the nutrient balance required for production in intensive agricultural systems. Fertilizers leak into waterways and ecosystems, leading to oxygen depletion in aquatic systems and harmful algae blooms.

OVER-FISHING is leading to habitat loss, destruction of aquatic ecosystems, and species extinction. Most of the fish used for commercial uses (like tuna, bass or cod) are at the top of the food chain and their scarcity brings disruption to the entire food web. EU regulations allow practices where industrial fishing trawls dump dead catch in the ocean. Equally, industrial fishing deprives local communities of their livelihoods.

MATERIAL

INTENSIVE AGRICULTURE IS OIL-DEPENDENT AND UNSUSTAINABLE, as 10 calories of energy are needed to produce only 1 calorie of food. The agro, meat, and fishing industries are heavily dependent on oil for the production of fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation and machinery as well the required transport and greenhouse heating.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs) are used with the intention of creating crops that are resistant to certain herbicides, so that these might be used without damage to the crop. Excessive use of herbicides has catastrophic effects on ecosystems, while GMOs pose a risk to biodiversity. Furthermore, far from ensuring food security, GMOs, with the accompanying corporate patenting of seeds, lead to an even more hierarchical and volatile food system, with small-scale producers losing out to large agro-agglomerates. The effects of GMOs on human health remain unknown.

AIR

THE CURRENT AGRICULTURE SYSTEM CONTRIBUTES 13% OF GLOBAL GHG EMISSIONS, while related deforestation accounts for further 18%.

Increased GHG emissions are responsible for a greater frequency of heat stress, droughts, floods and other extreme weather situations.

MARKETS

In markets, the price of a product is determined by demand and supply. Economies of scale mean products cost less when mass produced. Hence, large companies have an advantage vis-a-vis smaller producers, and dominate the market.

THE AGRO-INDUSTRY IS SUPPORTED BY MASSIVE SUBSIDIES. In Europe, 80% of all subsidies go to just 18% of farmers. Agricultural inputs such as fuel are also subsidized, meaning that the intensive agro-industry is further favoured above small organic farms.

FOOD PRICES do not include externalities such as the ecological cost of long-distance transportation, the depletion of ecosystems, water pollution, and treatment of waste. There is also a lack of transparency regarding what causes the large and sudden spikes in food prices.

REGULATIONS AND LEGISLATION MAINTAIN THE UNSUSTAINABLE STATUS-QUO. The EU's Common Agricultural Policy favours the importation of products from other continents which have cheaper production costs, and therefore can be sold cheaper than European products. Equally, European regulations on the size and shape of fruit and vegetables, as an example, lead to massive wastage of healthy fruit and vegetables based on their appearance. Global trade rules often reduce environmental standards.

AGRO CORPORATE LOBBY GROUPS BLOCK MUCH NEEDED REFORM and actively build up barriers for small-scale farmers to enter the market.

THE AGRO-CORPORATE CONTROL OF THE SEED MARKET, LEADS TO STANDARDISATION of seeds and total control over local crop varieties and global crop diversity. Currently there are three major cereal crops in the world: corn, wheat and rice, whose seeds are mainly hybrid and genetically modified, resulting in greater local seed vulnerability.

PEOPLE

Lack of knowledge and current consumerist lifestyles make most people go to chain supermarkets and buy food without considering their choice. As a result, a range of nutritional diseases have arisen in countries, while starvation continues in poor countries.

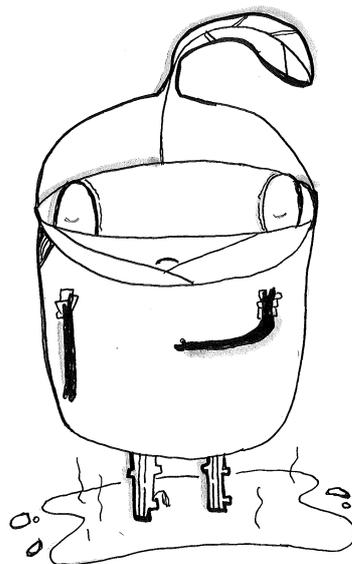
BIG AGRICULTURAL AND FARMING COMPANIES EXPLOIT PEOPLE. Large agricultural agglomerates concentrate farming activities in areas where workers' salaries and other costs are low, in order to maximise company profits. Corporate focus on the bottom line results in poor safety standards and dangerous working conditions.

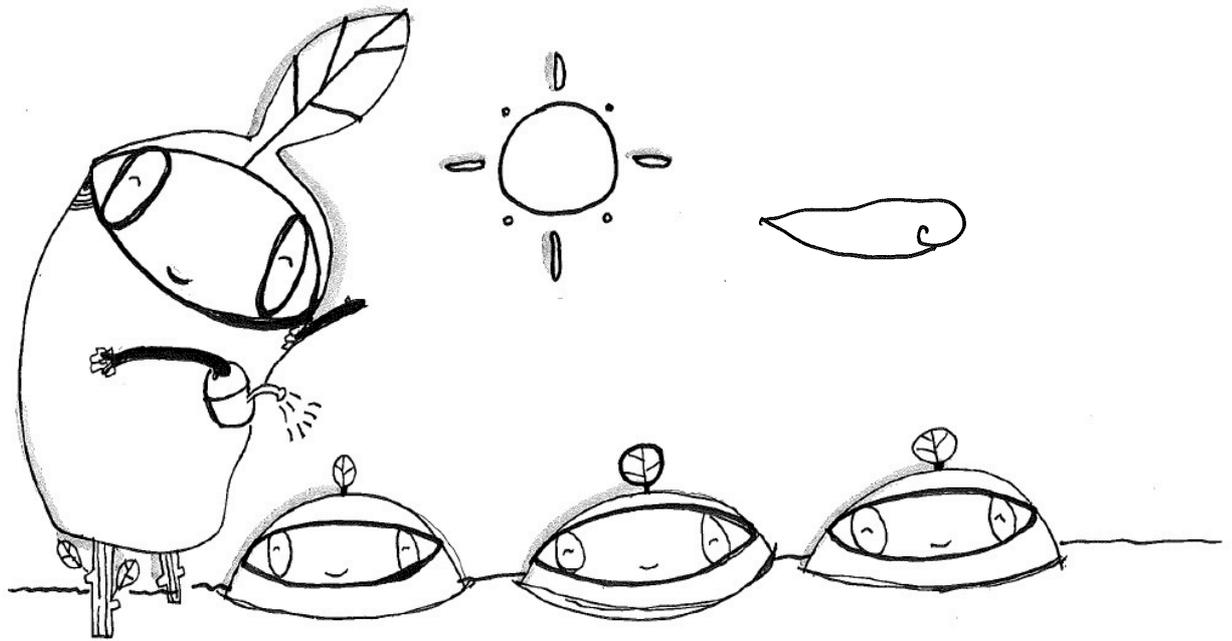
STANDARDISED PRODUCTION IS KILLING THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES and their traditional seeds, recipes and rituals. In order to be competitive and to conform to regulations, people still lose their ancient knowledge, local culture and traditions.

THE CURRENT FOOD SYSTEM HAS MADE PEOPLE UNAWARE OF WHERE THEIR FOOD COMES FROM, why it tastes a certain way, what its real price is, and what damage it causes to the environment and communities around the world. It is difficult to know the origin of a product, the way it was produced and what ingredients it contains.

DIETARY MASSIVE AND STANDARDISED PRODUCTION RISKS SAFETY, FAVOURING THE APPEARANCE OF DIETARY AND NUTRITIONAL DISEASES as well as favouring the increase of diseases like the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and its human strain Creutzfeld-Jacob's Disease (CJD) commonly known as mad cow disease. Avian flu, foot-and-mouth disease, and Killer E. Coli contamination are also examples of these kinds of diseases. These diseases devastated European agriculture in recent years.

HUNGER is still the world's first health risk, especially in developing countries.





SOLUTIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

The Young Friends of the Earth Europe Food and Agriculture working group, believe that a transition from industrial agriculture to a sustainable model is urgently needed. We need to shift from: individualism to cooperation, company dependency to self-sufficiency, business dictatorship and oppression to democracy based on consensus, institutional support of big companies to support of local process and local economies, mainstream culture to local one. There are an infinite number of ways to make this change.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND BIODIVERSITY

We should support practices that balance the potential of the land and the production taken from it, and we must consider people as part of the ecosystem and not as competitors to it. Thus we demand:

A SYSTEM BASED ON SMALL AND DIVERSE SUSTAINABLE-SETTLEMENTS, lead to a fair distribution of land and help to preserve local typical crops, recipes and traditions.

SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES, which integrate biodiversity of organisms and natural cycles of life, increase soil fertility, recycle nutrients efficiently, and require no oil or hazardous chemicals. Some practices that lead to sustainable agriculture are crop rotation, non-ploughing, planting different plants closer, increasing biodiversity with agro-forestry and protecting yield with pest predators...

SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT of eco-villages, urban gardens, seed banks and transition town initiatives that highlight agriculture as a means to a self-sustaining system.

A BAN ON PRODUCTION AND IMPORT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS AND FOOD PRODUCTS.

REDUCE FOOD WASTE by banning the discard of products based on their aesthetics and shape.

INCREASE TAXES FOR FERTILIZERS AND PESTICIDES so that all external costs are included, like water pollution, degradation of ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, and social costs.

THE END OF FISH FARMS, that feed fish with what they would not naturally eat.

MARKETS

What we need are radical changes to the means of production, marketing and regulations controlling these. We disagree with global and consumerist commerce and we suggest the follow to end this situation.

CREATING CLOSER LINKS AMONG BUYERS AND PRODUCERS by increasing the number of farmers' markets, rural food fairs, food cooperatives, community supported agriculture schemes and food exchange projects to reduce corporate food distribution chains.

REDIRECTION OF SUBSIDIES to small-scale, biodynamic and organic farms that protect the wild environment as well as biodiversity.

BUYING LOCAL AND SEASONAL, thus lower the impact of transportation and artificial cultivation.

LABELLING AND TRACEABILITY OF PRODUCTS IS ESSENTIAL so that people can make an informed decision about the food they purchase.

A FAIR TRADE SYSTEM that guarantees the fair treatment of workers, respects human rights, embraces gender solidarity and supports sustainable farming practices.

PEOPLE

The world needs conscious, well-informed and involved people who consider every little gesture as a small action towards a sustainable system of food and agriculture. People are the ultimate decision makers in the food market and it is vital that people make the right choices. Therefore we would like to see:

TRANSFORMATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF LIFESTYLE where people grow their food, buy less, eat local, seasonal, organic, raw, vegan or vegetarian food and eat less fish, meat and dairy products, and start or join local farming and market initiatives

and, as consequence, make them more aware of the needs of the people that produce the food so we could start to restore the social links between producers, consumers and people in general.

ACCESS TO LAND AND COUNTRYSIDE, enabling people to reconnect with nature and to grow their own food. A deeper understanding of where our food comes from will facilitate a transition to more sustainable food and agricultural systems.

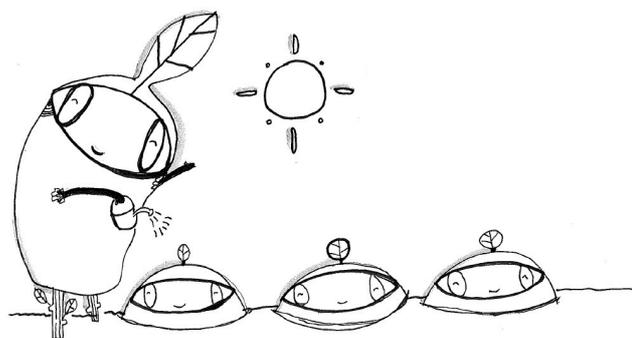
EDUCATION about healthy food, animal welfare, benefits of eating less meat and eating local and seasonal food and how to grow, prepare and preserve food in a sustainable way should be included in educational programs for all ages.

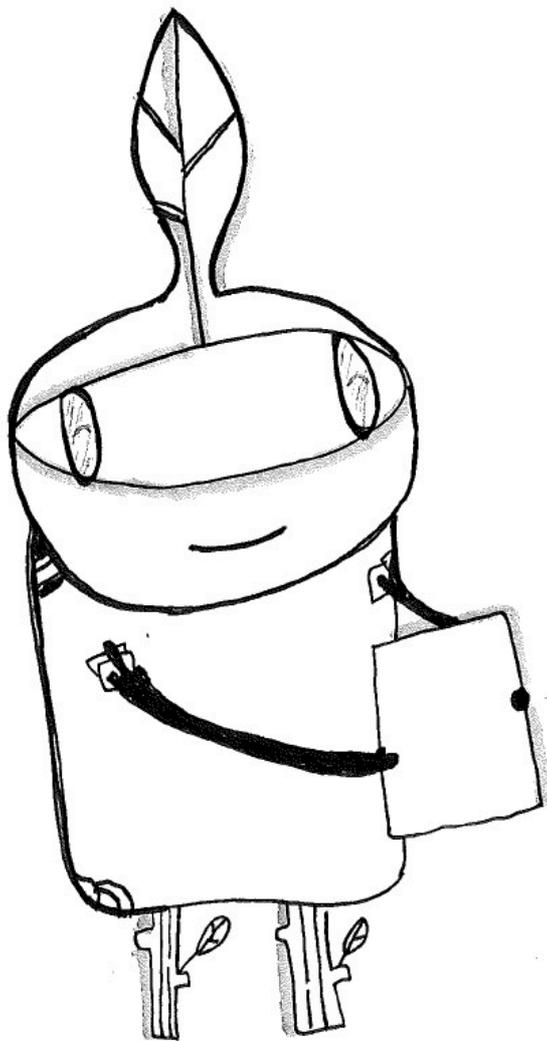
EASIER WAYS TO ACCESS INFORMATION about the problems, solutions and best practices, and also scientific studies and statistics that show detailed information about food and agriculture issues. Thus that the knowledge gap is closed and that the information is free and available in an understandable format.

SPREADING OUT THE MESSAGE about a more sustainable and fair food system by informing people and raising their awareness and commit with direct and indirect actions, so that little by little and all together we can make the change.

PUSHING FOR POLICIES by approaching politicians, holding meetings, organising campaigns, demonstrations and actions.

BUILDING A MOVEMENT BY WORKING TOGETHER towards a more equitable and sustainable food system by the promotion of front line communities of people working together for the change we want to get.





To find out more about Young
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www.youngfoee.org

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