

Expert Group Meeting on Strategies to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls through the Gender-responsive Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

30 and 31 May 2017 - United Nations Headquarters, New York

Panel: Ending poverty and achieving food security through women's access to and control over economic resources

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Summary:

For women in rural areas, the main challenge to achieve food security and control over economic resources is access to land. Women's movements in the countryside advocate to have land titles in their name even if they are not the head of their households. A serious risk for women in rural communities is displacement due to pressure and violence from state agents and private militia groups.

Farmland has become the target of speculation by financial institutions, especially after the 2008 economic crisis and the collapse of the housing market in the United States. The increase in farmland prices intensifies displacement of peasant and indigenous communities, increasing migration to urban areas, poverty, and unemployment.

In addition, speculation with agriculture commodities increases the price of food, which has a disproportional impact on low-income women who spend a large percentage of their income with basic needs, such as food. Urban women usually take the responsibility for providing food and administering the food budget in their households.

Rural women's organizations demand support for small scale agriculture and women's cooperatives, as well as the right to choose what type of agriculture system they prioritize. This includes inputs and technical assistance based on ecological practices, which determines not only access to food, but the quality of the food they produce.

Governments need to provide special lines of credit and subsidies that prioritize small farmers who produce healthy food for local markets, as well as other key resources such as transportation and energy. Women's organizations also demand that governments implement legislation to guarantee environmental protection of biodiversity and water sources.

Large mono-cropping of agriculture commodities cannot be sustainable. This system is based on chemical inputs and fossil fuels, constituting a major cause of climate change. Also, monopoly over land does not allow for the development of diversified economic activities, which can generate social and environmental stability.

Especially in Europe and in the United States there is a growing awareness in public opinion about the need to support small scale, local and ecological agriculture. In order to expand this movement internationally we need to increase solidarity between women's organizations in the Global North and the Global South, as well as in urban and rural areas. We need strong alliances to transform our food system in order to guarantee the right to food and environmental protection.