

## Food sovereignty in Europe and Africa - two new booklets from BEDE\*

review by GRAIN

### Promoting peasant farming and an ecological, solidarity-based agriculture in Europe

BEDE, October 2008, 33pp + CD available in English and French

This booklet takes a look at some important initiatives and actions occurring at the local and national levels in Europe. The book splits these into three areas: collective organising, on-farm processing and adding value to products, and the impact of European regulations. It is really a list of different experiences that BEDE has been involved with in Bulgaria, France, Italy, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, and Spain. The “collective organising” section includes some cooperation agreements between farmers and research institutions, particularly seed banks. Some are for farmers to gain access to ancient – and lost – varieties of seeds, but much of the work is also for researchers within institutions to learn more about the loss of farmers’ seeds and varieties. As the book points out, there is still much difficulty in getting many institutions to recognise the importance of farmer involvement and *in situ* conservation of seeds. France is one country where, thanks to the work of the French Peasant Seed Network, there has been closer collaboration between *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation of varieties. Other national seed networks include Red de Semillas (Spain), Colher para Semear (Portugal) and Rete Semi Rurali (Italy). The last chapter is a reality shock, as it describes one of the principal problems of working with seeds in Europe: the strict EU legislation that makes the use of non-registered varieties practically impossible. There are examples here, however, of how some are managing

to organise via legal loopholes and growing public resistance. But it is not only the restriction on the use of seeds that is strict in Europe, but also sanitary regulations, which end up hobbling the small farmer or pastoralist. The book cites examples of people resisting these sanitary norms. It also, of course, cites resistance to GMOs and the contamination of seeds. The booklet includes a CD – playable on any computer – which provides further laws, documentation and articles.

### Peasant seeds-the foundation of food sovereignty in Africa

BEDE, October 2008, 64pp + CD available in English and French

In 2007, more than 600 people from 80 countries met in Nyéléni to share their knowledge, experiences, and hopes for a world free of hunger, injustice, and corporate greed; and to express their aspiration to food sovereignty. Before this meeting the Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du

Mali (CNOP), together with BEDE and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), organised a preparatory workshop in Bamako on the privatisation of seeds in West Africa. The objectives of this meeting were: “To better understand how peasant farmers’ rights to conserve and re-sow their seeds are suppressed through regulations and laws”, and “to build collective instruments to reinforce peasant farmers’ right to and control over their seeds”. This booklet brings together a summary of these issues under the headings “Supporting the use of peasant seeds for food sovereignty”, “Impeding the privatisation of seeds and biopiracy”, “Banning GMOs on African soil”, and “Furthering exchanges between peasant farmers and peasant innovations”. The booklet also has continual pointers to the accompanying CD, which contains copies of presentations, articles and documents, audio clips and short videos from the workshop, field visits and farmer exchanges. It provides a good overview of the issues around the privatisation of seeds and the



*A farmer ploughing in the lowland Baltic German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*



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