

THE SIEM REAP STATEMENT

We, farmers from 10 countries across Asia, have gathered at the *International Workshop on Farmers' Experiences with Agricultural Research* held on 14-20 December 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand & Siem Reap, Cambodia, in celebration of the diversity of food and farming cultures that our region of the world represents. We have shared different country experiences, exchanged farm innovations and practices, carefully analysed farmer-researches and reveled in the knowledge and learning that we have in our midst.

In recognition of this and of our authentic collective wisdom that sustains not only the life & livelihood of our families but the entire world, we envision a critical role for farmer-led, farmer-oriented research based on local needs of communities and oriented towards mutual sharing. We have decided to make the following statement to advance this agenda

We have observed

with deep concern, the growing nexus between so-called science and the politics of trade liberalisation which legitimises the piracy of our knowledge, and insist that our governments take immediate action to stop this.

with dismay, through our experiences with CGIAR-led Green Revolution technologies and its current preoccupation with biotechnology, that scientists cannot solve the problem of farmers.

with incredulity, the manner and scale in which the international agricultural research systems have become extensions of agrochemical corporations and the modern biotech industry by serving their agendas and pushing governments to take the route of genetic engineering.

We strongly object to this transformation of a system that had based its very existence on farmers' resources and knowledge in the name of supporting small farm agriculture. We condemn the way contemporary scientific institutions ignore farmer-research and dismiss our knowledge as unscientific.

We demand with immediacy that

CGIAR institutions stop the promotion of expensive, capital-intensive and input-dependent technologies that do not suit poor farmers' conditions and which irreversibly threaten agricultural biodiversity. These disruptive technologies - like genetic engineering and hybrid rice technology - do not only damage our natural environment but also lead to the loss of farmers' control of genetic resources that further exacerbates the problem of poverty.

agricultural research be reoriented towards addressing the needs of poor and marginalised farmers that composed the bulk of the agriculture sector across Asia today

funding agencies reorient their priorities and not support researches that threaten the very foundations of farmer-controlled agriculture.

governments support small farmers' initiatives in planting diverse crops, which are suitable to our environment, our health, our cultures and our belief systems, and honestly recognise women-led community seed banks as authentic forms of

agricultural research and make investments in these initiatives just the way they invest in national gene banks.

governments desist from collaborating in neoliberal trade agendas against the interest of their own farming communities in Asia.

We commit ourselves to

reclaim true respect and dignity for our food and farming cultures, and to show our will and power to achieve these through sustainable and self-reliant means.

further develop our own technologies through our own researches that respond to the diverse and changing needs, priorities and aspirations of farming communities, by consciously integrating the social and political realities of our agriculture.

reaffirm our faith in the leadership that women have always taken in the ecological stewardship of our agricultural systems, and to advance this leadership role in our communities for seed storage, management and control at the community level.

In a symbolic act today, we exchanged our own seeds and knowledge of sowing them, saved from and improved by countless generations of farming throughout our individual country histories. Together we are committed to not only growing diversity but also growing knowledge and sharing it amongst ourselves.

Siem Reap, Cambodia, 19 December 2004

WORKSHOP CO-ORGANISED BY BASA-Asia & SANFEC
CO-HOSTED BY AAN, BIOTHAI & CEDAC

Participating countries and signing organisations

Bangladesh: Policy Research for Development Alternatives (UBINIG)

Cambodia: Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC)

India: Deccan Development Society (DDS)

Indonesia: BioTani Indonesia, Bitra Indonesia, Organisasi Tani Jawa (Ortaja)

Malaysia: Farmer

Nepal: U.S.C. Canada Nepal

Pakistan: Lok Sanjh

Philippines: Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP), Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Development (MASIPAG), National Initiative on Seeds and Sustainable Agriculture (PABINHI)

Sri Lanka: Centre for Human Development (CfHD)

Thailand: Alternative Agriculture Network (AAN), Biothai, Khao Kwan Foundation, Rural Reconstruction Alumni and Friends Association (RRAFA), Sustainable Agriculture Foundation(SAF)

International: GRAIN