

# Final Niamey Declaration of the consultation between actors for the recognition of peasant seed systems in West Africa, on 08 April 2021 in Niamey, Niger

We, farmers, delegates of the West African Farmers' Seed Committees (WACS), the Network of Farmers' Organisations and (COASP), the Network of Farmers' Organisations and Agricultural Producers of (ROPPA), Associations, national and international NGOs, TACIS Focal Points and international NGOs, ITPGRFA Focal Points, human rights defenders, citizens from seven West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Togo and Senegal) and Central Africa (Chad), participants at the training and consultation workshop for the recognition of farmer seed systems organised by COASP, from 06 to 08 April 2021, at the Regional Agrhymet Centre in Niamey (Niger), make the following declaration.

## *We note:*

- In West Africa, as in the rest of the continent, despite the many climatic, legal and economic aggressions to which they are subjected, seeds from natural biodiversity, cultivated or bred, come from farmers' seed systems;
- Farming communities have always developed and used species and varieties that meet their needs through selection, conservation and exchange without any form of restriction;
- Farmers have created a wide variety of seeds that are well adapted to local climatic and ecological conditions;
- This means that this seed system is dominant, despite the pejorative term 'informal seed system'.

## *We participants note that:*

- The seed cannot be reduced simply to its genetic and technological aspects and that it implies taking into account sociological, economic, cultural, cultural and political considerations
- Seeds represent the identities of our communities, their medicines, their food and their food sovereignty.
- Let us express our indignation at the plundering without any form of compensation of genetic resources and knowledge of farmers' communities by the seed industry through the new biotechnologies, especially the genetic sequencing, and various processes of privatising life, such as patenting and such as patenting and certification.
- Denounce the under-representation/under-participation of farmers' organisations and indigenous peoples in international, regional and national forums of negotiations and discussions on seed issues;
- Challenge the adoption of laws and policies that impede the rights of peasants to freely select, multiply, exchange and sell their peasant seeds farmers' seeds;

- We are concerned about the lack of inclusion and effectiveness of legal frameworks for seeds that obscure farmers' seeds, which represent more than 85% of seed systems in Africa.

*In view of the above, we:*

- Recall the obligation of States, in the light of international commitments, to recognise, respect and protect peasant seed rights and systems for the survival of humanity and the safeguarding of and invite them to:
- Take appropriate measures to recognise and preserve peasant identities, the economic and non-economic value of our peasant seed systems, their contributions to the preservation of plant and animal diversity;
- Recognise and support peasant agroecology as a way to achieve food sovereignty,
- Recognise the importance, resilience and virtues of our nutritious, diversified local food systems, which are proving their worth in the context of the pandemic.

*Therefore, we recommend the following:*

**West Africa farmers:**

- Conserve, use, exchange freely and sell their seeds according to the mechanisms provided by the peasant seed systems transmitted from generation to generation;
- Protect their knowledge, innovations and practices associated with seeds and genetic resources;
- Participate in decision-making on issues related to seed systems at all levels.

**States:**

- Adopt and implement a specific legal framework for the protection of peasant seed systems in all countries and at the regional level (ECOWAS etc) in accordance with their obligations under relevant international legal instruments such as the ITPGRFA, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other Rural People, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Nagoya Protocol;
- Reorient seed, agriculture and food policies towards peasant agroecology, while supporting initiatives of peasant organisations working in this direction;
- Ensure that digital sequencing information is recognised as a plant genetic resource and prohibit patents on genetic sequences;
- Strengthen the capacity of agricultural research on new scientific developments in order to effectively preserve the gains on farmers' rights in the negotiations;
- Support the ITPGRFA Focal Points in the implementation of the provisions of this instrument;
- Demand specific national consultation spaces on peasant seed systems;

- Recognise the specific criteria of farmers and indigenous peoples and their mechanisms for guaranteeing the quality of their peasant seeds for their free circulation;
- Guarantee the effective participation of farmers in national, sub-regional and international decision-making processes;
- Support the dissemination of seeds, knowledge and farmers' innovations for the benefit of communities;
- Protect our peasant seed systems against any release of GMOs and hazardous new biotechnologies

#### Regional and sub regional institutions (African Union, ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS, CORAF etc):

- Recognise and protect farmers' rights and farmers' seed systems in community law.
- Support the initiatives of farmers' organisations at regional level (ROPPA, COASP, etc) working to promote farmers' agroecology.

#### Civil society organisations:

- Continue advocacy at all levels for the recognition and legal protection of peasant seed systems;
- Translate and popularise documents and concepts in terms understandable by farming communities in local languages;
- Inform communities about seed and biodiversity issues;
- Sensitise and mobilise farmers on the need to preserve their knowledge and know-how for food and nutritional sovereignty;
- Call on all human rights defenders to massively support this declaration for the accession of our peoples to food sovereignty.

Drawn up in Niamey, on 08/04/2021 by the participants