

Farmers, indigenous peoples and settlers ask President Evo Morales of Bolivia to reject agrofuels (9th August 2007)

The Union Confederation of Farmer Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB); the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB), the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qollasuyu (CONAMAQ), the Federation of Peasant Women of Bolivia Bartolina Sisa (FMCBBS) and the Union Confederation of Bolivian Settlers (CSCB) asked President Evo Morales "not to let himself be deceived" by the neo-liberal discourse about agrofuel production, and to make Bolivia the first country to say NO to this kind of bioenergy. "We have to unite our original indigenous peoples, peasants and settlers of the entire world against neo-liberal models that only promote hunger, slavery and the destruction of our Mother Earth", according to these organisations.

RESOLUTION:

The organisations which were present at the National Forum "International Day of the Indigenous Peoples: Reaffirmation of our rights and our identity " meeting on August 9th 2007 in the city of La Paz, expressed our deep concern about the national and international context around agrofuels.

CONSIDERING:

That the introduction of agrofuels promotes large-scale land holdings and therefore allows the large landowners to continue taking control of large areas of land, obstructing the process of the Agrarian Revolution and the Community Law of the Agrarian Reform, which seeks to guarantee the gift of the earth for indigenous farmers and settlers.

That the harvesting of agricultural products for agrofuels will monopolise our best land, our water resources and our labour, competes with the spaces where we produce food, attacks food sovereignty, undermines supplies for the domestic market and, therefore goes against the food policy that the President Evo Morales is promoting.

That agrofuels are a direct attack against our family and community production models and will lead to the disintegration of our families, undermine our mode of trade and consumption of food products, which is harmony with the environment, cause environmental pollution, deforestation, soil erosion and other environmental harm; that is the reason why they are a danger to "good living" and our self-determination as indigenous peoples, farmers and settlers with our own identity.

That, the "Draft Law for Promoting and Regulating the activities related to the Production of Biodiesel" is totally neoliberal and does not give to the original indigenous farmers incentives or benefits, nor does it consult with them. On the contrary, it opens up the possibility of small indigenous producers and farmers being left not just outside the industrialization and commercialization, but also outside the production of raw materials, which would turn them into pongos (1).

THEREFORE:

The social organisations of the indigenous people and small farmers of Bolivia

RESOLVE:

1. We completely reject all mechanisms that consolidate the illegal appropriation and land ownership by the large estate owners, which try to hinder the process of Community Land Reform Law.
2. We support and we urgently demand the drafting and consolidation of a National Policy for Food Sovereignty that respects our identity as original indigenous peoples and farmers and settlers, that guarantees supplies for the domestic market with foods which contribute to a "good life" and which prevent the import of genetically modified food, which are less healthy for our country.
3. - We demand that our government, presided over by our brother Evo Morales, does not allow itself to be deceived by the neo-liberal discourse about the production of agrofuels, and instead declares Bolivia to be the first country to say NO to fuels obtained from biomass; that the government joins us in the struggle of the indigenous peoples, farmers and settlers of the world against the neo-liberal models which promote hunger, slavery, and the deterioration of our Mother Earth.
4. - We reject the " Draft Law for Promoting and Regulating the activities related to the Production of Biodiesel" and demand that this project is immediately cancelled because it constitutes an attack on food sovereignty, biodiversity, and on our identity.

Signed

Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB)-(Union Confederation of Farm Workers of Bolivia)
Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB)-(Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia)
Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyu (CONAMAQ)-
(National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qollasuyu)
Federación de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa (FMCBBS)-
(Federation of Women Farmers of Bolivia Bartolina Sisa)
Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia (CSCB)-Union
Confederation of Settlers of Bolivia

1) Translator's note: 'Pongo' is a Spanish term used to describe an indigenous person who works on land owned by a large landowner and who is required to provide labour for the landowner in return for being allowed to cultivate a fraction of the land.