

JUNE 28 AND 29, 2010



FROM LAND TO FOOD / FROM VALUES TO RULES

In addition to the themes presented above, which will serve as a basis for organizing plenary sessions and round tables, the 4th World Forum on Human Rights will be developing a special work project in partnership with the European LASCAUX programme. Its theme will be The Law, Food and Land (<http://www.droit-aliments-terre.eu/>).




The Forum will thus host a colloquium entitled From land to food / From Values to Rules, that will be open to the general public at no cost on June 28 and June 29. No call for papers will be made, but anyone who attends may participate in discussions during the various sessions that will be proposed.

The objective of the Lascaux programme is to ensure that “law serves the cause of the sustainable and equitable development of farming and the food industry in both poor and rich countries.” The programme seeks to “find the legal causes of global food crises and food-related problems, and to increase awareness of the right to food”. The Lascaux team – which is headed by François Collart-Dutilleul, a professor of private law at the University of Nantes and a member of the University Institute of France – is composed of some 80 researchers from around the world. Although most of these academics are legal experts the team also includes economists, sociologists and anthropologists.

THE COLLOQUIUM

Over the past few decades, we have seen a very encouraging increase in European and international legislation that has expanded, classified, described and combined a large number of human rights, including the right to sufficient and healthy food, and to a lesser extent the right of peasant farmers to have access to arable land. There is now a very broad consensus on the importance of these human rights.

And yet the number of famine victims continues to increase steadily, along with the number of poor farmers who lack arable land and are victims of the economic system, indifference and the environment. But these factors are too vague to enable us to determine exactly what the problem is. It is not enough to point our fingers at:

-  the inadequate regulation of an economic system based solely on free-market forces;
-  the cynical indifference of institutions and companies that go about their work and business with no consideration for the suffering they cause or allow to happen;
-  disruptions to the environment that may result in global warming, a shortage of fresh water and soil infertility caused by pollution.

We must understand that these “factors” are just a small part of an extraordinarily complex global problem for which there seems to be no ready solution. Human rights do not appear to be of much use in stopping global speculation on agricultural commodities, illegal deforestation, the brutal impact of global trade on the most vulnerable populations, the lack of agrarian reform, global warming, and the selfishness of all those who place their personal interest above the common good.

Can we reverse this tide? Can we make progress by increasing the scope of human rights and ensuring that they are enforceable? Human rights actually serve more as guidelines for action than as solutions in themselves. It will require bold new thinking in the areas of politics, economics and law before human rights will have sufficient substance to enable access to food, water and farming land.

Some of the political and/or economic solutions proposed are already the subject of debate. Other ideas are gradually taking shape, such as those to be discussed in the FAO’s Global Summit on Food Security to be held in Rome in November 2009. But there are practically no potential legal solutions to be discussed. Although the need for more regulation is often expressed, what is generally referred to are the rules that govern economic activity, markets, ethics, science and technology.

And yet we have had sufficient proof in our time that if the law is not used to regulate activity the results can be catastrophic for the environment, society, health and the financial system. No real solution is possible without a legal approach, because the law is the only means of regulating relationships and trade between human beings that is considered legitimate by all citizens and which takes the common good into account. Although policy decisions and economic choices will obviously be able to provide many solutions, it is through the language, resources and coercive force of the law that these solutions must be prepared and enforced.




If we sincerely want to help the hundreds of millions of people who are caught in the iron grip of hunger and malnutrition, we must succeed in combining political action, trade, social cohesion and law-based regulation into a coherent whole.

By putting political, economic and legal approaches into proper perspective the Lascaux programme seeks to advance this cause and ensure that the land and food resources are not just simply another form of merchandise.

With this goal in mind, the World Forum on Human Rights will be bringing together the imaginations of researchers, NGOs, political leaders and concerned citizens over the first two days of the Forum, on June 28 and 29, 2010.



June 28th, 2010

-  **9H30 - 12H00 – Access to land, a Human right to develop**
 -  **14H00 - 16H30 – Access to food, a Human right to guarantee**
 -  **17H15 – Official inauguration of the 4th World Forum on Human Rights**
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June 29th, 2010

-  **9H30 - 12H00 – Agricultural development and poverty reduction**
Roundtable from humanitarian experience in India, Colombia, Palestine and Mali
 -  **14h00 - 16h30 – Citizens Forum: Debate NGOs / Researchers**
From land to food, from values to rules. What solutions?
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