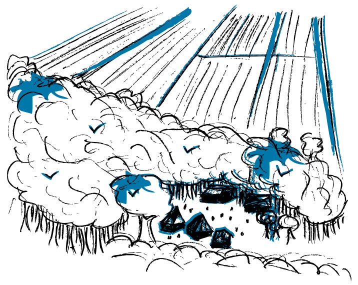
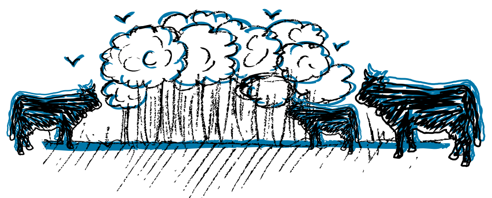
HOW RCEP AFFECTS FOOD AND FARMERS

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a mega-regional trade deal being negotiated among 16 countries across Asia-Pacific: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand. If adopted, RCEP will cover half the world's population, including the 420 million small family farms which produce 80% of the region's food. What will this agreement mean for food and farmers in the region?



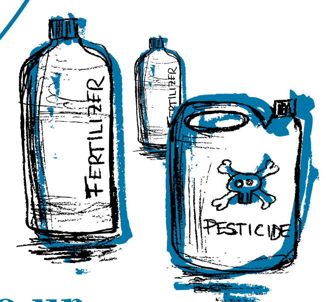
Land will be grabbed

- In the RCEP countries alone, 9.6 million hectares of farmland have changed hands since 2008. Two chapters of RCEP could have a decisive impact on access to land
- The leaked investment chapter proposes a rule that each government must give investors from other RCEP states the same rights to purchase farmland as domestic investors. Most RCEP countries do not allow foreigners to buy farmland.
- The services chapter may also allow foreigners to own farmland for a service-related purpose.



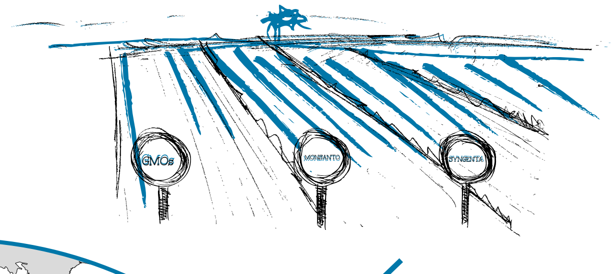
Small dairy and other farmers will go out of business

- RCEP will be destructive for small scale producers, especially as it opens markets to unfair competition from highly subsidised producers in Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Some 100 million small dairy and livestock farmers in India are particularly vulnerable.
- New Zealand dairy giant Fonterra, the world's biggest dairy exporter, aims to use RCEP to set foot in India where its government has failed to secure a bilateral trade agreement so far. People fear that Indian dairy farmers will either have to work for Fonterra or go out of business.
- RCEP will encourage the establishment of mega food-parks focused on supplying countries like Japan and Australia, which have food safety standards that are incompatible with small scale production and processing. These high tech farm-to-fork supply chains exclude small producers and household food processing businesses, and displace them from access to lands and markets.



Fertiliser and pesticide use will go up

- RCEP trade ministers have promised to deliver a deal that immediately cuts tariffs to zero on 65% of trade in goods. Farm chemicals, whose use is growing in Asia, are bound to be part of this.
- China's acquisition of Syngenta, the world's top agrochemical company with more than 20% of the global pesticide market, means the country could hugely benefit from RCEP. In January 2017, China already announced that it will scrap export tariffs on nitrogen and phosphorus fertiliser in order to boost its market share abroad.
- If leaked intellectual property drafts are adopted, RCEP may increase the patenting of other inputs like veterinary medicines, farm machinery, microorganism-based products and agricultural chemicals, and extend their patent terms, making them more expensive.

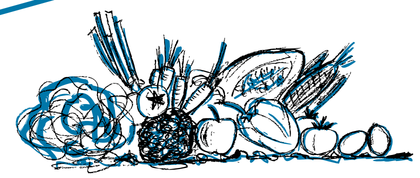


Seeds will be privatised, GMOs may proliferate

- The global seed industry is highly concentrated today, with three companies representing more than 60% of global commercial sales.
- Leaked drafts of RCEP's intellectual property chapter shows a push for all RCEP states to adopt "UPOV 1991", an international treaty under which farmers are generally not allowed to save seeds of protected varieties. In cases where it's permitted, they must pay seed companies royalties on farm-saved seed. Royalties typically represent a markup of 10-40% over the price of regular commercial seeds. In Asia, this may raise the local price of seed by 200-600%.
- If RCEP moves closer to what was negotiated in the TPP, it would get worse. TPP requires states to allow patents on inventions "derived from plants", which means genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Big retail will wipe out local markets

- According to leaked drafts, RCEP's services chapter may make it impossible for governments to limit the operation of supermarket chains that hail from other RCEP countries.
- If precedents set by TPP are followed, 'ICT farming' (the use of computers and communication technologies to manage farm operations) may be boosted under RCEP measures aimed at promoting regional supply chains and e-commerce.
- The trade agreement would make it illegal for a member government to require a service supplier like Alibaba or Aeon to have a 'local presence' in its country or to source food from local producers.



ACT NOW!

The result of all these changes will be a corporate take over of Asia's food and agriculture sector. The answer is not to reform RCEP but to reject it because it relies on and pushes a corporate model of agriculture that no amount of tweaking will change. Instead, we need to implement policies and initiatives that enable people-led food and agricultural systems to flourish. Only then can trade policies be drawn up to serve these systems – not the other way around.

- Get more informed and organise discussions and debates about RCEP in your communities. One resource to check out is the collective open-publishing site http://bilaterals.org/rcep.
- Support the people's call to stop RCEP and fight for a pro-people trading system that responds to people's needs not to corporate elites. Contact groups in your country that also signed the call and join forces.
- Go to the RCEP meetings. Demand the public release of negotiating texts to better analyse and build awareness of how the agreement affects the livelihood of people in RCEP member countries. Voice your concerns, as groups have done over the past months in Perth, Jakarta, Kobe and Manila. The next rounds will be held in Hyderabad (July 2017) and Seoul (later this year).
- Join the region-wide people campaign on RCEP and trade justice, and participate in collective mobilisations like regional days of action
- Keep an eye on http://rceplegal.wordpress.com/, http://keionline.org/ and http://www.bilaterals.org/rcep-leaks for leaked texts and analysis of RCEP chapters.

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