

## Right to Food

THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD is a human right stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is further made explicit by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which protects the right to food as part of the right to an adequate standard of living and guarantee a fundamental right to be free from hunger.

True, at least twenty States in the world—including Brazil, India, South Africa, and more recently Ecuador and Bolivia—today recognize the right to food in their constitutions. Many others are making great progress towards the implementation of these guidelines, such as Guatemala or Mozambique.

But what is urgently needed in view of the global financial crisis is re-investment by governments in agriculture. Recent international efforts as well as the experience gained from the crisis made it abundantly clear that the question is not merely of increasing the budgets allocated to agriculture. The key issue is rather, which model of agricultural development should be promoted.

The progressive realization of the right to food is not merely an issue of raising the budgetary allocation for agricultural development. It also requires that Governments opt for the orientations more conducive to the realization of the right to food, by carefully balancing the existing options against one another.

Access to markets and remunerative prices are a crucial condition for small-holder farmers and their communities to escape hunger.

In agriculture, in particular, trade-distorting measures—obstacles to market access for developing countries, domestic support schemes for OECD countries' farmers, and export subsidies—have led many small-holder farmers to deeply unfavourable situations. Yet, simply removing the existing distortions will not suffice. If trade is to work for development and to contribute to the realization of the right to adequate food, it needs to recognize the specificity of agricultural products, rather than to treat them as any other commodities; and to allow more flexibilities to developing countries, in order to shield their agricultural producers from competition from industrialized countries' farmers.

Trade is mostly done not between States, but between transnational corporations. The role of transnational corporations should be immediately curtailed to make the right to food a genuine basic right. But the right to food in the long run is all about equitable land distribution without which all international declarations will be meaningless. □