

Statement Issued by the Arab Network for Food Sovereignty

in the Context of the Corona Crisis

The Corona pandemic has revealed and highlighted the fragility of the globalized food system, and placed into focus the presently followed patterns rooted in the attrition and destruction of natural resources, alongside the marginalization of domestic agriculture and the violation of the rights of farmers, pastoralists, fishermen and agricultural workers both males and females.

On the occasion of World Labor Day the Arab Network for Food Sovereignty reasserts its unchanging principles related to the support of the struggle of farmers, agricultural workers, fishermen and pastoralists, in the Arab World and the world at large, whilst also emphasizing the necessity of struggle for food sovereignty and ensuring the Right to Food for all at fair prices for the producer and the consumer alike through building local food systems that are resilient in times of crises.

While fervently saluting all the workers, male and female, in the field of healthcare who are bravely and selflessly leading the battle against the Corona pandemic every passing day, the Network calls attention, in the context of this crises to a set of basic demands:

First: Devote care to the rural areas and their inhabitants who suffer from the lack of sustainable development, from exclusion and marginalization in the domains of health, education and infrastructure, particularly in the present time where those areas are currently witness to substantial paucity of necessary equipment and resources to face the Corona pandemic.

Second: The necessity of reconsidering farming policies pertaining to confronting possible food crises through:

- 1. Giving priority to domestic food production to enable the supply of products to markets on a sustainable basis, and encouraging investment in the national agricultural sectors particularly in agricultural processing, at the regional, domestic, urban and household levels.**

2. **Recognition of the importance of food producers and all those working in this field, both men and women, while facilitating their access to agricultural inputs such as land, seeds and water, and bolstering forms of protection, including through agricultural risk funds, waiving poor farmers debts, and the establishment of investment finance funds.**
3. **Supporting domestic markets and enhancing the capacity of small producers and farmers to access them directly, while emphasizing the necessity of reinforcing the frameworks of cooperative work.**
4. **Lay down and activate legal frameworks and obligatory plans particular to the uses of lands in a manner safeguarding agricultural lands and preventing infringing on them.**
5. **Emphasizing the necessity of exchange of agricultural produce and scientific research between the Arab countries, alongside the presence of suitable laws that guarantee such integration.**
6. **Establishing a data bank particular to sovereignty over food, which would constitute a joint future planning nucleus related to agriculture, production, manpower, while also contributing to increasing the gross domestic product share in every country of agriculture and livestock resources.**
7. **Enhancing the national and regional food reserves with a view to achieve food security, particularly through encouraging the planting of vital crops such as wheat and barley, while building silos for maintaining strategic reserves.**
8. **Establishing domestic and regional seeds banks and conserving the the plant genome.**
9. **Supporting the fishing sector, particularly artisanal fishermen through protecting their fishing zones, securing them with markets, facilitating easy credit and exempt them from taxes.**
10. **Enhancing livestock production while safeguarding the right of the pastoralists to access pastures.**
11. **Emphasizing the importance of research and training in all agricultural domains, including enhancing productivity, water management, agroecology, use of alternative energy and packaging.. etc.**

Third: Rejection of suspending the activity of international organizations in the agricultural and food domains during crises, including the Corona crisis, such as the closure of the "FAO" offices at times in which the world is in dire need of its activities. Moreover, underscoring the importance of supporting the strategies of positive adaptation developed by farmers over the ages.

Fourth: Rejection of the politicization of food assistance and using it against peoples, and demand the lifting of unfair international sanctions, and immediate cessation of internecine wars and conflicts, and the Israeli occupation of Palestine and its siege of Gaza, and prevent it from exploiting the current crisis to escalate aggression on the population, natural resources and the expropriation of lands.

Fifth: Promote partnership, transparency and accountability between governmental bodies, civil society and social movements.