

Food Day

elite minority put private profit before human need and maintain political and economic control of the land.

SAVING SEEDS

Of the 1,000 major crops harvested each year in North America, only cranberries, Jerusalem artichokes and sunflowers were first grown here. All other crops came from one of nine so-called centres of genetic diversity - the areas of seed origin - which are all located in the Third World. There, thousands of generations of subsistence farmers have developed an astonishing range of plant variability. This diversity is necessary to protect crops against disease, pests and adverse weather and soils, and to provide for new varieties.

With the spread of hybrid seeds, and in the absence of adequate plant conservation facilities, many seed varieties are disappearing. At the same time, many countries, including Canada, are enacting legislation to patent plant varieties. The patent monopoly turns the plant genetic heritage of the Third World into a hoardable and highly profitable commodity. Prices rise; scientific exchange declines.

Transnational companies interested in crop chemicals are now taking over the seed industry. This trend could well lead to the production of seeds dependent on chemicals, thus increasing farmers' costs and the multinationals' control over food production.

An urgent effort must be made to ensure that the world's genetic material is protected as a public, not a private, resource.

WOMEN'S WORK

A dire lack of development opportunities for women restricts their potential contribution to food security and economic development. Consequently, the essential daily well-being of thousands of families in the Third World is significantly diminished.

Women in developing countries generally work in subsistence agriculture, that is, for family consumption or trade at local markets. As a result, the work of some 250 million women becomes invisible since it is not seen



as equivalent to wage-earning work.

These heavy agricultural responsibilities, in addition to homemaking demands, keep women voiceless in decision-making. Concerted input from women is required because, despite their responsibilities for food production and processing, most financing and training in agriculture is given to men. Only five out of ten girls, compared to seven out of ten boys are enrolled in primary school in developing countries.

Education, organization and cooperative effort are therefore the helping hands needed to lighten women's burden.

Within Canada there is an active group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are concerned with global economic development in general, and World Food Supply in particular. They seek your personal involvement. Because of their primary focus at the grass-roots level, these groups can sometimes obtain results which governments have been unable to achieve. Six NGOs have co-operated in preparing this pamphlet.

Please write, call and get involved in:

Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)

321 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 7Z2 (613) 236-4547

Canadian Hunger Foundation (CHF)

323 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 7Z2 (613) 237-6180

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

2841 Riverside Drive, Ottawa, Ontario
K1V 8X7 (613) 521-3400

CUSO

151 Slater Street, Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5H5 (613) 563-1242

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Ontario
K1G 3H9 (613) 996-2321

MATCH International Centre

401 - 171 Nepean Street, Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 0B4 (613) 238-1312

