



Press Release
World Hunger Day
The Rural People Demand: Food, Land and Climate Justice!



October 16, 2023

The Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT) and Roots for Equity in collaboration with Asian Peasant Coalition (APC), Pesticide Action Network (PAN AP) are marking the “World Hunger Day” on October 16, 2023 – a day which is considered to be World Food Day. A peasant gathering (JALSA) has been organized in Ghotki, Sindh.

According to a recent report by UNICEF and the World Bank, about 333 million children (one in every six children) worldwide live in extreme poverty, while 62 million children in South Asia are living in extreme poverty. The World Food Programme estimates that 345 million people worldwide suffer from severe hunger, while according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the number of people suffering from hunger in the world in 2022 was between 691 million and 783 million. According to a recent UN statement, another 745 million people could suffer from severe hunger this year. Apparently we are in the 21st century, and it seems that high technological advances are also taking place, but the world is facing increasing hunger, with rural women being the most disadvantaged, who are not only suffering from hunger and malnutrition, but also deprived of proper employment and ownership of their personal land, especially agricultural land.

Given that Pakistan has been ranked 99th out of 129 nations in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) report, where the level of hunger has been described as serious; food agencies such as World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), believe that more than eight million people are expected to experience “high levels of acute food insecurity.”

The situation has not been created in just a day – it is the consistent promotion of neoliberal policies that have pushed for trade liberalization in food and agriculture that have resulted in such a dire situation.

The intense land concentration, with just 5% feudal families having control over 67% of land is of course also a critical reason behind not only rising hunger but the intense indebtedness of the country. The small number of elite who govern our country have pushed it into an abyss of debt and pauperization; at the moment Pakistan has a debt of \$85 billion which has resulted in severe economic crisis forcing austerity measures on the people. The government has been begging for aid from different sources, and since beggars cannot be choosers now agricultural land is being offered for lease to foreign entities. The government has created entities such as the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) that has extraordinary presence of the armed forces. The SIFC is paying particular attention to privatization and investment, especially in food and agriculture and will result in massive food exports. In addition, there is now land also being leased for corporate farming, with corporations being given priority over farmers, especially small and landless farmers. This is only going to have further grave consequences for rural communities, the bedrock of our society.

As a result of the IMF conditionalities, the prices of fuel have risen astronomically making it difficult for small farmers to continue food production. Rising debt of the farming community will end in exacerbating landlessness in the country.

The solution lies in not putting the country up for sale but for building self-reliance in food and agriculture and national industry. Corporations and foreign direct investment will only leach the country of its resources, while reaping rich profits off our land and labor. It is critical at this juncture that we adopt food sovereignty as the base for our food and agriculture policy, with center space given to small and landless farmers, especially women in policy development and implementing. There is no doubt that by making just and equitable land distribution a priority can help the country to break the shackles of debt and pauperization, and also help in establishing a national industry.

Let us fight for Food Sovereignty, for Climate Justice, for National Sovereignty!

Released by: Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT); 0300-3267684