

World Climate Challenge -A sustainable future for youth in rural areas

Position Paper of MIJARC Europe

See

We, as a Movement of young rural Youth, strongly feel the need to take action against Climate Change. We stress the importance of solidarity as a human virtue and our responsibility to preserve Gods' creation for our generation and for future ones.

According to the last report of the IPCC¹, *“each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth’s surface than any preceding decade since 1850. In the Northern Hemisphere, 1983–2012 was likely the warmest 30-year period of the last 1400 years (medium confidence)”*. *“Changes in many extreme weather and climate events have been observed since about 1950”*: the decrease of the number of cold days and nights and the increase of the number of warm days and nights, higher frequency of heat waves in large parts of Europe, Asia and Australia, more land regions where the number of heavy precipitation events has increased more than those where it has decreased and higher frequency or intensity of heavy precipitation events in North America and Europe.

We see that our current economic model overuses the resources of our planet. Our society focuses on food production, agriculture, technology, tourism and consumption of land, on consuming, growing and throwing away.

As a movement acting with youngsters all over Europe, we observe a feeling of incapacity of young people to act against climate change². In different fields the circumstances don't allow to act climate friendly. One example is the public transports in-between rural areas and towards urban areas. It is not serving correctly the needs of the population. Therefore people on rural areas use less ecological alternatives of transportation like private cars.

We see that people all over the world in the global south suffer already strongly from the impact of climate change due to floods, hazards, rising water levels and problems in the water supply. *"Droughts are projected to intensify in southern Europe and the Mediterranean region, central Europe, central and southern North America, Central America, northeast Brazil, and southern Africa. In dry regions, more intense droughts will stress water supply systems. In wetter regions, more intense seasonal droughts can be managed by current water supply systems and by adaptation; for example, demand can be reduced by using water more efficiently, or supply can be increased by increasing the storage capacity in reservoirs."*³

Judge

Agriculture has a strong impact on climate change. Industrial farming is linked with Land degradation and soil erosion, greenhouse gas emissions, water contamination, water- and soil runoff, erosion of soil and genetic pool, wild biodiversity and ecosystems functioning⁴. These aspects have either a negative impact on climate change or make the nature less resilient against negative consequences of climate change. One third of the food produced in the world is thrown away. Worldwide, one billion

¹Climate Change 2013: *The Physical Science Basis*, IPCC Working Group

²Sinus Jugendstudie 2016: Marc Calmbach, Silke Borgstedt, Inga Borchard, Peter Martin Thomas, Berthold Bodo Flaig (2016) *Wie ticken Jugendliche 2016? Lebenswelten von Jugendlichen im Alter von 14 bis 17 Jahren in Deutschland* <http://www.wie-ticken-jugendliche.de/home.html> p. 265-301

³IPCC, AR5 WGII, Chapter 3, October 2014

⁴IPES Food International Panel of Experts on sustainable Food systems (2016): *From uniformity to diversity – A paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agro ecological systems.*

people starve. Two billion people are overweight. Hunger is reinforced by European companies clearing rainforests, to grow genetically modified corn to feed animals. Europe produces products that people in Europe don't want to consume, which are sold on other continents and are destroying the local agricultural structures. Unnecessary overproduction has a climate-damaging impact.

Therefore we promote small scale farming. Agriculture needs to become sustainable and should be consuming fewer resources of the nature. As we stressed in our position paper "Rural youth to build the future agriculture"⁵, we believe that there are alternatives to the current food production, distribution and consumption. We believe in the concept of food sovereignty which stands for the right of each nation to have the power to protect themselves from price dumping from other countries thus safeguarding their own food production systems. Doing so, we would stop the race for lower prices and always higher productivity (use of pesticides, mono-cultures, deforestation) and decrease the CO₂ produced for transporting the food all over the world.

As mentioned above, climate change has already become visible through intense droughts, floods, more frequent hazards, rising water levels. One of the biggest challenges of climate change (and one of the central points of debate during the COP 21 in Paris) is Climate Justice. Less developed countries or countries of the global south have not been the main responsible actors for the growing amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere during the 19th and 20th centuries. Since they are the first and more directly impacted by climate change, government, businesses, communities and individuals need to take appropriate actions to ensure effective adaptation in a changing environment. It is possible but it should not endanger their own growth and their ability to finally gain some benefits out of globalisation. That's why we are fully supporting and hoping that the so called developed countries will fulfil their commitment to give at least 100 billion dollars each year for the South countries taking actions to adapt to climate change.

As a movement of rural youth, we consider the missing connection between the different actors in society (citizens, politics, companies, farmers...) as one of the clues of our current problems and also we see it as a solution. Only if all actors are included in the process, will we be able to find a common solution.

Food is a basic need. As it directly depends on the accessibility of natural resources, farmers are the first victims of climate change and extreme climate events. Consumers are mostly disconnected from the conditions of food production and the value of food. As a consequence of this lack of connection, they do not realize when farmers are faced with production concerns due to climate change and therefore consumers do not feel concerned or affected.

In general the consumers are not aware, don't care or don't see the impact on the climate of the long distance that the goods have to travel on from producers to consumers, the so called "food kilometer/mile". A lot of food is transported over the planet to reach our supermarkets, even when there is national or regional production of such goods. That is why we think that buying locally is a good possibility for everyone to reduce their emissions of CO₂. Nevertheless, nowadays there are not enough opportunities to buy local products easily.

Another lack of connection exists between the citizens and the governments. Our governments announce goals against climate change at national, European or international level (for example during the COP 21 and with the adoption of the SDGs). But too less of these goals are really fulfilled and some policies are even clearly against these goals. We also see that those climate goals are not challenging enough. It should be a responsibility of all politics, and all the layers in the society, to reach and strengthen these goals and to show their will to act against climate change towards citizens.

⁵MIJARC, 2010, *Rural youth to build the future agriculture*,
http://mijarc.net/sites/default/files/files/Food_Sovereignty_Political_Paper_Final.pdf

Finally, it is not only about governments determining goals and actions. Businesses, communities, citizens and consumers have a huge role to take against climate change. By individual and collective actions, they take their part of responsibility and can influence the governments and the laws.

Act

To reconnect people with their environment, to encourage everybody to make their part against climate change and to engage our society in an economic model that respects our Earth and its resources, we demand:

- more ecological ways of producing and consuming goods. To consume local products is one step in the right direction. The region of origin and kilometer label on products are needed to raise awareness of the distance products are transported and the use of resources and the impact on climate change. Food not fitting the norm needs to be consumed instead of being left on the fields.
- more education on the impact of our consumption behavior and how to improve it. In addition a focus on reducing considerably the use of energy is also needed.
- that ways of sharing and exchanging goods and services have to be created, promoted and included in policies.
- that governments develop efficient public transport alternatives which combine intelligently bicycle, buses and trains. Especially in rural areas an infrastructure with better public transport needs to be created.
- more research for earth friendly technologies and the implementation of these technologies.
- that governments on local, regional, national and international level bring the SDGs into practice. The SDGs need to be used as a tool to create links between citizens, different organizations and different countries.

As an organization we engage ourselves to take into consideration the carbon footprint of our events and to continue sensitizing our members on climate change. We sensitize young people, politicians and civil society by campaigns against climate change and call for changes in formal and non - formal education.