



Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network Réseau Afrique Europe Foi et Justice

ECHOES from AEFJN

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www.aefjn.org

aefjn@aefjn.org

JUST THINKING

Family farming an alternative response to the crisis

The UN has proclaimed 2014 as the 'International Year of Family Farming' (IYFF) to highlight the ability of this agriculture to counter hunger and poverty and to preserve the environment and biodiversity. Family farming (FF) gives work, generates a sense of well-being and gives stability to people in rural areas. It also assures food security and sovereignty and protects biodiversity, unlike industrial farming. The IAASTD report recognises that small farms are often more productive and sustainable than conventional large-scale farms.

Family farming offers an alternative response to the current crises. If given enough support, it can provide enough food to counter the food crisis. Its respect of the environment and biodiversity presents a solution to the environmental crisis. It offers plentiful work and it consumes less oil-derived chemical products than industrial agriculture. [Read more](#)

Begoña Iñarra – AEFJN Executive Secretary

TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

Community stewardship of the Commons

Today Community Land Trust (CLT) is one of the tools citizens are using to implement a new economy that meets social, ecological, and cultural criteria. A community land trust is a form of ownership for the common good with a charter based on the principles of sustainable and ecologically sound stewardship and use. It is an open-membership organization where members make a social contract with the community and elect the board of directors from the membership. The CLT acquires land, by gift or purchase, and develops a land-use plan for each site according to social need and ecological constraints. The movement has spread from the USA to the rest of the world. The CLT provides a system of land tenure that takes the Commons (land, water, forests, etc.) out of economic exchange and encourages a new land ethic. [Read more](#)

FROM THE AEFJN DESK

Africa's Dirty Diamonds

Created in 2000 by the UN, the Kimberley Process is responsible for ensuring that diamond sales do not finance conflicts as was the case in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola and the RDC in the 1990s (see film Blood Diamonds). When they met in Johannesburg in November 2013, the diamond producers refuse to move towards greater transparency in the Kimberley Process. In 2011, the organisation Global Witness had already denounced the lack of transparency regarding Zimbabwe. Indeed, in 2009, the Zimbabwean army had brutally seized the diamond fields of Marangue, expelling the small producers, killing hundreds of miners and forcing several tens of thousands of people to move away. Today, the diamond issue is affecting the crumbling Central African Republic (CAR) where, according to official statistics, a quarter of the population lives off the diamond industry which is the main source of income for the government. [Read more](#)

Christine von Garnier – AEFJN (Switzerland)

ALSO IN THE NEWS

Senhuile-Senéthanol: Farmers determined to oppose it

An agro-industry project jointly financed by capital from Italy, the US and Senegal has aroused resistance from the rural communities living of Gnith in Senegal. The people are opposed to the current development of land that is part of the project. The Italo-Senegalese company acquires vast tracts of land to produce biofuels for the European market.

Before establishing itself in Gnith, the company had been set up in Fanaye where the local people resisted the project. This led the project sponsors to suspend activities in 2011. Currently, the people of Gnith, and in particular the Fulani herders, are being faced down by the firm's bulldozers. The project has disappointed farmers as land development has reduced the grazing areas available for breeders. The project was also supposed to create employment, provide a health centre and grant subsidies to the local community, but none of these promises have been kept. [Read more](#)

VOICES FROM THE NETWORK

Remembering the first president of AEFJN

On the 2nd January 2014 Fr. Wim van Frankenhuijsen SMA, the first president of AEFJN died in Cadier en Keer (Netherlands). The AEFJN Secretariat was present at his funeral.

After 25 years in Ghana working in education, Father Wim was sent to Rome where he played a key role in the founding and early years of the Network. In 1986, his General Superior had asked him to explore the possibility of establishing a European advocacy group for economic justice similar to the American "Africa Faith and Justice Network" based in Washington. In 1988, the Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network was born and Fr. Wim became its first president. He often travelled to Brussels to support the first Executive Secretary Fr. Frans Thoolen. In 1995 when Fr. Wim was appointed to the Netherlands, he started the AEFJN Dutch Antenna and became its first Chairperson. [Read more](#)

ADVOCACY

Dialogue at the European Parliament on the perspectives in DR Congo

In December 2013 AEFJN participated at a meeting at the European Parliament co-organized by Mariya Gabriel (MEP) and EurAc (European Network for Central Africa) to discuss the state of play and perspectives in D. R. Congo two years after the elections.

The dialogue with the public was interesting and presented contrasting and, at times, opposing views and unanswered questions. The issues of the national consultations conducted by President Kabila, its follow-up and recommendations, the Addis Ababa framework, and the extended mandate of MONUSCO and their action on the ground were the main themes. [Read more](#)

Begoña Iñarra – AEFJN Executive Secretary

Meeting between AEFJN and the Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium

On January 13th AEFJN met with the cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy of Belgium. As a member of the Belgian Network on Natural Resources (RBRN), AEFJN was represented by Jose Luis Gutierrez Aranda. The RBRN laid out its position regarding the amendment of the Directive on Transparency on disclosure of non-financial information by certain large companies working overseas. [Read more](#)

Jose Luis Gutierrez Aranda – Policy Officer AEFJN

VIDEOS

[No Land, No Food, No Life](#): Trailer of the documentary “No Land, No Food, No Life” about land grabbing, popular resistance against land grabbing and the merits of family farming. (2min.)

[Explaining Investors State Dispute Settlement \(ISDS\)](#) Explication of the mechanism to resolve any dispute between private investors and the state.

[The scourge of bio-piracy](#) : is the illegal appropriation and commercialisation of biological resources through one-sided patents by private firms.