

RIGHTS OF PEASANTS AND RURAL WORKERS

Report of the Working Group on the Rights of
Peasants and Other Persons Working in Rural Areas

UN Human Rights Council – 2025



LAND AND TERRITORY



Territorial spaces are the basis of peasant life, its cultural practices, and its social organization.



When the territorial rights of peasants and rural communities are violated, their **survival, cultural identity, and human dignity are put at risk.**





RIGHT TO TERRITORY



Land grabbing and tenure insecurity:

Globally, peasants face dispossession and land grabbing by corporations and governments, without legal protection or compensation. Lack of degrees, corruption, discrimination, and climate change make them even more vulnerable.



Green grabbing:

Turn nature into business, carbon and biodiversity projects account for 20% of massive land acquisitions. Under the pretext of sustainability, communities are displaced, and corporate control over territories is strengthened.



Neoliberal reforms:

Economic restructuring policies and legal reforms are driving privatization and land concentration, weakening the protection of communities.



Financialization of land:

Land is being transformed into a financial asset, more valued for speculation and capital gains than as a productive resource for communities.



Investment inflows and proliferation of funds:

Agricultural land is being transformed into a financial commodity. In a few years, institutional investments grew massively.



Concentration of land ownership:

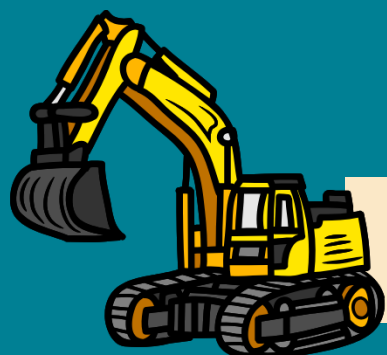
These trends reflect a global pattern of land accumulation by powerful actors at the expense of smallholder farmers and rural communities.





Globally, a small proportion of large-scale farms—representing only 1% of all farms—control the vast majority (70%) of agricultural land. By contrast, the poorest half of the global farming population has access to only 3% of agricultural land.

In Colombia, the wealthiest 1% of landowners control more than 80% of the country's agricultural land, revealing a significant disparity.



Land conversion and appropriation:

The extractive industry and megaprojects are displacing agriculture. In the last decade, mining absorbed 14% of large-scale land transactions (7.7 million hectares).

Positive measures taken by States:



Colombia: Constitutional Recognition of the Peasantry.

Ecuador: thanks to its constitutional design, it is the first country to ratify the Declaration.

Mali: Land Law for Peasant Participation.

India: Agricultural laws that protect forest rights and require prior consent in projects.



Namibia/Zimbabwe: land reform and land redistribution programmes.

Cuba / Argentina: agroecology programs and peasant cooperatives.

RIVER AND MARINE RIGHTS



Historically, fishers have managed and protected oceans, rivers, and coastal lands as part of their territories.

States and companies transfer these goods to private actors under discourses of development, tourism, and carbon credits.

IMPACTS

Displacement of traditional fishing communities.

Criminalization of artisanal fishermen.

Water pollution from mining and industries.

Infrastructure megaprojects that destroy livelihoods.





VIOLENCE, CRIMINALIZATION AND REPRESSION



Peasants, indigenous peoples, and land defenders face violence, criminalization, and repression when they resist dispossession.



Forced evictions, destruction of crops, arbitrary detentions, and judicial harassment are used to silence the defence of their territories.



They face restrictions on freedom of expression and association, stigmatization, public defamation, and legal warfare.



Some States and private actors act with impunity, violating fundamental rights.





Armed conflict

It is a direct threat to peasant life. Military occupation and hostilities cause the violent loss of agricultural land, cut communities off from their means of production, and destroy farms, irrigation systems, forests, and critical infrastructure.

Positive measures adopted by the States

Colombia: Agrarian Jurisdiction and National Peasant Joint Commission to resolve conflicts and guarantee participation. *Decree 1004 of 2024.*

Mali: Land Law that reserves 15% of state land for women and youth.

Kenya: Use of the Peasant Declaration in judicial decisions.

Ghana and Cameroon: protection from discrimination and abuse in investment projects.

Brazil and the Philippines: protocols and systems to prevent persecution and ensure reparation.



DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF GENDER

Peasant and rural women face structural inequalities that limit their access to land, resources, and participation.

Patriarchy and discriminatory laws deny women the right to own, inherit, or control land.

Economic exclusion, difficulty in accessing credit, markets, and agricultural training.

Overload of unpaid care and gender-based violence.





In Kenya, although women account for 80% of the agricultural workforce, they own only 5% of the land. This illustrates a stark gap in land ownership between genders.

In Nepal, 70% of women work in agriculture, but less than 34% are owners.



Aftermath

- Increased poverty, food insecurity, and homelessness.
- Invisibilization in property titles.
- Vulnerability of widows and single mothers to land loss.
- Rural migrants are exposed to sexual violence and labor exploitation.



Positive measures taken by States



Laws recognizing women's right to land
(Kenya, Lesotho, Togo).



Credit and economic support programmes
(Ecuador, Brazil, Uganda).



Quotas and empowerment initiatives
(Tanzania, Rwanda, Colombia, México and Nepal).



Promoting agroecology as a sustainable
alternative **(Bangladesh).**





CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change systematically violates the rights of peasants and rural communities, hitting hardest those who have contributed the least to the climate crisis.

Main impacts



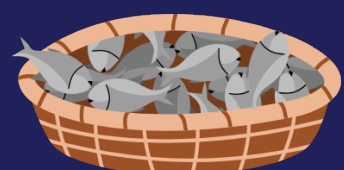
Extreme poverty: up to **122 million more people by 2030.**



Agriculture: destroyed crops, altered planting cycles, **loss of traditional crops, and food shortages.**



Territories: rising seas and desertification, **forced displacement, loss of agricultural land, and ancestral territories.**



Fishing: warmer and more acidic oceans reduce species, **forcing the search for alternative livelihoods.**



Water: glaciers and droughts, **severe water shortages.**

Structural problem



The failure of States to protect the environment and productive resources (art. 18) is a direct violation of peasant rights.



Exclusion of peasants from international forums (POPs, biodiversity) prevents their experience and knowledge from guiding solutions.



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND LIVELIHOODS



Unfair prices and corporate dominance: supermarkets and intermediaries impose conditions that generate poverty and exclusion (e.g., Portugal).



Income insecurity: low prices and debts lead to bankruptcies and even peasant suicides (e.g., India, France).



Industrial agriculture displaces agroecological and traditional systems.



Limited market access: Fair closures and restrictive rules affect small producers (e.g., Eastern Europe).



Insufficient policies: subsidies and insurance often exclude the youngest (e.g., CAP in Portugal).

Positive measures taken by States

- **Tanzania:** Technology adapted to local conditions to put an end to exploitation systems.
- **Malawi:** Mobile access to price data and market information eliminated intermediaries and improved incomes.
- **Brazil - CONAB:** a public company that provides data and programs to support peasant agriculture and food security.



LABOUR RIGHTS AND SOCIAL SECURITY



Abusive wages, informal work, dangerous conditions, few pensions or benefits, and no social security.

Women and migrants suffer aggravated exploitation.

Freedom of association is denied; rural leaders face violence.

Key cases



Spain: systematic exploitation of agricultural migrants.



Ecuador: Modern slavery in Furukawa Plantations.

Positive measures taken by States

India: Rural employment guaranteed by the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

Qatar: minimum wage and workers' support fund.

Colombia and México: programs for peasants, women, and food self-sufficiency.



SEED RIGHTS

Peasant seed systems, key to biodiversity and food sovereignty, are threatened by patents and laws that favor large companies, criminalizing the conservation and exchange of seeds.

Impacts

- Indebtedness and dependence.
- Restrictions on saving and exchanging seeds.
- Biopiracy on traditional plants.
- Penalization of the use of non-certified seeds.
- Loss of agrobiodiversity.



Positive measures taken by States

- **Brazil:** traditional and agroecological seeds.
- **Malaysia:** Community seed reserves.
- **Argentina:** social mobilization.



LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL, AND NON-JUDICIAL FRAMEWORKS

Although laws and legal mechanisms exist to protect the rights of peasants, their implementation is weak due to corruption, lack of judicial independence, bureaucratic slowness, and structural biases. This generates impunity and perpetuates inequalities.

Positive measures taken by States

Constitutional and legislative reforms and non-judicial mechanisms to ensure accountability.

PALESTINE



Palestinian farmers are particularly vulnerable due to the Israeli occupation, which limits their access to land, water, and essential resources for agriculture.

The violence perpetrated by settlers, State security forces, and the Israeli army is causing untold destruction.

The expansion of illegal settlements restricts the mobility and food sovereignty of rural Palestinian communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Legal frameworks: Integrate the Declaration into constitutions and laws, with accessible mechanisms for justice and protection of peasant organizations.



Territories: Recognize and protect ancestral lands, waters, and territories; redistribute land and stop land grabbing.



Protection: Ensure the safety of rural leaders and communities; eliminate laws that criminalize protests or peasant seeds.



Food sovereignty: Support agroecology and local markets; ensuring fair prices; defending peasant seed systems; and complying with labor rights and social protection.



Gender equality: Ensure women's rights to land and eliminate all violence and discrimination.



Climate change: Include peasants in climate plans and international forums; prioritize peasant solutions over corporate interests.



International organizations: Incorporate the Declaration into their policies and stop privatization and dispossession in the countryside.



Civil society and academia: Strengthen grassroots organizing, document violations, and generate participatory research with clear indicators.

**Download
the full
report**

Click here



https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-33-advance-edited-version.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

AI-created illustrations (ChatGPT, OpenAI)

Topics

Working group on peasants



SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

