

1 Good morning. I am very happy to be here, and to have the opportunity to take part in welcoming all of
2 you here today. It is a great honor to follow Señor Victor, who I've had the pleasure of knowing for a bit
3 more than a year, although Victor and my organization – the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, in
4 the US – have been allies for many years in many fights to support better and fairer trade, farmer
5 livelihoods, and sustainable agriculture.

6 But Victor and I, personally, met last year at a summit on agroecology, where he emphasized to a group
7 of other NGO members, foundations, farmer organizations, business people, and researchers the
8 importance of PEASANT agroecology. Agroecology, which as a scientific field has been around for
9 between 85 and 100 years, has roots in France, Germany, Latin America, and most recently the United
10 States. But of course its oldest roots go back to the innovations and struggles of peasants themselves.
11 But even though many agroecology researchers recognize and emphasize this – it is not enough. It is
12 important—but relatively easy—to *talk* about peasant leadership, and the innovations and knowledge
13 peasants bring from thousands of years of traditional practices and indigenous innovation. But to bring
14 scientists, agronomists and peasants together as partners is a challenge we “scientific agroecologists”
15 have perhaps not done enough to confront. Too often we speak of “educating” and “reaching out” to
16 peasants, and not thought of ourselves as the ones who needed education, who needed to get properly
17 organized, to show up at the proper times, to show support in the most needed ways, in order to be real
18 allies, real partners..

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20 This is not to say that our positions, our offices, laboratories, and research are not vital to solving the
21 multiple problems and crises facing us. But the social and spatial distance often found between the
22 academic or scientific agroecologist and the peasant is more and more becoming a luxury that our
23 struggles cannot afford. Agroecology is on the rise, brought to the attention of policymakers, activists,
24 and other farmers more and more each day, in no small part due to the efforts of groups like ANEC, and
25 our efforts at IATP, and many others here today. And from this rise, we know that the words and
26 concepts of agroecology *have power*. If it did not have power, private and public forces would not be
27 trying to “stop” it—certain actors have asked that agroecology no longer even be mentioned at the
28 international level—or co-opt it by using similar, but often deceptive language for ideas like “Climate
29 Smart” agriculture and supposedly “sustainable intensification.” If it cannot be stopped, the commercial
30 and imperial powers have decided, the next best is to take it. We, here, must not let them.

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33 The FAO -- the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations -- at their first international
34 seminar on agroecology in Rome last year, commented that because of agroecology a “window had
35 been opened there, in the Cathedral of the Green Revolution.” What they didn’t say is that a window
36 allows things to go both ways. We may be starting to make strides into the Cathedral of the Old Guard
37 of Industrial agriculture, but the Old Guard who even now speak of a “Doubly Green Revolution” would
38 be happy to rob the House of Agroecology blind. Their track record—from bad international trade deals,
39 old and new, to supposed “solutions” for farmers in the forms of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers—
40 shows that they are unbothered, if not pleased, to see peasants losing livelihoods, to see the “culture”
41 of agri-culture phased out, to see the variety, community, and potential of peasant economies hollowed
42 out so that they can merely be support for other exploitative economies in cities, for foreign powers,
43 and for financial investors.

44 The FAO had a regional meeting on agroecology in Latin America in Brasilia this past June. At that
45 meeting, both activists and officials recognized that agroecology required not just new practices, but
46 new policies, new economies. And this requires pressure, mobilization, organization from peasants and
47 their allies. This is especially true as agroecology continues to grow on the international stage, we must
48 continually defend peasant agroecology as not *an alternative system*—because with the challenges
49 faces us, it will not be a choice. Agroecology, as Dr. Clara Nicholls and other scholars at the FAO meeting
50 in Brasilia emphasized, is not AN option but rather it is the ONLY option. This is a message that hopefully
51 will continue at the next FAO regional meetings this November in Africa and Asia, a message that
52 perhaps we can deliver out of this meeting to present to our brothers and sisters there, in solidarity for
53 uniting scientists and peasants as true allies for THE necessarily peasant Agroecological future.

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55 When we speak of this, we come to a current tension in agroecology—between recognizing the
56 fundamental role of peasants, and what people call “romanticizing” peasant agriculture. That is,
57 pretending that it is a way of life that is always in balance, always wise, and always rewarding. But this,
58 this is the point, is it not? Peasants, like everyone else, are people, with their weak points and their
59 strong ones; with their happy times and their bad ones. The point is not that peasant agriculture is
60 perfect—the point is that it can be, should be, MUST be better—for the peasants themselves and for the

61 land they tend. Peasant agroecology must involve coming to the peasants, and supporting them as
62 brothers and sisters, side by side. We do not always agree with our real brothers and sisters, remember!
63 Neither are they always right, nor are we (even if, as the oldest sibling, I know we often deep down think
64 we really *are* right). But, for those of us who can, when our brothers or sisters need us, we go to them.
65 When they are treated unfairly, we stand with them—not in front of them, not instead of them, but
66 with them.

67 This is the power of peasant agroecology and the peasant economy. Unlike the dominant model, it
68 remembers that food is culture; having enough food is independence, autonomy, and power; food and
69 agriculture are about struggle and joy, family AND business, innovating, researching AND honoring and
70 learning from the wisdom of our ancestors. The dominant model cares only how many dollars it brings,
71 not how many people have good, steady work and receive prices and support that allow them to make a
72 living they can pass on to their own children. At its most charitable, it cares about calories, but not
73 quality; not variety; not dignity; not stewardship, sustainability, or sovereignty. Peasant agroecology is
74 about all of these things, and where it does not meet its potential, it is not for us to romanticize it, but
75 rather to engage in the struggle to make it what it can and must be – the only viable way forward.

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77 This focus on the farmer, the peasant, and not just the practices needs to be defended as agroecology
78 grows in the international arena. The focus on peasants as partners is the basis of IATP and ANEC's long
79 history together, and what we need to focus on in the struggles to come. So I am happy to be here to
80 represent IATP on this 20th anniversary of ANEC, and I look forward to not only the next few days of
81 work, but also to looking back, twenty years from now at ANEC's 40th anniversary celebration, on all we
82 have done together, as we take on the challenges before us. As we do more than open a window into
83 the Cathedral of the Green Revolution, but rather, open the whole thing up, to occupy it, as we continue
84 forward on the peasant agroecology revolution.