

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8403>



France

Radical change is needed to combat capitalist agriculture!

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Sunday 4 February 2024

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Farmers mobilisations are rocking Europe fuelled by the distress and anger of farmers. We are seeing the hypocrisy of the FNSEA and the government. The far right are trying to exploit the situation. The conflict raises urgent social, climatic and ecological issues.

Neither the petty measures announced by Prime Minister Attal last Friday nor his reactionary rhetoric at the National Assembly on Tuesday have been able to extinguish this mobilisation. The government's so-called "agricultural rearmament" is in reality a disarmament of farmers...

A dire situation

The number of farms, as well as the number of farmers, has fallen drastically: 40 years ago, farmers represented 7% of the working population... and today they represent less than 2%. The Confédération paysanne (Peasant Confederation) talks of "a massive redundancy plan". What's more, the inequality among farmers is huge: while 18% of farm households live below the poverty line, some are wealthy industrialists... like FNSEA President Arnaud Rousseau, who farms 700 hectares (10 times the average size) and chairs the agro-industrial group Avril. Unsurprisingly, unequal agricultural policies primarily benefit large farms: uncapped direct aid favours large farms to the detriment of small and medium-sized ones.

While the FNSEA has been co-managing agricultural policy for decades, it is trying to ride roughshod over the current revolt in order to further satisfy the productivist agriculture and chemical industry that it defends against biodiversity and the climate, but also against the health of farmers and the general public. For example, it rejects no-treatment zones, controls on water abstraction, the Ecophyto plan (i.e. halving the use of pesticides by 2030), and demands a "moratorium on bans" on pesticides...

Yet the report by the French High Council for the Climate shows that while this agricultural model is a major cause of climate change, it is also one of its main victims. Since 1961, climate change has already reduced the total productivity of world agriculture by 21%.

Mobilising for the land and those who work it

Capitalism and productivism always go hand in hand, and this is particularly true in agriculture: for capitalists, you have to grow wheat... to make money [pousser du ble...pour faire du blé!, ble means both wheat and money in French!].

To defend this model, the Macron government, like its predecessors, knows who its friends are. It continues to make ever more pledges to the FNSEA, counting on its faithful ally to help the river of current anger flow back into its bed. This government is also maintaining its traditional tolerance of blockades and violent actions by farmers (or hunters!)... This is in stark contrast to the police violence used less than a year ago in Sainte-Soline, and the severity of the sentences handed down to environmental activists!

We need to respond to the demands of farmers to improve their living and working conditions, a battle that is shared

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by our entire social camp. We need to work together to defend solutions that are emancipatory, ecological and social, to prevent the far right from exploiting the suffering of a section of the farming community and turning it towards nationalist, anti-ecological and anti-social solutions.

This requires a radical change in public agricultural policies:

- setting minimum prices (farmers are suffering from lossmaking purchase prices imposed by the major distribution groups);
- imposing a moratorium on bank debts;
- promoting organic peasant models;
- developing and supporting the organic sector;
- The introduction of food social security would ensure quality food for all;
- facilitate the setting up of new farms;
- and enabling farmers to be fairly remunerated.

Break with intensive, production-oriented, industrial agriculture, which is doped up on chemicals, so that a different kind of agriculture is possible!

Tuesday 30 January 2024

Translated by [Anticapitalist Resistance](#) from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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