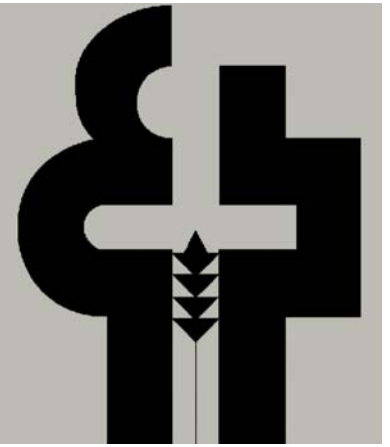


Agricultural Missions, Inc.



Declaration of Albany, GA on Land, Agriculture & Climate Change

We met at a moment of great crisis in our country and world related to land, agriculture and climate change, which has been evident for decades for small family farmers, in particular people of African descent both in the U.S. and abroad, as it has intensified. With 80% of the impoverished people of the world being people “of color”, we understand that the multiple social, economic, political and ecological crises we are undergoing disproportionately impact people of color, overwhelmingly women and children.

We met on lands where large numbers of enslaved persons from Africa were subjected to forced labor on a scale never before seen in North America. This land is now being organized and utilized for the education and development of people of color and their allies by the descendants of those who suffered the bondage of chattel slavery.

We are surrounded on all sides by former plantations (*latifundios*) of tremendous size (30,000 acres was the size of one single plantation in the area), covering so much of the land that could otherwise support thousands of family farms, that an entire adjacent county is unable to support more than 3,500 people* today (*the total population of that county). This contemporary land concentration, a legacy from the ante-bellum slave-plantation system, which was instrumental in producing the capitalistic wealth of the United States, continues to impact communities of color unjustly. This is one of the critical realities Agricultural Missions is analyzing: the monopolization of the most important element in any sustainable agricultural system, fertile farmland.

We gathered here with people of faith representing various churches, representatives of farmer advocacy and family farms of the U.S. south, peasant agricultural movements from regions of Haiti, from the Garífuna (Afro-Indigenous) movement of Honduras, as well as social movement leaders from El Salvador, along with representatives from other U.S. states. From the proceedings, we learned the following truths: The participation of people of color in rescuing and transforming our agricultural system and realizing food sovereignty is essential.

“Therefore, we declare that the agricultural system needs to be transformed based on the principle of food sovereignty, which includes a strong measure of social, economic and ecological justice. “

- Declaration of Albany, GA on Land, Agriculture & Climate Change

1. Low-input, high-knowledge family and community-oriented agriculture is a vital part of both feeding our society and slowing the ravages of climate change.
2. Climate change has occurred in large part because of longstanding structural injustice including a corporate pursuit of wealth, which has endangered both people and planet.
3. “Big (Industrialized) Ag” is responsible for a significant portion of greenhouse gas emissions: in fact, in addition to heavy reliance on fossil fuels, the fatal defect of Big Ag is that soil fertility diminishes over time, causing a net emission of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Small-scale, agro-ecological farming, by contrast, brings an increase in soil fertility over time, thus sequestering CO₂ from the atmosphere, while feeding local communities.
4. Justice and social support for the agricultural sector is essential for the return of people to the vocation of farming. To achieve such justice requires affordable access to fertile land, well-adapted seeds, animal breeding stock, affordable credit, agricultural research and extension oriented toward small and medium scale farmers, as well as markets and support mechanisms for local agriculture that compensate farmers in times of crop losses due to drought, floods, extreme weather, etc....
5. Experiential and conceptual education for young and beginning farmers and gardeners oriented toward sustainable, organic or low-input practices is vital and must be taken up for children, young adults and for adults.
6. The extreme hardships of the evolving and failing agricultural system, which have caused so much suffering for farmers and their families, must be eliminated so that young people would consider returning to the agricultural vocation.
7. The effects of slavery, Jim Crow and on-going white supremacy organizations and teachings have been passed down through generations and remain with us today. Such are most apparent in our political debates, in our economic policies, in the current realities of unequal land concentration, and the marginalization of low-income communities of color in decaying urban neighborhoods with little to no economic opportunity or legal livable-wage employment, as well as the cultural shifts and losses of transmission of knowledge from generation to generation, all these need to be addressed as part of transforming the system.
8. Current actions of national and International institutions such as the WTO, WB, IMF, USDA and trade agreements such as NAFTA, CAFTA, and bilateral “free” trade agreements, as well as the US Farm Bill (particularly the commodity and insurance titles), and the patenting of life by agro-chemical corporations such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Dow, Pioneer, etc. ensure that the current system of commodity dumping and unequal trade arrangements will continue to drive farmers from the global south and among the small and medium scaled producers within the U.S. out of farming as a viable livelihood.

Therefore, we declare that the agricultural system needs to be transformed based on the principle of food sovereignty, which includes a strong measure of social, economic and ecological justice. Agrarian reform as part of a future Farm Bill and other economic policy legislation at many levels is needed to provide affordable access to land, biodiversity, water, and needed agricultural credit, extension, value-added production and marketing support to all who embrace an agricultural vocation. We strongly oppose the privatization of life, in the form of the DNA in seeds, cuttings and animals all of which rob the farmer of the ability to freely reproduce their means of production. We seek to create an alternative solidarity food economy, as the logic of the market cannot solve the crisis we are in, but only worsen it. We are aware of the lifestyle changes that must take place, particularly for those of us with a measure of affluence, from our choices of how to procure our food, to our carbon footprints, to our investments as individuals and organizationally.

As a response to climate change, we call on the nations of the world to negotiate in good faith and give careful consideration to the proposals coming from the social movements of the world that call for an economy of justice and sufficiency and in rejection of profligate corporate capitalism, and that call for proportional commitments by the industrialized nations due to their historic responsibility in causing climate change. We reject any so-called “green” economy solutions that do little to reduce emissions while often increasing socio-environmental problems in other areas such as carbon futures’ markets (cap and trade) or Reduction of Emissions for Development (REDD, REDD+), or subsidizing an increase in monocultures or mono cropping. These so-called “market-based” solutions result in a new form of international economic “welfare” for corporations that are actually harming the environment.

All solutions to these multiple crises must include at the table the voices and democratic decision making power of frontline peoples’ organizations who have the ability to mobilize their communities to take the day to day actions that must come to bear to restore soil fertility, restore woodlots and mixed forests, feed communities and end hunger and exclusion, and create a culture of peace, sustainability, and sufficiency for all.

Organizations present/co-signers,

Agricultural Missions, Inc. (AMI), New Communities, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, SW Georgia Rural Women’s Project, Woodberry Associates, Presbyterian Church USA Hunger Program.