



Report

The World Organic Forum 2018 at Schloss Kirchberg

Reported by Diana Ismael



Photo credit: Schloss Kirchberg

The World Organic Forum took place for the second year at Schloss Kirchberg, Haus der Bauern, from the 7th – 9th of March 2018. The international congress was organized by the “House of Farmers” foundation with other partners believing that the world needs a turnaround in agriculture. The conference provided space for discussions about the development of more efficient alternatives to the general capitalist business model in order to maximize profits. This year, the focus was on the future of agriculture and food in our world, the rights of small farmers, and solidarity economies.

Green Revolution representatives strongly believe that the world can be fed only with high-yielding varieties (HYVs) and with the help of lot of chemicals, modern agriculture, and efficient structures. Although those methods may give the desired results, the price is, and will be, very high: Biodiversity is decreasing, modern agriculture offers less and less chances for employment, and small farmers cannot survive, in addition to the negative effects on the quality of soils, groundwater and air. Thus, the world is in urgent need for a turnaround in agriculture that focuses on the environment, saves the natural resources, and encourages family farming, without compromising the adequate nutrition of humans. The conference focused on organic farming and the preservation of smallholder farming by strengthening their rights. This is the vision and the “New Age of Enlightenment”.

The congress started on the 7th of March with a welcome speech and introduction by Rudolf Bühler, the Chairman of the House of Farmers Foundation, and Founder and Chairman of the Farmers Association. Then, Dr. Alexander Müller, a former General Secretary at FAO and the Sustainability Council of the Federal Government, gave the key-note speech on the “External Cost of Modern Agriculture to the Agrobiodiversity”.

Over the course of the next two days, the conference consisted of three main blocks and one final block of working groups and discussions. The blocks were called: “The Future of Food and Agriculture in the World”, “To Feed the World ‘Organic’ or Not at All”, and “Global Peasant Rights”. Michael Windfuhr, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, gave a speech on UN human rights declarations named “Can a Declaration of the UN Human Rights Council Make a Difference?”. The congress then closed its sessions with a working group session and a final discussion. In conclusion, the World Organic Forum was beneficial and gave the right platform for scientists, experts, farmers, and even students, to discuss in general the need for a change in the agricultural paradigm.