

Communiqué

PAN ASIA PACIFIC HOLDS THE 2ND FARMERS-SCIENTISTS CONFERENCE AND FOURTH CONGRESS

Amid the worsening global climate and environmental crises and intensifying attacks against food sovereignty, there is a heightened urgency to advance people-led agroecology as a sustainable solution to the crises. Rising to this challenge, PAN Asia Pacific (PANAP) and its partners successfully organized the 2nd Regional Farmers-Scientists Conference back-to-back with its Fourth Congress last November 6 to 9, 2024 in Penang, Malaysia. The events were attended by 125 individuals representing 73 organizations from 16 countries.



Leaders of farmers' movements join PANAP Executive Director Sarojeni Rengam in officially opening the conference's exhibit.

2nd Regional Farmers-Scientists Conference (November 6-8)

The 2nd Regional Farmers-Scientists Conference took place on November 6 to 8, 2024. It brought together peasants, farmers, women, indigenous peoples, rural communities, scientists, health practitioners, environmentalists, and consumers to advance food sovereignty and agroecology, while challenging corporate control over food and agriculture systems. The gathering fostered collaborative, ground-level solutions to address the detrimental impacts of corporate-driven agriculture on livelihoods, health, and the environment, particularly in Asia, where governments have been influenced by corporate promises despite high economic, environmental, and social costs. By strengthening cooperation and solidarity, the conference united farmers, scientists, and civil society organizations to share knowledge, develop policy advocacy, and promote sustainable practices like agroecology, while democratizing scientific knowledge and encouraging participatory, community-based research to ensure science serves the people and fosters genuine sustainable development.

Day 1 - November 6



Indigenous peoples from Sabah and Sarawak perform a ritual to open the conference.

Specifically, the conference aimed to discuss and analyze emerging trends, evidence, and challenges related to corporate control of food and agriculture, as well as the use of hazardous technologies and chemicals, including pesticides, that negatively impacted rural communities. It also sought to address the impacts of climate change and share people-centered solutions for building community resilience and promoting sustainable approaches, particularly through agroecology. Participants shared experiences and enriched their perspectives on community-led innovations, such as farmer-led experiments in the field and participatory guarantee systems (PGS), while identifying key points of collaboration and strategies to respond to these challenges. The conference emphasized offering people-led solutions to strengthen community resilience and support movements advocating for sustainable and equitable food systems.

The regional conference opened with a focus on the challenges posed by climate change, corporate control, and industrial agriculture. Keynote speakers Rafael Mariano, chairperson emeritus of the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC), and Sagari Ramdas of the Food Sovereignty Alliance (India) highlighted the devastating impacts of corporate-driven solutions on smallholder farmers, particularly in Asia. Mariano emphasized agroecology as a sustainable alternative, citing successful initiatives in the Philippines, Bangladesh, and India, while calling for agrarian reform and youth empowerment. Ramdas criticized international institutions for promoting industrial technologies like GMOs and urged reclaiming agroecology for food sovereignty and social justice.



In their keynote messages, Asian Peasant Coalition Chairperson Emeritus Rafael Mariano and India's Sagari Ramdas of the Food Sovereignty Alliance criticize corporate agricultural solutions for harming smallholder farmers in Asia. They advocated for agroecology as a sustainable alternative and called for genuine agrarian reform.



Panel discussions addressed corporate dominance in agrifood systems, with Arnold Padilla, PANAP deputy executive director, critiquing the influence of multinational corporations and corporate lobbyists in climate talks. Kavya Chowdhry of the ETC Group warned of the risks of digitalization in agriculture, highlighting the collusion between Big Ag and tech companies. Dr. Chito Medina of the Stop Golden Rice Network (SGRN) debunked myths around GMOs, emphasizing their environmental and health risks, while sharing successful grassroots resistance efforts in the Philippines. Dr. Meriel Watts of PAN Aotearoa presented alarming data on pesticide poisoning, particularly affecting women farmers, and called for urgent action to address its chronic health impacts.



PANAP deputy executive director Arnold Padilla, ETC Group's Kavya Chowdhry, Dr. Chito Medina of the Stop Golden Rice Network (SGRN), and PAN Aotearoa's Dr. Meriel Watts address global trends and their impacts on food sovereignty and agroecology.

The opening day underscored the need for agroecology, grassroots resistance, and policy advocacy to counter corporate control and promote sustainable, people-led solutions in agriculture. The conference highlighted the importance of empowering rural communities, preserving traditional knowledge, and fostering solidarity to achieve food sovereignty and climate justice.

Day 1 also featured workshops and learning exchanges focused on addressing threats to food sovereignty, promoting agroecology, and sharing sustainable agricultural innovations. In the False Climate Solutions and Digitalization workshop, participants highlighted trends like digital land mapping and carbon offset schemes, proposing strategies such as policy mapping, seed sovereignty campaigns, and youth engagement. The GMOs workshop emphasized the need for consumer awareness, policy advocacy, and promoting local seed varieties, with a focus on involving women and youth in the fight against GMOs. The Pesticides workshop addressed the use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs), advocating for stricter regulations, public awareness campaigns, and capacity-building for farmers.



Learning exchanges, meanwhile, showcased successful agroecological practices. EcoPro Farm and SRI Lovely from Malaysia shared their organic farming methods, including composting and natural pest control, while acknowledging challenges like dependency on external inputs. MASIPAG (Philippines) and SWI Nepal discussed their work on agroecology and Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), celebrating victories against GMO crops. CGFED (Vietnam) presented its green market initiative, which supports household farming and has expanded to district levels. KMP (Philippines) and SRED (India) highlighted collective land cultivation as a tool for agrarian reform, with SRED empowering Dalit women through land occupation. The session on Citizen Science & CPAM introduced Community-based Pesticide Action Monitoring (CPAM) and the International People's Agroecology Movement (IPAM), encouraging participants to engage in advocacy and agroecological transitions.

Day 2 - November 7



The second day of the regional conference continued with a focus on advancing food sovereignty and agroecology through panel discussions, strategy workshops, and learning exchanges. The panel discussion on Advancing Food Sovereignty and Agroecology through People's Science and Movement Building featured discussions on the multidimensional principles of agroecology. Terence Lopez, coordinator of PANAP's Agroecology Program, emphasized its holistic approach, integrating social, cultural, economic, and ecological dimensions, while Wali Haider from Roots for Equity (Pakistan) highlighted the commodification of seeds as a threat to biodiversity and food sovereignty. PANAP's executive director Sarojeni Rengam addressed the environmental degradation caused by corporate-driven agricultural expansion, particularly in oil palm cultivation, and called for leveraging UN resolutions to protect natural resources.

During the simultaneous workshops, participants explored strategies for food sovereignty and people-led agroecology. The Community Resilience on Climate Change workshop emphasized documenting indigenous agroecological practices and linking with social movements to combat climate change. The People-led Agroecology and Movement Building workshop addressed corporate land monopolization and oppressive laws, advocating for legal frameworks to secure farmers' rights, fair land distribution, and community-led land ownership. The Seeds Sovereignty and Biodiversity workshop proposed a regional "Save Our Seeds" campaign, research on local seed varieties, and involving youth and women in seed conservation. The Safe Environment workshop focused on protecting water, soil, and forests through organic farming advocacy and public awareness campaigns.



Participants share their insights and recommendations during the learning exchanges and workshops.

Learning Exchanges in Day 2 celebrated successes in agroecology and sustainable practices. Malaysia's PACOS Trust and Jungle School showcased initiatives strengthening indigenous knowledge and eco-tourism, while Vikalpani (Sri Lanka) and SRED (India) highlighted women's roles in agroecology, particularly Dalit women overcoming land and health challenges. Khoj (Pakistan) and CAP (Malaysia) shared urban gardening initiatives promoting food security and chemical-free farming. Malaysia's Tenaganita and Yayasan Beranda Migran discussed agroecology as a solution for migrant workers' food security and land loss. Thanal (India) presented findings on biodiversity improvements in organic farms, emphasizing ecological resilience and reduced pesticide use.

The day concluded with Learning Exchanges where RRAFA (Thailand) and Gita Pertiwi (Indonesia) shared their work on empowering women farmers through organic farming and debt management. Good Food Community and SUKI Network from the Philippines presented community-supported agriculture models, fostering direct farmer-consumer partnerships. PAN India discussed organic cotton farming challenges, while SIBAT (Philippines) highlighted technological support for farming communities, including micro-hydro power systems. Khoj and SAEDA emphasized urban gardening's role in food sovereignty, improving soil health, and fostering community bonds.

Day 2 reinforced the importance of agroecology, community resilience, and grassroots movements in achieving food sovereignty and climate justice, while celebrating innovative practices and strategies to counter corporate control in agriculture.



PANAP's Tey Lopez and Sarojeni Rengam and Roots for Equity's Wali Haider lead the panel discussion on food sovereignty and agroecology.

Day 3 - November 8

The final day of the regional conference focused on synthesizing discussions and planning coordinated actions to advance food sovereignty and agroecology. Participants emphasized the need to reframe messaging around agroecology principles, highlighting its holistic approach and the role of facilitators rather than experts. Key strategies included promoting pro-poor, pro-farmer, and pro-women practices, showcasing regional agroecological innovations, and building compelling narratives around natural pesticides. Strengthening regional platforms through in-person gatherings and engaging legal experts for policy advocacy were also prioritized.



In the Research and Documentation segment, participants agreed to monitor the long-term health impacts of pesticides and launch capacity-building initiatives to document agroecology practices scientifically. The Capacity Building discussions centered on developing comprehensive modules for effective policy work and establishing an informal platform to sustain the conference’s momentum through learning exchanges and reciprocal support among PANAP partners.

The conference concluded with the Appreciation to Innovators, a special recognition by PANAP for its partners’ remarkable contributions to improving community conditions through innovative agroecological practices. Among the honored organizations were BARCIK (Bangladesh), which integrates indigenous knowledge into sustainable agriculture; Ecopro Training Center (Malaysia), dedicated to ecosystem restoration and permaculture; and Food Today, Food Tomorrow (Philippines), promoting solidarity gardening and food sovereignty. Other recognized innovators included Gita Pertiwi Foundation (Indonesia), Good Food Community (Philippines), Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (Vietnam), Khoj (Pakistan), MASIPAG (Philippines), PACOS Trust (Malaysia), SAEDA (Laos), SHISUK (Bangladesh), SIBAT (Philippines), SRI Lovely (Malaysia), SRED (India), Thanal Agroecology Centre (India), and Vikalpani Women’s Federation (Sri Lanka). These organizations have demonstrated exceptional commitment to sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and empowering marginalized communities.

Day 3 reinforced the conference’s collective vision for a just and sustainable food system, celebrating the achievements of grassroots innovators while outlining actionable steps to advance agroecology and food sovereignty in the region.



The conference concludes with the Appreciation to Innovators, a special recognition by PANAP for its partners’ remarkable contributions to improving community conditions through innovations.

PANAP's Fourth Congress



As part of Palestinian Children's Days of Action, PANAP Congress stands in solidarity with Gaza's children who face deliberate starvation in Israel's genocidal war on Palestine.

The PANAP Congress took place on November 9, 2024 with the theme "Promote people-led agroecology, phase out highly hazardous pesticides, and assert the people's right to land and resources! Forward the people's agenda for a pro-people and pro-planet food systems transformation, genuine sustainable development, and climate justice!" The Congress addressed the pressing challenges to food sovereignty posed by corporate-controlled, fossil-fuel-heavy agriculture, which has been exacerbating ecological destruction, global warming, and human rights violations.

During the Congress, PANAP reviewed its achievements and challenges since its last meeting in 2013, presented and adopted its Five-Year Plan (2025-2030), and mobilized support for its implementation. The event strengthened PANAP's regional network of advocates and communities, mainstreamed the principles of people-led agroecology in policy discourse, and intensified campaigns against highly hazardous pesticides while demanding accountability from agrochemical companies. The Congress also focused on consolidating partnerships and fostering solidarity to support communities' access to and control over their land and resources, aiming to create favorable conditions for sustainable and equitable food systems.



Partners offer valuable suggestions to further enrich PANAP's Five-Year Plan.



The Congress was a significant gathering of advocates, activists, and organizations dedicated to advancing food sovereignty, agroecology, and the fight against corporate-controlled agriculture. The event opened with PANAP executive director Sarojeni Rengam's welcome remarks, which set the tone by condemning the global food sovereignty crisis driven by corporate dominance, fossil-fuel-intensive agriculture, and agrochemical dependency. She highlighted the worsening environmental degradation, climate change, and food insecurity caused by these practices, while celebrating grassroots efforts and sustainable agricultural practices as beacons of hope. Rengam emphasized PANAP's commitment to mobilizing for people-led agroecology, securing land rights, combating hazardous pesticides, and holding agrochemical companies accountable. She concluded with a call to action for solidarity and collective commitment to building a legacy of food sovereignty and justice.

Dr. Anwar Fazal, PANAP Chairperson of the Board and a member of its Steering Council member, in his message, further framed the Congress by contrasting the three dimensions of peace—with self, others, and Earth—against the harsh realities of ecocide and genocide. He outlined seven critical challenges facing the world, including casino capitalism, rising criminality and corruption, the digital divide, the double-edged potential of genetic engineering, the urgent need for conservation, the commercialization of essential services, and the colonization of minds through aggressive marketing. Anwar called for conscience, courage, and competence, affirming that grassroots movements of ordinary people working together can achieve meaningful global change.



Glorene Das, a key member of PANAP's Board and Steering Council, gave a keynote speech that reinforced the collective vision of transforming food systems through justice, sustainability, and resilience. She highlighted the detrimental impacts of corporate interests, fossil fuel-intensive agriculture, and conflicts on food insecurity and displacement, particularly in Malaysia, which hosts over 6 million migrant workers, refugees, and displaced people. Despite these challenges, Glorene expressed hope in the resilience of rural

communities fighting for food sovereignty and concluded with a powerful song verse from Tenaganita founder Irene Fernandez, urging everyone to "wake up and pay attention."

Reflections from various organizations showcased PANAP's impactful collaborations. KMP (Philippines) highlighted PANAP's support in resisting land grabbing and promoting agroecology through education, policy dialogues, and capacity-building. Thanal (India) shared successful programs like agroecology campaigns and soil camps for children, while Vikalpani (Sri Lanka) emphasized PANAP's role in strengthening their pesticide awareness campaigns and expanding their network. CGFED (Vietnam) detailed their growth through PANAP's support, including initiatives like Community Participatory Action Monitoring (CPAM) and the establishment of a green market model for sustainable funding and food security.

The Congress also featured discussions on PANAP's Five-Year Plan (2025-2030), with participants offering valuable suggestions. Key points included the need to highlight the political and economic dimensions of agroecology, expand campaigns to include state accountability, and focus on the health impacts of pesticides. Participants also called for expanding PANAP's reach to the Pacific region, documenting indigenous knowledge, and addressing emerging trends like the co-optation of agroecology by corporations. Emphasis was placed on empowering women and youth through targeted programs, capacity-building, and creating independent platforms for youth initiatives. The Congress officially approved for implementation PANAP's Five-Year Plan.



PANAP partners in high spirits as they look forward to continued collaboration, advocacy, and grassroots actions.



For a just and pesticide-free future

**Advancing food sovereignty,
environmental health, and
social justice since 1992**

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PANAP's Congress recognizes activists and leaders for their outstanding contributions to pesticide-free advocacy and food sovereignty.

The event concluded with PANAP recognizing 13 key activists for their outstanding contributions to pesticide-free advocacy and food sovereignty. The awardees included Kim Jai Ok (Consumers Korea), Dr. Romy Quijano (pesticide safety advocate), Dr. Meriel Watts (global pesticide reduction campaigns), Hon. Rafael Mariano (Ka Paeng) (Philippine peasant movement leader), Charito Medina (Doc Chito) (anti-GMO advocate), Professor Koa Tasaka (Tasaka san) (organic farming advocate), Song Vo Kyung (Song) (consumer rights champion), Dr. Irene Fernandez (Tenaganita co-founder), Aegile Fernandez (migrant worker rights advocate), Nguyen Thi Hoa (SRD Vietnam), Chandra Hewagallage (Vikalpani Women's Federation, Sri Lanka), Ramakrishnan Ramasamy (REACH founder), and Professor Kuang Rong Ping (pioneer in pesticide safety and digital education in China). Their recognition celebrated their legacy and inspired continued collective action toward a just and sustainable future.

The 2nd Regional Farmers-Scientists Conference and PANAP's Fourth Congress reaffirmed the urgent need to advance people-led agroecology, resist corporate control over food and agriculture, and uphold the rights of farmers, indigenous people, and rural communities. Through knowledge-sharing, movement-building, and strategic action, participants strengthened solidarity and commitment to transforming food systems towards sustainability, equity, and justice. As the global climate and food crises escalate, PANAP and its partners remain steadfast in their mission to champion food sovereignty, promote agroecology, and advocate for policies that prioritise people and the planet. The outcomes of these gatherings will serve as a foundation for continued collaboration, advocacy, and grassroots action in the years ahead.