

Farmers in Colombia Denounce Bill As “Counter-Agrarian Reform”



Bogota, June 18 (teleSUR-RHC)-- During the Peasant Agrarian Summit on Tuesday, Colombian farmers called for a mobilization in July against the legislation on the use of uncultivated lands currently being discussed in Congress.

This initiative does not contribute to promote an equal distribution of land, said President of Fensuagro (the national federation of peasant unions) and Summit participant Eberto Diaz Montes, calling the bill a “counter-agrarian reform.” “This is a second step of the agrarian counter-reform, he added. The first followed the violence of paramilitaries. Now the second takes a legal form.”

Other organizations like Oxfam, Codhes (Human Rights and Displacement Consultancy), Cinep (Center of Investigation and Popular Education), and the Commission of Colombian lawyers joined the mobilization.

“We hope that this peasant-indigenous collective (called “minga”) will have the strength and ability to have the Government sit at the negotiation table,” added Diaz Montes.

The next mobilizations will also have to do with the failure of the government to comply with the deal reached after the 2013 agrarian strike and the massive protests in 2014, he said. “The Government has been diluting the eight points of the document negotiated then, and before the impending approval of the bill, we remain on high alert because this consists of a new step of land concentration,” said Diaz Montes.

The creation of Areas of Interests and Economic Development (ZIDRES) is violating constitutional rights of peasants, the Agrarian Summit argued, while offering better opportunities of profits for agrarian multinationals. When the Colombian government stated that this assertion was untrue, Oxfam Director in Colombia Aida Pesquera responded that “if the bill does not consider the issue of allocations indeed, the Article 9 does plan a transfer of land possession with the option of acquiring a piece of land that used to be uncultivated.”

Article 9 states: “In the Zidres, the project executive... will be able to: rent out, use, exploit, acquire, receive ... pieces of land legally obtained or join into partnership with the owners who do not want to give up their right to property, until fulfilling the required area for the productive project.”

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