

MST

*FOR LAND, PEOPLE'S AGRARIAN REFORM
AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION*





The **Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST)** is a working people's movement that organizes landless peasants from all over Brazil to fight **for access to land, agrarian reform, and social transformation**. It is the result of a long history of struggle against, and resistance to extreme concentration of land ownership and social inequality in Brazil and is inspired by various processes of people's struggles for social justice and people's sovereignty.

The latifundio - huge estates or landholdings-, the large scale monocultures of commodity crops for export and slave labor are the pillars of the formation of the Brazilian state and the development of capitalism in Brazil. Therefore, the democratization of land means a change in the entire socioeconomic structure of the country.



A photograph showing four men standing in the foreground of a large settlement of makeshift tents or shacks. The tents are made of various materials, including plastic and wood, and are set up in rows. In the background, there is a dense line of tall, thin trees under a clear sky. The men are dressed in casual clothing, including hats and t-shirts. One man on the left is holding a long wooden staff. The overall scene suggests a rural or agricultural setting, possibly a landless workers' settlement.

FIGHT FOR LAND:

Land occupation is the primary means of action that MST families take to gain access to land and the main way of exerting pressure on the government to identify land holdings that do not fulfill their social function to be destined for inclusion in the government's agrarian reform program.

A CONSTITUTIONAL STRUGGLE

"It is the responsibility of the Union to expropriate for social reasons, for agrarian reform purposes, rural property that is not fulfilling its social function by means of prior and fair compensation ..." (Federal Constitution, Title VII, Chapter III, article 184)

The Social Function of Land – Article 186 of the Brazilian Constitution establishes that rural properties must fulfill a social function and may be expropriated when this does not happen. The social function of the land is understood to be fulfilled when land is used in a rational and appropriate way – and is thus productive, while respecting the environment and labor laws.



THE FIGHT FOR AGRARIAN REFORM

Agrarian Reform is conceived of as much broader than merely land redistribution, and includes the transition to, and consolidation of, a production model based on agroecology and the creation of new social relations; a new model that challenges the exploitative agribusiness model.


It also involves the implementation of public policies, such as access to credit, health care services, cultural programs and free and quality educational services as basic rights of the rural population.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The democratization of land and the construction of an effective People's Agrarian Reform process must be part of a broader political project of radical change in the political, social and economic structure of society and must include the whole working class.

LAND CONCENTRATION AND INEQUALITY IN BRAZIL

Brazil is one of the countries with the greatest concentration of land ownership in the world. This situation has persisted in Brazil since the early years of Portuguese colonization that began in 1500 and is the foundation or the basis of the great social inequality that characterizes the country up to this day.



About 1% of rural land owners hold private title to around 51% of all agricultural land.

Of the approximately 400 million private hectares, 176 million - or 44% - have been declared to be "large unproductive properties".

Today there are around 4 million landless peasants in Brazil (farmers who do not own any land, or do not have enough land to survive).

AGRIBUSINESS IN BRAZIL

Especially since the 1990s, agribusiness, as the most complex form of territorialization of capitalism in the countryside, has gained strength and expanded in Brazil.

The agribusiness model is fundamentally characterized by intense vertical integration of production chains that organize the production and circulation of agricultural commodities on a large scale, by large transnational corporations, that control then territories. This model involves a technological package that includes large agricultural machinery, scientific research in areas such as genetics and biotechnology, the intensive use of chemical poisons and fertilizers, transport systems, and an intensive

financialization of agriculture. It almost always, is characterized by a class alliance that unites landowners, transnational corporations, financial capital and the bourgeois media, who garner the strong support of governmental actors.

With the global crisis of capitalism, the major economies are turning to countries like Brazil that still have large amounts of available natural resources, such as land, minerals, water, forest and biodiversity, as well as state incentives and soft environmental and labor legislation. Agribusiness companies and large financial groups are appropriating more and more territory and natural resources, and investing in the production of commodities for export.

- Agribusiness controls 85% of the land and practically all of the production of export oriented commodities.

- Production is centered almost exclusively on : soy, sugar cane, coffee, corn, oranges, cellulose and livestock.

- Its large scale monocultures require super-exploitation of natural resources, causing deforestation using massive burning, as well as the contamination of soils, water, food and people.

- Agribusiness has further increased concentration and ownership of land in the hands of a few foreign transna-

tional corporations such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Nestlé, Bunge, Bayer, Dupont, Cargill.

- Brazil is currently the largest consumer of toxic agrochemicals in the world - about one billion liters per year, which would correspond to an average of more than 5 liters per inhabitant. Fourteen types of pesticides currently used in Brazil are banned in the rest of the world.

- Agribusiness generates few jobs, mostly precarious, some of which are considered analogous to the slave labor according to governmental regulations.



STRUGGLE! BUILD PEOPLE'S AGRARIAN REFORM!

The current situation reaffirms the need to fight against the latifundio and the dominant agribusiness model, and at the same time demands that we continue to build our proposal for People's Agrarian Reform, which will go beyond merely settling families on reclaimed land, but also seeks to implement a new production model, based on agroecology, that produces healthy food for the entire population and guarantees decent living conditions for families who live and work in the countryside.

Our agrarian program seeks structural changes that will change the way we use natural resources or the "common goods" of nature, which belong to all mankind, and the way we organize production and social relations in the countryside. We want to contribute, in a permanent way, to the construction of a just, egalitarian and fraternal society.

Thus we, from the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), after our journey of over 35 year, reaffirm the following commitments:

- 1.** The earth, water, forests, fauna, flora, minerals, and all goods of nature must be held and managed at the service of the people and preserved for future generations.
- 2.** Access to land must be democratized and its social function must be fulfilled. All peasant families must have the right to work and live on the land.

3. We defend the demarcation of all areas belonging to indigenous peoples and traditional communities, such as: quilombolas, riverside dwellers and artisan fishermen.

4. We must prioritize the production of healthy food, ensuring the health of both producers, consumers as well as the preservation of nature. Food is a right and should not be just seen as a commodity or a source of exploitation and profit.

5. We defend the principle of Food Sovereignty, so that each community and region may produce the necessary food for its people.

6. Agricultural production should be agroecological, and we should abolish the use of pesticides and transgenic GMO seeds.

7. Seeds are a patrimony of peoples at the service of humanity, and no private property regimes can be held over them.



8. Promote the various forms of agricultural cooperation and install small scale agroindustries managed and controlled by the workers.

9. Combat deforestation and reforest degraded areas with native and fruit trees.

10. Develop energy sovereignty of each community, in the form of communally owned cooperatives, and taking advantage of renewable energy sources, to meet the needs of the people.

11. All persons living in the countryside must have the right to free, quality, public education at all levels in the place where they live.

12. Ensure the peasant population the right to produce and enjoy cultural goods as well as access to the various types of communications media.

13. Salaried rural workers must have all social, pension and labor rights guaranteed and equivalent to those of urban workers.

14. The social relations of production must abolish exploitation, oppression, and alienation. Workers should have control over the outcome of their work.

15. Combat all forms of violence against women, children, and the elderly. All forms of discrimination based on social status, gender, ethnicity, religion and / or sexual orientation should be eliminated.

16. Combat all forms of slave labor, expropriating farms and companies that practice it and punishing their owners and managers.

17. Ensure access to technical scientific and political training, on a permanent basis, for all those living in the countryside. Knowledge must be an instrument of awareness, liberation, and permanent cultural elevation.



HOW WE ORGANIZE

CAMPS

struggle, resistance and organization



When Landless Movement families occupy a latifundio, they organize the camps where they start living. The camps are organized collectively, where each person takes on a task and everyone participates in the community decision-making processes.

SETTLEMENTS

a space of life, dignity and production

The settlements are constituted when the land is conquered, that is, when the State expropriates the lands and gives the land-use rights to the families and therefore, the camps become the settlements. In the settlement the peasant families live, work, and produce, giving a social function back to the land.

Even after settling, these families remain organized in the MST, since the conquest of the land is only the first step towards the realization



of Agrarian Reform. The struggle continues in the settlement, both for the realization of the social rights that should be upheld for the entire Brazilian people: home, education, health, culture, healthy food, and to build a new way of living and producing in the countryside.



The MST organizes more than 1,5 million people in about 1,200 municipalities, located in 23 states and in the Federal District.

Currently, we have 120,000 families encamped and 350,000 settled on Agrarian Reform settlements across the whole country.

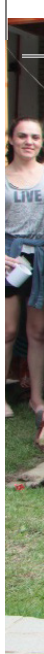
In all, more than 60 cooperatives and around 100 associations form part of the MST's organized production process.

Settled and encamped families organize themselves into a participatory and democratic structures to make decisions within the MST. The families form family groups that discuss production, education and the needs of each area in general. Each family group chooses two coordinators – a male and a female. From these family groups the sectors and collectives are constituted to work on all the fronts necessary for the implementation of agrarian reform.

The same structure is repeated at the regional, state, and national levels. And in the camp and settlement assemblies everyone has the right to vote: adults, young people, men, and women.

The MST's Sectors and Collectives are: Health, Human Rights, Gender, Education, Culture, Communication, Political Education, Projects and Finance, Production, Cooperation and Environment, Mass Front, Youth, International Relations and LGBT.

The main organizational principles are: collective leadership, division of tasks, gender equity in the composition of the various bodies within the structures of the movement, autonomy, planning, conscious discipline, respect for collective decisions, criticism and self-criticism, study, and maintaining a permanent link with the base.





FLORESTAN FERNANDES NATIONAL SCHOOL

Since its founding, the MST has held political education as one of the highest priorities, and it takes place in all spaces where the movement is organized, from the camps to the national training courses.

The ENFF is part of this process and arose with the purpose of thinking, programming, organizing and developing the political and ideological education of the militants and leaders of the whole MST and the working class. In 2005, its main physical space was inaugura-

ted in Guararema - SP, thanks to the volunteer work of MST settlers and encamped activists from all over Brazil, and to international solidarity.

It is a school in permanent construction and its operation is only possible thanks to the solidarity contribution of hundreds of friends and supporters from all over the world, many of whom today are organized around the "Association of Friends of Florestan Fernandes the National School".

<http://amigosenff.org.br/site/>

Since 2007, ENFF has promoted international political education courses for militants of popular organizations from different continents. In the courses for Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 876 activists from 21 countries of the region have already participated. And since 2015, with the creation of English Language Courses, participation has expanded to other continents, with more than 365 participants from 28 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America.

In addition, ENFF periodically carries out exchanges, seminars and other educational activities at both the national and international levels, and focused on the most diverse variety of areas of knowledge.



SOLIDARITY AND INTERNATIONAL STRUGGLE

Since its inception, the MST has understood internationalism as both a value, principle and strategy. Throughout more than thirty years of existence, the international relations policy of the MST was built and thought based upon our practice and the principles of solidarity and internationalism.

It is through this lens that the MST has contributed to the construction of instruments capable of helping to connect to various continental and international struggles. Among those are: the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations (CLOC), La Via Campesina (an international coordination of more than 170 peasant movements from 80 countries around the world), the Articulation of Social Movements of ALBA (coordination of Latin America and the Caribbean social movements with an anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal and anti-patriarchal perspective) and the International Peoples Assembly.

The MST frequently sends militants on internationalist missions and today has permanent exchanges and Internationalist Solidarity Brigades in Cuba, Venezuela, Haiti, Zambia, Palestine, Colombia and Guatemala.



The Internationalist Brigades are one of the most beautiful and significant expressions of international solidarity in the MST. They mean giving up our activism at home to understand, participate in and contribute to the struggles around the world, taking the struggles of all peoples as our own struggles. The political role of the brigades is the exercise of practical solidarity, commitment to the cause and struggle of other peoples, and the practice of proletarian internationalism as a political principle. It aims to create ties of greater political integration with other peoples and organizations.





Also in Europe and North America, friends and supporters have set up a number of groups that carry out advocacy and support activities for our movement, and there are currently Friends of MST Committees in several countries.



Friends of MST Abroad:

Aragon	Germany:
The Basque country	<i>http://mstbrasilien.de/ (German)</i>
Canada	Italy:
Catalonia	<i>http://www.comitatomst.it/ (Italian)</i>
Finland	Madrid
France:	Sweden:
<i>http://amisdessansterre.blogspot.com.br/</i>	<i>http://mstsverige.blogspot.com.br/ (Swedish)</i>
<i>(French)</i>	United States:
	<i>http://www.mstbrazil.org/ (English)</i>

For more information in portuguese see our website

www.mst.org.br

Social networks:

Facebook: facebook.com/movimentosemterra

Twitter: twitter.com/MST_Oficial

Instagram: instagram.com/movimentosemterra

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