



3/11/2026

Farmer movements in the United States and Canada call for agrarian reform and transformative rural development in North America

Following the conclusion of the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20) on February 28th, 2026 in Cartagena, Colombia, the National Farmers Union (Canada) and the National Family Farm Coalition (United States), representing over 100,000 small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, ranchers, Indigenous Peoples, and peasants across our territories, call on all of governments in North America to implement transformative food system policy, particularly related to land governance, rooted in human rights frameworks and the principles of equity and justice. For decades our farmer members and rural communities on both sides of the border have been forced to defend their livelihoods and relationships to the land despite increasing corporate control of our food systems, lack of adoption and enforcement of human rights frameworks particularly for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Black farmers, and lack of adequate support mechanisms for smallholders to access land and navigate systemic low prices and increasing impacts of the climate crisis. We call on our governments to put rural livelihoods over corporate profits and politically support the vision of ICARRD and future multilateral policy negotiations on people-centered agrarian reform and rural development.

According to the [International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty \(IPC\)](#), an autonomous global platform for grassroots organizations and social movements, agrarian reform is the *“equitable and sustainable access to, use of, and democratic control over land, fisheries, forests, water and territories with redistributive tenure policies and people-led rural development rooted in justice, equity, people’s self-determination and the defense of life and Mother Earth.”* Without agrarian reform, there can be *“no food sovereignty, no just transitions to food systems based on agroecology... and no peace”* (IPC, 2026). In the North American context, land or agrarian reform can refer to efforts to change laws, regulations, and customs towards more equitable access, distribution, and control of land, waterways and oceans, and resources. This is especially important in the context of increasing land concentration and financialization and historical and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples and Black farmers.

ICARRD+20 - and the [social movement Forum](#) that preceded it - provided an opportunity for global movements to converge and articulate their demands for popular, integral agrarian reform based on four principles: Restitution, Recognition, Redistribution, and Regulation. In particular, we call for political action across the following critical issues:

Indigenous rights and land sovereignty

Agrarian reform in the North American context cannot be carried out without respecting and upholding Indigenous rights as outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In the North American context, this includes respecting the Treaties, recognizing Indigenous jurisdiction, ensuring Free, Prior and Informed Consent (see [Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper](#) for more information), and implementing UNDRIP with the leadership of Indigenous and Native leaders.

Farmland for farmers and farmworkers

To move towards food sovereignty, agrarian reform in North America must reverse land consolidation and concentration and rein in corporate control of land and land grabs. At the same time, farmland must be protected from both industrial and residential development and urban sprawl. This conjuncture is pushing farmers off the land at a rapid rate and we find ourselves in a crisis of agrarian generational renewal. In alignment with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other Peoples Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), farmland must not be treated as a commodity targeted for financial speculation, and [large-scale corporations should not be able to buy and consolidate more farmland](#). We must keep farmland in the hands of those who steward it and feed our communities.

End free trade and investment agreements

Free trade agreements across North America have disenfranchised small-scale farmers and peasants in our region for more than three decades. While this status quo trade environment has been disrupted in the past year, the weaponization of tariffs has not benefited working families and rural communities in the U.S. or Canada. As all three governments in North America review the U.S.-Mexico-Canada (USMCA or CUSMA) trade agreement this year, we call on all governments to end the practice of corporate give-aways through closed-door trade negotiations and center human rights, labor standards, and ambitious climate agreements as the foundation of trade policy.

Invest in local food systems and agroecology

As our communities continue to struggle through the increasing impacts of the climate crisis, chronic food insecurity, and under-investment in local food systems, we call on our governments to support a paradigm shift in the role of public institutions toward building socio-ecological resilience in rural communities.

[The NFU of Canada](#) is a member-based, farmer and farmworker-led organization working towards dignity, justice, and income security for those who work the land. Founded in 1969, the NFU organizes democratically to generate policy that calls for food systems transformation rooted in food sovereignty and agroecology.

[NFFC](#) is a U.S.-based alliance of grassroots farmer- and advocate-led groups representing the rights and interests of independent family farmers, ranchers, and fishermen since 1986. Today, NFFC's 31 state, national, and regional farm and rural organizations are bound by the common mission to mobilize independent farmers, ranchers, and fisher people to achieve fair prices, vibrant communities, and nourishing food free of corporate domination.

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