



**Secretariat:**

Society for Conservation and  
Protection of Environment (SCOPE)  
7/190, 1st Floor, Delhi Mercantile,  
Cooperative Housing Society,  
Block-3, Off Shaheed-e-Millat Road,  
Karachi-75350 Pakistan.  
Ph: 021-34551226-7,  
Fax: 021-34551228

**Open letter**

April 17, 2012

**Where are land reforms on political agenda?**

Dear Sir/ Madam

**Announcing that Pakistan Kisan Sangat** پاکستان کسان سنگت or National Peasants Coalition of Pakistan (NPCP) is a national level coalition of peasants movements of Pakistan, which was created on February 2012 at a national peasants convention at Hyderabad.

**Aware with the fact** that about two-fifth of the labour force in Pakistan is engaged in agriculture, which contributes to one-tenth of the country's GDP.

**Realizing that land** in Pakistan's context is not merely an economic commodity in Pakistan; it is also a source of social and political power. Agricultural land ownership in the country is highly concentrated and unequal. Around half of the rural households do not own any land, and the top 5 % own over a 1/3 of all cultivated area.

**Recognizing the fact that** rural women spend more hours in agriculture labour than men but they earn less income compared to men and face more hardships to own agricultural land;

**Knowing that** inequality of land ownership and landlessness is a major cause of poverty and backwardness in Pakistan. The large farms have approached the maximum yield per acre with the available technology. Further growth in agricultural output increasingly depends on raising the yield per acre of smaller farms. The small-farm sector, whose yield potential remains to be fully utilized, constitutes a substantial part of the agrarian economy.

**Also realizing that** in Pakistan small farms (less than 25 acres) constitute 88% of the total number of farms, and 57 % of total farm area. The 54 % of the total farm area in the small-farm sector is tenant-operated. Since tenants lose half of any increase in output to the landlord, they lack the incentive to invest in technology, which would raise yields. Because of their weak financial and social position they also lack the ability to make such investment.

**Aware that** tenants' ability to invest is further eroded by a nexus of social and economic dependence on the landlord, which deprives the tenant of much of his investable surplus. Thus the objective of raising yields in the small-farm sector is dependent on removal of the institutional constraints to growth arising out of the fact of tenancy.

**Office Bearers:**

Mr. Jaan Nisar Khalil, President  
Mr. Shah Baran Mandukhel, Senior Vice President (Male)  
Ms. Fozia Memon, Senior Vice President (Female)  
Mr. Dur Mohammad Umrani, Vice President (Balochistan)  
Mr. Mushtaq Arjo, Vice President (Sindh)  
Mr. Gulzar Khan, Vice President (KPK)  
Ms. Bushra Hanif, Vice President (Punjab)  
Mr. Noor Nabi Rahoojo, General Secretary  
Ms. Nasreen Awan, Finance Secretary  
Mr. Nisar Soomro, Information Secretary  
Mr. Abdul Kareem Mengal, Joint Secretary  
Ms. Katharine Chaman, Secretary Minorities (female)  
Mr. Vishnu Mal, Secretary Minorities (male)  
Mr. Tanveer Arif, Executive Secretary

**Advisory Committee:**

Mr. Aftab Alam  
Ms. Arifa Mazhar  
Mr. Fateh Mari  
Mr. G.M. Ghanjera  
Mr. G. Mohiuddin Asim  
Mr. Khadim Hussain  
Ms. Mahjabeen Khan  
Ms. Mehnaz A. Paracha  
Ms. Najma Sadeque  
Mr. Nasir Aziz  
Ms. Sameena Nazir  
Ms. Shaheena Ramzan  
Ms. Summaya Sajjad  
Dr. Wajid H. Pirzada  
Mr. Tahir Hasnain  
Mr. Tanveer Arif  
Mr. Tariq Mahmood  
Mr. Waheed Jamali  
Mr. Zulfiqar Halepoto

**Convinced that** the corporate farming policy of Government of Pakistan is against the economic and food security interests of the nation. Corporate farming will displace farm labors and small scale farmers, particularly women and further marginalize them from their livelihoods.

**We believe that** a land reform programme that gives land to the tiller is an essential step in providing the small farmer with both the incentive and the ability to raise his/her yields. Land reforms are required not only to accelerate agricultural growth, but to prevent the developing social crisis associated with the poverty and disempowerment of peasantry in Pakistan's rural society.

**We recall that** land reforms in Pakistan are an unfinished agenda. The country has experienced 3 attempts of land reforms in 1959, 1972 and 1977. Unfortunately in 1977, during the land reforms debate, a military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq toppled the civilian government and during Zia era a *Shariat* bench of Supreme Court of Pakistan upheld an appeal to declare land reforms against the law of *Shariat*.

**We recognize that** redistributive land reforms (state's takeover of land from large landowners and its allotment to the landless farmers) did not achieve a great deal due to the political power wielded by the landowning classes.

**We believe that** land reforms play an important role in agriculture production, poverty eradication and empowering the poor farmers. In Pakistan, the power of landed aristocracy has acted as a barrier to social and economic progress of the rural society. Genuine land reform can help solve the problems caused by the fact that farmers often use relatively inefficient capital-intensive techniques due to distorted market prices and that small farmers do not have access to the liberal credit subsidies on imported machinery and capital equipment.

We as members of National Peasants Coalition of Pakistan (NPCP) - Pakistan Kisan Sangat پاکستان کسان سنگت

Hereby demand from all political parties and stakeholders that a new land and agrarian reforms be introduced in Pakistan

**While supporting the charter of Oxfam's Dharti campaign,** we hereby demand that;

1. All major political parties must clearly express their commitment about a land reforms programme in Pakistan. All political parties should include an equitable, effective land and agrarian reforms in their election manifestos;
2. A comprehensive land and agrarian reforms programme should be introduced in Pakistan with immediate effect which is based on pro-poor, pro-peasant, equity and gender justice principles;
3. The verdict of Shariat Bench of Supreme Court, during Gen. Zia-ul-Haq's rule which declared land reforms against Islamic principles, should be revoked with immediate effect;
4. Landless women should be given priority in land re-distribution programmes and all discriminatory legal and cultural practices that prevent women's right to own agricultural land and be recognized as a farmer should be declared illegal. Women should be recognized as Farmers not just as farm workers;
5. Land ownership ceiling be fixed at 50 acres irrigated and 100 acres non-irrigated land per family. The necessary legislation should be introduced in favour of land reforms;

6. The land recovered from large land owners should be redistributed among the peasant landless farmers, who have been working on that land with proper legal titles;
7. The Existing tenancy acts should be reformed to allow workers to establish unions, demand fair wages and receive land titles supporting their legal rights to the land; while legal mechanisms should be put in place to adjudicate complaints and resolve conflicts;
8. Bonded agriculture labour and keeping peasants in private jails should be declared a heinous crime which should be sentenced with maximum punishment to those who commit it;
9. All laws and regulations regarding land developed under colonial era that is anti small farmer, should be abandoned and a judicial commission on land utilization should be formed to check exceeding commercialization of land;
10. The landless farmer families should be allotted at least 10 acres of agricultural land and the land titles should be in the name of both husband and wife;
11. The agriculture land occupied by or allotted to military farms and government departments should be revoked and redistributed among the local landless peasants;
12. Corporate farming should not be promoted under the current policy framework. There must be a new legal framework which must ensure food security, abiding of labour laws and a ceiling limit over land. The land reserved for corporate farming should be distributed among landless farmers;
13. Utilization of groundwater should be brought under a regulatory law to ensure equity and protection of underground water resources;
14. Allotment of forest land to the influential persons has to be revoked and re-allotted to the peasants on the condition of re-forestation. The occupied surveyed or un-surveyed lands in the country must be re-surveyed and distributed among the landless peasants and agriculture workers families.
15. Equitable distribution of the water at the tail-end is imperative. To avoid water logging and salinity, the canals, branches and watercourses should be lined. The government must draw up an agriculture policy with the consultation of agriculture scientists, peasants, agriculture workers and growers.
16. The parliament should be persuaded to pass a legislation for protection of the peasant's rights, allowing them to have their trade unions, ensuring social justice and providing them the old age benefits to men and women farmers of Pakistan;
17. The new Food Security and Research Ministry must focus on the land related issues as one of their priority area of work;

Sincerely

Members of

National Peasants Coalition of Pakistan/ Pakistan Kisan Sangat پاکستان کسان سنگت