

Intervention CND Alternative Development – 12 March, 2015

Pien Metaal

We appreciate the opportunity to share our points of view on the issue of Alternative Development with the Commission. From our work with crop cultivators in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia for the last two decades, we have been able to gather profound insights as to what Alternative Development has meant thus far to the peasants and their families. We sincerely hope this will change in the near future, and the few positive examples of success can be repeated in other regions and communities.

For most farmers unfortunately AD constitutes a hollow phrase of empty promises and disappointing results, if any, understood to lure them into so-called voluntarily eradication of their crops, leaving them and their families without any income and dire poverty and debts. Good intentions alone have proved insufficient to address the complex issues of agricultural developmental challenges, instable international market prices, access to land and the ongoing social conflicts in rural communities around the world.

First and foremost the issue needs to be addressed in conjunction with supply reduction policies. It should not need much explanation to understand the tremendous negative impact of forced eradication, by military style operations and aerial spraying, on rural communities. It is the worst possible start of building relationship between these communities and the state, and had proven to be one of the root causes of the failure of developmental projects, in all regions. Conditioning AD participation to previous eradication should therefore without any doubt be abandoned as a policy, since it has proved to be counterproductive. As long as the amount of hectares eradicated remains the main indicator for drug policy success, sustainable development loses.

Secondly, sustainable rural development is a challenge in itself, and the prohibition of cultivating coca, cannabis or opium poppy has caused these crops to get a status of such high revenue, that there is no serious alternative to compete in an economic sense.

Moreover, the traditional uses of these plants have come under threat as a result of these policies, causing the violation of indigenous and human rights of the affected populations.

Finally, peasants' **families** around the world are being criminalized, prosecuted and locked up as a result of current policies. Their crime is to want to live off the land and feed their families with revenues of a crop that sells. This should never be the intention of global drug control.

The voice of the primary stakeholders will be represented in the preparations for UNGASS through the organisation of a Global Forum of Producers of Prohibited Plants. Their participation in the design and implementation of development policies are fundamental, and they will contribute to the CSTF efforts to ensure this is effectively the case.