

## ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF SMALL FOOD PRODUCERS AS A GUARANTEE OF FOOD SECURITY

*The International Forum for the Protection of Peasants' Rights "SMALL PRODUCERS ON THE GUARD of FOOD SECURITY: The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas", initiated by academia, civil society organisations, farmers and private landowners with the participation of representatives from Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Italy and other countries.*

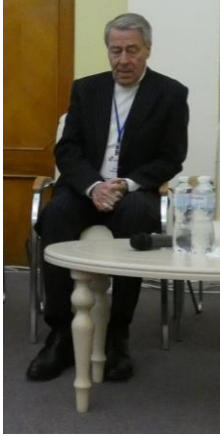
During the opening session, "The Importance of The Peasant-Farmer Model for the Post-War Economic Rebuilding of Ukraine", the participants of the Forum were greeted by the Director of the Institute for Economics and Forecasting of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, **Academician Valeriy Heets**, Director of the Institute for Rural and Agricultural Development of the Polish Academy of Sciences, **Professor Monika Stanny**, and Member of the Ukrainian Parliament, Member of the Committee on Education, Science and Innovation **Ivan Kyrylenko**.



**Valeriy Heets**, stressed the importance of economic development with a focus not only on efficiency but also on human rights.

He noted the importance of ensuring food security, especially during the war and post-war periods, and the need to deepen the processing of agricultural products.

Valeriy Heets emphasised the special role of education and science in Ukraine's reconstruction. In furtherance of this idea, he stressed the expediency of holding broad public discussions on economic development, one of the platforms for which is the Institute's journal.



**Ivan Kyrylenko** stressed the importance of forming a multi-structured system in Ukrainian agriculture, in which peasant farms should play a significant role.

He emphasised the need for structural changes in the activities of farms and the importance of developing agricultural processing. The experience of Italy, Poland, Denmark, Ireland, and Norway is useful for Ukraine in this regard. He pointed out that the production of environmentally friendly products could be a priority for the development of national agriculture. He paid considerable attention to the impact of the war on agriculture and the emphasis on the post-war reconstruction of the sector, which provides jobs in 12 industries.



**Monika Stanny** focused on the provisions of the UNDROP, which allows for legal action to ensure respect for rights and counteract violations, including land grabbing, forced evictions, gender bias, and erroneous rural development strategies. She stressed that it is important to avoid excessive concentration to ensure a level playing field for producers of all forms of rural economy.

Monika Stanny emphasised Poland's support for Ukraine in building a democratic institutional system, including the creation of a political platform for the inclusion of peasant and farmers' households in the plan for the reconstruction of Ukraine's agri-food system.

The first session, "The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants: Five Years since its adoption by the UN General Assembly," was moderated by **Ramona Duminiciou**, President of the Association of Small Farmers of Romania, Eco Ruralis.

Within the framework of this session, the following speakers delivered speeches: **Olena Borodina**, Head of the Department of Economics and Policy of Agrarian Transformation, Institute for Economics and Forecasting of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Corresponding Member of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine; **Ramona Duminiciou**, President of the Association of Small Farmers of Romania, **Andrea Ferrante**, Head of the International School for Agroecology "Agroecology School", **Viktor Yarovyj**, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Economics and Forecasting of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, **Morten Hartvigsen**, expert of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, **Raimund Jehle**, Head of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.



**Olena Borodina** highlighted the practical mechanisms and peculiarities of developing a human rights-based economy. She stressed the importance of implementing a human rights-based approach to preserve and rebuild Ukraine's agri-food system during the war and post-war reconstruction. She proposed to create a separate institutional structure to monitor the observance of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas to

protect and ensure the realisation of these rights and to promote the social, economic and environmental sustainability of rural communities and rural areas.



**Ramona Duminicioiu** emphasised the importance of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas as a basis for ensuring equal rights between different agricultural producers. She drew attention to the importance of correcting inconsistencies in the international and national legislative systems of individual countries in terms of human rights.

Ramona informed the participants about the practice of implementing certain provisions of the Declaration in the world, including the establishment of an expert working group on human rights at the UN level. She noted the importance of nominating a candidate from Ukraine to the group.



**Andrea Ferrante** devoted his report to the development of the food system on the basis of agroecology and human rights.

He stressed the responsibility of everyone for the current and future situation in the world. He noted the importance of considering any economic issues with due regard to environmental requirements.

Andrea Ferrante emphasised that knowledge should be at the centre of the farming system, which farmers should use to create more

added value. He stressed the importance of forming a common Europe and the need for society to have mechanisms to control the food system.



**Viktor Yarovyi** informed about the participation of the Ukrainian scientific community and the general public in the legislative process initiated by international peasant movements and organisations in the field of advocacy for peasants' rights. He described the main stages of this participation and the activities initiated by Ukrainian scholars in support of the UNDROP at both the international and national levels. The speaker mentioned an active information campaign in support of the

UNDROP, analysed the factors of effective interaction with the authorities in terms of scientific and analytical support of the decision-making process by the relevant executive authorities in support of the UNDROP, and stressed the importance of further uniting the efforts of civil society, the scientific community and the authorities for the successful implementation of the UNDROP's provisions in national legislation and practice.



**Morten Hartvigsen** described the FAO's approach and recommendations for ensuring access to land for smallholders, women and youth. He revealed certain provisions of the FAO recommendation on the introduction of an integrated approach to land use, which is aimed at ensuring sustainable development of the rural economy.



**Raimund Jehle** stressed the importance of the UNDROP for the successful transformation of the agri-food system.

He noted that, given the trend of increasing global population, agricultural land is becoming increasingly important for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of overcoming hunger while respecting environmental requirements. He

also stressed the special role and importance of respecting the rights of small producers, whose activities are more in line with the ecological approach, and emphasised the importance of investing in research and science to ensure sustainable development.

The second session, "Food Security in the Time of War: Challenges and Opportunities," was moderated by **Ruslan Homych**, Head of the Lebediya farm, Head of the Volyn Regional AFZ.

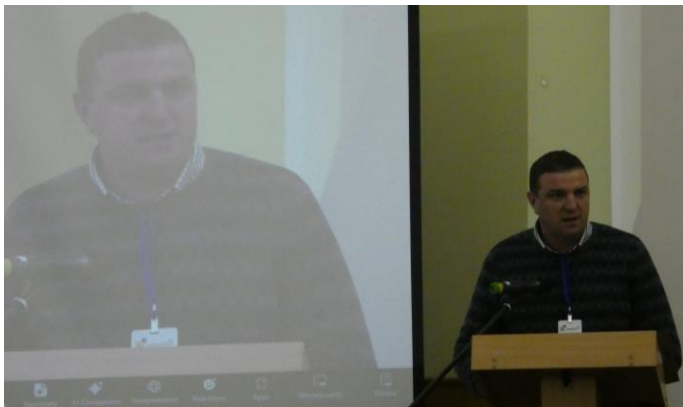
The session also featured presentations by **Andriy Kuzmych**, Head of the Rivne Association of Farmers and Private Landowners, **Svitlana Gaponyk**, Representative of the Kharkiv Association of Farmers and Private Landowners, **Oleg Bondarenko**, Head of the Kalyna Farm and Representative of the Association of Farmers and Private Landowners of Sumy Region, **Vasyl Burlaka**, Head of the Avangard Farm, **Kateryna Skrylnyk**, Head of the Fortuna-2015 Farm and Founder of the Skrylnyk Family Farm, **Oleksandr Palariev**, Head of the Frumushyha-Nova Farm, and **Maria Lukianova**, First Deputy Head of the Berezhany Territorial Community in 2019-2023.





**Ruslan Homych** addressed the issue of the impact of changes in land legislation on the activities of small agricultural producers, in particular farmers. He emphasised that they are the group of landowners who, under any circumstances, will fulfil their social mission of providing the population with food. He pointed out the inadmissibility of continuing market transactions for the purchase and sale of agricultural land in times of war, especially as a result of the expansion of the range of subjects of these relations from 01.01.2024 by legal entities with the possibility of acquiring up to 10 thousand hectares, which threatens to cause farmers to lose agricultural land as the

basis of their production activities.



Focusing on the economic reasons for ensuring the right to a decent livelihood for small farmers, **Andriy Kuzmych** emphasised the need to address the problem of low prices for agricultural products and the decision of Polish partners to impede the export of Ukrainian agricultural products to Europe.



**Svitlana Gaponyk** emphasised that FAO's assistance allowed private and farm households in Kharkiv Oblast to solve the problem of their own and local food supply in difficult wartime.



**Oleg Bondarenko** highlighted the ways in which peasants and farmers in the frontline areas defend their rights to life. He emphasised the need for farmers to unite in defending their rights, the importance of cooperation to increase profitability, and the need for farmers to receive qualified assistance from advisory services.



**Vasyl Burlaka** focused on the internal and external components of profitable farming, emphasising the importance of diversifying production to enable farmers to compensate for a possible drop in prices for one type of product at the expense of others. Based on the European experience, he noted that the introduction of various subsidies for farmers would help strengthen their strategic position in ensuring food security.



**Kateryna Skrylnyk** described the modern aspects of the development of a dairy family farm including the importance of cooperation, milk processing, and participation in various grant competitions. She emphasised the need for farmers to combine their efforts in streamlining the paperwork system and the need for more flexible work of the State Consumer Services.



**Oleksandr Palariev** shared with the audience his experience of developing his own farm, Frumushyha-Nova, where he has implemented a full cycle of sheep production, set up sales outlets, opened a restaurant and a green tourism complex. He concluded that it is advisable to diversify the activities of small agricultural producers.

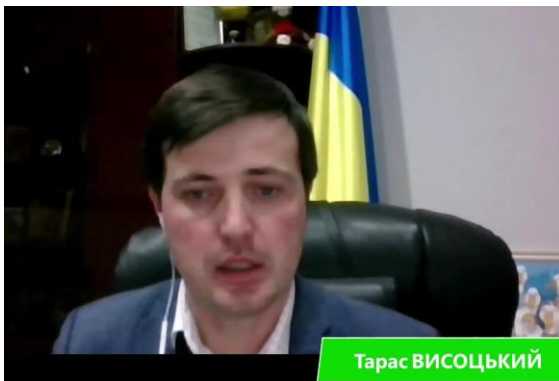


**Maria Lukyanova** outlined the experience of local authorities in protecting the rights of rural communities in the face of wartime challenges, focusing on the social role of small producers, whose activities contribute to employment of the community population, filling local budgets and supporting local social infrastructure.

The third session, "Implementation of Peasants' Rights in Post-War Agricultural and Rural Development," was moderated by **Viktor Sheremeta**, Vice President of the Association of Farmers and Private Landowners of Ukraine and Deputy Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine in 2017-2019. During this session, presentations were also made by **Taras Vysotskyi**, First Deputy Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine, **Pierre Vauthier**, Head of the FAO Country Office in Ukraine, **Christophe Golay**, Strategic Advisor on Human Rights and Fellow of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights (Switzerland), **Natalia Hendel**, Fellow of the same Academy and Senior Researcher at the Institute of Information, Security and Law of the National Academy of Legal Sciences of Ukraine, and **Ivan Tomych**, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Agrarian Policy and Rural Development 2002-2006 and Head of the Union of Ukrainian Peasants.



In his report, **Viktor Sheremeta** emphasised the role of small producers in the post-war reconstruction of the national agri-food system and the importance of state support to strengthen their production potential.



**Taras Vysotskyi** highlighted the role of the Ministry of Agrarian Policy in supporting small producers during the war and in the post-war reconstruction. He emphasised the importance of small producers' contribution to food security, especially in local agricultural markets, and drew the attention of their representatives to participate in the



implementation of the objectives of the Strategy for the Development of the Agricultural Sector of Ukraine until 2030, aimed at ensuring sustainable rural development, increasing the competitiveness of agricultural production, improving the quality and safety of agricultural products, and preserving natural resources.



By demining fields, providing maps of mined and affected areas to the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, providing humanitarian aid to the population, seeds, planting material for crops and certain means of production to small producers, conditions were created for the realisation of the right of peasants to food, which had become an element of weaponry in the hands of the aggressor, **Pierre Vauthier** said. He reported on the intention to continue this assistance from FAO for the duration of the war and post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.



**Christophe Golay's** presentation briefly outlined the evolution of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (2018) and the implementation of its individual provisions, in particular the decision to establish a UN monitoring group on the rights of peasants. At the same time, based on the acute perception in Ukraine of the procedure for introducing agricultural land into the market turnover, the author emphasises the importance of taking into account the experience of Colombia in regulating these issues, as well as in implementing the provisions of the UNDROP in general.



**Natalia Hendel** revealed the differences in the legal interpretation of the status of international documents such as Declarations and treaties and legal obligations after their signing. She also stressed the importance of raising the level of legal knowledge among small agricultural producers and among managers of various branches of government in Ukraine as one of the basic conditions for the formation of a law-based democratic state.



**Ivan Tomych** emphasised that the promotion and realisation of peasants' rights is a guarantee of food security, climate change prevention, preservation of Ukraine's land resources and local economy. He focused on the potential increase in threats to the food supply of the population of Ukraine in the case of the introduction of a legal provision allowing the acquisition of up to 10 thousand hectares of agricultural land in private ownership from

01.01.2024, and stressed the importance of developing a specific action plan in the context of the joint efforts of all small producers.



The **Fourth session** was moderated by **Viktor Goncharenko**, President of the Association of Farmers and Private Landowners of Ukraine. This session was devoted to analysing the situation with the implementation of the decisions of the previous Forum, held in 2022, as well as discussing the content of the Resolution of this year's Forum.

In particular, Oleksandr Zubenko, Vice President of the Ukrainian Farmers Union, Head of Monolith Farm, Mykola Myrkevych, Head of Zemlya Farm, Ivan Zayets, Member of Parliament of Ukraine of the first, second, third, fourth and sixth convocations, and Nazar Mukhachov, civil society representative, took part in a wide-ranging discussion of the Resolution.

The participants agreed with the recommendations and proposals formulated during the discussion to amend the final text of the Forum's Resolution and to prepare appeals to the government and international organisations based on the results of its work