



National Agrarian Reform Fair

By Leonardo Fernandes, edited by ROOTS. Source: MST.

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From 8 to 11 May 2025, Água Branca Park, on the west side of São Paulo, Brazil, will host the 5th National Agrarian Reform Fair, organised by the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST).

The first edition of the event took place between 22 and 25 October 2015, in the capital of São Paulo, and brought together around 800 rural workers from 23 states of the country, plus the Federal District. In all, 220 tonnes of products from 80 cooperatives and associations linked to the MST were sold. The event also featured the 'Culinária da Terra' food court, which served more than 10,000 typical dishes from the regions of Brazil, as well as cultural shows and spaces for debate. More than 150,000 people passed through Água Branca Park during the four days of activities.

This year, 2025, the National Agrarian Reform Fair returns to the country's largest city, celebrating its 10th anniversary, to promote peasant agriculture, the struggle for



agrarian reform, and healthy food. Débora Nunes, from the MST's National Coordination and Production Sector, explains in an interview she gave in 2017 how the movement is preparing for the event and what the proposal is based on. This year, 2025, RAÍZES spoke to Débora to find out what's new for the event and updated the interview. Check it out!



MST National Fair in 2023, in Água Branca Park. Photo: MST.





MST National Fair in 2023, in Água Branca Park. Photo: Luiz Fernando.

What is the aim of the 5th National Agrarian Reform Fair?

Without a shadow of a doubt, the fair aims to make available and commercialise a wide range of healthy food, produced in an agro-ecological way in agrarian reform camps and settlements across the country.

However, the central objective is to bring the struggle for land and agrarian reform as a condition for us to be able to produce healthy food to hold fairs throughout Brazil, but also to confront hunger and the environmental and climate crisis. We denounce agribusiness, which has hegemonised Brazilian agriculture, including access to public resources, and produces contradictions that affect society in the countryside and in the city, whether in the destruction of the environment, the intensive use of pesticides, the production of commodities for export, trying to permanently expel the peoples of the countryside, waters and forests from their territories.

Alongside diversified production, the Fair is also a space to share other dimensions of life in the rural areas, peasant cuisine, health, education, Sem Terra culture, music, and art. This also makes people realise that it is the integration of all these dimensions that guarantees the holding of a fair of these proportions. So the fair is not just a space for commercialisation, but a space for reaffirming the importance of the struggle for land, the struggle for Agrarian Reform, and how this relates to structural issues in society as a whole.

What are these other dimensions of life in the rural areas, of the struggle for Agrarian Reform, that will be represented at the Fair?

In addition to commercialisation, the fair makes it possible to bring other aspects of what exists in the settlements, in the encampments, and the struggle for Agrarian Reform as a whole. This means being able to commercialise diversified production, with more than 1,800 products, but also other constructions in rural education, popular health, and the culture we produce in our territories. In short, it is an expression of the diversity of the people who make up the daily life of the Sem Terra in every corner of the country. In this way, the fair also brings the cultural expression of the Movement, through the cuisine of the land and other forms of culture, bringing together around it the very diversity that exists in Brazil.



What preparations is the MST undertaking for this significant event?

The fairs are the result of an organisational process by the MST, and are also a very strong feature of our people's culture. The National Fair brings together diversity from all regions of the country to be shared in São Paulo. But other fairs have already taken place throughout the year in various municipalities in other states. This is one of our main channels for dialogue with society. It's a way of firstly eliminating the figure of the middleman, but also of establishing a dialogue with the population of the cities. The decision to hold the National Fair in São Paulo was precisely to intensify and broaden this dialogue. To this end, there is a whole organisational process taking place in the states to mobilise and prepare the landless people for this moment.

And as it is a very strong cultural element of our people, the fair is already part of the Movement's mystique and not just its calendar. So there is a whole process of preparation, involvement and collective construction, so that we can really express through the fair what we have already built through our struggle, and what we still want to build.

In what manner does the fair align with the MST's project for the countryside?

Through the National Fair, there is an essential platform to bring and showcase agroecological products, and other dimensions of our struggle to São Paulo. It provides a great opportunity to reaffirm that we have a project for agriculture, that there is a model that we defend. We are talking about a popular Agrarian Reform project that can resolve structural issues in the countryside, such as preserving the environment, defending biodiversity, and producing healthy food. It is also a way of saying that it will be the realisation of Agrarian Reform that will make it possible to solve structural problems for society as a whole. This is an organisational process that already exists, and which is intensified with the National Fair. It is a way of sharing the best of what our organisation has built.

Why does this MST project for agriculture put healthy food at the centre of the debate?

Today, talking about healthy food is talking about public health. People have been getting sick, dying from diseases such as cancer, and we have no doubt that this situation is directly related to what we eat. That is why it is the MST's political task to produce healthy food and promote this debate with society as a whole. Healthy food cannot be the privilege of a particular class that has the purchasing power to access this or that product. That's why it's not just a question of producing healthy food, but also of



engaging in dialogue with society as a whole on this issue. The Brazilian state needs to prioritise family and peasant farming, carrying out agrarian reform and guaranteeing public policies that strengthen the production of healthy food and environmental preservation, which benefits society as a whole.

In this sense, the National Fair does not just sell goods, it offers food that carries all the political symbolism of struggle, organisation, and the possibility of changing the model of agriculture and society.

How, and in what way, does the debate on healthy eating arise within the movement?

In its origins, the MST arose in 1984 from a social demand, which at that time was the right to land. As the struggle progressed, and according to other needs that arose, above all because of the contradictions of the hegemonic model of capital in agriculture, we realised that we needed to go in the opposite direction to this model. Not only in terms of the democratisation of land, but also in terms of the use we would make of that land. In this sense, the production of healthy food has been our main task, and it should be a fundamental right of the people of Brazil and the whole world.

Often, those in the city can not make this connection, but there is a daily encounter between those in the city and peasants, with the Sem Terra, when we have breakfast, lunch and dinner. This reflection is not always made: "where does our food come from?", and we can only propose a differentiated model if we also produce differentiated food. That's why the agroecological model is a priority within our strategy.

What agricultural projects are in dispute?

In Brazil, we have a model that is considered hegemonic, which is the agribusiness model. It's a model that concentrates land, that produces through the intensive use of poison, that does not generate labour, that does not keep workers in the countryside. A model that generates profound social inequalities, that destroys the environment, and that is prioritised by the state and governments. In other words, it's a model that does not bring benefits to society as a whole; on the contrary, agribusiness has generated structural problems such as the rural exodus, which in turn generates the swelling of cities, the problem of urban mobility, etc.

The model of small-scale farming, agrarian reform, and peasant farming, on the other hand, goes in the exact opposite direction to agribusiness. It's a model that presupposes the democratisation of land, that establishes another form of relationship with the goods of nature, with biodiversity, and with natural resources. It's a model that produces food



to feed society, that makes it possible to generate a living in the countryside, and that effectively contributes to solving structural problems. That's why our fair seeks to engage in dialogue with this aspect, that is, with the model of agriculture we want for our country, and how Agrarian Reform can provide a solution to these problems.

Is there a clear political character to the organisation of the National Fair, beyond the economic benefit of the farmers?

Of course. There's a very interesting issue, which is that people do not always manage to link the Agrarian Reform Fair to the process of struggle of rural workers. Many people say: "Oh, I like those landless people who sell cheap, agro-ecological produce, but not those landless people who occupy, demand, and protest in the struggle for land and Agrarian Reform". But it's the same guy. So we need to reaffirm the political character of the National Agrarian Reform Fair. It's not just a space for commercialisation, it's a space for reaffirming the need for Agrarian Reform. Because it's only possible to hold a National Fair or the various regional fairs because there was a process of struggle and organisation. There was land occupation, fence-cutting, and a collective construction of the movement so that we could produce this food.

So the Fair is the space in which we say to society that we need to carry out Agrarian Reform to solve our problem, that of the landless workers, but also to solve the problem of those who live in the cities and that we need to tackle the structural problems that affect the whole of society.

What should the people of São Paulo expect from the 5th National Agrarian Reform Fair?

From 8 to 11 May, the people of São Paulo will have the opportunity to enjoy the taste, smell, culture, and diversity of the Brazilian countryside, embodied in around 2,000 people, including market traders and work teams, more than 1,800 products and 22 kitchens with typical dishes from all over the country. Health spaces with herbal medicines, popular health practices, many debates in various seminars, the launch of new agrarian reform products, many cooperatives, and associations. Mini agro-industries demonstrating food processing processes, native and fruit seedlings, agro-ecological practices, books, lots of good people from Brazilian popular culture.

The fair has much more than healthy food produced by landless people from all over Brazil. Those who go to the fair will also be able to experience culture, learn about our



educational processes, our history and the struggle of the Sem Terra people. It will be a great opportunity for everyone to join in this struggle that belongs to society as a whole.

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