



THE PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL ON AGROTOXINS: A CALL FOR JUSTICE AND CHANGE

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From 21st to 23rd March 2025, FoSCU, represented by her coordinator, was privileged to participate in the People's Tribunal on Agrotoxins, held in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa. The three-day event brought together farm workers, researchers, and independent judges to shed light on the devastating impact of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) on health, the environment, livelihoods, and social well-being. The tribunal served as a platform for marginalized voices to share their lived experiences and demand accountability from governments and corporations.

Voices from the Fields: Painful Testimonies

The heart of the tribunal lay in the testimonies of farm workers who had endured unimaginable suffering due to exposure to HHPs. These pesticides, widely used in South Africa's large commercial farms, have left a trail of devastation:

- ⦿ Chronic illnesses such as asthma and respiratory problems.
- ⦿ Skin infections and loss of sight.
- ⦿ Deaths of loved ones due to prolonged exposure.
- ⦿ Environmental degradation is impacting communities' livelihoods.

One worker recounted how years of handling pesticides without proper protective gear led to severe skin conditions and respiratory issues. Another shared the heartbreak of losing family members to illnesses linked to pesticide exposure. These stories painted a grim picture of the human cost of industrial farming practices reliant on toxic chemicals.

Scientific Evidence: Substantiating the Harm

The tribunal was not solely a space for personal stories; it also featured technical and research presentations that provided scientific evidence on the harmful effects of HHPs. Experts detailed how these chemicals compromise human health, pollute ecosystems, and perpetuate social injustices. The

presentations underscored the urgent need for regulatory reforms to protect vulnerable populations from these toxic substances.

Independent Oversight: A Path to Accountability

Presiding over the tribunal were three esteemed independent judges tasked with listening to the testimonies and determining actionable recommendations. Their presence lent credibility to the process and reinforced the importance of addressing these issues through both legal and policy frameworks.

A Call for Change: Recommendations for Action

The tribunal concluded with a resounding call for an immediate ban on HHPs in South Africa. This recommendation was grounded in both the harrowing testimonies of affected individuals and the compelling scientific evidence presented during the event. The judges emphasized that protecting human lives and preserving environmental integrity must take precedence over corporate profits.

Broader Implications: Lessons for Africa

The People's Tribunal on Agrotoxins highlighted systemic failures in regulating pesticide use, not just in South Africa but across many African countries. It exposed how economic pressures and weak governance allow harmful practices to persist at the expense of public health and environmental sustainability.

For Uganda and other nations grappling with similar challenges, this tribunal serves as a wake-up call. It underscores the need for coordinated efforts among governments, civil society organizations, and international bodies to phase out HHPs, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and ensure justice for affected communities.

Conclusion: A Collective Responsibility

The People's Tribunal on Agrotoxins was more than an event it was a movement towards justice and systemic change. It amplified the voices of those who have long been silenced by powerful agricultural interests and called on all stakeholders to prioritize human dignity over profit.

As we reflect on the outcomes of this tribunal, it is clear that achieving food system justice requires collective action. Governments must enforce stricter regulations, corporations must adopt safer practices, and communities must continue advocating for their rights. Together, we can create a future where agriculture supports life rather than endangering it.

This article is dedicated to all those who courageously shared their stories at the tribunal. Your voices will not be forgotten.



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