

NO and NO! TO THE OPENING OF CARREFOUR in its current form

A five star and red carpet treatment is being given to the giant French multinational retailing supermarket **Carrefour** as it prepares to open up in Cameroon. Free and unimaginable benefits have been granted to them by Cameroon's government like the 3.5 ha of land in the heart of the capital after displacing the population, exemptions from taxes not only on the construction material of the building but on all imported products, free and unlimited repatriation of funds, and dozens of other incredible facilities ... etc). And yet! It is a catastrophe on all aspects to the country.

ACDIC (Association Citoyenne de Défense des Intérêts Collectifs) is firmly saying "**NO and NO! TO THE OPENING OF CARREFOUR in its current form**". ACDIC carried out two studies on over 10 already existing supermarkets in the two main cities of Cameroon-Douala and Yaoundé, and another study in Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire where Carrefour opened its doors in December 2015 to see how the multinational operates there. The main points or results of the studies are as follows:

- When these supermarkets talk about creating jobs, it is simply a sham. They claim to create 500 jobs (go and find out for yourself the kind of jobs!), but actually destroy 10,000 others in the production, processing and distribution chain of local products. And what about these local shopkeepers and other small trades that will disappear with time;
- When these supermarkets talk about selling local products, it is just window dressing. A few local products that represent less than 2% of their business turnover and are exposed in an unattractive manner amongst very attractive imported products. 2%, Just enough to buy a deceptively good image. Even worse is the fact that they do not subscribe to any ethical charter and any affirmed social concern.
- When these supermarkets say they have to train producers to produce under their standards, what their stores would need, it is smokes and mirrors. It is not their role to replace the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock, to name but a few.
- These supermarkets distribute 98% of imported products; target the rich middle class having some purchasing power and who unfortunately, dream of shopping with a trolley in those clean, air-conditioned and snob places. These supermarkets capture and misappropriate the money of these wealthy people who, if they consumed local products, would have boosted local production and favored better living conditions for our producers. And what about the perversion of the mentalities and eating habits of these middle classes;
- These supermarkets block our development because we cannot promote and encourage producers to produce better and more to finally be unable to sell. Local markets are being invaded with imported products. They impoverish the 67% of Cameroonians who live off Agriculture. Even more, it is a calamity to the rural people who already represent 60% of the poor in Cameroon;
- These supermarkets, with their imported products with doubtful origins and quality are not only dangerous to consumers, but are also gradually changing our eating habits. Nowadays in the city, we know and consume less and less traditional dishes that will

eventually disappear, taking away our culinary riches, spices and other natural resources that were used in their preparation. They expose populations to all the known harms of industrialization and the excesses of mass consumption;

- These supermarkets overwhelm us and prevent us from thinking out any evolution of our local markets and from inventing a “truly Cameroonian” distribution of consumer products like improving our main local markets in New Bell Douala and Mokolo Yaoundé.
- These supermarkets and other multinationals benefit from enormous public favors, unlike local markets such as Mfoundi in Yaoundé or Mboppi in Douala ... which, in more than one respect, are also supermarkets. And what about the bayam-sellam (reseller) who also deals with the distribution of products;
- These supermarkets weaken or even break the producer / consumer and urban / rural links and relationship that are the guarantee of solidarity. There is a growing dependency and a weakening of the country’s food sovereignty;
- In Europe, large-scale retailers have shown their limits and problems in society. Consumers turn their backs on them and prefer a more direct relationship with producers, while we enter the mass retail chain with trumpets. Unbelievable! The decline in the turnover of supermarkets in recent years explains their attempt to maintain their profits by resettling in emerging countries;
- With these supermarkets, we live and suffer a new colonization and this time through our mouths. We are neither willing nor prepared to open ourselves so naively to this mass consumption. If we go there, we will lose on all sides.

THINGS WORTH KNOWING:

CARREFOUR has already lost a battle, in India. After four years of existence 2010-2014, CARREFOUR was forced to shut down following the demonstration of the population. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-28205698>)



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