



Angelo Monne - [www.angelomonne.com](http://www.angelomonne.com)

## a poem on hope

It is hard to have hope. It is harder as you grow old, for hope must not depend on feeling good and there's the dream of loneliness at absolute midnight. You also have withdrawn belief in the present reality of the future, which surely will surprise us, and hope is harder when it cannot come by prediction anymore than by wishing. But stop dithering. The young ask the old to hope. What will you tell them? Tell them at least what you say to yourself.

Because we have not made our lives to fit our places, the forests are ruined, the fields, eroded, the streams polluted, the mountains, overturned. Hope then to belong to your place by your own knowledge of what it is that no other place is, and by your caring for it, as you care for no other place, this knowledge cannot be taken from you by power or by wealth. It will stop your ears to the powerful when they ask for your faith, and to the wealthy when they ask for your land and your work. Be still and listen to the voices that belong to the stream banks and the trees and the open fields.

Find your hope, then, on the ground under your feet. Your hope of Heaven, let it rest on the ground underfoot. The world is no better than its places. Its places at last are no better than their people while their people continue in them. When the people make dark the light within them, the world darkens.

Wendell Berry

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## who we are

In the last years hundreds of organisations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organisations were present in the *International Nyéléni Forum 2007* and feel part of a broader **Food Sovereignty Movement**, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organisations involved: AFSA, Development Fund, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, TNI, VSF-Justicia Alimentaria Global, WhyHunger.

**now is time for food sovereignty!**

## Globalise the Struggle, Globalise Hope!

*Elizabeth Mpofu, General Coordinator,  
La Via Campesina*

There is an African proverb that says:  
"If you want to go fast, go alone, but you  
won't go far. If you want to go far, go with  
others."

I believe that the struggle for Food Sovereignty is captured in the latter part of the proverb. Food Sovereignty is a lasting global solution for how we should relate with nature and people as we feed ourselves. It is a struggle that requires alliances for fully recognizing and realizing peasants' rights, and achieving social, economic and ecological equity and equality. This can only be done through collectiveness, in alliance across movements, regions, cultures and genders to ensure global solidarity and effect real change.

To build and realise Food Sovereignty, it is imperative to work and engage with others—peasants, indigenous people, fisherfolk, women, men, progressive researchers, consumers, etc.—to rethink ways and means of farming and mobilisation. By sharing ideas and generating knowledge, we are able to shape a society based on justice and solidarity, build healthy, inclusive communities, and improve social integration and cohesion. La Via Campesina recognizes the importance of alliances and we have joined hands with other social movements and organizations to push for Food Sovereignty in many national and international spaces. As a result, Food Sovereignty is included in some policies, enshrined in constitutions by some countries, while in others, debates continue on what to adopt.

Today, Food Sovereignty is a living concept because of continuing alliance work. It is the struggle for local food systems based on agroecology; access to local markets; access to and control over productive resources such as land, water, seeds, etc; recognition of peasant rights; and resistance to industrial agriculture, Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Transnational Corporations (TNCs).

## Advancing the paradigm of Food Sovereignty

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the historic International Forum on Food Sovereignty that was held Mali in 2007. The Forum brought together more than 500 peasants, fishers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, workers, migrants, women, youth, consumers, researchers and press/media from 80 countries to build a global movement on food sovereignty. The Forum was named Nyéléni, as tribute to and drawing inspiration from a legendary Malian peasant woman.

Nyéleni has since become a space of praxis, to convene, synergise and build forces to strengthen the different conditions for food sovereignty. These include defending and protecting land, water, territories, seeds and biodiversity; re-distributive agrarian reform; secure access to land, territories and resources; agroecology and sustainable peasant agriculture; cooperative production and marketing; preventing corporate domination, capture and control over seeds, lands, water, technology, knowledge, markets and policy-making; resisting privatization; dismantling neoliberal trade-investment regimes; stopping the criminalization of frontline communities and rights defenders; and upholding the rights of small-scale food providers and workers.

As the paradigm of food sovereignty has expanded, so too have threats against it. The convergence of climate, finance, economic and energy crises over the past decade have triggered an explosion of large scale infrastructure projects, mining, oil and gas extraction, logging, industrial tree plantations, luxury resorts and property development, Special Economic Zones, and bogus climate 'solutions' such as REDD, blue carbon and soil carbon trading. Rural populations are losing their lands and territories, and facing escalating criminalization, violence and militarization as they organize to protect the very foundations of their lives.

New generation free-trade agreements (FTAs) threaten food sovereignty through extreme tariff cuts, changes in domestic regulation that remove supports for small-scale producers, and mechanisms for investor 'rights' protection that give corporations unfettered access to critical sectors such as food, agriculture, retail, medicines and public health. Equally dangerous are policies that enable corporations to control the production, use, price and marketing of seeds, promote genetic engineering, and to patent seeds and plant varieties (many of which are derived from bio-pirated materials). The mega-mergers of six corporations—Bayer + Monsanto, Dow + Dupont and ChemChina + Syngenta—will increase corporate control over seeds, agricultural technologies and equipment, undermining the productive potential of small-scale food producers worldwide.

These threats are being confronted at multiple fronts and levels by the growing global movement for food sovereignty. The recurring crises the world is facing are inherent to capitalism which is adept at re-inventing itself to maintain structural power. Tinkering with the wiring of the capitalist model will do little good. What is needed is deep systemic change, a complete paradigm shift from competitiveness to solidarity, from extractivism to respect and from exploitation to dignity. This is the paradigm of food sovereignty, which the global movement is advancing through diverse knowledge, capacities, resources and social bases.

*Shalmali Guttal, Focus on the Global South*

## The UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas

### Introduction

Peasants and people living in rural areas, such as small-scale fishers, pastoralists and rural workers, still represent almost half of the world's population. The great majority of them have to face massive and systematic violations of their rights: they suffer disproportionately from hunger and malnutrition, are being increasingly dispossessed from their lands, water bodies, fisheries, forests, seeds, and are being alienated from their sources of livelihood. They cannot maintain and develop their local economies and earn an income which allows them to live in dignity. They are often arbitrarily detained, harassed, easily criminalized, and even killed for defending their rights. Moreover, rural women carry out a disproportionate share of unpaid work, are often heavily discriminated against in the access to natural and productive resources, financial services, information, employment and social protection, and still face violence in manifold forms.

The international peasant movement La Via Campesina (LVC) has been championing the recognition of the rights of peasants in the international human rights system since 2001. After eight years of internal discussion, LVC presented in 2009 its own declaration on the rights of peasants – women and men– in which they succinctly expressed their aspirations and demands<sup>1</sup>. Shortly after, in 2010, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) mandated its Advisory Committee to elaborate a study on ways and means to further advance the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas<sup>2</sup>. The study recommends “(a) to better implement existing international norms, (b) to address the normative gaps under international human rights law, and (c) to elaborate a new legal instrument on the rights of people working in rural areas” (Par. 63). In September 2012, the HRC passed a resolution establishing an inter-governmental working group with the mandate to elaborate a draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas.

### Relevance of the declaration

The former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier de Schutter, has stated that there are “four main reasons for adopting a new international human rights instrument on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas: it is needed in international law; it will improve the fight against hunger; it is a means of protecting small-scale, family-owned farms from the pressure of large, agro-industrial farms; and it will increase access to the means of production in rural areas.” He has also underlined that “the adoption of a declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas would increase visibility on the rights that are already recognized in international law, and help to recognize new rights, such as the rights to land, to seeds and to

compensation for the losses due to food subsidies given to farmers in other countries<sup>3</sup>”.

### **Rallying for the rights of peasants, small-scale fishers, pastoralists and other people working in rural areas**

In countries like Indonesia or Colombia, peasants have historically faced deep entrenched discrimination and pervasive violence. The call for recognition of the rights of peasants has been able to capture the attention of people on the ground in these countries and has been instrumental in helping them assert their rights. It has also strengthened their organization and mobilization capacities as well as their initiatives towards policies and laws which protect and promote their rights. In recent years, several laws and policies specifically addressing the situation of peasants have been passed in Indonesia. Peasant and rural people's mobilizations and demands have been at the top of the national agenda in Colombia after decades of disastrous neglect.

### Way forward

The inter-governmental working group elaborating the draft declaration held its fourth session in May 2017<sup>4</sup>. Besides the importance of having a UN declaration asserting the rights of peasants and other rural people, the process of drafting bears in itself the potential of becoming a vehicle to

- deepen the dialogue and alliance among different constituencies and groups of rural people; and
- raise awareness and contribute to capacity and movement building.

The recognition of the rights of rural people goes beyond the UN Human Rights Council. It can be demanded from other UN bodies and more importantly from local, national and regional authorities. It is up to all individuals, groups and organizations to join this struggle in their own creative ways.

1- See: <http://viacampesina.net/downloads/PDF/EN-3.pdf>

2 - Final study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (on the advancement of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas), UN doc. A/HRC/19/75, 24 February 2012.

3 - Ibid. §70

4 - See the joint statement of La Via Campesina together with the World Forum of Fisher People, the International Indian Treaty Council, the International Union of Food Workers and other CSO on the outcome of this session at <http://www.eurovia.org/the-time-is-ripe-for-the-recognition-and-protection-of-peasants-rights/>

## The State of Palestine: Internationally Recognized Yet Stripped of Food Sovereignty

*Jamal Talab, Land Research Center,  
Palestine*

Perhaps the loss of food sovereignty for the people of an occupied state doubles the negative impact of the violation of their fundamental human right to a life of dignity. The State of Palestine, recognized as a member state by the United Nations (UN), still does not have full sovereignty, including over natural resources. The Israeli occupation controls 80% of the underground water and 64% of the total area of Palestine, reserved for the expansion of settlements that are illegal according to UN Resolution number 2334 of December 2017.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation has constructed an apartheid wall (774km), opened colonists-only roads (1270km), confiscated 50% of Palestinian lands and uprooted over two million fruit trees, 70% of which were aging olive trees. It established over 488 colonies and outposts on Palestinian hills and mountains, pumping untreated sewage water and banned pollutants (pesticides and fertilizers) onto Palestinian agricultural lands, resulting in the contamination of plants and degradation of lands.

The concept of food sovereignty entitles peoples to control their food chains and systems. Yet all concepts are not applicable in Palestine. Also, the occupation has besieged the Gaza strip for over ten years and Israel executes full control over land, air and water. Fishermen are only allowed a quarter of the entitled mileage into the sea, which negatively affects their fishing capacity and income.

The presence of over 742 Israeli military checkpoints across all Palestine fully restricts the movement and transportation of goods. Above all, Israel has imposed hindrances that undermine local markets to shift Palestinians from producers to consumers of Israeli markets that are more organized and modern.

With over 41 days<sup>1</sup> of hunger strike for dignity and freedom, Palestinian prisoners urged the international community to stand by their side for their full rights and sovereignty.

1 - Article written in May 2017

## The Right to Resist

Thirty-five Filipino farmers, including 10 women, are facing imprisonment as land-owners of a large coconut estate filed 19 criminal cases of theft against them in 2016. The coconut estate is an agrarian hotspot for land distribution under the Philippine agrarian reform program. Now the farmers need to raise more than USD \$22,000 as bail money to grant them temporary liberty. Due to poverty and the recent destruction of their crops by a typhoon, they are unable to raise this amount, prompting many of them to hide and do so preventing their children from going to school this coming term. Criminalization is one of the tools used by landlords and business interests to harass landless peasants and rural communities, and they use the legal system to oppose agrarian reforms that threaten their monopoly of control and ownership of lands. Similar cases can be seen in other countries of the South, where institutions and structures of justice are becoming instruments of repression, and judicial proceedings are manipulated by those with wealth and political power.

The violence surrounding peoples' struggles for food sovereignty has become appallingly common across the world. This comes in the form of threats, intimidation, physical force and abuse of power by state agencies, elites and non-state actors. From Cambodia to Brazil, rural communities increasingly encounter the danger of violence as they defend their lands, waters, forests, resources, livelihoods and rights from extractivist and destructive projects/policies, often in the name of 'development.' Women, youth and children are particularly at risk. The systematic failure to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice deepens the culture of impunity and constitutes a denial of victims' rights to justice and redress.

While violence, abuse of power and impunity are not new to much of the rural world, the violation of peoples' rights and criminalization of rights defenders have expanded and escalated to alarming levels over the last few decades<sup>1</sup>. These can be attributed to the powerful nexus of political and business interests, repressive laws, and a model of development that criminalizes those who resist land grabbing, deforestation, mining, dams, and socio-economic injustices. Local communities and peoples' movements that are practicing and building food sovereignty are primary targets, as food sovereignty directly challenges narratives of economic growth and development based on large-scale investments, industrial agriculture and food systems, privatisation, and extractivism. A convenient and efficient way to undermine food sovereignty is to disable its proponents. Legal and physical violence have become preferred weapons by which corporations, elites and many governments silence dissent and opposition, and prevent people from imagining worlds outside the dominant economic paradigm.

However, communities and peoples' movements around the world are organizing to end the criminalization of small-scale food providers and the impunity of state and corporate perpetrators even in countries where spaces for genuine democracy are shrinking or absent, for example, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Ecuador, Brazil, etc. These struggles aim to defend human dignity and nature, protect fundamental rights and freedoms, and exact accountability from institutions, structures, and people in power. The unwavering commitment of peoples' movements to defend food sovereignty stress the importance of strengthening and defending alternatives to neoliberalism and corporate power, as well as articulating well-being and progress from the perspectives of those who have been victims of various forms of injustices, especially women.

1 - Check Nyéléni newsletter no.14 Rights and Repression - <http://www.nyeleni.org/ccount/click.php?id=44> and Newsletter Volume III No. 4, August 2016 - <https://focusweb.org/content/newsletter-volume-iii-number-4-august-2016>

# Voices from the field

## The women's movement and Food Sovereignty

3

*Sophie Dowllar, World March of Women*

The World March of Women participated in the Nyéléni International Forum on Food Sovereignty in Mali in 2007 as a feminist movement, contributing to the expression of women as political subjects. One of the most important themes in food sovereignty is women's access to land, water, seeds and territory. Land should be in the hands of those who work it. Ultimately, those who stay in the countryside to till the land for food production are peasant women.

Rural women are permanently concerned with rescuing and maintaining biodiversity, and preserving the land, which is reflected in their use of sustainable, agroecological practices. Water should be respected within the framework of food sovereignty. The privatization and commodification of water as a common good is a crime against nature and humanity. For peasant women, protecting and saving seeds is a fundamental role and way of contributing to food sovereignty.

In order to produce and distribute nutritious food to everyone, women's movements are already engaged in different forms of community based agriculture that link rural and urban women, and in joint initiatives that build and strengthen alliances among women from different sectors including fisherfolk, migrants, peasants, environmentalists, etc. Despite the contradictions due to existing in a capitalist and patriarchal society, these initiatives create opportunities to learn, organise, develop new forms of conviviality, forge meaningful alliances for sustainable food production and solve problems together. There is also a shared vision that includes seed preservation, food sovereignty and the relationship between peoples and territories.

The affirmation of women's knowledge and contribution to food production, preparation and distribution is one of the greatest hopes that lies ahead for food sovereignty to thrive. There has to be recognition of their indigenous knowledge and their contribution to the production, preparation and distribution of food. Food sovereignty means the future.

## Consumers and Food Sovereignty

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*Isa Álvarez, Advocacy officer URGENCI*

From the point of view of consumers, food sovereignty is a key right in order to obtain a full and dignified life. It is difficult to consider ourselves as living in dignity if there is limited autonomy of choice about how we feed ourselves.

In today's times the capitalist system values citizens primarily in two ways: as a workforce to feed the production system or as a niche in the consumer market that continues making that market viable. At the same time through mechanisms of mass publicity it has constructed an imagined world where consumerism is the only entry point for rights, making invisible the human rights which all citizens have for the mere fact of having been born.

It is becoming increasingly urgent that it be the people who are able to decide on their own political policies in all areas but especially in that of food and agriculture. Today the globalized market, in the hands of transnational corporations, inundates us with ultra processed products which make us sick, while associating such products with progress and being a citizen of the 21st century. This leads to the disappearance of not only other forms of foodstuffs which are more suitable to our real needs, but also progressively of small farmers and peasants.

The negative impacts of these edible products (not foodstuffs) on our health are already evident. Curiously, in the face of this evidence some false solutions are instead putting in focus citizen responsibility - especially that of women - perpetuating their unequal role as carers, as if the act of deciding what to eat in today's world was a free act made in a neutral environment. Instead, we should not forget the role and capacity which public policies have of choosing (or not) our foodstuffs, as well as the need that these policies become the fruit of participatory processes among all citizens and not the result of pressure applied by large transnational corporations which have little or nothing to do with human necessities.



## Advancing Food Sovereignty in Nepal

5

*Balram Banskota, All Nepal Peasants Federation*

Food sovereignty has become the banner of All Nepal Peasants' Federation (ANPFa), the largest peasant organization in Nepal. Nepal's peasant movement joined hands with its national and international counterparts to bring the discussion of food sovereignty into the mainstream as a new development model for agrarian and rural development, opposing the neo-liberal paradigm of development and advancing towards socialism. It was during the Peoples' movement-II when the message of the peasant movement and concept of food sovereignty reached down to the local level. People had food sovereignty in one hand and the political agenda of a federal democratic republic in the other. That is why it was possible to incorporate food sovereignty as a fundamental right of the people. The new constitution of Nepal (2015) has ensured that people have the right to food sovereignty as guided by the law (article 36 under food related rights, sub-article 3). Though these historic achievements are worthy of mention, legislative acts to implement these rights have still to be drafted.

The political instability in Nepal as a direct impact of regional hegemony and global capitalism still continues. Thus the present government, backed by neo-liberal forces and with technical support from FAO, is drafting the food security and right to food bill against the mandate of the constitution. We understand the conspiracy of anti-people forces against food sovereignty and other progressive rights of people that ensure Nepal's advancement towards socialism. We are well prepared for the massive political awareness and demonstration needed to support food sovereignty. ANPFa is also leading the process of drafting the food sovereignty bill necessary to implement peoples' constitutional rights. We hope that we will soon implement food sovereignty in Nepal despite those challenges.



## Voice 6

### Food Sovereignty expresses the richness of our struggle

*Nettie Wiebe, National Farmers' Union (Canada)*

The term "food sovereignty" has become so familiar and widely used (as well as mis-used) that it's hard to remember a time before it was part of our lexicon.

We are not entirely sure who first coined the term "food sovereignty," but there is no doubt about how and where it became a signature concept in La Via Campesina (LVC) and beyond. It is a defining theme of our struggles, our analysis and our movement.

The founding meeting of LVC in Mons, Belgium in 1993, took place in a context where the neo-liberal agenda was rapidly gaining legitimacy and power through regional and global trade agreements, particularly the GATT/WTO. By April, 1996, when the first major, delegated conference was held in Tlaxcala, Mexico, the hundreds of peasant, indigenous and rural organization representatives who participated were unanimous in their opposition to these policies and powers that threatened peasants, small-scale farmers and rural and indigenous communities everywhere.

It was not difficult to name what we were fighting against – the destruction of communities, environments, cultures, livelihoods and local markets by corporate agribusiness and the governments that colluded with this destruction.

But it was harder to name the alternatives succinctly. I recall long, profound, sometimes contentious, discussions going late into the nights as we struggled to find a term that would capture what we were fighting for. The conventional term of "food security" was inadequate. This was about more than producing more food or distributing it more efficiently. We were grappling with fundamental questions of power and democracy: Who controls food producing resources such as land, water, seeds and genetics and for what purposes? Who gets to decide what is grown, how and where it is grown and for whom? We needed to have language that expressed the political dimensions of our struggle.

Food Sovereignty is such a term. It provokes the necessary discourse about power, freedom, democracy, equality, justice, sustainability and culture. Food is taken out of the realm of being primarily a market commodity and re-embedded in the social, ecological, cultural and local contexts as a source of nutrition, livelihood, meaning and relationships.

A few months later, at the World Food Summit in Rome, LVC publicly presented some of the basic principles of food sovereignty. And in the decades since then, it has become a powerful, transformative, widely used concept that frames a multitude of diverse struggles to protect life, cultivate hope and reap justice.

## Voice 7

### Why we choose Food Sovereignty

*Zainal Arifin Fuad, Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI)*

Food Sovereignty as an alternative paradigm to Food Security was first adopted by the government of Indonesia in 2009 following a long struggle by the Indonesian Peasant Union (SPI) to counteract the introduction of the Food Security framework adopted by the FAO in 1996 to overcome hunger. Food Sovereignty is concerned not only with shortages of food, but also with agrarian reform, biodiversity, environment, energy, workers rights, consumers, economic institutions, financial institutions, markets, transportation and politics, which are part of food based geo-politics. The implementation of Food Security reproduces poverty, hunger and agrarian conflicts because of the role of corporations in providing and controlling food through the green revolution, land grabbing and free markets.

Therefore, SPI realizes that Food Sovereignty should be supported by all components of civil society (academics, students, NGOs, women, workers and other social movements) and the government. La Via Campesina's slogan: "Peasants' Struggle, Peoples' Victory" is a message that the struggle for Food Sovereignty is for everyone.

Now there are many laws in Indonesia containing Food Sovereignty explicitly as well as implicitly, such as The Law of Land Protection for Sustainable Food Based Agriculture (2009), The Law of Food (2012), The Law of Farmer Protection and Empowerment (2013) and the Development Program of Jokowi (2014-2019). However, the way forward is hard and even paradoxical at the level of implementation. There are many constraints and interventions from many actors, both national and International, who still want to implement Food Security. FAO has already opened a window for Agroecology in 2014 and processes are ongoing in the Human Rights Commission in Geneva on the Declaration of Peasant Rights. Therefore, SPI and La Via Campesina continue their struggles at the grassroots level, as well as for public policy space at national, regional and international levels.

**one does not sell  
the earth  
upon which  
the people walk**

Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877



## Voice 8

### Food Sovereignty in small-scale fisheries

World Forum of Fisher Peoples

*"We, the El Molo people, co-exist with nature. Our livelihoods and traditions are connected with nature and the lake [Turkana]*

*where we fish. In El Molo, we have a saying: 'conserve, protect and sustain the lake so it can serve your family and your community.' It is the source of your life; it is a two-way relationship. There is no commercial aspect, it's about surviving."* Christiana Louwa, El Molo Forum, Northern Kenya

The importance of Food Sovereignty has long been recognized by the leadership of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP): Food Sovereignty is a political agenda of small-scale food producers in the defense of our rivers, lakes, oceans and land. It is at the centre of our struggle against the neoliberal food system dominated by multinational corporations who, in the context of fisheries, seek to privatize and consolidate fishing rights in the hands of the few.

Food Sovereignty gives us a new language to describe what already makes up the heart and soul of the defense of our territories, our heritage and our capacities to produce healthy, good and abundant food. It provides a framework for sharing indigenous, traditional and new knowledge and wisdom, and to cultivate the study and debate about Food Sovereignty among youth, women and men in all of WFFP's constituencies. Our vision builds on the 'six pillars' for Food Sovereignty :

1. Focuses on Food for People:

Inland and marine small-scale fishers are at the centre of fisheries and related policies, and ensure that food production is not harming future generations.

2. Values Food Providers:

The human rights of all small-scale fisher peoples involved in the entire value chain of small-scale fisheries, including youth, women, men and Indigenous fishers, must be respected and protected.

3. Localizes Food Systems:

Fishing communities decide independently on their own food system. They are at the center of decision making in terms of processing of fish products (salting, drying, smoking, fresh products, freezing, canning, etc.).

4. Puts Control Locally:

Fishing communities must have control over the land and water territories in both inland and marine fisheries. Access to fishing grounds - including lakes, rivers, salt marches, mangrove forests, coral reefs, and coastal waters – is a fundamental right of fishing communities.

5. Builds Knowledge and Skills:

Small-scale fishers have built their traditional, customary and/or Indigenous knowledge and skills over many generations (passed on from parents to children).

6. Works with Nature:

Small-scale fishing communities have a long history of working with and respecting nature. The inter-connectedness between fisher peoples and nature is deeply rooted in traditions and customary practices, especially for Indigenous Peoples, and expressed through our commitment to agroecology.

It is on the basis of Food Sovereignty that we will be able to take our struggle into the next decade. With emphasis on youth, women and Indigenous Peoples, we will strengthen solidarity between fisher movements and other social movements from all over the world.

## Voice 9

### Food Sovereignty and AFSA

Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)<sup>1</sup> understands food sovereignty as the ultimate struggle to protect Africa from the assault of the industrial food system.

Never before has there been a more coordinated and better-funded attempt to transform Africa's peasant based agriculture into a commercial enterprise. Agricultural and food policies are geared to corporate interests. Through agreements and shady dealings, our governments are handing over the responsibility of feeding Africa to corporations. The kind of food production envisioned by corporations is strongly biased towards the industrialization of agriculture, relying on hybrid seeds, GMOs, and increased use of fertilizer and pesticides – as well as on mechanized, large-scale farming. Rather than being supported, food producers are being eliminated from their food production system. Rather than incorporating the available knowledge and experience of food producers, they are giving the impression that the majority of food producers are no longer needed.

This process is also allowing Africa's genetic heritage to be privatized by a handful of multinational corporations, while undermining the contribution and role of local seed diversity and exchange networks.

Agriculture is being used to tear our cultural and social fabric apart, destroy our environment and make us subservient to the forces of global capitalism. The bright side is that we are making food sovereignty and agroecology our story, our solution, and our future.

AFSA has provided a continent-wide political platform on food sovereignty in many venues, contributed to policy discussion on food sovereignty and agroecology, broadened the food sovereignty agendas to include the impact of Food System on nutrition and health and successfully challenged the Regional Economic Commission on laws related to seed and biosafety.

AFSA has doubled its membership to reach 30 networks. It now covers 50 African Countries out of 56. Today AFSA is recognized as one of the biggest, loudest grass-roots voice in Africa. It is a broad-based alliance of African regional farmers, fisher folk, consumers, youth, women, and faith-based and African non-governmental organisation networks, along with various other allies. The aim is to bring greater continental cohesion to an already developing food sovereignty movement in Africa.

1 - Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is member of the Nyéléni newsletter's Editorial Board since June 2017.

# Voice 10 The road towards people's Food Sovereignty

Diego Montón, Operative Secretariat - CLOC-Vía Campesina

From our understanding it is impossible to achieve people's food sovereignty in the framework of the capitalist and patriarchal system. Given that, it is necessary to build a popular program based on solidarity, on social, gender and environmental justice and on food sovereignty.

Advancing towards food sovereignty on the continent (*Latin America*) with the largest level of land concentration means defending the social function of land, while also defending peasant seeds and resisting any and all initiative to privatize them. Therefore the struggle for integrated agrarian reform and the construction of local systems of seed production are key central commitments of the CLOC.

At the same time, we need to transform the models of production imposed by transnational corporations and dominant classes at a national level. Agroecological production is fundamental in retaining the autonomy, the realisation of the right to food and the environmental sustainability of peasants and small farmers. In this area education and training play a fundamental role and for this reason the CLOC has created IALAS and agroecology schools in various countries.

To reinforce the work of peasants and small farmers while generating opportunities for rural youth, it is vital that the state

plays an active role through public policies which:

- Ensure the equal access of women to resources and policies;
- Ensure a dignified life in the countryside, guaranteeing a minimum income, health cover, educational access and other rights;
- Develop local and small-scale agroindustries which add value to primary products which can subsequently be marketed in local and urban markets;
- Guarantee infrastructure for local markets;
- Subsidise logistical support in transporting products from farms to markets and fairs;
- Define different standards so that peasant products can be sold directly into local markets, through urban and rural planning avoid the mass concentration of the population in cities;
- Fortify peasant and small farmer organisations;
- Promote integration between popular organisations from the countryside and the cities which permit them to debate and consolidate food sovereignty as a right of all citizens.

To advance down this road we need: strong democratic states as well as UN resolutions which control and penalize transnational corporations and their states of origin when those states or TNCs violate human rights or attempt to monopolize the market for foodstuffs.

For these objectives all the popular rural movements of the continent are working together.



**The Declaration of Nyeleni.** *Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.*

<https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>

**Stop land-grabbing now!** *Secure access to and control over land and natural resources are inextricably linked to the enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several regional and international human rights treaties.*

<https://viacampesina.org/en/stop-land-grabbing-now/>

**Our seeds our future.** *Seeds are an essential basis for achieving food sovereignty because almost everything in agriculture depends on them.*

<https://viacampesina.org/en/our-seeds-our-future/>

**Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles.** *We are fighting and protesting against natural resource grabbing, especially water and land grabbing of our Commons, and against the systematic violations of the associated human rights.*

<https://viacampesina.org/en/declaration-of-the-global-convergence-of-land-and-water-struggles/>

**Statement of the WFFP to the working group of the Human Rights Council.** *My plea is simple -- to reject the commodification of nature. Land grabs were the start of market-led colonisation; now it's the turn of water, including oceans. The natural commons, on which depend livelihoods of tens of millions, should not be allowed to become hostage to market greed and predatory states.*

[http://worldfishers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/statement\\_peasants\\_declaration\\_nov\\_2014.pdf](http://worldfishers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/statement_peasants_declaration_nov_2014.pdf)

**Declaration of Rights of Peasants – Women and Men,** <https://viacampesina.net/downloads/PDF/EN-3.pdf>

**First Global Encounter on Agroecology and Peasant Seeds, Surin Declaration.** *We are convinced that agroecology is the corner stone of food sovereignty. We cannot achieve food sovereignty if agriculture is dependent of inputs controlled by corporations, if the impact of technology destroys Mother Earth, if we do not challenge the commodification and speculation of food and land, and if we do not make better livelihoods for those who make available healthy and accessible food to our communities.*

<http://www.landaction.org/Surin-Declaration>

**Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology.** *Our diverse forms of smallholder food production based on agroecology generate local knowledge, promote social justice, nurture identity and culture, and strengthen the economic viability of rural areas.*

<https://viacampesina.org/en/declaration-of-the-international-forum-for-agroecology/>

**International Conference of Agrarian Reform: Marabá Declaration.** *20 years after the El Dorado dos Carajás massacre in the State of Pará, Brazil, we are meeting once again, inspired by the thousands of men and women who defend the right to life itself, who fight for a more just society through a permanent struggle for peoples' rights to land and territory, for the promotion of food sovereignty and agroecological production, to end hunger and poverty.*

<https://viacampesina.org/en/international-conference-of-agrarian-reform-declaration-of-maraba1/>

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