



## ESCUELA CAMPESINA MULTIMEDIA

Una herramienta audiovisual para difundir la agroecología



agroecologia.espora.org

editorial

## agroecology as resistance and transformation:

### Food Sovereignty and Mother Earth

Suddenly agroecology is in fashion with everyone, from grassroots social movements to the FAO, governments, universities and corporations. But not all have the same idea of agroecology in mind. While mainstream institutions and corporations for years have marginalized and ridiculed agroecology, today they are trying to capture it. They want to take what is useful to them – the technical part – and use it to fine tune industrial agriculture, while conforming to the monoculture model and to the dominance of capital and corporations in structures of power. Social movements, on the other hand, use agroecology to challenge existing power structures – like land concentration and

monopolies, to resist the multiple attacks on life in the countryside and on our Mother Earth, and as a tool for the social, economic, cultural, political and ecological transformation of communities and territories. Their agroecology is merely technical, our agroecology is political.

Agroecology has become a territory in dispute. It is essential that we build a consensus among our people's movements of what it means to us, of what we are defending. That is why we held the International Forum for Agroecology at Nyéléni in Mali in February of 2015, and why we have been disputing agroecology in the recent series of agroecology forums hosted by FAO in Rome, the Americas, Asia, Africa, China and Europe, even as we actively build agroecology in our territories.

Peter Rosset, LVC and Martín Drago, FoEI

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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: 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!**

Edited excerpts from

## **Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology** - Nyéléni, Mali, 27 February 2015

We are delegates representing diverse organizations and international movements of small-scale food producers and consumers, including peasants, indigenous peoples, communities, hunters and gatherers, family farmers, rural workers, herders and pastoralists, fisherfolk and urban people. Together, the diverse constituencies our organizations represent produce some 70% of the food consumed by humanity. They are the primary global investors in agriculture, as well as the primary providers of jobs and livelihoods in the world.

In 2007 many of us gathered here at Nyéléni, at the Forum for Food Sovereignty... Similarly, We gather here at the Agroecology Forum 2015 to enrich Agroecology through dialogue between diverse food producing peoples, as well as with consumers, urban communities, women, youth, and others. Today our movements, organized globally and regionally in the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), have taken a new and historic step.

### **Building on the past looking to the future**

Our ancestral production systems have been developed over millennia, and during the past 30 to 40 years this has come to be called agroecology. Our agroecology includes successful practices and production...we have developed sophisticated theoretical, technical and political constructions.

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.

Agroecology means that we stand together in the circle of life, and this implies that we must also stand together in the circle of struggle against land grabbing and the criminalization of our movements.

### **Overcoming multiple crises**

The industrial food system is a key driver of the multiple crises of climate, food, the environment, public health and others. Free trade and corporate investment agreements, investor-state dispute settlement agreements, and false solutions such as carbon markets, and the growing financialization of land and food, etc., all further aggravate these crises.

We see agroecology as a key form of resistance to an economic system that puts profit before life.

### **Agroecology at a crossroads**

Popular pressure has caused many multilateral institutions, governments, universities and research centers, some NGOs, corporations and others, to finally recognize "agroecology". However, they have tried to redefine it as a narrow set of technologies, to offer some tools that appear to ease the sustainability crisis of industrial food production, while the existing structures of power remain unchallenged. This co-optation of agroecology to fine-tune the industrial food system, while paying lip service to the environmental discourse, has various names, including "climate smart agriculture", "sustainable-" or "ecological-intensification", industrial monoculture production of "organic" food, etc. For us, these are not agroecology: we reject them, and we will fight to expose and block this insidious appropriation of agroecology.

The real solutions... will not come from conforming to the industrial model. We must transform it and build our own local food systems that create new rural-urban links, based on truly agroecological food production by peasants, artisanal fishers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, urban farmers, etc...we see [agroecology] as the essential alternative to the industrial model, and as the means of transforming how we produce and consume food into something better for humanity and our Mother Earth.

### **Our common pillars and principles of agroecology**

The production practices of agroecology are based on ecological principles like building life in the soil, recycling nutrients, the dynamic management of biodiversity and energy conservation at all scales. Agroecology drastically reduces our use of externally-purchased inputs that must be bought from industry. In agroecology there is no use of agrottoxins, artificial hormones, GMOs or other dangerous new technologies.

Territories are a fundamental pillar of agroecology. Peoples and communities have the right to maintain their own spiritual and material relationships to their lands...this implies the full recognition of their laws, traditions, customs, tenure systems, and institutions, and constitutes the recognition of the self-determination and autonomy of peoples.

Collective rights and access to the commons are a fundamental pillar of agroecology.

The diverse knowledges and ways of knowing of our peoples are fundamental to agroecology. Agroecology is developed through our own innovation, research, and crop and livestock selection and breeding.

The core of our cosmovisions is the necessary equilibrium between nature, the cosmos and human beings. We reject the commodification of all forms of life.

Collective self-organization and action are what make it possible to scale-up agroecology, build local food systems, and challenge corporate control of our food system. Solidarity between peoples, between rural and urban populations, is a critical ingredient.

The autonomy of agroecology displaces the control of global markets and generates self-governance by communities. It requires the re-shaping of markets so that they are based on the principles of solidarity economy and the ethics of responsible production and consumption.

Agroecology is political; it requires us to challenge and transform structures of power in society. We need to put the control of seeds, biodiversity, land and territories, waters, knowledge, culture and the commons in the hands of the peoples who feed the world.

Women and their knowledge, values, vision and leadership are critical for moving forward. All too often, their work is neither recognized nor valued. For agroecology to achieve its full potential, there must be equal distribution of power, tasks, decision-making and remuneration.

Agroecology can provide a radical space for young people to contribute to the social and ecological transformation that is underway in many of our societies. Agroecology must create a territorial and social dynamic that creates opportunities for rural youth and values women's leadership.

The full declaration at <http://www.foodsovereignty.org/agroecologynyeleni2015/>

## Agroecology at a crossroads – between institutionalization and social movements

Agroecology is in fashion. From being ignored, underappreciated and excluded by the institutions that govern agriculture internationally, it has become recognised as one of the key alternatives to confront the serious crises caused by the green revolution. This is unprecedented, and leaves agroecology facing a serious dilemma: give in to cooptation and message capture, or take the political opportunity to advance agroecology as a tool for transforming the current hegemonic, agroextractivist model. While international institutions are not monolithic and internal debates exist, the situation can be seen as a struggle between two competing camps. The first is made up of official government institutions, international agencies and the private sector, and the other is composed of various social movements, who defend agroecology as the only viable option to radically transform the prevailing agriculture and food system.

In this scenario we can see how green capitalism has “discovered” agroecology as a way of incorporating peasant agriculture, its territories and agro-ecological practices into global circuits of accumulation. Its objective is to commodify seeds and agro-biodiversity; appropriate the agroecological knowledge of peasants and indigenous communities; find agricultural products for food, cosmetic, and pharmaceutical markets; increase the profits made from carbon credits and neoliberal conservation and arrangements like REDD+; and profit from the expansion of markets for industrial organic products, which might even be rebranded as “agroecological” in the largest supermarkets. On top of this it is also offers an excellent opportunity for agribusiness to fine tune its production practices and partially revert its tendency to degrade the conditions of production, increase production costs and reduce productivity over time.

Through the classic strategies of development the intention will be to appropriate the knowledge of rural peoples – creating and imposing dependency on a system that in the future will provide agroecological services through states, opportunistic NGOs, transnational companies, and the projects of foundations and international organizations. We should avoid the naivety of believing that at last the doors have been opened to transform world agrarian structures towards agroecology; on the contrary, social movements have to remain alert that institutionalization does not strengthen dependency on public programs and projects, which can generate more bureaucracy and useless demagoguery.

We are at a crossroads which social movements cannot afford to ignore. To refrain from taking part in these discussions is to leave the way clear for capital to find its way out of its chronic crisis of over-accumulation, while temporarily restructuring the conditions of production. Above all however, it is an excellent opportunity for regrouping our forces as we resist this new attempt at appropriation, for giving new meanings to struggle, updating our forms of resistance, and finally for redefining the meaning of alternatives.

In the end, one of the major contradictions of capital is that in the attempt to gobble everything up - in the efforts to bring every space and human activity into the circuits of accumulation, they end up reinforcing peoples' struggles, having the antagonistic effect of strengthening mobilizations and inspiring people to reappropriate their own knowledge and heritage, revalue their cultures, and redouble their efforts to build effective social processes for scaling up agroecology in their territories.

The full article can be seen here (in Spanish only):  
<http://revistas.ufpr.br/guaju/article/view/48521/29189>

## **“Getting into a bind”: trade and investment regime blocks the development of agroecology and access to land <sup>1</sup>**

Small-scale food producers are moving ahead with the exchange of knowledge, practices and movements for agroecology. Evidence from the ground shows that with appropriate public investments they can make even greater strides in achieving food sovereignty through action on agroecology. But current trade and investment agreements being signed by countries are actively blocking progress on agroecology.

These agreements are focused on attracting agribusiness and are geared towards generating profits for them. This is being done by opening new markets through trade and investment liberalisation, using bilateral investment treaties (BITs), free trade agreements (FTAs), conditional loans, and aid agreements.

Provisions in all these agreements undermine and supersede the sovereignty of states and hinder their ability to develop or protect their economies or social and environmental interests. At the same time they provide comprehensive promotion and protection for agribusinesses' profits at the cost of states' and peoples' welfare.

Key instruments are i) Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) which enables corporations to sue states for billions of dollars in secret arbitration courts for implementing economic, social or environmental policies that may impede profitable activities.

ii) Agribusiness investment promotion policies such as tax-free zones, unilateral tariff reductions, subsidies for the consumption of services (such as electricity and water), subsidies for hiring and training workers. Favorable policies for agribusinesses are also often insisted upon by donors providing development assistance or food aid.

iii) Requirements to give foreign agribusinesses equal or better conditions than local businesses

iv) Banning of performance requirements such as requirements to hire from the national workforce or transfer technology.

But food sovereignty and economic justice movements are fighting back!

1 - To read the full report :  
<http://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Camisa-Once-Varas-INGLES-Q.pdf>

# Agroecology in practice 1

## Spreading agroecology and building resistance for food sovereignty

*Shashe Agroecology School*

The Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF), a member of La Via Campesina (LVC), runs an Agroecology School at Shashe which promotes the exchange of agroecological peasant farming experiences through horizontal learning among farmers from Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries.

The school is part of LVC's network of more than 50 Agroecology schools worldwide, and is the cornerstone for collective development of strategies to fight against dependence on agrochemicals and fertilizers, and to survive climate change. At Shashe, farmers employ various agroecological practices to ensure food sovereignty, mitigate climate change and reduce dependence on purchased agro-inputs, thus keeping farm income in the family's pocketbook. These practices include the use of manure, mulching, minimum tillage, multiple cropping, the exchange and use of traditional seeds, among others. Such practices are the foundation for building a new future for peasant farmers, not only at ZIMSOFF, but globally. In addition to planting crops, most farmers keep a wide variety of livestock. Our agroecological systems are designed so that these livestock do not compete with humans for food, but eat what humans don't eat, such as weeds and insects.

Peasant families in ZIMSOFF also are experimenting with local food processing, storage and preservation. This is critical not only for reducing post-harvest losses but so to initiate the growth of small local industries which are key for the employment of youth. Crops such as sunflower and groundnuts are processed to make cooking oil and peanut butter respectively. At Shashe the farmers are creating a vibrant local market for produce, and strengthening relations with consumers.

In April of 2016, the school hosted 20 farmers from Manica province in Mozambique, who came to learn and exchange information on peasant seeds and struggles against policies intended to criminalise their production and exchange. Bad policies facilitate the marketing of commercial registered seeds, build a policy framework to enforce the privatization of germplasm, and constitute an attack on peasant seeds. Fighting these policies is a key complement to agroecology, and such exchanges are fundamental for organizing resistance and building peasant seed sovereignty.

The experience at Shashe shows that with agroecology and their seeds and livestock, peasants can produce healthy food at a low cost, in harmony with nature, for their families and for the market. More importantly, agroecology provides an environment for peasants to experiment and shape their own sustainable rural development, and build better social relations based on respect and mutual learning.

# Agroecology in practice 2

## Turning the Green revolution upside down

*Native and Criole Seed Network of Uruguay*

For thousands of years the production of foodstuffs for human consumption was based in the utilization of "natural" seeds by indigenous peoples, peasants and farmers. – meaning that using our own knowledge, capacities and skills we have been capable of domesticating wild species, adapting them, improving them and above all reproducing them to satisfy our food needs. It can be clearly seen how three distinct crops – maize in America, wheat in Africa and rice in Asia gave sustenance and life to three models of civilization.

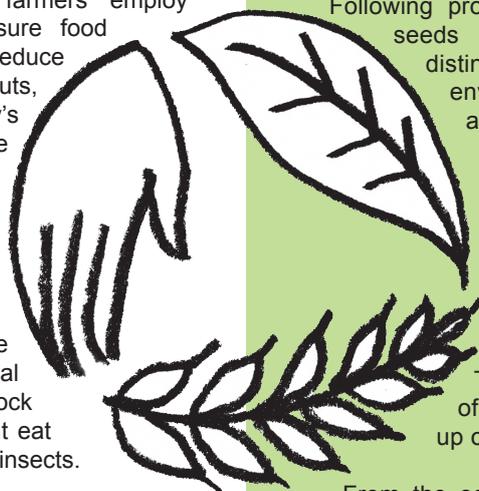
Following processes of migration these original local seeds were moved to other territories with distinct ecosystems, climatic conditions and environments. Once again it was the peasants and farmers of these territories who had the ability to adapt and reproduce these seeds. This gives rise to the term "criole seeds" which are distinguished from "native seeds" by just this process of adaptation.

It is calculated that human beings had about 6000 types of domesticated vegetables suitable for consumption. Today we use only about 200 of those and of these 12 are the basic crops which make up our main diet.

From the second decade of the last century central countries<sup>1</sup> began to impose the model of the green revolution internationally, with technological packages including industrial and transgenic seeds with their associated agrochemicals among other things. Hunger was never tackled seriously and the economic, social and environmental costs were huge. However, it is possible to slow and even reverse the advance of large scale industrial agriculture driven by agribusinesses and supported by huge transnational corporations. In Uruguay in the Native and Criole Seed Network we are marking the path in demonstrating that the majority of native and criole genetic materials continue in the hands of peasant and farming families who continue to conserve and utilise them through the generations to feed their people.

However we are speaking now of Food Sovereignty and all of us agree it is a right, but the exercising of that right is not only the task of those who produce food. Today all of us, regardless of the role we occupy in society, have to commit to the struggle to defend food sovereignty. Nor are we alone – across the world millions of peasants, farmers and communities are doing the same. As long as a farmer exists who has a seed, and who is willing to struggle for land to plant it, and for water to water it, the perpetual nature of life is guaranteed.

1 - Central countries vs those in the periphery



# Agroecology in practice 3

## A real solution to the agrarian crisis in India

### Zero Budget Natural Farming in India

Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is both a set of agroecological practices and a grassroots peasant movement in India, especially Karnataka, where some 100,000 peasants participate. This has been achieved without funding, as ZBNF inspires a spirit of volunteerism among its peasant members, who are the protagonists of the movement. The word 'budget' refers to credit and expenses, thus the phrase 'Zero Budget' means without using any credit, and natural farming means with Nature. The movement was born out of collaboration between Subhash Palekar, an agricultural scientist who put together the ZBNF 'toolkit' of practices, and the state farmers association of Karnataka (KRRS), a member of La Via Campesina (LVC).

There is an agrarian crisis in India, with farmers reeling under debt due to expensive inputs, poor market prices, and faulty policies. More than a quarter of a million farmers have committed suicide in the last two decades. Various studies have linked these suicides to debt. Under such conditions, 'zero budget' farming promises to end a reliance on loans and drastically cut production costs. ZBNF farmers who have given up chemical monocultures to practice ZBNF, say they now produce way more with virtually no cash outlays.

The key practices of ZBNF include: Jivamruta- a microbial culture made of cow urine, dung, pulse flour, raw sugar and a handful of soil; a similar seed treatment called Bijamruta; intensive mulching and cover crops; and regulation of moisture. ZBNF requires less than half the water of conventional farming, and is apt for arid areas. There are a host of other principles like intercropping, local earthworms, indigenous cows, bunds, and ecological pest management.

At the local level, the movement has a self-organized dynamic and runs in an informal way. Most practicing ZBNF farmers are loosely connected to each other and carry out both organized and spontaneous farmer-to-farmer exchange activities and other pedagogical activities. The main centrally organized activities at the state level are massive and intensive training camps, taught by Palekar, with an attendance that ranges from 300 to 5000 farmers and last up to five days.

*"In ZBNF our expenses are very low. It doesn't matter what the yield is, I still make a profit because my costs are negligible. Plus I've added intercrops to this, so I get income from many crops, not just one. Yield is not an important concept for us."* — Belgaum a ZBNF farmer

# Agroecology in practice 4

## Building the Community Supported Agriculture movement in Europe

### Urgenci Europe

We are building the Community Supported Agriculture movement in Europe. We are working to develop the joint pillars of food sovereignty and solidarity economy.

With a very rapidly growing movement, there was an increasing need to build a common narrative, so we started a year-long process to develop a shared Declaration for all the Urgenci members throughout Europe. And as the recent European survey of CSAs shows, there are almost a million CSA members right across all European countries, so this was a big challenge. Not all countries or members were involved, but it was a participatory and collectively owned process from the start, and we set out to reach agreement on who we are and what we stand for: a sort of "identity card" of the movement to help us to develop as a whole, and to prevent the corporate capture of the CSA concept.

Box schemes, the Food Assemblies and other "look-alikes" have been springing up and eating into our market. But none of them have the unique characteristic of shared risks and benefits that CSA consumers share with their producers!

The process to build the European Declaration on Community Supported Agriculture reinforced both the European CSA platform and the local and national networks, fostering critical discussions on what we stand for and how to share it widely. The process has also been a way to nurture the future sustainable movement-building process.

The Declaration was adopted by the 3rd European CSA Meeting on 17th September in Ostrava, Czech Republic and it is the best way to take position on behalf of our movement; because if we don't do it, somebody else will!

Since then, it has been hailed with great enthusiasm, not just in Europe, but also in countries around the world. It has been translated into many different languages, and has helped those practicing CSA who are not necessarily Urgenci members to come closer to us. It's still early days, but the Declaration is proving a powerful movement-building tool for us all. And we all feel proud to have been part of this unique process!

You can read the declaration at:

<http://urgenci.net/the-european-csa-declaration-adopted-in-ostrava/>



## box 2 Food Sovereignty takes root in Eastern Europe

The second Nyéléni Europe forum on food sovereignty took place in Cluj-Napoca, Romania from the 26th to the 30th of October and brought together more than 500 participants from 40 European and Central Asia countries.

After five days of discussions, the groundwork has been laid through the planning of multiple actions and strategies to take back and re-localise Europe's food systems. A huge diversity of people were present, including farmers, food and agricultural workers, trade unionists, researchers, activists, fisherfolk, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, consumers, NGOs and human rights defenders.

A major accomplishment of the forum was the convergence of Eastern European and Central Asian organisations/movements, which initiated talks on collective regional strategies and stepped up the coordination of the food sovereignty movement there. The convergence also recognised the Mali declaration on agroecology as the basis for the European region to scale up agroecology in order to achieve food sovereignty.

The process towards the forum started in December 2015, when several organisations throughout Europe gathered in Paris to

discuss the structure and functioning of a new Nyéléni Europe Coordination Committee, which three months later in March 2016 sent out the call for participation in the 2nd forum. The preparation work has been carried out by one full time coordinator and several working groups dealing with fundraising and financial issues, the establishing of a new website and newsletters, the preparation of the agenda and inputs of participants to the content of the forum, as well as the technical work done by COATI to ensure interpretation can happen in nine key languages with 60 volunteer interpreters.

Major part of the preparation of the forum has been the establishment of contacts and delegations in several countries, where neither of the initiators of the process had contacts. The result is a functional list of focal points per country.

The gathering is an important stepping stone for the building of a strong food sovereignty movement in Europe, especially Eastern Europe and important for the dynamics in several other European countries where no platforms exists. It is also a first step towards structuring the movement and giving it visibility with the planning of common actions.



## box 3 Building public policies for Agroecology

The International planning committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) has been involved in the debate instigated by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO) about what public policies can be proposed to help agroecology. In the framework of this process the FAO organized an international symposium on agroecology for food security and nutrition in September of 2014, where it was agreed to decentralise the discussions and conversations through regional symposiums.

In 2015 the FAO, the IPC and a number of governments and academics organized symposiums in Latin America and the Caribbean (June), Sub-Saharan Africa (November) and in Asia and the Pacific (November). Following up on these symposiums in 2016 the regional conference of the FAO analysed the results of the meetings on agroecology and agreed on the following steps at a regional level to promote agroecology. In the last months, two more regional symposiums have been organised, as well as one specifically for and in China. Once again civil society, the FAO, governments and academics will meet in Latin America and the Caribbean (September) and in Europe and Central Asia (November).

In Latin America and the Caribbean a regional agenda of work between different participants and open to others was agreed upon, in order to: make visible the centrality of artisanal fishing and the contribution of agroecological agriculture to it;

formulate and implement policies and legal frameworks for the promotion of agroecology from and to the territories, with social participation; to expand the generation and management of evidence-based knowledge on agroecology, integrating scientific knowledge with indigenous ancestral knowledge and practices from diverse sectors; promote institutional mechanisms for agroecological production and marketing; guarantee popular rights to seeds, water, land and territories; promote agroecology by valuing and respecting life and human rights, highlight the international peasant declaration; suggested the celebration of the International Year of Agroecology.

In Europe and Central Asia, at the proposal of civil society organizations, it was agreed to comprehend Agroecology beyond the technical aspects of production and include social, cultural, political, economic and environmental aspects, from an intersectoral perspective. However, a critical issue is the need for governments, in addition to accepting the positive impacts of agroecology, to implement public policies for its support. The IPC gave a very positive evaluation of the symposium as a good opportunity.

The symposiums continue to generate further opportunities to strengthen the links between the different actors involved in Agroecology.