



Illustration: Carlos Julio Sánchez for LVC.

editorial

grassroots solutions to the global food crisis

In 2008, numerous experts – from peasants to policy makers – warned of a “perfect storm” of crises in the industrial food system. Our movements had already been raising the alarm on growing corporate control, the financialization of food, resource grabbing, economic injustice, and the destruction of the territories of small-scale food producers by large scale commodity agriculture which is deeply dependant on fossil fuels and other mined inputs. Seventeen years later, it is evident that crises are a recurrent phenomenon in the capitalist food system. Intensifying environmental impacts, resource wars and conflicts, rising debt, structural injustices and inequalities are compounding the effects on our peoples.

Food sovereignty remains our answer to the food crisis. Now more than ever, our communities and countries need to focus on agroecological food production. As this edition shows, we have a multitude of praxis and political proposals for solutions, but we need to build up our power to fight the extractive and profit driven corporations from taking over our food system. The food crisis is one aspect of the overarching drivers that are causing overlapping crises of ecological destruction, the re-enforced rise of the patriarchy, and the increasing criminalisation of rights defenders in collusion with capital, who are pervading every aspect of our lives from food to social engagements and our interactions with nature.

Many movements are championing the common cause to challenge the drivers of these multiple, interconnected crises, including demands for climate justice, an end to fossil fuels with responsibility lying first within the historically polluting developed nations and then with elite consumers everywhere, cancellations of illegitimate debt, and rescinding unjust trade investment and tax regimes. Feminist movements are showing us the path towards economies of life and care, intersectional justice and building political power. Anti-racist, decolonial, peace-driven and all anti-oppression movements are showing us new visions of community, reminding us of our ancient practices of togetherness as peasants, women, Indigenous peoples, pastoralists, fishers and workers, and the urgency of solidarity with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Knowing that we must build and strengthen our movements from the ground up, and find cohesion across all regions and peoples facing injustice, we are convening the Nyéléni process 2021 – 2025 to provide spaces for coming together. **We invite all movements to join us¹. Food Sovereignty now!**

AFSA, Focus on the Global South and FoEI

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<https://nyeleni.org/en/get-involved/>

1 - <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/ipc-regional-processes>

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 is the voice of this international movement.**

Organisations involved:

AFSA, ETC Group, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for Food Sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Real World Radio, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, Transnational Institute, VSFJusticia Alimentaria Global, WhyHunger, World Forum of Fisher People, WAMIP.



now is time
for food
sovereignty

in the spotlight 1

Trapped by markets

The world is facing the third global food crisis in the past 50 years which will greatly increase food and economic insecurity for hundreds of millions of people around the world. The recent State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) reports indicate the failure of global efforts to end hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, which have been rising since 2014.

Policy makers attribute this grim reality to the economic downturn from the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating climate change, and the Russian war on Ukraine. The pandemic certainly resulted in an alarming increase in hunger, food insecurity, job and income losses, poverty, and inequality. But the SOFI reports show that world hunger levels were high even before the pandemic struck in 2020. The Russia-Ukraine war has disrupted grain exports and supply chains from the Black Sea region, resulting in soaring prices for grain, energy, fertilizer, and other products. But policy makers are ignoring the roles of commodity markets, agribusiness corporations and financial investors in triggering food price volatility and making our economies vulnerable to recurring food crises.

Central to these recurring crises are market structures, regulations, and trade and finance arrangements that bolster a global corporate dominated industrial food system, and enable market concentration vertically and horizontally, and financial speculation in commodity markets. Over the past decades, finance corporations have invested in commodity production, processing, retailing, agrochemicals digital technology, logistics (transportation and storage) and large-scale land deals, and are increasingly the hidden faces behind land, water and resource grabbing and rural dispossession.

According to Michael Fakhri, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, "... food prices are soaring not because of a problem with supply and demand as such; it is because of price speculation in commodity futures markets."

National responses to the crisis have varied depending on food stocks, production capacities, debt levels, and purchasing power. Low-income food importing countries in face multiple challenges of high indebtedness, depreciating currencies, and insufficient funds and infrastructure to boost the availability of locally produced foods. As the war continues, more countries have restricted exports to meet domestic needs, which though understandable, have further contributed to increased prices of agricultural commodities.

Multilateral responses to the crisis have prioritized the functioning of global supply chains for agricultural commodities and inputs (especially fertilizers) by removing export bans/restrictions and supporting further trade and investment liberalization. No measures have been proposed to stop food speculation, regulate agriculture markets, and deconcentrate agri-food markets from corporate domination.

More info:

- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. 2021. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets. Rome: FAO. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb4474en/online/cb4474en.html>
- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. 2022. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable. Rome: FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0640en>
- UN Security Council Aria-Formula Meeting on Conflict and Hunger. UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Michael Fakhri. 21 April 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/UNSC-Aria-Hunger-Conflict.pdf>
- The Global Food Crisis, this Time: <https://focusweb.org/globalfoodcrisis2022/>
- Is the Global Value Chain Breaking up: <https://focusweb.org/is-the-global-value-chain-breaking-up-the-perfect-storm-and-the-crisis-of-capitalist-agriculture/>
- Pro-corporate Multilateralism and Food Insecurity: <https://focusweb.org/pro-corporate-multilateralism-and-food-insecurity/>

in the spotlight 2

Five real solutions to the food crisis in Africa

When the first Europeans landed on African shores, the seed of the food crisis was sown. Tens of millions of Africans were taken to process commodity products, primarily sugar, in the Caribbean. Before Europeans arrived, Africa had a well governed, thriving socio-economic and food system. Under colonialism, the focus shifted to extracting African raw materials to fuel Europe's industrialization. This reduced Africa to producing a few export commodities, preventing the diversification of agricultural systems geared toward local development and regional markets. Since independence, internal mechanisms for self-organization and growth have been hampered by debt incurred through donor-led investment, IMF structural adjustment programs, and increased reliance on external resources, including food.

COVID and the Russia-Ukraine war exacerbated Africa's food crisis. The cost of food, agricultural inputs, and fuel has rocketed. How will Africa get out of this quagmire? How can Africa produce enough nutritious, healthy food while preserving its food culture and ensuring justice in its food system without negatively impacting the environment?

Overcoming the narrative

We must debunk the green revolution narrative, which looks at the African food system only through the prism of productivity. According to this story, the solution is to increase the production of high-calorie foods, primarily three cereals, maize, rice and wheat through increased use of toxic agrochemicals and hybrid/GMO seeds, allocating large land tracts to agribusinesses. Rather than boosting productivity, this harms food security, damages the environment, exacerbates nutrition deficiency, and erodes food cultures and human rights. This must stop!

Embracing agroecology

Multiple research reports and personal field visits to farms managed in harmony with nature -combining local knowledge with cutting-edge science - have demonstrated that it is possible to produce more nutritious food without harming the environment. Agroecology responds to the numerous crises we face on both the human and planetary levels. To avoid disaster, Africa should embrace agroecology.

Debt relief

The debt burden exacerbates hunger and severely restricts agricultural investment in Africa. Only a few countries have committed 10% of their GDP to agriculture. Thirty-three African countries are classified as Least Developed Countries, with the majority heavily in debt. African governments are sinking into debt due to the climate crisis and investing conditional loans in false adaptation solutions. According to the UN, countries could pay an extra USD 168 billion over the next ten years for such adaptation programs. We must advocate for debt relief and restructuring.

Proper food policy

We require continental and national food policy and governance systems that prioritize a healthy and sustainable diet for all. This will ensure policy coherence and establish a governance structure for implementation. The right kind of food policy prioritizes people over profits, combats food dumping, and promotes the growing and consumption of local healthy foods.

Supporting territorial markets and agroecological entrepreneurs

The African landscape is covered in territorial markets. For many small communities, they serve as the economic, cultural, and political centers. These centers must be constructed to promote local cuisine and combat shocks. During COVID 19, many rural communities relied on territorial markets. Along with this, we also need to help the burgeoning agroecological entrepreneurs as they find solutions to the issues of getting healthy food to consumers and providing employment for millions of young people in Africa, the majority of whom are women and girls.

The colonial legacy and elite control of our food system will not go away with a wish. We must organize, define our strategy, and fight for change. The movement must propose solutions, focus on agroecological transition, and demonstrate effectiveness. To tackle the food crisis, the movement must promote healthy food production and consumption.

Only food sovereignty, which promotes self-sufficiency and local control, can assist us in avoiding the impending food catastrophe.

In 2022 a worldwide grassroots consultation on impacts of the food crisis, and proposals from below showed the reality lived by small scale producers and communities around the world who are facing up to and leading responses to the food crisis¹. The findings were stark:

Poverty, price gouging by corporates and market led food provision meant that even if food was available it remained unaffordable for millions. Conflicts, wars and state violence have persisted, and food is being used as a geopolitical weapon. Those countries and populations least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions experienced the impacts of climate change most acutely, with extreme weather events and failed harvests leading to the loss of livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and small-scale food producers. Gender inequalities persist, and so women and LGBTQI people are particularly at risk in times of crises and scarcity. Multiple inequalities often combine discrimination based on class, social privilege, race/ethnicity, caste, gender, occupation, religion and age. The neoliberal food system driven by corporate profit contributes to many of these problems and is also unsuited to solving them.

Instead, largely ignored by the State in crisis responses, grassroots communities of small scale producers and citizens of various marginalised groups came together to provide their own solutions. Based on their praxis, several demands were articulated. Overall, policy responses need to be anchored in a comprehensive human rights approach, recognising the agency of those most affected as rights-holders, and the accountability of governments as duty-bearers.

In the short term movements demand that emergency food aid provision must support local food systems, cultures and initiatives. They must not become another route for corporations to distribute ultra processed

products. Small scale producers must be provided domestically available inputs such as indigenous seeds and bio fertilizers in order to feed their communities. Taxes on huge profits of corporations and on extreme wealth are urgently needed to fund social policies.

In the medium term movements demand regulations to stop food speculation and strengthen the powers of market and financial regulatory authorities. They call for an end to illegitimate debt – highlighting the need to restructure and cancel private and public debts in developing countries. A moratorium on the use and processing of agricultural commodities for non-food purposes, such as agrofuels is crucial.

In the long term we must break food import dependency and support domestic food provisioning, transform food systems through agroecology and implement food sovereignty. This requires governance systems that ensure human rights and democratic multilateralism. Practically, this demands measures to limit corporate power. Trade and investment must be reoriented to serve people and societies, not corporations. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) should be halted, and existing WTO agreements must be dismantled.

There are also myriad positive measures that can put us on a path to these long term goals for example: using public procurement and food reserves effectively; building territorial markets; reviving indigenous crops and breeds; integral and popular agrarian reform and commitment to implement the UN declaration on the right of peasants and people in rural areas and the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Overall, we need more democratic control over food systems at all levels.

1 - More info and full report at <https://www.csm4cfs.org/voices-from-the-ground-transformative-solutions-to-the-global-systemic-food-crises/>

voices from the field 1

From crisis to Agroecology - Ferdinand Wafula, Bio Gardening Innovations (BIOGI), Kenya.

Western Kenyan smallholder farmers must change due to global upheavals. George and Violet are among thousands of families in Khwisero, Kakamega County, changing their farming methods. Due to COVID-19, George lost his job as many businesses closed. George moved his family from Nairobi two years ago. He was a painter promoting a company's products during the pandemic. Violet, his wife, thought it was good riddance because she would have more muscle to till the land.

Working on the land with his wife had its own challenges and thrills to George. Failed rains, late planting, and sharp price increases in basic commodities, especially farm inputs, hit George like thunder. Maize was no longer a staple crop. Crop yields had been falling. A young family with school-aged children couldn't survive with three bags instead of six. Violet was quick to learn about a nature-friendly farming training from her peers. In 2021, BIOGI trained her as a trainer. Vihiga-based NGO BIOGI works in Kakamega's Khwisero Subcounty.

Crop diversity, livestock integration, and soil fertility through bio inputs sank like water on fertile ground, and new seeds of hope sprouted. Her farm has several local crops. Sweet potatoes, cassava, local green vegetables, groundnuts, and bananas are some of them. "I no longer stress about inputs," she says. I make biostimulants and use sweet potatoes and ground nuts to supplement, if not replace, maize." BIOGI and AFSA's training was adopted by the family early on. The Healthy Soils Healthy Food Project is being implemented across the farm. The family thanks the initiative's supporters and hopes to learn more through future interactions and training.

voices from the field 2

Cuban agroecology and resilience to hurricanes

The Farmer to Farmer Agroecology Movement (MACAC) is a grassroots movement inside of the Cuban National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), which is a member of the international peasant movement, La Via Campesina. In it, campesino (peasant farmer) members of ANAP have been transforming their productive systems by applying the principals of agroecology since 1997.



Revolutionary resilience

"On an agroecological farm, if one thing doesn't make it, another one will. There's always something to eat. It doesn't matter what happens." — Nini, agroecological farmer and member of ANAP.

Due to Cuba's geography, it is susceptible to declines in agricultural production as a result of constant natural disasters. The greater biological and human resilience of agroecological systems to the effects of climate change is, without a doubt, an important factor to the success of MACAC.

Over the years, Cuban farmers have witnessed the benefits of agroecology in the face of hurricanes: farms with a greater level of agroecological integration have suffered less in the face of such phenomena. This may be partially explained by the fact that agroecological systems suffer less from erosion and landslides due to greater implementation of soil conservation practices (contour planting, gully control, greater use of cover crops, etc.). Fewer crops are lost when multiple strata of vegetation exist. Aside from the fact that agroecological farm losses in the face of hurricanes (unlike those of conventional monoculture) are not total, farms with greater levels of agroecological integration recover much more quickly.

The increase in food prices in the international market, as well as the price of inputs indispensable to conventional agriculture, obliges us to consider an alternative model which creates less dependency. Agroecology and MACAC offer the path to food sovereignty in Cuba - assuring greater resilience in the face of climatic adversities; restoration of soils degraded by intensive agrochemical use; and healthy food - while also providing an example, source of ideas, and inspiration for other countries.

More info: <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/es/c/429742/>

box 2 Our future is public!

From 29th November to 2nd December over a thousand representatives from over one hundred countries, from grassroots movements, advocacy, human rights, and development organisations, feminist movements, trade unions, and other civil society organisations, met in December 2022 in Santiago, Chile, and virtually, to discuss the critical role of public services for our future¹. Hundreds of organisations across socio-economic justice and public services sectors, from education and health services, to care, energy, food, housing, water, transportation and social protection, came together to address the harmful effects of commercialising public services, to reclaim democratic public control, and to reimagine a truly equal and human rights oriented economy that works for people and the planet.

For the first time since this process started some 5 years ago, food was part of this conversation. Since food is not a public service, we explored in this sectoral dialogue the connections between public services and the public policies needed to realize the right to food. Likewise, our dialogue touched upon understanding what we mean when reclaiming the public and how to democratize the economy through the strengthening of the agroecological transition.

In our conclusions, we highlighted that food is so essential for our survival and well-being, that it must be at the

centre of public policies and services. Food is inextricably intertwined with health, care, education, work, transport, water, climate, political agency and participatory democracy. Food must be prioritized as a human right, within the framework of a comprehensive, complex and interdependent understanding of human rights, where it is essential to include the rights of all small-scale food producers, workers, and women, including collective rights and the right to food sovereignty. Food systems are the vehicle for the continued reproduction of living cycles, making human health indivisible from the sound ecological foundations of Mother Earth.

There was a strong call to unite across sectors, regions and movements to formulate common strategies and new alliances to realise food sovereignty, transition to agroecology across the world, and ensure that the rights of all actors involved in food systems are respected. In particular, we talked about the role of agrarian reform in agroecological transitions, the importance of the care dimension in food systems, the role of public food procurement for public institutions (schools, hospitals, prisons, etc) and the need to strengthen and better coordinate our existing campaigns against agrotoxics.

1 - Read "Our Future is Public: the Santiago Declaration for Public Services", <https://peopleoverprof.it/resources/news/santiago-declaration?lang=en&id=13578>



3 The Food Box Initiative: rebuilding female-led food systems in Gaza

Gaza Urban and Peri Urban Platform (GUPAP) and Urban Women Agripreneurs Platform (UWAF), Palestine.

In the Gaza Strip, GUPAP supported the formation of the Urban Women Agripreneurs Platform (UWAF) in 2019 to unite and empower women agricultural producers and workers, and build an independent, resilient food system for all Palestinians. In the protracted crisis context of Gaza, food insecurity and restricted access to quality land, seeds and breeds, and to water and the sea has resulted in a decline in self-sufficiency, exacerbating the vulnerability of local communities to hunger. GUPAP-UWAF strategies have focused on reducing dependency on international markets, promoting/using what is locally available, decreasing the ecological footprint of food production and distribution, and rebuilding women owned farms.

An important initiative was raising funds through crowdfunding to buy local food from 52 women farmers whose livelihoods were destroyed in the May 2021 bombings, and distributing this food to vulnerable women facing social and health related crises through food box that included grains, fresh produce, preserved, and medicinal foods. This initiative was supported by local non-governmental organisations and the Ministry of Agriculture in identifying beneficiaries, inspecting food items for quality control and distributing the food boxes.

The Food Box action was a community-based approach that was owned and led by women. It supported 52 women farmers by marketing their products at fair prices, and 473 women and their families facing particular vulnerable conditions. Equally important, the initiative shows how solidarity across small-scale food producers, entrepreneurs, local governments and people can be operationalised to design local solutions in a situation of protracted crisis that Gaza has been facing.

This testimony is drawn from the report: *Solidarity marketing campaign to enhance resilience of UWAF members in the Gaza strip*, <https://nyeleni.org/DOWNLOADS/newsletters/Women%20Restoring%20their%20Farms.pdf>

4 How are small-scale farmers in Sri Lanka dealing with the food crisis?

S.M.N. Maheshika Premachandra, Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR), Sri Lanka.

As Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis in decades; around 30% of Sri Lankans are coping with food insecurity, and one out of four are and one out of four are skipping meals regularly. While the rest of the country is struggling with food accessibility and therefore a nutritional diet, rural smallholder farmers were quite able to fulfil their food based needs in their households thanks to being who they are.

In Sri Lanka, close to 1.65 million smallholder farmers are responsible for 80% of total food production. An estimated 40% of households in the country are agricultural households, 94% of which are engaged in crop production activities and 12% in livestock farming. In rural Sri Lanka, not only the farmers were able to feed their families, also those who around them were able to share or buy fresh produce from the farmers. Their way of farming was not heavily affected by the chemical fertilizer or pesticides shortage; in fact, they were able to explore and expand more in to natural farming methods with growing demand of food in the near markets and them being more experienced to farm with out chemicals. However, rural and urban households are depleting their savings or using credit to buy other dry-essentials due to increasing market prices.

However, In the "farming estates sector" which includes tea plantations and other similar "estates," more than half of households live with food insecurity as they have been for years. These households are worse off than urban populations and other rural residents. Most of the estate communities in up country don't possess land to cultivate: don't have enough room to even plant a small chili tree. Most young women in the estate households are compelled to seek job opportunities as house maids in middle east; in fact, significant portion of the work-related migration during the first quarter of this year, comes from estate communities.

