

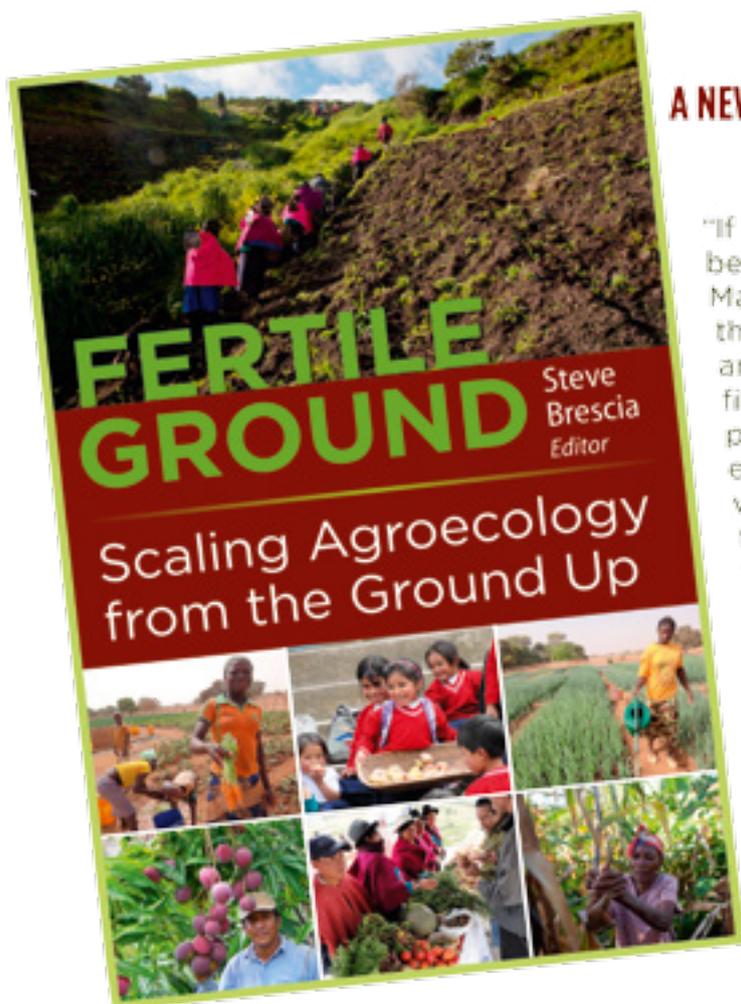
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— Raj Patel, activist, academic, writer, *Stuffed and Starved* (2007)

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Educating peasant youth to defend their freedom

I was born in Los Leones, a small community in the province of Mendoza, Argentina, about 300 km from Mendoza's capital. The 15 families that form our community have lived there for generations. We raise goats, sheep, cows and horses, make cheese and produce fruits and vegetables. We do all the work ourselves and we share our land communally. Our production is for self-consumption and to sell in local markets at a fair price. For us, this is food sovereignty.

We used to live a quiet life, but in late 2006 some businessmen showed up bearing forged property titles and saying they owned our land. They had an eviction order for our animals, and a machine with which they intended to loot the fields that sustained our lives. Those were difficult moments. Where peace once reigned, everything seemed to crumble down. After asking for help in various places, the National Movement of Indigenous Peasants of Argentina informed us about our right to our lands and territories. They helped us to organise ourselves, and to resist. We joined the Union of Landless Rural Workers of Mendoza (UST) and we managed to free the land from the barbed wire fences and won the court cases.

In 2010, we started to visit other organised communities. As a movement of landless workers, we realised that we needed a school that would prepare us for resistance in the countryside. The school I went to, for example, was 60 km away from our community. Students live there and only return home two or three times a year. Most young people of Los Leones only finished primary school, and those who completed their secondary education never went back to work on the fields.

Some communities didn't want a school. They said, "What do you want a school for? Schools are only good for taking people off of the land." This made us think about the type of school we wanted and to consider the kind of education our students needed.



Photo: Marta Greco

Belén Arenas (belenarenas213@gmail.com) is a young peasant from the department of San Rafael Mendoza, Argentina. She is a member of the Union of Landless Rural Workers of Mendoza and the National Movement of Indigenous Peasants of Argentina.

We started our first school in 2011. We alternated one week of lesson attendance per month with three weeks back in our communities. Being back at our communities allowed us to continue with our tasks and helped to prevent uprooting, because both the family and the community were also part of the school.

We teach what we know because we want education to be a tool that gives us a voice in the conflicts that affect us. We want an education that helps us to generate our own livelihoods. We want our youth to have the right to work on the land, to maintain our culture and live a dignified life.

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This issue of Farming Matters was produced in collaboration with the Nyéléni Europe movement.



Photo: Nyéléni Europe 2016

Food sovereignty from the ground up

Worldwide, the food sovereignty movement is taking root. The multitude of new food sovereignty initiatives speak to its strength as a concept, and as a source of practical responses to today's problematic food and farming system. The stories in this issue of *Farming Matters* address interwoven issues of food sovereignty related to production, processing, trade and consumption. Together they highlight the value of tackling policy at multiple levels while at the same time taking practice into your own hands.

Adam Payne, Stanka Becheva and the ILEIA team

In the last 30 years, more and more people are defending and promoting the right to control their own food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries systems, and the policies that affect those systems. 'Food sovereignty' is a term that encapsulates these efforts, and that has catalysed these social movements. It entails people's control of natural resources and markets, including access to land, seeds and water, as well as fair prices for small scale producers. Food sovereignty holds the wellbeing and local knowledge of producers and consumers at the centre of food practices and policy. Importantly, it stipulates the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food, and values environmentally respectful production practices.

Food sovereignty is fundamentally different from food security. Food security vouches for the provision of sufficient food to feed a population, and access to that food through market mechanisms. However, food security does not necessarily include a consideration for where food comes from, the quality or type of food, or the conditions under which it is produced and distributed, including aspects of human rights. Food sovereignty does.

A brief history of food sovereignty

The principle of food sovereignty was first launched by La Via Campesina – an international peasants movement – in 1996 during the FAO World Food Summit which took place in Rome. This

Small scale food producers and citizens are leading with initiatives that build food sovereignty. Photo: Diana Quiroz



occurred at the same time as the first global coordination of food producers and civil society organisations was created (called International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty - IPC). In 2007, an alliance of social movements representing peasants and family farmers, artisanal fisher folk, indigenous peoples, landless peoples, rural workers, migrants, pastoralists, forest communities, women, youth, consumers, environmental and urban movements gathered in Mali to build a common understanding of food sovereignty, and to strengthen the global movement.

A matter of power The importance of the global food sovereignty movement is growing as agribusiness gains economic and political power, and as industrial agriculture dominates world food production and consumption. This system has been supported and shaped by trade deals and international policy. Liberalised agricultural markets have benefited a small number of very large transnational companies who now dominate the supply of seeds, agrochemicals, processing, logistics and even food production. The mergers of Dow Chemical with DuPont, Syngenta with ChemChina, and if allowed, Monsanto with Bayer AG, will result in three companies controlling around 70% of the world's agrochemicals and more than 60% of commercial seeds.

Everyday change This concentration of power undermines the livelihoods of small scale farmers and producers across the supply chain, and moves those who do not farm ever further away from the sources of the food they eat. Industrialised food creates both a physical and a social distance between the consumer and the farmer. Nevertheless, as this issue of Farming Matters clearly demonstrates, change is occurring through the everyday practices and the powerful and diverse actions led by small scale food producers and (urban) citizens around the world (page 43).

More people around the world are starting to appreciate the role of food producers in society, and seek more direct relationships with them. Initiatives that support farmers' markets, create community supported agriculture, seek the involvement of chefs and establish public purchasing arrangements are popping up everywhere. This issue describes several such experiences: for example how a fisherperson in the Faroes Islands organises to sell his fish directly to consumers (page 18), and how agricultural workers in Italy fight for dignified living and working conditions (page 28).

Peasant farming versus industrial farming

Peasant and small scale agriculture is an integral part of food sovereignty and nutrition. According to the FAO, peasant agriculture provides around 70% of the food consumed globally, including the food consumed by the majority of those suffering from extreme hunger and malnutrition. Furthermore, it produces this food with just 30% of the resources and inputs used in agriculture. It uses around 20% of fossil fuels and 30% of water and is based on an enormous genetic diversity, using around 8000 livestock breeds and millions of plant varieties. Globally there are an estimated 1.5 billion peasant farmers, 800 million urban gardeners, 410 million people relying on forests or savannas as a primary source of food, 190 million pastoralists and over 100 million peasant fishers.

This is in stark contrast to industrial agriculture, which accounts for only 15% of the food that is traded internationally, but accounts for more than 80% of the fossil fuels and 70% of the water used in agriculture. It also uses a narrow genetic base of less than 100 livestock breeds and 150 plant specials. Nevertheless, the industrial agriculture sector benefits from the vast majority of funded research. 96% of all recorded food and agricultural research takes place in industrialised countries and 80% of that research is focused on industrial food processing and retailing.

Source: http://www.etcgroup.org/sites/www.etcgroup.org/files/web_who_will_feed_us_with_notes_0.pdf



Food sovereignty is uniting actors in a variety of contexts, including struggles to maintain urban food production (see article on page 21)

Photo: Uygur Bulut

Food sovereignty in policy

Around the world, food sovereignty has been adopted as a political framework at the national level. In 2008, Ecuador was the first country to instate food sovereignty in its constitution, although its implementation is flawed (page 44). Since then, other countries have followed including Senegal, Mali, Bolivia, Nepal, Venezuela, and most recently Egypt (2014). As the first country on the European continent, Switzerland is on its way to bring food sovereignty into national legislation (see story on page 36).

Important change is also happening in international policy making around food and farming. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of national food security is one such example (see story on page 24). The food sovereignty movement, through the IPC, had a leading role in reforming the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). They did this by establishing the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) in 2009 a unique, autonomous and self-organised space for inclusive civil society participation in global governance of food security and nutrition. The Declaration on the Rights of Peasant Men and Women and Other People Living in Rural Areas is another breakthrough as an international human rights instrument to protect peasant food production. After 15 years of work, the declaration is close to being adopted by the UN. While these are very important steps, the meaningful implementation and use of these policies and frameworks by (sub)national governments remains a challenge and will continue to need monitoring and pressure.

Grassroots responses The great significance of food sovereignty as a concept is that it has been developed and driven by the organisations of peasants and small scale food producers. Because of this, it is a self-organised, grassroots response to the dynamics of the global food system. In this issue of Farming Matters we show how in Korea women's groups are fighting to keep their own seed (page 32), in Zimbabwe schools are turning their yards into edible forests (page 40), and in Brazil farmers are working with nature aiming to live in an autonomous, sustainable way (page 10). The latter story is a good illustration of how agroecology is a means of reaching food sovereignty. In our special section on Europe we show how urban dwellers in Turkey are organising around local food in a violent context through a struggle to keep urban gardens alive (page 21), and how the food sovereignty movement in Eastern Europe is providing alternatives to supermarkets with food hubs and co-ops (page 26).

All these initiatives shorten food chains and create new alliances between producers and consumers. Moreover, these initiatives are founded on principles of environmental and social responsibility. Clearly, people around the world are starting to understand the multiple benefits of adopting responsible food production and distribution practices, forming a major force for change.

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An initiative from Zimbabwe on page 40 shows that you can never be too young to build food sovereignty. Photo: Charles Mucherera



Currently, we live in a world of extremes in the global food system. On one hand, there are the politics of the capitalist system, of those who control the world and just want to make business at our expense. They perpetuate the vision of food security in which a few big corporations produce all the food that we are expected to buy and eat. One of the problems with this situation is that we do not know the origin of those foods, how they are produced and processed, and whether or not they are genetically modified.

On the other hand, there are the people, us. We are the peasants. We embody food sovereignty. The word sovereignty is another word for freedom. And food sovereignty means having control of our peasant seeds, the seeds that we ourselves have selected, planted and harvested for generations. It means producing the food that we know, and owning this knowledge.

But there are a few obstacles that stand in the way of our freedom. The first one has to do with the politics of international trade and economic globalisation, which promote the vision of food security. We peasants produce for ourselves but we also sell on the market. Yet legislation created by the World Trade Organization favours large corporations and blocks the access to markets for peasants. It is this type of policy that turn us from producers into buyers of food.

Another obstacle is war. And war is a situation created by a few politicians, but in which we all lose. Through war we lose our land and our homes which we have struggled to build. Through war we lose our animals and we lose access to the waters where we fish. We must find a solution to war, but cannot do this alone.

Therefore, we need to join forces in order to achieve our vision of food sovereignty. All over the world, civil society is increasingly supporting agroecology and food sovereignty. People are also fighting for control over natural resources and sustainable management of the environment. There is still a long way to go. In Africa, we face repression and land grabbing, and in Europe people face difficulties accessing land and lack of political willingness.

Nonetheless, we move forward. Meetings like the Nyéléni forum on food sovereignty offer a space of convergence where we can discuss how to achieve this vision. When everybody commits to the cause, we can achieve a lot.

Massa Koné (kmassa26@gmail.com) is secretary general of the Union of Associations and Coordination of Associations for the Development and Defence of the Rights of the Deprived (UACDDDD) and spokesperson of the Malian Convergence Against Land Grabbing.



Photo: Diana Quiroz

Peasants embody food sovereignty



Agroecology for food sovereignty

In what ways is agroecology a means to food sovereignty? In Brazil, claiming land rights was the first step along one group of farmers' pathway to autonomy. The next was to develop and maintain agroecological practices. To achieve this goal, these farmers never worked alone. Strong self-organisation and long-lasting partnerships enabled them to redesign their farming system and set up alternative markets that value their produce and way of life.

Leonardo van den Berg, Irene Cardoso, Margriet Goris, Izabel Maria Botelho, Heitor Mancini Teixeira

Trees in flower with brilliant red, white and yellow canopies shade a group of farmers picking coffee beans. Four oxen peacefully pull a wagon filled with coffee, potatoes and beans over the hilly slopes. On the veranda of a house, two women scrape the peel from the cassava tubers that they just harvested and toss it aside for the goats to feast on. These sounds softly echo in the green valley, giving a sensation of remote, isolated tranquillity. It seems as if time has stood still and people's lives have gone unchanged for generations. This is far from the truth. This place, in the Zona da Mata in Minas Gerais, Brazil, is marked by a continuous fight against soil degradation, dependencies on external inputs, and exploitation by landlords, multinational traders and chemical manufacturers. It is a struggle for autonomy. By establishing control over land and re-designing food and farming systems farmers are moving towards food sovereignty.

Land sovereignty One of the villages in the Zona da Mata that moved towards food sovereignty is Araçuaia. In the past, many farmers in Araçuaia had no land and worked in sharecropping arrangements to produce coffee. They did all the work for only part of the harvest, at the whim of the landlord. They had no say over what to cultivate or how to cultivate the land. From the 1970s onwards, landlords began to implement many of the principles and technologies of the Green Revolution. As a result, sharecroppers were obliged to use agro-toxins, forbidden to grow food crops, and had to weed the land until it was bare.

Things changed in the 1980s when neighbouring families organised themselves in small dynamic groups, each composed of five to 20 families called the Comunidades Eclesiais de Base (CEBs, Basic

Ecclesial Communities) These families would meet to pray and sing, and engage in politically-oriented readings of the Bible. The CEBs were linked to the broader Liberation Theology movement that was occurring within the Catholic Church throughout Latin America at that time.

“So, we were on our own land; we had all the freedom but no harvest”

Farmer showing soil rich in organic matter built up with agroecological farming practices.

Photo: Margriet Goris



During these discussions, sharecrop farmers began to challenge the status quo. They founded the Arapongan Rural Workers Union to protect the rights of sharecroppers and rural workers. At the same time, farmers affirmed that autonomy could not be attained in a sharecropping arrangement, but only as landowners. This marked the beginning of the Arapongan Joint Land Conquest Movement. Mediated by the union, farmers formed groups and pooled their resources to collectively buy land. They set up lending schemes through which group members could borrow money from other members. Between 1989 and 2010 more than 700 hectares were purchased by more than 150 families. This also led to the return of Arapongans who had migrated to the slums of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Drawn by the movement's successes, they came back to Araponga to purchase land and make a living as farmers.

The movement for Alternative Agriculture Nevertheless, while having control over land, the settlers soon found that this did not bring the autonomy they had envisaged. Green Revolution practices had become the default mode of farming in the region. Such practices, including mono-cropping, specialisation in coffee and ploughing, were leading to land degradation and resulting in yield declines. "So, we were on our own land. We had all the freedom but no harvest," says João, one of the farmers in the region. The increasing prices of chemical fertilizers on one hand, and of the food in stores on the other squeezed farmers' income even further. Farmers knew they had to free themselves from the chains of the Green Revolution. But how?

At the time, the Green Revolution started to meet resistance from other sides. Brazil was undergoing a process of re-democratisation. Now that self-organisation was no longer banned, a new generation of civil society organisations was flourishing, including the growing movement for Alternative Agriculture, later coined agroecology.

At the Federal University of Viçosa, located near Araponga, alternative agriculture was also gaining ground. A group of recent graduates approached farmers about working together, and in 1988, the Centre of Alternative Technologies of the Zona da Mata (CTA-ZM) was founded, together with 13 rural worker unions in the region. This moment also marked the birth of new partnership in the Zona da Mata: between the CTA-ZM, the Federal University of Viçosa and numerous peasant organisations, including the Arapongan farmers' union. The alliance proved important in terms of acquiring support, obtaining legitimacy, fostering experimentation and learning, and stimulating innovation.

Farmers began to cultivate a higher diversity of food crops and fruits

Nested markets The joint experimentation and learning, which involved farmers, researchers and NGO staff, resulted in various novel agroecological farming practices. Selective weeding, cover cropping, use of leguminous plants, and intercropping of trees in between coffee amongst other practices effectively reversed processes of land degradation and enabled farmers to cultivate a greater diversity of crops with higher yields. Agroforestry systems were also developed. Many farmers began, for instance, to plant leguminous trees, which tap nitrogen from the air, and trees that host mycorrhiza which capture tightly bound phosphorus in the soil, in between the coffee plants. These, and other practices, allowed them to reduce, or even completely stop, applying chemical fertilizers.

And there were more experiments. Farmers began to cultivate more and a higher diversity of food crops (e.g. cassava, maize, beans and vegetables) and fruits (e.g. mango, avocado, banana and papaya). Some of these were cultivated as part of an agroforestry system. Soon, food processing started. For example, sugar cane was processed into raw sugar, avocado into soap, milk into cheese and maize and cassava into flour. Farmers' diets gradually improved and they became much less dependent on purchased food. As one farmer said: "In the time of my father's generation we experienced no hunger, but we did not have the variety of food that we have now."

Many of these farmers nowadays produce a surplus of food. Together with CTA and UFV, they created so called 'nested markets'. These are local markets that are governed by farmers' and citizens' own values, where farmers can sell their surplus. A farmer shop was established in the centre of the town of Araponga and an open farmers' market is now organised every week. Market networks where farmers could sell directly to citizens in the larger city of Viçosa were also set up. Urban people value these markets because products are fresh, free from pesticides, and inexpensive. One farmer said, "we did not know that the people in Araponga ate so many bananas." Urban citizens in Araponga used to buy bananas from external markets.



A farmer shop was set up in the centre of Araponga.

Photo: Leonardo van den Berg

A way of life Today, the agroecology alliance continues to struggle against corporate control over production and consumption by strengthening and creating nested markets, and by fostering innovation and exchange between farmers, researchers and activists. They work in Araponga and many other municipalities in the Zona da Mata. Together with other movements, united under the National Agroecology Articulation (ANA), they run awareness raising campaigns. They also advocate for public policies that reward farmers who produce environ-

mental or social benefits for society and call for regulations that put limits on agro-industry and their destructive effects on public health, the environment and the farming community.

In Araponga, moving towards food sovereignty was a two-pronged process of gaining control over land and redesigning farming to be independent from dominant markets and technologies. It was through self-organisation, the pooling of resources, forging partnerships with other organisations and (re)connecting with nature that, a seemingly powerless group of sharecroppers took the food and farming system into their own hands. They gained the capacity to re-establish control over, and re-design these systems. Crucial in this process was the establishment of an institutional environment that protected farmers from external interests, that enabled them to experiment and innovate with agroecology and that guarded the peace, nature, and ways of life that flourish in the Arapongan countryside.

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A new patch of coffee in an agroforestry system including bananas. Photo: Magriet Goris





“Food sovereignty is about peasants’ rights”

Ramona Duminicioiu is a member of Eco Ruralis, a peasant association in Romania. In this interview, Ramona explains why the food sovereignty movement is not only about food, and why defending the peasant way of life is in the interest of society as a whole.

Interview: Tomáš Uhnák

What is the Nyéléni movement?

Nyéleni is the name of a Malian woman. She was a legendary peasant who farmed, fed and cared for her people. Her actions embodied food sovereignty and inspired the world. And so we celebrate her heritage in the food sovereignty movement through her namesake.

The movement’s first gathering was organised in 2007 in Sélingué, Mali, Africa. Besides strengthening the movements’ political power, the forum’s participants sought to further develop the concept of food sovereignty as an alternative policy framework for food and agriculture. Their vision was articulated in the

final declaration of the Nyéléni forum on food sovereignty (see box). This declaration served as inspiration for other regions and continents to organise around food sovereignty. Nyéléni forums are important events that unite the food sovereignty movement. At these gatherings we create plans and strategies for actions to counteract problems that we find and define together. Moreover, we strengthen networks to support each other in what works.

The forums are not just one-off events, they are part of a process that builds on previous forums. In 2011 for example, the first European food sovereignty forum was held in Krems, Austria. It gathered all the

constituencies that had been working on food sovereignty in the region. There were food producers, peasants, pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous people, urban gardeners, researchers, organised consumers, and generally people that have knowledge and interest in building a better future for food and agriculture. A European declaration of food sovereignty was created, and based on that declaration we started planning actions together. Five years later, civil society and peasants from La Via Campesina decided to organise another forum. This latest Nyéléni forum took place in 2016 in Romania. More than 40 organisations, including Eco Ruralis, were involved in preparations for the gathering.

What is the importance of the food sovereignty movement for peasants? Food sovereignty is a concept that refers to peasant and human rights to food, to choose their food, to produce food, and to shape policies that govern food and agriculture in their regions.

At the moment we feel that decision makers are very far from the reality, problems and difficulties that peasants are confronted with. Peasants are on the frontline of climate change issues and are the first ones to come up with solutions. They are the biggest investors in agriculture, yet nobody recognises this. They are producing and maintaining common goods by administrating land and natural resources in sustainable ways. They are the backbone of society and they deserve to be put in the centre of decision-making.

“Peasants are the backbone of society and they deserve to be put in the centre of decision-making”

This is why peasants all around the world needed to create a common strategy and common political framework. We defined it as food sovereignty. It's not a concept that refers to borders and stipulates that we should produce food only for our own region or country. It's not a nationalistic concept, it's something broader and more profound. It truly refers to human, and particularly peasant rights.

What are some of the campaigns that you have been involved in at Eco Ruralis? Eco Ruralis was founded in 2009 by a group of peasants from around the country who felt the need to have political representation. We couldn't find any allies in the unions, or in other organisations. Our first campaign was on protecting our seeds. This is the most practical and inspirational activity that we have. It is the campaign that really brought us

The Nyéléni Declaration on food sovereignty (2007)

The creation of the Nyéléni declaration has proven to be a critical step in shaping food sovereignty as a policy framework. After La Via Campesina coined the term 'food sovereignty' in 1996, there have been numerous gatherings to co-create a shared vision of the concept. The first Nyéléni forum was particularly significant because of the broad participation of about 600 activists from over 80 countries. The collective understanding of food sovereignty that they achieved is still drawn upon widely today. Key points include:

- The right of all individuals to healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food is at the centre of all food and agriculture policies
- Peasants, farmers, fisher folk, indigenous people, forest dwellers and agricultural workers are valued, recognised and respected for their contribution to food provision
- Local and national economies and markets are prioritised
- Food production, distribution and consumption are based on environmental, social and economic sustainability
- The rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food
- Food providers and consumers are brought closer together to determine food, farming, fishery and pastoral systems.

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



Nine years after the Nyéleáni declaration, in 2016, the second European forum for food sovereignty was held in Romania. Photo: Diana Quiroz

together. We still have a lot of genetic resources in the field, and we wanted to act before it's too late. So we focused on keeping our seeds alive by using, multiplying and redistributing them. We are best known for the seeds which we produce and distribute across the entire country.

Over time we crystallised our vision. We started cooperating with La Via Campesina, and this exposed us to other models of action and organisation with other countries. And so we created two more campaigns. One addresses land issues and the rights to land, and the other is on the rights to markets. Through the land campaign we mostly expose the phenomenon of land grabbing, promote ideas of sustainable rural livelihoods and the rights of people to keep their land in their communities for future generations. Our campaign on markets is just emerging now.

In what way are your campaigns linked to the issue of migration and migrant labour rights?

Many, if not most, of the workers in agriculture in Western Europe come from Eastern Europe. Cheap labour provided by refugees and migrants is one of the reasons our food can be so cheap. EU agricultural and food processing practice is, to a large extent, based on migrant and refugee labour as well. For example, many Romanian peasants end up in

Germany, France, Czech republic, etc. These people very often have their rights violated and they work in absolutely terrible and unfair working conditions.

Land grabbing and the lack of vision from our governments to support peasant farming pose serious threats to the peasant way of life. This, in turn, has many far-reaching implications for society. In contrast to Western Europe, much of the land is still in the hands of family farmers in Eastern Europe. But, Eastern European governments, Romania's included, have an agenda to attract foreign investors and consolidate land. They spend a lot of public money on this and are blatantly pushing peasants to sell or lease their land. In Romania, subsidies taken from the second pillar of the CAP for rural development are used to entice peasants to part with their land. The land value is still relatively low, so it's attracting a lot of investors such as multinational companies, investment funds and banks that only use the land in a destructive and speculative way.

As a result, peasants lose connection with their land. When they are looking for ways to feed their children, with few employment opportunities at home and little hope, they feel they have to go to Western Europe. And because we are a country of peasants, most of the people that go abroad work in agriculture. When doing so, peasants lose even more connection with their home and land. This contin-

ues to perpetuate the process of farmers giving their land away to companies.

What is the role of women in the food sovereignty movement?

It's essential, and we can never do enough work making the role of women for food sovereignty visible. Unfortunately, in the 21st century we still have the essential problem that women's roles and work are always undervalued. Yet, in this movement women are not left behind, on the contrary, the food sovereignty movement honours women. For example, women have a central role in the Nyéléni forums and we impose equal quotas of participation by women and men. This is a fundamental part of our struggle, as we believe that we can only achieve our goals when men and women first, side by side, solve women's rights issues.

Rural feminism is, I would say, an emerging struggle that is gaining shape. I feel that women increasingly come together to share their awareness and insight. With every international meeting women organise special gatherings with impressive participation. Women are putting peasant women in the centre, and others, such as women researchers, are supporting these actions.

Lastly, can you talk about the public comeback of the word peasant in Romania?

Let me tell you a story. In Romania, the word peasant was used in a derogatory way for a long time. A few years ago, the national radio asked a representative from Eco Ruralis to give an interview on a farming issue. When they asked how to present her, we mentioned her name and said, "peasant spokesperson." The radio apologised and told us that pronouncing the word peasant in public spaces is forbidden. 'Peasant' was associated with negativity, with somebody that is poor, uneducated, rude, etc. These negative connotations came from misunderstanding, from a



There are 4.7 million active peasants in Romania.
Photo: Diana Quiroz

lack of connection with people that work on the land.

Nonetheless, we have continued to use the word because we know that there are peasants in our fields. Romania is a country where peasant farming is still alive; we have 4.7 million active peasants representing almost half of the peasants in the European Union. It's an undeniable reality, they produce our food, even though they are not recognised on the market, nor are they recognised and protected by the social laws.

But recently this word has made a public comeback. It's now on the TV, radio and in newspapers – it's almost fashionable now. People have remembered what it means to be a peasant. A recent national opinion poll concluded that people associate the word peasant with honesty, hard work and beautiful people. In Eastern Europe we are in the region of peasants. We are in the region of people that know how to produce food. This is very unique and important. Peasants not only know how to make food, peasants know how to fix things, how to build things, how to take care of animals. They are creators of life and this is essential for the future of society at large.

The 2015 Nyéléni forum held in Mali further articulated the vision of agroecology as a means towards food sovereignty. Photo: Thierry Kesteloot





Building food sovereignty around fresh fish

My name is Finnbjørn Vang. I'm 38 years old and I help my dad run a small fishing business in Klaksvík on the island of Borðoy in the Faroe Islands. We have two boats and we are part of the second smallest vessel group in the Faroese fisheries sector. Compared to larger vessel groups, our methods are less mechanised, and we embody other values than merely seeking an income. We work with a high respect for nature, and we have extensive knowledge of weather and tidal conditions. Our land-based work, for instance in the baiting sheds is, to a large extent, a social activity. It's a place where we meet for coffee, laughs and social life while together we prepare baits and lines for fishing.

One of the main challenges our small vessel groups face is related to the low prices we get at the Faroe Fish Market, which is where fish caught by Faroese vessels has to be sold according to the Faroese fish trading policy. Sometimes, a couple of hours after selling our catch, we find the exact same fish for sale in the Faroese supermarket for eight times the price we sold it for earlier in the day. This has left us confused and wondering.

You can call me an idealist, but I believe it is possible to design a more sustainable and fair system. I am working towards an alternative system where we get a higher price for our fish and where Faroese people simultaneously get easier and more affordable access to fresh, unprocessed local fish. I am working on a proposal where we would sell a portion of our catch directly to Faroese consumers at a fair price. A higher price would also enable us to distribute a part of our catch to local retirement homes and hospitals. That way we could contribute with a culturally meaningful, healthy element to the diet of the sick and elderly in our community.

Although we have to overcome a number of barriers such as trade, health and safety regulations, I am convinced we can work towards this vision. We know that there is a growing interest among Faroese people in direct purchasing of unprocessed fresh fish. A more just and fair deal is important both for us fisher folk and for the consumers.

Interview and photo by **Elisabeth Skarðhamar Olsen** (e.s.olsen@lancaster.ac.uk), a PhD researcher at Lancaster Environment Centre.

Food sovereignty: stories from Europe

Producers and citizens are working together to transform our food systems to make them more socially just, culturally appropriate and respectful of the environment. While shifts in policy are overdue, initiatives to build food sovereignty are popping up all over Europe. This special section highlights a few of these.

Introduction

Agriculture in Europe has long been characterised by a predominance of small scale family farms practicing different forms of peasant agriculture. This model is based on principles of community, diversity, and direct connections with consumers. The current context of land and market concentration has put European agriculture under severe financial and political pressure, but also gives rise to powerful initiatives for food sovereignty.

Squeezing out small scale producers

Europe's small scale farms have shaped many of its characteristic landscapes, provided employment in rural areas, and developed the foods that inspired Europe's culinary diversity. But Europe's farmers are disappearing. Between 2003 and 2013 the European Union lost four million small farms, one third of its total, whilst in most member states, the number of farms of over 100 hectares doubled or even tripled. Although they represent only 3% of European farms, these large farms control 52% of agricultural land. The power of supermarkets is also growing. For example, in 2011 four retailers controlled 85% of the national food market in Germany and three retailers controlled 90% of the food market in Portugal (Nicholson and Young, 2012). National and European policy continue to favour these trends.

These recent trends have major impacts on food producers (including farmers, processors and vendors), consumers and the environment as small scale farmers and fishers are driven from the land and seas. Moreover, Europe is experiencing a massive reduction in agricultural diversity, an increase in labour exploitation in industrial food production and processing, and alarming losses to nature. These shifts are also coupled with unhealthy diets and the associated weight / obesity problems.

Emerging alternatives The growing interest in food sovereignty around Europe can be understood in light of these social and structural changes. New awareness amongst European citizens of the power they have to drive change is expressed in emerging, innovative initiatives of producers and consumers. This awareness also takes the form of policy proposals, such as the recent European declaration on Community Supported Agriculture, promoted by Urgenci and the referendum in Switzerland to establish food sovereignty policy at a national level (see page 36). Furthermore, the European movement for food sovereignty is growing.

A European movement Inspired by the international Nyéléni movement for food sovereignty, a number of European social movements organised a similar process in Europe, seeking space to define actions and strategies to challenge the dominant forces of production and consumption. A major Nyéléni Europe forum took place in October 2016 in Cluj-Napoca, Romania with the presence of 500 delegates from more than 40 countries and 290 organisations. Participants included farmers, fishers, pastoralists, indigenous people, consumers, trade unions, environmental, justice, solidarity, human rights organisations, community-based food movements, journalists and researchers. They shared experiences, built a common understanding of food sovereignty, developed joint actions, and prepared to influence key policies in Europe. Some of the most inspiring food sovereignty experiences in Europe are presented on the following pages.

This section of the magazine was produced in collaboration with the Nyéléni Europe movement, with generous support from Friends of the Earth Europe and Misereor.



Food versus the big city

of Istanbul

Istanbul, like many other cities, is under heavy pressure from urban development projects. In the face of this threat, the DÜRTÜK collective supports small scale farmers in and around Istanbul by organising reliable demand for the produce from urban gardens, and by building a supportive community around them. This initiative not only provides urban residents with local and fairly priced vegetables, but is also a line of defence against the destruction of the city's historic vegetable gardens and a space of action in Istanbul's violent, paralysing atmosphere.

Sevgi Ortaç

Every Monday our collective makes a list of vegetables available from local farmers, sets fair prices, and collects orders from our members. We also talk about the most urgent developments concerning the vegetable gardens, which are under constant threat from urban transformation projects. On Thursdays, we bring the produce to a central district of Istanbul where members can pick up their orders and socialise amongst themselves.

DÜRTÜK is the acronym for Producers and Consumers in Resistance (*Direnen Üretici Tüketici Kolektifi* in Turkish). It also means the poke or the poked, which we consider a modest and fun expression for motivating each other to take action. The DÜRTÜK collective was born in 2015 as common ground between the struggle for urban spaces and the emerging food sovereignty movement in Istanbul.

Finding common ground In 2013, protests erupted all over Turkey in response to the violent dismantling of demonstrations against development plans that would destroy the Taksim Gezi Park, one of the few green places in the city. The protests brought together a rich multiplicity of people and groups opposing the enclosure of public spaces, destructive urban transformation projects, the ecological devastation, as well as ongoing state oppression and violence.

After the 'Gezi Resistance', the emerging movement continued to be active in neighbourhoods in the form of discussions, protests, solidarity events, open markets, workshops, community gardens and informal food coops. DÜRTÜK was born in this process, bringing together different experiences, actors and desires.

A violent, paralysing atmosphere It is very difficult, and in fact painful, to look back now and reflect on the expectations, emotions and desires that we had at that time. It is painful, because over the past two years oppression and violence in Turkey has grown beyond our imagination.

The war in Syria, the bombings by ISIS (Daesh), the termination of the peace process in the Kurdish region of the country by the Turkish state, and the attempted coup in 2016 have generated political polarisation all over the country. Journalists, academics, teachers and politicians are being imprisoned, cities and neighbourhoods burnt, and many lives lost. Schools, streets and public squares lost their liveliness. Our hopes, our imaginations, and even our mobility, have shrunk.

Persevering with the seemingly modest activities of DÜRTÜK has been significant in overcoming this paralysis. It not only supported the producers but also

kept us going, as activists, consumers and citizens in trying to create spaces of solidarity.

Bostans: an edible heritage

DÜRTÜK cooperates with the small scale orchards and vegetable gardens situated in central Istanbul known as *bostans* that are run by professional farmers. They grow green, leafy vegetables and herbs that can be harvested various times a week. The farmers sell to (and at) open markets, restaurants and grocery stores, as well as through DÜRTÜK, and directly from the *bostan*. Their cultivation methods are a combination of those inherited from generations of gardeners before them and other techniques.

Bostans have convened people in defence of cultural heritage, and urban food production

While today only a few remain active, historically the *bostans* of Istanbul helped feeding the city. In fact, people depended on these gardens for survival during wars and famines. Today they are considered a nostalgic memory that is irrelevant to urban life. But nothing could be further from the truth. In recent years, *bostans* have convened people in defence of cultural heritage, the right to the city and urban food production.

The Mosque Garden: threats and resistance

One active but endangered *bostan* of Istanbul is *Piyalepaşa Camii Bostanı* (Piyalepaşa Mosque Garden), which was supposed to become a car park in 2013. Mehmet and Cemile, a

The Mosque Garden *bostan* was saved and declared national heritage in 2015. Photo: Uygur Bulut





A meeting amongst new members of Dürtük at Dünyada Mekan, a collective space in Beyoğlu for freelancers and white collar workers' solidarity.

Photo: Uygur Bulut

couple in their 60s, struggle to keep the *bostan* going in the middle of the rapidly transforming centre of Istanbul. The *bostan*'s history is closely related to that of the mosque, having been a source of income for the mosque since the 16th century. An unlikely alliance of activists, lawyers, archeologists and historians stood up for its protection, and with success. Not only was *Piyalepaşa Camii Bostanı* saved from becoming a car park, it was also registered as a historical heritage landmark in 2015.

This has been an exemplary case in Istanbul of how agricultural land can be recognised as cultural heritage. But the municipality and associated construction companies are continuing to put pressure on Mehmet and Cemile to move somewhere else. The latest rumour is that the *bostan* will be turned into a hobby garden for the municipality so that they can make a profit from it.

The near future of this *bostan* is uncertain for other reasons as well. Mehmet and Cemile are old and they do not have enough strength to cultivate all their land. Because of the low prices of agricultural produce, and the equally low social status of farming in Turkey, their children do not have an interest in keeping the business going.

No recognition, no security Urban development speculators breathing down their necks is not the only worry for farmers like Mehmet and Cemile. Although the *bostans* are quite central in the city and are surrounded by residential areas, the farmers struggle to get fair prices for their produce. The problem is that they cannot compete with the prices of imported, industrialised food.

Moreover, despite the fact that the farmers have been cultivating their land for generations, their land tenure is insecure and they can be evicted at any moment. The land they cultivate is not considered agricultural land so they cannot formally register as

farmers. This means that they are not recognised in agricultural policies and don't get access to public social security programmes. Combined, all these precarious conditions make the farmers in *bostans* hesitant to make long term investments in the soil.

Cultivating hope Taksim, where we have our base, has been the scene of many political demonstrations and marches. It is a historically loaded place. Demonstrations are banned now, and a state of emergency has been in place since the attempted coup in 2016. Police are everywhere and constantly present. This has made many people afraid of coming to Taksim, which limits the growth of our orders. We haven't been able to hold big meetings in the past year, and we are also having difficulty finding volunteers to invest time in DÜRTÜK's operations and activities.

The urgent need to save and to defend agricultural spaces meets the humble labour of cultivating and reproducing everyday life

But even if there are not many weekly orders, we are continuing. We are trying to organise events and keep the discussion alive on how to continue and develop the organisation. We discuss food sovereignty in an international context, and talk about themes such as Community Supported Agriculture models in different countries and alternative economies. We organise picnics and participate in solidarity markets to find new members. We come together with other organisations to discuss issues and to gather strength.

The weekly routine of DÜRTÜK's meetings represents hopeful, common ground for gardeners, farmers, consumers, activists and other citizens to exchange experiences about how they cope in their precarious situations, and to support each other. At DÜRTÜK, the urgent need to save and to defend agricultural spaces meets the humble labour of cultivating and reproducing everyday life.

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Resisting land grabbing in Germany



Photo: Bündnis junge Landwirtschaft e.V

Land grabbing is no longer a phenomenon of the Global South only. In rural Germany, a highly undemocratic form of land control is accelerating the process of land concentration, contributing to the increase of land prices and creating barriers for young farmers to enter agriculture. With the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests* at hand, young farmers in Germany are trying to reverse this situation and claim agricultural land.

Paula Gioia

Until 2016, KTG-Agrar was the biggest agribusiness land owner in Germany, controlling over 38,000 ha in the country. When KTG-Agrar filed for bankruptcy, the young peasant association (Bündnis junge Landwirtschaft, BjL) together with young, mostly landless, members from La Via Campesina's member organisation in Germany (Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft, AbL) gathered on the fields of KTG-Agrar. We peacefully expressed our desire to establish sustainable agriculture in the area, and we asked for support from the government

for this. Nevertheless, the land was sold, via a dubious structure of shareholding companies, to a transnational insurance company from southern Germany and to a private foundation from Lichtenstein (Münchener Rück and Gustav-Zech-Stiftung).

This is an example of what we call land grabbing in our territory. In Germany, increasing land concentration is creating a situation of inequitable access to land. This is driving family farmers out of business and blocks the entrance of aspiring young farmers. In 2010, the largest 7% of the farms controlled 37% of the farm land. This trend is ongoing and is accompanied by an increase in agro-industrial agriculture; it is



Young peasants making their case for a fairer land governance system. Photo: Vanessa Ebenfeld

undermining peasant agriculture, ecological resilience and food sovereignty. Moreover, these changes are eroding culture and social life in rural Germany.

Land grabbing in Europe? Land grabbing has been described by the European Coordination of La Via Campesina (ECVC) as: the legal or illegal control of 'larger than locally-typical' amounts of land by any persons or entities for purposes of speculation, extraction, resource control or commodification at the expense of peasant farmers, agroecology, land stewardship, food sovereignty and human rights. This challenges the notion that Europe is a showcase of good land governance with well-regulated land markets.

Land grabbing, as defined by the ECVC, exists in Europe and is exacerbated by the unequal distribution of subsidies from the European Union. For example, 28.4% of CAP (Common Agriculture Policy) payments in Germany are given to 1.2% of the beneficiaries. Furthermore, factors such as skyrocketing land prices help to explain why the remaining small and medium scale farms are being forced out of agriculture. These farmers, as well as aspiring young peasants, simply don't have the capital to compete with investors – many of which are non-agricultural – to either keep, or access land.

Tenure Guidelines at home As young peasants, we are trying to turn the tide. Together with allies from civil society organisations, we are making use of the United Nation's *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests* (VGGT, see box). We are asking the government to implement the VGGTs in our country, and to bring coherence to local and national policy. Currently, the German government supports the implementation of the VGGTs in partner states in the south.

In September 2016, a coalition of German peasants and allied NGOs participated in the first national exercise to monitor the implementation of the VGGTs not only abroad, but also at home. This event was organised by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

The event gathered around 60 participants from the government, development agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs), academia and the private sector. They aimed to highlight achievements, challenges and recommendations for the implementation of the VGGTs based on the past four years of experience with them. Through testimonies and working group discussions we jointly identified some key challenges and next steps.

In the German context, the event highlighted the urgent need to increase awareness about the VGGTs in Germany. CSOs and academics especially, expressed the need for more transparency and higher public participation in land acquisition processes and land use decisions. We recommended the translation of the 'People's Manual', a version of the guidelines in easy-to-understand language, into German, and the development of a legal assessment on the compliance of the German land law with the VGGTs. Jointly we agreed on the need of increased use, application and implementation of the VGGTs by Germany, also at home, and that for this, more policy coherence is needed. Therefore we recommended the creation of a multi-stakeholder process to accompany the implementation of the VGGTs in Germany. This marks the beginning of an important policy reform process.

With this event and the related process, Germany, together with France, were the first European countries to start a monitoring of the implementation of the VGGTs. Besides the fact that an important process has been triggered in Germany, our experience can be useful for actors in other countries dealing with similar land struggles.

Paula Gioia (paula.gioia@eurovia.org) is a beekeeper and small scale farmer in Eastern Germany. She is a member of the Bündnis junge Landwirtschaft, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft and the coordination committee of the European Coordination Via Campesina.

The VGGTs

The VGGTs (Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests) are the first international governance instrument to apply a human rights framework to land tenure and the governance of natural resource. They represent a valuable tool for peasants – worldwide. They were developed by the UN Committee on World Food Security through an inclusive and legitimate consultative process involving those most affected by tenure insecurity and a lack of access to land. The VGGTs were endorsed in 2012 by 130 countries, including Germany. The document contains a number of important provisions for tackling land grabbing and associated problems that peasant communities face regarding access to, and control of land, territory, and natural resources.



Regaining trust: alternative food systems in the Czech Republic

Four decades of communism and an overnight transition from socialism to the free market caused dramatic shifts in consumer – food producer relationships across Eastern Europe. In the Czech Republic, a history of cooperatives and local food production contrasts with the situation today. Now the country is almost entirely dependent on international trade and supermarkets. But in response, parallel, independent initiatives are on the rise.

Tomáš Uhnák

Historically, Czech society was characterised by strong cooperative structures. Cooperatives (co-ops) helped small and middle scale peasants and autonomous traders attain economic emancipation from the Austrian Empire. Starting in 1847, with the establishment of consumer / savings

co-ops in Prague, the Czechs quickly developed a culture of co-ops, inspired by the British Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers. For example, villages received electricity due to co-ops; the Prague Zoo and National theatre were founded as co-ops, and of course there were very important agricultural and consumer co-ops.

The rise and fall of co-ops However, with the introduction of communism in 1948, the culture of co-ops lost its positive aspects of bottom-up engagement. The centralised, state-dictated way of decision making was detached from the day-to-day reality of the consumers and peasants and many people stopped farming and left the rural areas.

After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, which ended 41 years of one party rule in Czechoslovakia, the state introduced a new law on co-ops, enabling them to function independently again. However, embracing the competitive ideology of the free market rendered many of the remaining co-ops obsolete or a relic of the communist past.

Since 1991, when the very first international supermarket opened in the Czech Republic, the country has witnessed an, 'invasion' of international retailers and supermarkets with their aggressive and predatory politics of unfair trading practices. This led to the disappearance of hundreds of small and middle scale food producers, and to the concentration of distribution channels and food production in the hands of a few industrial companies. Today, initiatives providing alternatives to this model of production and distribution are needed more than ever.

Community Supported Agriculture The CSA movement is currently the strongest alternative food movement in the Czech Republic. The very first communal project that was built on the values and principles of the CSA model in the Czech republic is KomPot (www.kom-pot.cz). KomPot (translated as 'Communal Foods') was established in 2011 by a group of organic farming activists, environmentalists and local people from the peri-urban area of Prague. The aim was to feed at least 50 families with organically grown fruits and vegetables from a community-led market garden based on solidarity between producers and consumers.

This CSA was a challenge to get started because there was very little infrastructure, support, and awareness about alternative food systems. The country's recent history has led to skepticism and distrust around collective action and consensus-based decision making. And, operating without subsidies made it difficult to make investments in materials such as water wells and polytunnels. But, Jan Valeška, one of the founders of KomPot, explained how CSAs are becoming more popular in Czech: "Every year there are newcomers starting their CSA systems. Today, there are up to five dozen CSAs across the country, with several thousand members." The CSAs in the Czech Republic are an example of an alternative model for food production and distribution based on building community, trust and direct contact between consumers and producers. Equally, it is about restoring a lost connection with the land and food.

A reflection on Eastern Europe

Many other Eastern European countries still harbour a live rural, peasant culture. Unfortunately, due to land grabbing, intense pressure that food producers experience from the international retailers, and the dominance of industrial agriculture, small scale farming is disappearing.

Czech fruit and vegetable growers, for example, rely mainly on migrant labour from the Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria. Czech apples are often being picked by Romanian hands, those same hands that used to grow fruits and vegetables in Romania (see interview on page 14). On the other hand, every year Czech workers are leaving for Britain, France or other western countries to pick wine grapes or to work on farms.

Completely unprepared, Eastern European countries adopted economic models and neoliberal strategies that are still difficult to digest and cope with, especially for the smallest farmers, and for consumers whose options are restricted. But, while our countries share common challenges, we also share a common vision of possible solutions. These solutions are being recognised by more and more people. The CSA model is one way of providing stability, not only for small scale producers, but also for consumers. Producers and consumers are becoming co-actors in the whole process, from production to processing and distribution of food. The result is a transition towards localised, sustainable practice and dignified living conditions. That is the message from CSA communities in the Czech Republic that sprouted from KomPot.

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We would like to thank Jan Valeška for his input to this story.

Today there are up to five dozen CSAs across the Czech Republic with several thousand members.

Photo: KomPot





Human-centered agriculture fighting exploitation, and racism

While much of the production of food in Europe depends on migrant workers, most people are not aware of the terrible working and living conditions that most of them have to endure. At the same time the plight of small scale producers, who must deal with the low prices imposed by large retailers, also goes unnoticed. In Calabria, South Italy, small scale producers and migrant workers are coming together to practice ethical agriculture.

Ibrahim Diabaté and Nino Quaranta

Ibrahim Diabaté, an author of this story, came to Italy from the Ivory Coast nine years ago as a legal migrant, to study agriculture. His plan failed, so he worked in factories, moved to different cities, and eventually ended up in Calabria, harvesting mandarins and oranges.

Similarly, many other migrants, both legal and illegal, have moved to the area to find work. Most of them live in terrible conditions, in the cold, enclosed in ghettos and earning very little money.

Meanwhile, citrus growers are receiving eight cents per kilo for their oranges. Even small scale producers can't afford to pay for labour with the price they receive for their produce. Sadly, exploiting their workers has become a default solution for many.

Joining forces At the beginning of 2010 the immigrant population in the city of Rosarno, an important agricultural centre in Calabria, rose up after two migrants were injured and to protest the shameful conditions in which they were forced to live. Ibrahim was involved in an anti-racism committee at the time. He moved to Rosarno where he got in touch with some locals who were helping migrants by providing food and basic goods. From this point, a synergy emerged between the two groups that resulted in the creation of SOS Rosarno, first as a project, then as an association. SOS Rosarno brings together land labourers and small producers suffocated by the prices imposed by large retailers. The association includes 15 small producers that work with citrus, olive oil and honey, as well as artisans, and people working in the cultural sector, and 30 to 35 migrant workers. These migrants used to be engineers, electricians, drivers, or accountants in their homelands.

Ethical agriculture is diversified and with fair prices

Together, they aim to achieve adequate and ethical wages, for farm workers and producers alike, that respects the minimum standards. To do this they have created a direct relationship between farmers and citizens (not 'consumers') through about 400 existing ethical-purchase groups across the country. An important feature of the groups is the 'transparent price' that is available for everyone online. That way

everyone can see which fractions of the money they pay goes to who and covers which costs.

Ethical agriculture Out of SOS Rosarno, a social cooperative was created, *Cooperativa Mani e Terra* (hands and land), by five Italians and seven migrant workers, each with equal rights when it comes to decision making. The cooperative has been renting five hectares of land for the last two years for winter and summer production. They sell their produce on the spot, either to the ethical-purchase groups or to restaurants in the area. This way they provide an alternative to the big retailers.

SOS Rosarno has brought migrant workers and small scale producers together to fight exploitation in agriculture.

Photo: Stefano Danieli, #overthefortress a Rosarno, <http://www.meltingpot.org/+Campagna-overthefortress+.html>



Through their farming they are making a political statement: 'ethical agriculture' is diversified, organic, and with fair prices. They define this as caring for the land and practicing human-based agriculture that is not for profit. Foremost they farm to sustain themselves and then to provide a good product for those who consume it. Wealthy people should not be the only ones eating good food.

The cooperative works for diversification and they want to fight the new racism that's been emerging in Europe. They are proving that it is possible to break the linguistic and cultural walls established between locals and migrants.

A drop in the ocean Also, there is not enough demand for organic products in the area. This is especially the case for oranges that require more labour for harvest. This creates additional costs and prices that neither small scale producers or less

wealthy citizens can afford. So still today, most of the organic oranges are pulped and sold at a loss to big organic retailers, or thrown away.

There are about 3000 immigrants in the Gioia Tauro plain of Calabria with no home, no job and no food. Employing seven or 30 of them is not a big change. But it sets an example. SOS Rosarno is collaborating with different networks in the country, such as the Italian Rural Association (ARI) and Fuorimercato, which works with direct distribution of agricultural produce to cities all over Italy, with a focus on workers' rights and the environment. We are only a drop in the ocean now, but there is an existing web of people building a solidarity-based economy that could grow stronger.

Ibrahim Diabate (ibrahimfxo@live.it) and **Nino Quaranta** (ninoquaranta@gmail.com) are both members of SOS Rosarno and *Cooperativa Mani e Terra*.

Workers team up with consumers in defence of their rights in Spain

In Almeria, Spain, more than 40,000 hectares of fruit and vegetables are cultivated to supply the markets of northern and central Europe. More than 130,000 workers, most of them migrants, produce and process these products under precarious conditions.

Since 2008, various conflicts have erupted in which the organic produce company, Biosol, violated workers' rights. In a sociocultural context in which labour organisation is extremely complicated and laws, for the most part, work against them, workers have gained strength, organisational capacity and support for their struggle, and have managed to gain recognition and respect for their rights. This breakthrough has been the result of combined pressure put on the company between workers, the SOC-SAT union in Spain, and consumers in northern Europe. Specifically, German and Swiss consumers pressured supermarkets (Rewe, Coop and Migros) to paralyze purchases from Biosol. This coordinated action has made it possible to overturn dismissals and achieve fair compensation for workers who have had to leave the company.

During the most recent conflict, six workers, members of SOC-SAT, with permanent contracts were fired from their job at BIOSOL

for participating in a German documentary about organic agriculture. For 14 months these women fought for their rights through protests, public statements and a hunger strike. In this case, the campaign, supported by activists and consumers in northern Europe, managed to get the organic certification, issued by Biosuisse, suspended until workers' rights were respected. Two civil courts in Spain ruled in favour of the women declaring that they cannot be fired for free expression of their ideas, criticisms or opinions.

Now, the SOC-SAT union activity by members of Biosol has been recognised by the company as legitimate. The women hold their union meetings at the workplace and openly carry out the actions necessary to continue to protect their rights and those of other workers.

Federico Pacheco (pachecofederico@yahoo.es) is a member of SOC-SAT.



We are faced with incredible challenges that are being intensified by the false solutions of seed and biotech companies. With their 'experts' and 'scientists', in connivance with government agencies, they all claim to be 'saving' farmers and improving the quality of their seeds and livelihoods.

Why are these companies creating imaginary problems and providing false solutions to make profits from our food and agricultural systems? There are countless examples of false solutions that undermine food sovereignty in Africa: from biosynthesising the active ingredients in our medicinal plants, to biofortification. Most of us were outraged earlier this year when we learned about Tanzania's new law that criminalises peasant seed exchange.

If it isn't broken, don't fix it. The food and farming system practiced by the majority of small scale farmers is not broken. They have the knowledge, skill and experience to grow food for nourishment, taste, quality and resilience. Big corporations look down on them and call their seeds inferior and archaic. But time and again, grounded evidence shows that small scale producers are feeding the people and meeting the basic needs of their communities.

As I have done, you only need to learn from farmers themselves. Our farmers are working with nature, the soil, plants and animals. They have the knowledge and the right to choose what they want to grow, how they want to grow it and what is culturally appropriate and healthy. That is what food sovereignty is all about.

Food sovereignty is built on the inalienable rights of peoples to maintain their cultural as well as seed diversities. Cultural diversity permits peoples to maintain and enlarge their stock of local knowledge; produce, save, exchange, use, and reuse their seeds and have control over farming practices developed over centuries of experimentation and experience. Food sovereignty ensures that farmers stay in business and that people are not forced to alter their diets.

Our governments and (future) researchers must take the indigenous and local knowledge of small scale farmers and producers into account. Lost knowledge must be recovered and research must be identified by the people and not defined by corporations who are only interested in making profits, or by laboratory experts.

Africa can no longer afford to be a testing ground for all kinds of unwholesome food and toxic technologies, in which her people are being used as guinea pigs in the so called fight against hunger, malnutrition or disease. Our nutrition is not found in the laboratory, it is found in farmers' fields and knowledge.

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Nutrition grows in farmers' fields



Photo: Hyo Jeong Kim

Food sovereignty:

taking root in women's knowledge

The Korean Women's Peasant Association (KWPA) is a leader in South Korea's food sovereignty movement. Founded in 1989, it is an association that encompasses hundreds of local women farmers' groups. Intergenerational exchange of knowledge and experiences among women is at the heart of their work. Through this exchange, a new generation of peasant women are challenging the roles traditionally attributed to women in farming, while the older generation share their lifetime of knowledge. This is a good example of how women's indigenous knowledge is a crucial ingredient for sustainable farming and food sovereignty.

Hyo Jeong Kim

South Korea's food sovereignty movement is facing a colossal fight. The country is emerging as one of the world's biggest importers of edible genetically modified (GM) crops. On top of this, the current government aims to produce and sell GM crops, including one of the Korean people's most important staples: rice.

Rapid industrialisation, combined with pressure from global food markets, has taken its toll on South Korean farming. The percentage of the total population that farm has reduced from 50% to less than 7% today, and a quarter of the country's farmland has disappeared since the 1970's, when Green Revolution technologies were first promoted. Remaining farmers have been forced to join 'development projects' and take part in modernisation efforts that disregard their indigenous knowledge and skills in favour of input-intensive farming techniques.

Grandmother's knowledge

Women have been disproportionately affected by these changes in Korea's agriculture. As a consequence of the country's patriarchal society, many women lack access to capital and land resources. This has led to exclusion of women from the government's push to 'modernise' their farms. Many women have remained small scale producers active in the informal economy, but struggling to access markets for their products. Moreover, they have been marginalised in shaping formal economic and social policies.

Yet, every dark cloud has a silver lining: these women continued their indigenous farming practices. Most of these women are now over 60 years of age and known as *hal-mo-ni* (grandmothers). These grandmothers know how to produce, process and conserve food, as well as make clothing and shelter. They have kept the knowledge and skills needed to save and breed their indigenous seeds. Their practices are rooted in biodiversity and they manage their agroecosystem to maintain complex polycultures (see box).

Activist farmers Recently, some younger women farmers, members of KWPA, who had learnt to farm in the industrial farming system, started to actively question the need to constantly purchase inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers. These activist farmers also identified the need to make the valuable role of women peasants more visible in Korean society. They decided to focus their work on using women's knowledge of seeds and breeding to revive traditional varieties of crops through collecting and multiplying indigenous seeds. Moreover, peasants' seeds symbolically represent traditional knowledge, safe food, and safekeeping of genetic resources as well as cultural heritage.

Women peasants don't have degrees but they are experts

Sowing seeds The first indigenous seeds that Hoengsoeng Women's Peasant Association, a member of KWPA, decided to cultivate were beans. Beans have played an important role throughout Korean history. Despite their importance, it was difficult to find indigenous seeds. Finally they obtained seeds from an activist from the Anti-GMO Korea network whose acquaintances had access to the seedbank of the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation. Each member of the association was given three types of bean to cultivate. The idea was to meet a year later to exchange experiences and seeds. All but one woman failed to cultivate their beans. The successful peasant happened to be one of the grandmothers. She was the only one with the necessary knowledge and skills to grow the beans. This was an important moment for the KWPA activists. They realised that the exchange of knowledge and skills between old and young generations of women is key to building an indigenous seed movement. "Women peasants don't have degrees in seed breeding, but they are experts," said Yoon Keum Soon, a KWPA activist from Seong-Ju.

Peasants' seeds represent traditional knowledge, safe food, and safekeeping of genetic resources.
Photo: Hyo Jeong Kim



Since then, the KWPA activists have been building an indigenous seed movement. They started by collecting seeds and recording indigenous knowledge from the grandmothers in their communities. Their activities reach across the country and have been steadily expanding. KWPA women now are active in more than 15 cities and eight provinces nationwide. Besides organising seed festivals and publishing and distributing information on peasant's rights to seeds, two notable activities are their communal seed farms and a farmer-owned cooperative.

Ae-gi Jeong, 83 year old grandmother:

"Hoengsong is in the mountains so we try to use small plots of land effectively. No matter how small the plot might be, we always try to plant various crops. In the garden plots we plant soybean and sesame seedlings between corn. After the corn is harvested, the plot gradually turns into a soybean and sesame field. The corn stalks are fed to cows. We also plant soybean and sesame around the paddy fields, and intercrop local lettuces and chillies."



Photo: Hyo Jeong Kim

Communal seed farms Since 2009, KWPA has started more than 20 indigenous seed production farms. Only three of these receive governmental support and most are managed by groups of women, each with their own plot of land, who share the work collectively. Urban citizens also help managing a number of these farms, which, in turn have become venues where children and adults can learn about the importance of indigenous seeds.

For many reasons, putting indigenous seed farming into practice has not been easy. Even with years of farming experience, there is still a lot to learn. Each crop requires different methods of cultivation, selection and preservation. For example, Han Young Mee, a peasant from Hoengseong with more than 20 years' experience with industrial farming, explains that when she tried to preserve seeds she was unsuccessful because animals ate them or she had forgotten where she had stored them. Moreover, when some indigenous pink potato seedlings that she got from another locality failed it became evident that caring for seeds also requires understanding of the local climate and soil.

To overcome these problems, KWPA developed a mentorship programme with grandmothers. This was rather easy because most villages have a good number of both young and elderly female farmers. When they come together, these farmers share their knowledge of farming and cooking, thereby learning from each other. With the help of KWPA, many of these women document their lessons so that more farmers can put indigenous seed farming into practice. For example, a KWPA group on Jeju Island published a book about grandmothers' way of farming and how to grow and keep various indigenous seeds.

Seeds passed through all the community members' hands

Communal resources In Haman, a county in the south of the country, a group of peasant women communally manage 30 different crops on 0.2 hectares of land. One practical challenge they have been facing is the amount of time needed to tend to the seed farm. Farmer Han Swoung Ah explains how difficult it is to combine childcare, work on her own farm and on the communal plot: "I quarrelled with my husband many times about working on the communal field. He hates that I neglect our family farm."



An agroecology exchange programme between members of the KWPA and women farmers in Thailand that was funded by the Agroecology Fund.
Photo: Hyo Jeong Kim

Despite the challenges, the importance and value of community has become clear through the women's experience on the seed farms. For instance, without community support, a bad harvest of a seed crop makes it almost impossible to find planting material for the next year's crops. In the past, peasants sustained their farming through local communities by sharing their seeds, labour, knowledge and skills. In this way, seeds passed through all the community members' hands and had a character of public property. The communal seed farms are reviving this type of sharing.

Farmers' cooperative The members of KWPA realised the importance of building solidarity not only among peasants but also between peasants and consumers. Therefore, they set up the Sister's Garden CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) box scheme. It started in 2009 as a social enterprise with support from the government to pay two staff members. Recently, they transformed the organisation into a cooperative such that each of the 200 participating peasant women became members. The CSA's success has been such that in seven years it has grown from one community providing weekly boxes to 100 families to 15 communities across South Korea reaching more than 2000 families. In contrast to the industrial food system, consumers are in direct communication with producers and learn about their planting decisions and seasonal limitations. Besides accessing affordable seasonal products, consumers are more involved with the work of the KWPA through voluntary work at the indigenous seeds farms or by joining indigenous food cooking courses held monthly in Seoul.

The cooperative is also seen as a success in terms of economic empowerment for the peasant women. This is particularly the case for the grandmothers who otherwise have difficulty accessing markets for their produce. In this sense, the approach that connects producers and consumers is useful for ensuring fair compensation to peasants for their work.

Moving forward A long term goal is to produce and sell more indigenous crops through the Sisters' Garden Cooperative and to set up an agroecology school that will further support this intergenerational exchange. KWPA's ambition to better connect the seed movement with the cooperative is not only an opportunity to continue strengthening the relationship between the older and younger generations of women peasants, but also to forge links with other like-minded organisations in East Asia. The first steps in this direction have been taken between 2015 and 2016, when KWPA women farmers visited and exchanged knowledge with members of CAEF (Community Agroecology Fund) in Surin, Thailand and the Agroecology School of La Via Campesina member organisation Serikat Petani Indonesia. In this way, more people will be able to gain the knowledge and skills needed to successfully work with indigenous crops. In 2012 the KWPA was awarded the food sovereignty prize for their work.

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Striving for food sovereignty takes many shapes and forms. From innovations in farmers' fields to legal reform that supports farmers' rights, each initiative contributes to a stronger movement.

Algeria

Innovation keeps tradition alive

Food sovereignty in marginal areas of the Maghreb has always depended on the conservation of tree diversity such as the fig tree in the Atlas chain and the date palm in the Sahara. For centuries, maintaining high agrobiodiversity has allowed peasants to adapt to their environment, extend the maturation period of their crops, and to develop a wide variety of flavours and uses for these crops (construction, crafts, medicine, etc.). However, this diversity is becoming increasingly threatened, as traditional crops lose ground to new eating habits. To tackle this situation, peasants in M'zab, a territory in the northern Sahara Desert and fig growers in Kabyle mountains in Algeria teamed

up with scientists in a partnership facilitated by BEDE (Biodiversity Exchange and Dissemination of Experiences). Together, peasants and scientists are experimenting with technological and social innovations that range from expanding uses of traditional products (for example, new uses for fig vinegar) to experimenting with biological pest control agents. These efforts don't just pay off for peasants and researchers. By revaluing their agricultural and food heritage, people in the oases of the Maghreb not only reclaim their food sovereignty but are also at the forefront of climate change adaptation.

For more information contact BEDE
(bede@bede-asso.org).

Australia

Defending small scale farms

The rise of a movement of small scale farmers selling directly to consumers in Australia (and elsewhere) is being seriously challenged, and even hampered by national policy. Scale-inappropriate and outdated regulations and planning schemes discriminate against small scale farmers. For example, policy defines small, pastured pig and poultry farms as 'intensive' and they are subjected to the same requirements as giant sheds full of thousands of confined animals. In response to the need to defend small scale farmers, the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance has established a Legal Defence Fund, and crowdfunded nearly AUD\$70,000 over the past year. More than AUD\$7,000 has already been distributed to three farms in critical need of support as regulators forced them to stop farming. For example Happy Valley Free Range received support with her

forced move to a property in another shire. A legal hotline that will provide urgent help to farmers is in the planning. The next step is to collate the known regulatory and planning barriers and commence writing and lobbying for reformed, scale-appropriate legislation to support a food sovereign future where growers of ethical and ecologically-sound produce can thrive.

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Photo: Linsey Rendell

Switzerland

A popular vote on food sovereignty

It's official! Swiss people will have the opportunity to decide whether food sovereignty is to be included in their constitution. Swiss direct democracy allows every citizen to initiate a popular citizens initiative. In 2014, Uniterre formed an alliance with 70 like-minded organisations to do this. Two years later the first two hurdles were passed. The process began with drafting a new constitutional article. The decision was made to ensure that the text was detailed enough to avoid misinterpretation that could accommodate existing laws. Ten points are proposed and these include banning GMOs, the right to cultivate and commercialise peasants seeds and, of particular importance for the milk sector, quantity and price regulation. After the text was accepted by the Federal Chancellery, hard-working and creative volunteers collected 109,000 valid signatures within 18 months to complete the submission. The path ahead is one of building more popular support. None of the major political parties dare support our vision of alternative production and trade. As the initiative committee member Fernand Chuche proclaimed during the handover of the signatures: "Discussions



Photo: Nicolas Repond

about production and consumption of foods have reached a turning point. And the absence of a credible message from the government leads to engagement of the people. This is a warning and a chance at the same time."

For more information contact Mathias Stalder
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www.ernaehrungssouveraenitaet.ch.

Colombia

Farming for peace

The Agricultural Workers Union of Sumapaz is leading a process to constitute a Peasant Reserve Area (ZRC) in Sumapaz, part of greater Bogotá, Colombia. Aiming to build peace at the territorial level, this was born as an agricultural initiative to protect the world's largest 'páramo' wilderness area and ensure a dignified life for peasants.

The community's development plan for the Peasant Reserve Area seeks to protect and strengthen the peasant economy through agroecological production, phasing out the use of chemicals, monocultures and extensive cattle-raising. The plan also aims to enhance local collective action, and to forge links with the urban area of Bogotá as a way to ensure food sovereignty. These strategies are based on principles of



Photo: Ricardo Torres Ariza,
facebook.com/ricardo.torres.ariza.fotografo/

endogenous development, legal access to land and the recognition of the importance of a thriving rural economy. Importantly, it stipulates that peasant organisations should be able to take decisions autonomously in their territory.

After a public hearing in August 2016, attended by over 850 farmers, academics and government representatives, adjustments are currently being made to the plan. Although the process has met with resistance on the part of State authorities, the peasants of Sumapaz consider the Peasant Reserve Area a crucial way to implement the peace agreements and to "transform our negative realities into a culture of peace."

For more information read Revista Cultural Sumapaceña "El Fogón", Edición N°4 2017, Fundación Parcela Cultural Campesina.
(parcelaculturalcampesina@gmail.com)

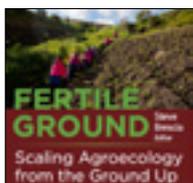
MIND! > BOOKS AND FILMS



Human Rights and the Food Sovereignty Movement: Reclaiming Control

Priscilla Claeys. 2015. Routledge. 210 pages. ISBN: 978-1138793019

While the negative impacts from land grabbing, speculation with agricultural commodities, agrofuels and climate change become increasingly evident, the policies that have created these problems have not faltered in their march. At the same time, social movements that challenge policies and practice that undermine food sovereignty are on the rise. This book enriches our understanding of the relevance of the transnational agrarian movement, La Via Campesina. She takes stock of the achievements, such as mobilising a human rights discourse in the struggle against neoliberalism. This is a useful read for anyone engaged in the debate around the 'right to food'.



Fertile Ground: Scaling Agroecology from the Ground Up

Brescia, Steve (Ed). 2017. Food First.

Agroecology is our best option for transitioning to food and farming systems capable of nurturing people, societies, and the planet. Yet how do we amplify and spread agroecology to achieve that goal? *Fertile Ground: Scaling Agroecology from the Ground Up*, a new book edited by Groundswell International Executive Director Steve Brescia and published by Food First, addresses that question. It offers nine case studies, authored by practitioners from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, and Europe, that demonstrate how agroecological innovation can be deepened, spread to ever growing numbers of farmers, and integrated into social movements and policy.



“Getting into a bind” how the trade and investment regime blocks the development of agroecology and access to land

Natalia Carrau and Martin Drago, Friends of the Earth International. 2016. 20 pages

The notion that trade and investment agreements are designed to generate profits for the agroindustry has long been denied by its proponents. This report reveals how current strategies to raise investment in agriculture are likely to hinder the amplification of agroecology as a means of achieving food sovereignty. By contrasting a food system based on agribusiness with one based on agroecology, this publication highlights the different impacts of these two models. This report also offers several practical recommendations about how to get around detrimental trade and investment and to support the consolidation of agroecology as a viable alternative to agribusiness.



Connecting smallholders to markets: An analytical guide

Civil Society Mechanism. 2016. 46 pages.

Territorial markets benefit society at large. Not only are they more profitable for small scale producers and for local economies than global agri-value chains, but they also foster sustainability and strengthen social cohesion and culture rooted in tradition. This publication is the fruit of two years of collective efforts by the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) working group. This analytical guide examines how small scale farmers and civil society organisations can advocate for the implementation of national and regional policies and programmes that support territorial markets. This e-book is also available in Spanish and French.

More on food sovereignty

Towards Food sovereignty: reclaiming autonomous food systems by Michel Pimbert (2009), filled with photos, video and audio clips, makes the case for locally-controlled and diverse food systems, and highlights different examples of how people are promoting food sovereignty. Another comprehensive overview that balances problems and solutions is the edited book, **Food and democracy: Introduction to food sovereignty** (2011). **Land grabbing and land concentration** by Sylvia Kay (2016) discusses how young and aspiring farmers in Europe face barriers to entry into the farming sector. She also outlines the implications for food sovereignty of the steep decline in the number of small farms in Europe. **Cultivating Gender Justice** by Food First (2017) explores why dismantling sexism and patriarchy in the food system, in the food movement, in our organizations, and among ourselves is fundamental to transforming the food system.

Besides books, there are also a number of web-based and multimedia resources on food sovereignty. The **Nyeléni Newsletter** is the voice of the international food sovereignty movement and provides space for individuals and organisations to exchange and share information. **Food for thought** serves a similar purpose for the European movement. **Food for thought and action: A food sovereignty curriculum** (2009) is an educational tool for activists seeking to strengthen the food sovereignty movement.

In film, **The Land for our food** (2016) is a documentary that shows how accessing land has proved to be a barrier to improving our food system in Europe and provides a range of practical experiences in the quest for land for agroecological farming. The short clip, **Towards a Declaration on the Rights of Peasants** (2016) describes the main issues and the process behind working towards the declaration on the rights of peasants in the UN. This film can be viewed in seven different languages. **'Anachasho' Food of the wilds** (2014) provides a peak into collective harvesting of uncultivated forest foods in India and what this means for food sovereignty. **Food sovereignty football** (2013) makes for a good laugh while exposing the uneven playing field between family

farmers and transnational corporations in Britain. Also in Europe, the animated film **The Missing Option: Food Sovereignty** (2011) portrays the fight of countless individuals and organisations for a Common Agricultural Policy reform based on the principles of food sovereignty. And, **Seeds of Sovereignty** (2013) tells an inspiring story of African farming communities and organisations reviving traditional seed diversity across the continent and taking back control over their food systems. This short film is the second instalment in the **Seeds of Freedom** trilogy.

There are more resources than we are able to mention here. A longer list of books, reports and websites can be found on the **Agroecology Land Trust website**.





Photo: Linda Kabaira

We are not too young

In Zimbabwe, children across the country are putting food sovereignty into practice. They are redesigning their schoolyards based on permaculture principles to regenerate the soil, harvest rainwater and produce their own food. Children from more than half the schools that have gone down this path are now able to supplement their lunches with freshly picked produce.

Linda Kabaira

In the face of climate change and chronic malnutrition in Zimbabwe, the schoolyards of 107 schools across the country are being transformed into green landscapes of edible food forests. Schools and Colleges Permaculture (SCOPE) is a practical education programme of the Zimbabwe Institute of Permaculture. Working in partnership with the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe, SCOPE has been implementing projects with young people in schools throughout the country. We use climate friendly agriculture and youth empowerment activities to address school-based supplementary feeding and household level food sovereignty. Educational centres and schools are developing integrated land use designs aimed at transforming schoolyards into healthy, productive agroecosystems. In addition, SCOPE works to facilitate and influence a school curriculum that is centred on building an understanding and application of the ecological principles on which sound land use practices and food production systems are based.

Children are working on practical solutions to address and meet their needs at their schools using locally available resources

Children are working on practical solutions to address and meet their needs at their schools using locally available resources and inspired by permaculture. Permaculture is a system of ecological design that demonstrates how the relationship and co-existence with nature can model how to meet human needs. At the same time permaculture designs aim to regenerate the environment around us in the face of a changing climate. Permaculture lies, not in any single technique, but in looking at how multiple techniques can be woven together into systems that are more than the sum.

How it works The schoolyard is transformed into a local school food system. The land is divided into food forest zones that protect it from erosion. The school lawn zone and flower beds are transformed into productive food gardens where cereals and vegetables are produced. The food forest zones are where multipurpose trees, mostly indigenous species that are well adapted to the environments, and fast growing

fruit trees are planted. This has allowed most of the schools to enjoy diverse fruits throughout the year.

One fifth of the schools have integrated fish farming into their systems, where the water from the fish ponds is used to water vegetable gardens. The fish waste fertilises the plants, and the plants clean the water. These systems use 70-90 % less water than conventional farming and can produce large amounts of food within the small school spaces.

Nurturing the water, soil and fauna Children learn how to value water, and to be in control of their own water systems. In a world where water is becoming ever more scarce and precious due to climate change, children are taught how to engage and practice water-harvesting earthworks such as swales, ponds and keyline systems. The most common feature in all of the schools practicing permaculture is infield rainwater harvesting, coupled with planting of banana and paw paw around the school buildings to harvest roof water.

Another common practice coupled with food production is the use of greywater from the school. Water from hand washing points is captured, filtered with simple systems and used to grow trees, shrubs, and herbs.

As a way of working with the soils and rebuilding them as carbon sinks, the young people are taught to feed the soils through continuous mulching, composting, and use of green manures. Where possible, schools have managed to restore significant numbers of predators and keystone species needed for food productivity. For example, lizards and chameleons have come back to their environments to feed on the pests. Unlike massive geo-engineering schemes, these are practical solutions that are affordable and teach learners to observe and work with nature to produce food.

An edible forest illustrating how children create safe green spaces abundant in food and water.

Photo: Jeffred Madzvanya





Primary school pupils selling vegetables during the food and seed festival held in October 2016.
Photo: Rudo Chihota

Not too young to be involved

SCOPE's work is an attempt to encourage generations of system thinkers by bringing the ethics and principles of permaculture design and regenerative systems into the classroom. It is an attempt to empower the young people of Zimbabwe to determine and create a future of their choice. At the centre of each schools' work is the demonstration of good practices. Children create safe green spaces abundant in food and water, using locally available resources. In addition, SCOPE works with children to create awareness of climate change action. An important success factor has been the acknowledgement that children and youth can actively support initiatives that lead to building resilient and sustainable communities.

Challenging the status quo

Applying permaculture has been difficult because practices such as mulching and intercropping have been perceived as dirty and less systematic than monocropping and maintaining bare soil. This led to limited support and somewhat negative attitudes from school administrators. Making more creative use of resources at hand, rather than doing what everyone else is doing also challenges the status quo.

We cultivate a large diversity of plants in the schools. In some places there was inadequate knowledge of local and indigenous plants. Although the design process brings parents and elders back into the school to share their knowledge and seeds, in some cases, local communities no longer have diverse seeds for sharing.

SCOPE continues to support more sharing of lessons learnt for implementation of good practices. The schools that are able to maintain their production independently act as learning and demonstration centres for the other schools. Besides this, different schools are connecting with and learning from each other through social media such as WhatsApp.

Students have learnt to think holistically about their landscape and their food

Youth as agents of change In the past year, half of the schools were able to provide food to supplement the Government's school feeding programme through the produce from their schools' gardens. But beyond producing food, students have learnt to think holistically about their landscape and their food. This will be useful for self-reliance in their future careers, and in their lives, and it is also the first step towards building food sovereignty in our society.

Linda Kabaira (linda.kabaira@gmail.com) is the national coordinator for Schools and Colleges Permaculture (SCOPE) Zimbabwe.

Grow your own, cook your own, eat your own

Under the ongoing SCOPE campaign, "grow your own, cook your own, eat your own," we facilitated the participation of the schools' children and youth in the national food and seed festival. This gave them an opportunity to share, with other youth and elders, the inspiring work that they are doing on seed saving and food production. This was also an opportunity for young people to demonstrate cooking of local dishes.



The vitality of everyday food

A great deal of energy has been invested in attempts to influence the thinking in science and government on the problems of industrial food and the benefits of agroecology and food sovereignty. Meanwhile, people everywhere must take responsibility for creating the changes they want to see through daily food practices in their families, neighbourhoods and social networks. In addition to organising for 'resistance', we call for greater attention to the latent potential in daily living and being, *or existence.*

Stephen Sherwood, Myriam Paredes, Alberto Arce

We all have a serious problem when people's most basic activity – eating – undermines their ability to exist. Yet this is precisely what we have achieved with the advent of modern food. Through the pursuit of cheap food as a 'good', we have generated a series of unwanted 'bads',

such as mass destruction of soils and water systems, erosion of agrobiodiversity, and widescale sickness and death by pesticides, not to mention the constitution of two, rampant pandemics: overweight/obesity and global warming/climate change. Fortunately, growing awareness of the contradictions of modern food is sparking lively counter-movements.

We challenge the widespread preoccupation over how agriculture, food, and development should be. Instead, we focus on how everyday experience in agriculture and food is. The work of social movements in the Americas leads us to call attention to the forces of change in people's everyday encounters with food – not as characterised in concept, but rather as embodied in practice.

The untapped potential of existence

In common food sovereignty discourse, actors are placed in a tidy narrative of oppositions involving marginalised, victimised peasant farmers and helpless consumers facing powerful abstract entities: transnational corporations, the state, science, and out-of-control global food configurations. It is often maintained that processes of food globalisation only can be contained through state regulation.

But can national regulations truly allow citizens to set their own agenda for inclusion and for ending political marginalisation? Which part of the nation-state can be trusted to support people's actions and their values of environmental sustainability, social justice, dignity, and fair income? In fact, through a growth in hybrid public-private partnerships, institutions in

Latin America have systematically neglected people's experiences, while undermining people's ownership over the public commons, for example, through attempts to regulate, in the name of scientifically informed norms of 'biosafety' and hygiene, genetic resources, food processing, manure-based fertilizers, and commercial markets. While the state certainly is an influential actor in social change, we find the work of people during their less deliberate, informal moments of their day to be of equal, and even greater, importance.

Recently, we met with 23 other researcher-activists working in seven countries of Latin America to exchange and analyse a variety of provocative experiences in food. The resulting casework, assembled in a forthcoming book, is both inspiring and instructive, in providing insights into diverse means of existence. For example: the creative way that a social movement has built political clout through increasing consumer investment in agroecology Ecuador (see box); connecting seemingly disparate people around flavour and taste of Chili in Mexico; and the constitution of healthy, affordable 'responsible' food through an urban-based purchasing cooperative in Valdivia, Chile. As we see in such experiences, people in the street are

Ecuador's national food sovereignty law and the 250 Thousand Families Campaign

The *Colectivo Agroecológico*, Ecuador's national agroecology collective, played a central role in influencing Ecuador's ground-breaking 2008 Constitution, which stipulates a national policy transition from food security (understood as merely meeting people's basic needs) to food sovereignty (an emancipatory force for democratic change). Leaders from the agroecology movement drafted a series of subsequent legislative measures on food sovereignty, including bills for the protection of genetic resources, agrobiodiversity, and the promotion of ecological farming. Nevertheless, little meaningful family-level change has been achieved. In fact, in many ways, the public agenda of food sovereignty is losing ground.

While Ecuador's 2008 Constitution explicitly prohibits the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) seeds and crops, in September 2012 President Correa proposed an amendment

to remove this "technological straightjacket" that "jeopardised the country's food security." Drawing on sketchy scientific evidence and in the name of advancing the country's food sovereignty, Correa argued that GMOs would not be the product of some foreign private industry, but rather, they would be "our [Ecuador's] GMOs" – produced by Ecuadorian scientists in a publicly funded research institute. Other examples relate to land, water and seed laws, all of which of which seek to limit citizen ownership and control of traditional common pool resources, opening the door for privatisation and a deepening of agricultural modernisation.

The *Colectivo* concluded that the logic of modern, industrialised food had become so influential in national politics that it was no longer realistic to expect government officials to represent the public interest, so it decided to place the responsibility for a transition to food sovereignty in people's

capable of creating change – a global phenomenon that cannot be explained solely or simply as a form of resistance to ‘the system’.

People’s production, procurement and eating are an influential force

These studies of day-to-day existence in households, fields and on the streets expose how people’s production, procurement and eating are an influential force – be it self-harmful and negative (e.g., overweight/obesity, exclusion from markets, and degradation of natural resources) or positive (health, equity, and sustainability). The fact that this entrepreneurship happens despite the supposedly overwhelming influences of globalised science and industry calls into question the concern of food sovereignty movements with how to fix and improve government institutions as the necessary pathway to a better future.

The vitality of every day food

The tremendous diversity and dynamism of food practices point at the potential of people’s will, inventiveness and self-organisation. Examples of inspiring citizen-led innovation in Latin America include the rescue of underutilised, traditional food sources, such as Andean roots and tubers, grains and leafy vegetables, the rise of heirloom seed production and exchange networks and neighbourhood wholesale purchasing groups, and the culinary activity of food preparation and tasting in kitchens across the region. This creativity shows that people are capable of mobilising a tremendous wealth of knowledge, assets, values and organisation to advance particular sets of interests. They do this through their daily living and being, with or without clear design or approval from authorities.

Indeed, the change that takes place in people’s lived experiences is often overlooked. One provocative example from research in the Galapagos Islands reveals how family farmers – once the target of criticism from conservationists – effectively block the influx of fresh food from continental Ecuador, which is the primary source of invasive species to the islands, through organic, home-grown and locally marketed

hands. In October 2014 the *Colectivo* launched its ‘250,000 families!’ campaign (www.quericoes.org), aiming to inspire a critical mass of 5% of Ecuador’s population to join a ‘citizen’s agenda’ of food sovereignty. The *Colectivo* estimates that the combined purchase of these families in farmer-sold, Andean-based, agroecological food would represent an investment of about US\$300 million per year.

Recently, the campaign found it not necessary to ‘mould’ or ‘educate’ these 250,000 families to practice responsible consumption, but that this untapped resource already existed in the country. Instead, the campaign views its task as helping to identify and connect these families and inspiring them to publicly share experiences. This is being achieved through food fairs, gastronomic events, creative communications and sensorial workshops. The latter consists of innovative and playful tests through which people get re-connected to the flavour, feel, smell and sound of food. This has proven to awaken powerful memories, motivations and desires in them.

Two years on, tens of thousands of families from all walks of life have joined the campaign. Once dependent on the politics of the state, a growing number of families are now working together to eat well, healthily and locally - not just as individual households, but also as a collective, household- and street-level force of vitality and democratic food.



Photo: Stephen Sherwood



A popular 'trueque' or barter trade event in northern Ecuador, where people exchange their goods without the use of money. Photo: Colectivo Agroecológico

foods. In doing so, these farmers, in fact, protect the environmental integrity of the islands and their valuable tourism industry. The endless examples of sustainable food production, equitable exchange, and responsible consumption in the region and beyond, often in the absence of state-based sanction and sometimes in the midst of heavy antagonism, speak to people's flair and ability to independently pursue their own agenda.

This is why we pose a challenge to the orthodox vision of social change around agriculture and food that prioritises the state and, to a lesser extent, science, as the primary vehicle to institutionalise agroecology and food sovereignty. Instead, we believe that needed change must come from the social, material and political relations generated through practice.

Coming together through daily practice Researchers, activists and policy makers often distinguish between jobs and processes (production, circulation, and eating), administrative units (farms, markets, government agencies, cooperatives and organisations) and countries. In everyday food practice, however, such boundaries are blurred, generating ebbs and flows of information, images and properties. Everyday experiences of (ir)responsible production, circulation, and consumption break down the classical boundaries used to categorise society. What is left are people brought together by a shared necessity to eat.

Empirical research on how agroecology networks and consumer movements organise and work find that people do not necessarily obey classical boundaries of geography, social status or scientific standards of 'best practice'. This raises questions over commonly held beliefs about how people self-identify and experience life. In other words, is the world still (if it ever was)

primarily assembled around dividing lines such as North-South, rich-poor and urban-rural?

In effect, such dichotomies blind the owner to the rich going on in food. Studies of changing patterns of nutrition in Northern Ecuador and Mexico, for example, reveal how contemporary food mobilises minds and bodies in endlessly nuanced ways. Meeting one another over a meal, migrating rural families, foreign retirees and well-off nationals build social relationships and life together regardless of class, national-ity or age.

Therefore we must identify an agenda of change in agriculture and food that includes renewed scrutiny of daily food practice – in the family, neighbourhood and social networks as well as in the administrative bureaucracies of the state, industry and science. The multiple means of existence found in, and enabled through food, reveals a vitality that despite, and even because of seemingly insurmountable forces, provides hope and inspiration for healthier, more equitable, and sustainable futures.

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In May 2017, the authors will publish a book entitled 'Agriculture, Food, and Social Change: The Everyday Vitality of Latin America' (UK: Routledge/Earthscan Press).

An update from ILEIA

Dear readers,

As you may be aware, ILEIA has to close its doors as an organisation on 1 July 2017, after more than 30 years of work to support family farming rooted in agroecology. The reason for this decision is that we did not succeed in raising enough funds to keep the organisation going in its present mode. Besides publishing Farming Matters, ILEIA has been the global Secretariat of the AgriCultures Network since 1997.

In a recent meeting of the Network the members have jointly decided to shift its Secretariat to Senegal so that it will get rooted in the global South. This happens at a moment when African agriculture is truly at a crossroads and the world needs strong and positive African voices in support of family farming and agroecology. We are proud to inform you that Bara Gueye, director of IED-Afrique, the Senegalese member organisation of the AgriCultures Network, has agreed to take on this task and to steer the Network into a new phase.

With the Network we are also exploring new ways to carry forward ILEIA's legacy and to

continue supporting the practice, science and movement of agroecology and family farming.

During the past months we received encouraging messages from friends, colleagues, readers and authors of our magazine, policymakers, scientists and donor agencies. We would like to thank everyone who has accompanied us over the years and take your recent advice to heart. Many of you told us that the world will be less diverse and less colourful without ILEIA, so we should try to find ways of continuing our work as an inspiring global connector, magazine maker and communicator. That's what we are doing right now and we look forward to keeping in touch with you.

At ILEIA we are now preparing the June issue of Farming Matters. This will be the final issue in our current constellation.

With warm regards from Wageningen,

Edith van Walsum – Director
e.van.walsum@ileia.org



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Centre for learning on sustainable agriculture

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The AgriCultures Network

ILEIA is a member of the AgriCultures Network; five organisations that provide information on agroecology and family farming worldwide, and that publish: LEISA revista de agroecología (Latin America in Spanish), LEISA India (in English, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu), AGRIDAPE (West Africa, in French), Agriculturas, Experiências em Agroecologia (Brazil,

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**“MOVING TOWARDS
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PROCESS OF GAINING
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REDESIGNING FARMING TO
BE INDEPENDENT FROM
DOMINANT MARKETS AND
TECHNOLOGIES”**

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**“Food
sovereignty
means having
control of our
peasant seeds,
the seeds that
we ourselves
have selected,
planted and
harvested for
generations”**

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