

**WHAT IS
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?**

A MOUTHFUL ABOUT FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

7 PRINCIPLES BY LA VÍA CAMPESINA:

- 1 Food: A Basic Human Right**
Everyone must have **access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food** in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity. [...]
- 2 Agrarian Reform**
a genuine agrarian reform [includes...] **ownership and control of the land**, [the farmers] work and [returning] territories to indigenous people. The **right to land** must be free of discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, social class or ideology; the land belongs to those who work it.
- 3 Protecting Natural Resources**
Food Sovereignty entails the **sustainable care and use of natural resources**, especially land, water, and seeds and livestock breeds. The people who work the land must have **the right to practice sustainable management** of natural resources and to conserve biodiversity free of restrictive intellectual property rights. [...]

SOVEREIGNTY

Food sovereignty is a term that was developed by the organization La Via Campesina. It is a holistic and complex concept that deals with the unjust roots of the globalized, industrialized agriculture, and attempts to give autonomy and power back to the producers, and consumers, of food.

4 Reorganizing Food Trade
Food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade. [...]

5 Ending the Globalization of Hunger
Food Sovereignty is undermined by [...] the growing control of **multinational corporations** over agricultural policies has been facilitated by the economic policies of multilateral organizations such as the WTO, World Bank and the IMF. [...]

6 Social Peace
[...] **Food must not be used as a weapon.** Increasing levels of poverty and marginalization in the countryside, along with the growing oppression of ethnic minorities and indigenous populations, aggravate situations of injustice and hopelessness. [...]

7 Democratic control
[...] Everyone has the **right to honest, accurate information and open and democratic decision-making.** These rights form the basis of good governance, accountability and equal participation in economic, political and social life, free from all forms of discrimination. [...]

What is Food Security?

The term food security is widely used in the United Nations and throughout international negotiations. The FAO defines food security as having four main dimensions: Physical availability of food, economic and physical access to food, food utilization, and stability of the other three dimensions over time. We find the term food security to be inadequate to deal with all the factors that are needed to address the unjust and inequitable food system that perpetuates this food crisis, because it can only address the symptoms of an inherently broken system; the basic biological needs of people will be met, but the larger agricultural framework with its structures of oppression and exploitation will still be essentially flawed.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 1 IN EVERY 7 PEOPLE IN THE WORLD SUFFERS HUNGER

SOURCE: LA VÍA CAMPESINA



SOURCE: UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAM

WHO CONTROLS THE SYSTEM?

The globalized, industrial food system is dominated by transnational corporations (TNCs). It is based on unsustainable methods that lead to inequitable power distribution. Farmers can't choose what they produce, what they earn, or what they consume.

Subsidies

As a result of foreign recommendations and pressure (such as IMF structural adjustment programs), many developing countries implement neoliberal policies. Markets are opened up, creating more competition and causing prices to drop, meaning farmers earn less for their crops. Government spending is cut, so there are less subsidies for their farmers, meaning their final prices will be higher. While developing countries' governments cut spending on agriculture, developed countries (in particular the US) heavily subsidise their agricultural sector. This means that on the global scale, agricultural products from developing countries are more expensive and cannot compete on the international market.

NOT-SO-SWEET RETURNS

HOW MUCH OF WHAT YOU PAY FOR A BANANA GOES WHERE?



SOURCE: IIED

Crop Price Stability

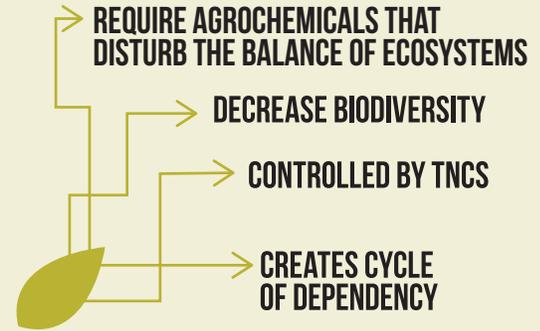
The price of crops is affected by global supply and demand. However, many of the recent price spikes are actually caused by speculation instead – that is, investors betting on food prices. Biofuels further exacerbate price instability because they use the same crops and so there are two markets, instead of one, competing for the same resources. Farmers selling these crops are vulnerable to market price fluctuations. If the global price drops, they are not earning as much – if any – money.

GMOS

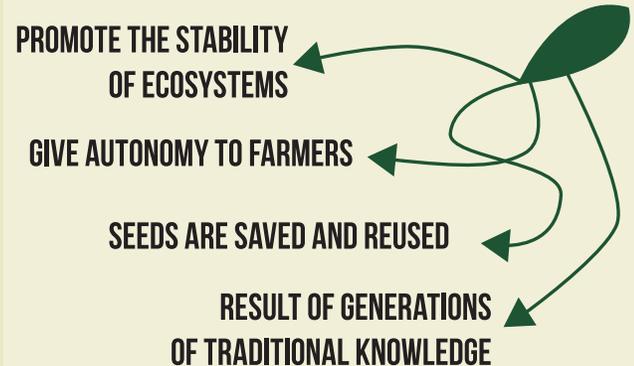
Large scale monoculture agriculture often involves the use of Genetically Modified (GM) seeds purchased from TNCs. The use of GM seeds causes debt because farmers are buying seeds instead of using the ones they have historically saved. The use of GM seeds also requires larger amounts of agrochemicals, incurring further costs. Farmers may be contractually obliged by their seed company to not save the purchased seeds (especially with GM), meaning that they have to continuously buy new ones. GM seeds also lead to the contamination of non-GM crops, resulting in the loss of native species and ancient crop breeds.

The Food Sovereignty Approach

Food sovereignty promotes a shift towards subsistence farming: crops for direct consumption. Food sovereignty also believes in growing a diversity of products and selling at a more local level. By ensuring more stable prices for the farmers selling goods, it also decreases dependency on large (often foreign) corporations, strengthens the local economy, and improves the overall quality of life.



GMO VS. NON-GMO



THE PLANET PAYS

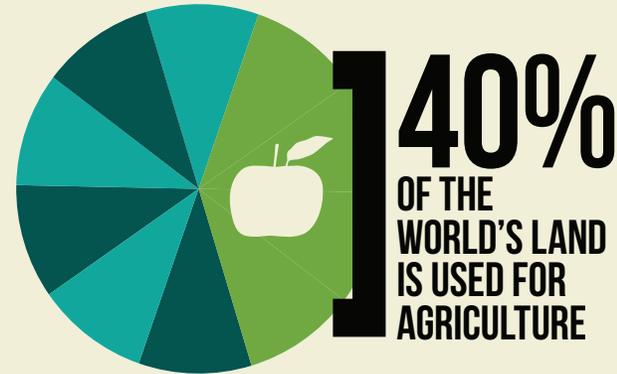
Unsustainable and industrialized forms of production have serious impacts on the environment, degrading it and intensifying food insecurity. This is further exaggerated by climate change causing irregular and extreme weather.

Natural Resources Management

Deforestation and other forms of poor land management, encouraged by intensive mechanized agriculture, leads to land degradation. This in turn causes the removal of topsoil and leaching of soil nutrients. Inefficient irrigation systems can cause salinization and cause streams or underground water sources to dry up.

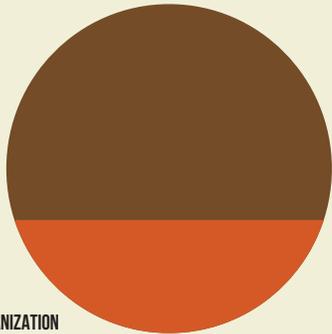
Biodiversity

Severe loss of biodiversity is another environmental problem associated with intensive agriculture. There is heavy use of agrochemicals (fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides) that only furthers the damage to the ecosystems. The indiscriminate use of these technologies creates chemical-resistant 'pests' and weeds. Elimination of 'pests' also kills untargeted species which further alters the ecosystems' balance, creating a downward spiral of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.



FROM "AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN VALUES"

THE AREAS OF THE WORLD THAT ARE VULNERABLE TO LAND DEGRADATION COVER ABOUT 33% OF THE GLOBAL SURFACE



SOURCE: WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

Water

Agrochemical runoff, which is toxic for human beings and other living entities, greatly alters the chemical balance of water and coastal ecosystems. Pesticides cause water sources to become toxified, which is particularly harmful for species at the top of the food chain (e.g humans) since some of these chemicals bioaccumulate throughout trophic levels.

GMOs And Agrochemicals

Large scale monoculture agriculture usually involves the use of Genetically Modified (GM) seeds purchased from TNCs that lead to the contamination of non-GM crops, resulting in the loss of native species and ancient crop breeds. The use of GM seeds also requires larger amounts of agrochemicals. The use of GM seeds causes debt because farmers are buying seeds instead of using the ones they have historically saved. Farmers may be contractually obliged by their seed company to not save the purchased seeds (especially with GM), meaning that they have to continuously buy new ones.

Food Sovereignty

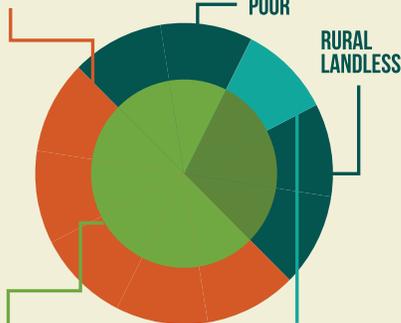
In this complex scenario of environmental degradation where farmers and rural communities suffer, food sovereignty is an alternative that attempts to restore the natural balance that has been profoundly altered by large scale industrial agriculture. Food sovereignty encourages small scale agricultural methods such as urban farming, intercropping, subsistence agriculture, crop rotation and agroecological practices. These practices promote self-sufficiency for communities while protecting the deep and harmonic connection of farmers to their land.

WHERE DO PEOPLE STAND?

PEASANTS CONFORM
50% OF THE POPULATION
WHO IS HUNGRY

URBAN
POOR

RURAL
LANDLESS



YET THEY PRODUCE
70% OF THE
WORLD'S FOOD

PASTORALISTS,
FISHERS,
FOREST-
DEPENDENT

SOURCE: THE DEVELOPMENT FUND

Who feeds the world?

All humans must be able to claim their right to food. Small scale farmers and peasants must regain their autonomy and rightful place in the food system through -owning their methods of production; having decision-making power about policies and the food system's structure; being supplied with sustainable technologies; being provided with suitable public subsidies; and having a strong local economy. They must also have access to land, climate change adaptation and resilience systems and water.

Moreover, traditional and indigenous knowledge should be recognized for their value regarding sustainable food techniques, and must be adopted within the food system. Empowerment of women is key. Globally, the majority of food is produced by women, but they face tremendous power imbalances and are most vulnerable. Moreover, women have been shown to invest their resources in food, children, and small businesses, and thus their empowerment leads directly to poverty eradication.

Can the peasants provide for all?

Food sovereignty in the hands of small scale farmers and peasants can provide sufficient and nutritious food in a more equitable and sustainable way.



60% OF THE WORLD'S
AGRICULTURAL
WORKERS ARE WOMEN.

SOURCE: FAO



**THESE WOMEN
PRODUCE BETWEEN
60% TO 80% OF
WORLD FOOD CROPS.**

SOURCE: FAO

Culturally Appropriate Food

If farmers are only producing cash crops to be exported, and no one is producing food to be consumed locally, food must be imported. As a result, traditional foods of the many different cultures and peoples of the world are being lost. The non-local food tends to be more processed and less healthy, fresh and culturally appropriate. This has caused a nutritional and cultural imbalance that has brought loss of native seed varieties. People of all cultures should be able to exercise their right to grow and eat their own traditional foods because this enhances harmony with the local environment and strengthens culture and identity. Culturally appropriate food should be understood in a holistic way that includes all the processes from the production of the food to the methods of preparation.

Who is hungry?

Half of the more than the 1 billion people that suffer from hunger are peasants and their families.

The world's hunger and malnutrition affects the poor, women and children the most. Malnutrition is caused by the cheap and unhealthy food that is prevalent in our industrial food system. Hunger is caused among other things by the widespread poverty in the developing world, climate change and by the highly unequal distribution and consumption of food between the developed and developing countries.



HUNGER KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES:



=15 MILLION PEOPLE

ASIA & PACIFIC = 642 MILLION

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA = 265 MILLION

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN = 53 MILLION

NORTH AFRICA = 42 MILLION

DEVELOPED COUNTRIES = 15 MILLION

SOURCE: WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

WHO WE ARE

Earth in Brackets is a College of the Atlantic student group engaging in environmental and sustainable development politics. Since 2006 we have sent delegations to UN meetings under the Convention on Biological Diversity, Framework Convention on Climate Change, and Commission on Sustainable Development. With a human ecological approach, we try to bring a sense of justice--environmental and social--to the fore. We believe another world is not only possible, but necessary, and we want to bring more young people into the struggle for and celebration of that world.

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SOURCES:

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COMPOSITION OF HUNGRY POPULATION:

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**ANOTHER WORLD
IS POSSIBLE...**