



Francisco Daniel, MST de Brasil,  
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## editorial

### ten years of nyéléni - much to celebrate !

A decade ago, the movements of peasants, fisherfolk, shepherds, women, migrants, workers, young people, and indigenous peoples sowed a crucial seed in the defence of Food Sovereignty and the right to food - the Nyéléni Newsletter. During this ten year germination period, we have shared challenges, experiences, reflections, and acts of unity. In recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic has reaffirmed the fundamental role of those who feed communities in a healthy, fair, and sustainable manner.

Alarmingly, we have also witnessed how extractive capitalism, authoritarianism and agribusinesses have taken over land and territories with total impunity, causing lives to be put at risk while governments continue to enact policies, regulations, and laws that favour corporations and industrial food systems.

Despite this, there is still plenty to celebrate. This newsletter is a unique instrument of solidarity, exchange, training, and communication for the organisations that are advocating an end to the Industrial Food System and its replacement with Food Sovereignty. Today we applaud legislation promoting Food Sovereignty, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, the mass expansion of Agroecology in practice and training through hundreds of schools, as well as the constant fight to keep peasant seeds in the hands of small-scale food producers.

So, in this edition we celebrate, cherishing our collective memories and reaping the fruits of our labour, because we are the voice of hope, and we will sing loudly!

*The Nyéléni newsletter Editorial Board  
on behalf of the  
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sovereignty

## who we are

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

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

## now is time for food sovereignty !

## box 1 Why was the Nyéléni newsletter created?

The International Forum on Food Sovereignty in Mali in 2007—the Nyéléni Forum—brought together over 500 representatives from organisations/movements of small-scale food providers, consumers and civil society organisations, all of whom were involved in strengthening and expanding food sovereignty at local and global levels. During the Forum, participants from 80 countries shared knowledge, visions, strategies and practices for transforming their communities, societies and economies through the principles of food sovereignty.

These discussions revealed the wealth of knowledge continuously being created by food sovereignty practitioners as they confronted social, economic, environmental and political challenges. It also highlighted the centrality and utility of food sovereignty as a platform to build alliances and strategies to resist neoliberalism, global capitalism, authoritarianism, and all forms of injustice, inequality and violence. Participants pledged to build solidarity, unity and common cause within and across movements, constituencies, genders, cultures and regions by strengthening communication, political education, awareness and peer-to-peer learning.

The Nyéléni newsletter was created to respond to these commitments: to give voice to the priorities, concerns, experiences and knowledge of the food sovereignty movement, and foster dialogue across sectors/actors. The newsletter was conceptualized as an informational and educational tool to contextualize and explain complex issues to movement actors—especially those at the grassroots and in the frontlines—as well as bring their particular experiences to the forefront. The newsletter is produced four times a year in English, Spanish and French, and shared all over the world through conventional and social media.

The topics of each edition of the bulletin are decided by movement members, and the articles are written in styles and lengths that are easy to understand and translate. While allied researchers/academics are invited to present analyses, each newsletter contains testimonies from grassroots actors, and information about struggles, initiatives and outreach materials from movements across the world. The overall goal of the newsletter was and remains to be facilitating a pedagogy of peoples committed to building and realizing food sovereignty.

## in the spotlight 1

### Food Sovereignty at the forefront for a new system

Neoliberal policies have failed to achieve their promises of endless economic growth, while many real investments have lost their profitability. Now a new era of financialization and capital accumulation, characterized by the dematerialization of the real economy and mergers and acquisitions by TNCs, has led to an unprecedented market concentration focused on the enhancement of new R&D (Research and Development) and (bio)technology investments. They aim to extend the frontiers of capitalism to capture all the world's biodiversity, lower the cost of food and labour, and restart a material economic expansion.

To achieve this objective, TNCs increasingly influence the UN system to receive favourable public policies and normative frameworks. The World Economic Forum and TNCs are trying to transform the UN institutions' governance principles and practices through so-called "multi-stakeholder governance" and make it the domain of a small number of powerful private monopolies. The COVID pandemic has shed light on the power of TNCs, as in many countries large scale corporate food enterprises were financially supported while small-scale food producers went bankrupt and food and agricultural workers (many of them migrants) remained unemployed and therefore without access to food.



The food sovereignty movement - which mainstreams agroecology - can be at the forefront of an alternative way forward, offering a solution to restart material economic expansion while tackling climate change, and reshaping a new society based on egalitarian principles. Indeed, the FAO has recognized the role of small-scale food producers in feeding the world, and recognises their role at the core of solutions to mitigate and reverse climate change. Until now, all the solutions to mitigate climate change proposed by the corporate sector have failed to address underlying causes and have continued to allow the biggest polluters to continue heating our planet. Real solutions to stop climate change are rooted in peoples' access to and control of land, seeds, and water and in the promotion of agroecology, the restoration of nature and landscapes that enable water retention.

Following the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996 - during which La Via Campesina launched the Food Sovereignty agenda and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) was formed - it was at the Nyéléni Forum in 2007 where social movements gathered to agree on a common agenda for Food Sovereignty. In 2015 many of those same movements came together at the Nyéléni Forum for Agroecology, where a common definition of Agroecology was agreed in order to bring it into the mainstream of the United Nations. Now the food sovereignty movement through the IPC is calling for a new global summit which aims to connect the food sovereignty agenda with the other converging struggles for climate justice and system change, and which can demonstrate the real alternatives to the current food and economic system already in existence - alternatives based on agroecology and an economic system that includes territorial markets, direct relationships between producers and consumers, cooperatives and participatory community-led governance mechanisms and policies.



# in the spotlight 2

## Communication and the urgency of reporting on Food Sovereignty

To exercise your rights, you must know them. Alternative, popular, and community-based communication is key to this effort, as it entails social organizations and movements creating messages that strengthen their own narratives, without any intermediaries involved. They communicate the struggles, demands, complaints, ideas, and proposals for a dignified life directly from communities themselves, including calls for social, environmental, economic and gender equity.

Among the mainstream communications media monopolised by agribusinesses - who invest in million dollar advertising schemes whilst greenwashing their extractive projects that pollute soils and waterways - popular communication is forging its way.

Through blogs, social media messages and online video streaming, social, environmental, feminist, peasant, indigenous and Afro- organisations are experiencing a new boom in media appropriation, with new communication technologies becoming major allies.

An emblem of this new era is the collaboration between various organisations to build new communication channels and their own media. This unity in diversity, which we promote in order to advance a common political agenda, has its place in these transmedia platforms where the media hegemony can be challenged. In addition, there are audiences eager to see themselves reflected in these modern means of communication which have been built from the bottom up and from the political left, to inspire them and to help them find a cause they feel connected to.

Within the coverage of issues related to the development and practice of Food Sovereignty - be it articles, posters, reports, photo-reports or podcasts – it's important to continue to share the stories that illustrate the emancipatory projects that are taking place around the world and that are facing political persecution, militarisation of the land and the imposition of agro-industrial technologies which are being incorrectly labelled as being 'sustainable'.

In this capitalist and patriarchal world, women are the ones who suffer most from hunger and only 13% of them own land although paradoxically, they are responsible for 60% of global food production. Narratives on Food Sovereignty must feature women as the leading protagonists, showing the work they do and boosting their voices as political subjects of Agroecology.

Communicating what Food Sovereignty is and why its defence and its construction from the bottom up are important must be an integral part of movements' strategies. Getting this message across is a central tool for effecting change, not an afterthought.

# voices from the field

## 1 Women in the struggle for Food Sovereignty - *We want to continue to play our key role: feeding humanity*

*Excerpt from an interview with Francisca Rodriguez of Anamuri, CLOC-Via Campesina, Chile.*

Peasants of the world are highly diverse peoples, communities, organisations and families. We represent different cultures and worldviews.

The process of discussing and debating around food sovereignty has allowed us to recognise and value our peasant activities – and recognise that women have been fundamental to the development of agriculture and continue to be key to the production, processing and transformation of food.

We have strongly promoted Agroecology - not as something new that is emerging - but rather as part of a process of recovering ancestral practices in agriculture, which have been developed by indigenous and original peoples up until the present day.

Never in history have we properly realized the value of the countryside for the survival of humanity itself - we are the guardians of the land, we live where the resources are, and our task is to fight to preserve them for current and future generations.

We are proud to be what we are, we do not want to migrate to the cities or be forced abroad by force, we want to continue fulfilling our fundamental role: feeding humanity with our work, our knowledge and our natural goods, ensuring that the right to food is fulfilled for all without exception, and that Mother Earth is cared for while we obtain our sustenance from her.

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Food Sovereignty movement  
from the grassroots.*

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# voices from the field

## 2 The Importance of alliances for Food Sovereignty from the perspective of two US women farmers

**How does organizing in cross-sectoral alliances fit into the global effort toward food sovereignty?**

*Patti Naylor, USFSA member and Coordinating Committee member of the Civil Society and Indigenous Mechanism for North America.*

As a farmer, I see around me how corporate-dominated agriculture does not support rural communities, farmer livelihoods, or Mother Earth's essential sources of life. Nor does it produce healthy food - it instead relies on long, complex supply chains that result in highly processed foods. Food sovereignty is necessary to replace this disastrous system. Coming together in organizations and building our collective strength into alliances is critical as the momentum of industrial agriculture gains speed and power worldwide, becoming a force that could become impossible to stop. Time is critical. The injustices of capitalism, impacts of climate change, and disruptions to territorial markets due to COVID-19 are putting food producers in dire circumstances.

Just like upheavals in the past, farmers, fishers, peasants, and rural workers who cannot survive economically will leave their farms and communities. The production of local food and even the ability to organize in resistance will be greatly diminished. Rural areas will be depopulated as people move to cities in search of jobs. These changes may be irreversible. As we recognize the urgency of these situations, we must continue to build alliances that are strong and are based on clearly defined, common goals to reach food sovereignty for all peoples.

### Can you tell about the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA)?

*Jennifer Taylor, national coordinator for the US Food Sovereignty Alliance.*

Like the Nyéléni 2007 Forum for Food Sovereignty, the USFSA membership is made up of family farmers, fisherfolk, ranchers, farm workers, women, youth, rural and urban workers, consumers, etc. who believe that food is critical to humanity and that healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through agroecological methods is the basis of healthy food systems and healthy environments. We believe in the benefits of agroecology- food sovereignty policies.

The USFSA upholds the right to food as a basic human right. As an agroecology-organic BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) small farmer promoting wellbeing and quality of life, I would emphasize that our Human Right is to the availability of and access to healthy, nutritious food, that benefits healthy farms and community environments, and that fosters healthy communities – this critical emphasis upholds the right to local and global food sovereignty and is inclusive of underserved farming populations, black indigenous farmers and farmers of color and their communities. Participatory capacity building of local and global agroecology-organic smallholder farmers and their communities is vital to enable healthy local and global food systems. USFSA supports participatory capacity building strategies that enable the wellbeing, livelihoods, and ability of local and global black indigenous farmers and farmers of color and their communities.


## 3 Food Sovereignty: challenges and hopes for fisher communities

*Ibu Zainab, member of Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri - Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia.*

The challenge faced by fisherwomen in our struggle for food sovereignty is that businesses and corporations are taking away the ocean which is the source of our livelihoods. These corporations deny us access to the ocean, pollute the coastal environment, and even trigger conflicts within communities. Our government has never listened to our demands, but instead sided with these corporations.

As women, our identity as fisherwomen is also not recognized and is often attached to our husbands' role as fishermen. I hope that the government protects our right to food and our access to marine resources so we can fish and sustain our livelihood as small-scale food producers.

There must be a solution to ensure the struggle for space between company interests, government agendas and community rights does not marginalize fisherwomen. Because Indonesia is an archipelago, fishermen and fisherwomen are heroes of the nation in ensuring a healthy diet (fish as major source of protein) and our rights must be respected, protected and fulfilled.

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

Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877



## 4 Food Sovereignty: challenges and hopes for pastoral communities

*Fernando Garcia, Campo Adentro, European Shepherds Network – WAMIP, Spain.*

In April, while the Covid crisis was at its worst, different social movements' representatives of the Food Sovereignty movement wrote a letter titled "COVID-19 – Small-scale food producers stand in solidarity and will fight to bring healthy food to all."<sup>1</sup>

We can hardly foresee the impact that this crisis might entail.

On one hand there is a growing concern regarding the unsustainable patterns of our food models - especially the danger of intensive livestock systems and factory farms which are associated with ecosystem disruption due to industrial agribusiness expansion (such as native forests being removed for palm oil plantations).

On the other hand climate change is more present than ever, and the importance of small-scale food producers is crucial. This crisis is a sort of "stress test" as economists say, for an entire food system that is supplying an ever-growing urban population and is based on globalized transport and circulation. Maybe patterns we have seen increasing till now could change.

This crisis is surely hitting small businesses harder (such as shops and restaurants), which are generally more closely linked to small-scale local producers. Some actors - with e-commerce now king - might promote an even faster digitalization of food systems driven by corporate interests and profit.

Pastoralists in Europe and the world look at these scenarios with great concern, but also with the confidence that comes with the knowledge that they are a vital part of the solution. We hope that the environmentalist movement doesn't simplify the slogan "no more meat" and impose an urban-western-centred view of veganism, but that it will instead promote a responsible consumption of quality, healthy and local animal products from pastoralist systems.

Grassroot organisations, joined in a renewed World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples & Pastoralists - WAMIP – are now active in different spaces and working to bridge the discussions on Agroecology and Food Sovereignty (born in the context of peasant struggles) to the particularities of pastoralism. We together made and acknowledge the Declaration of Peasants - and Pastoralists - Rights and now we need to make sure that real spaces of participation and recognition put pastoralists first – such as at the Pastoralist Knowledge Hub of the FAO, or the GASL and LEAP initiatives<sup>2</sup>. We have managed to have the FAO COAG (Committee on Agriculture) pass the proposal making 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, and trust IPC and other civil society processes.

The hardest thing is staying in touch in spite of the distances, and to make time for building alliances besides our everyday work...but if we don't, anti-pastoralist policies and economic interests will put in danger our way of life, and the territories and landscapes that with our animals we nurture.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/covid-19/>

<sup>2</sup> Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock and Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance.

## 5 Agroecology is not just a set of practices, but a way of life

*Anuka Desilva, MONLAR/ LVC, Sri Lanka.*

Agroecology is not just a set of practices, but a way of life. It is as much about nurturing our soil, our fields - as it is about solidarity between our peoples. Without solidarity between people, there is no agroecology.

In Sri Lanka, the young collective of peasants from Dikkubura, Ahangama and Galle have attended agroecological formation sessions, met peasants from other regions, and studied and debated on not just the practises we follow in the field, but also the politics of food in general.

Through several training sessions, our collective learnt and exchanged information regarding the preparation of beejamrutha, jeevamrutha, ghana jeevamrutha, agniastra and other inputs used in natural farming. We also learned about dry-land horticulture and different techniques of grafting in horticulture crops. Various seed saving techniques were discussed too. These were the practical aspects. However, we do not just stop there. We also studied the dynamics of the global food system that is now in the hands of transnational corporations. We analysed the impacts of free-trade agreements on local production and consumption. We studied the gender and caste disparity in the ownership of land in South Asia and much more. So the training sessions are often a mix of practical and political aspects of the peasantry.

Agroecology is at its core giving autonomy to people to design their own food systems, based on local resources and local labour. It is a system that allows us to produce food in harmony with nature and that prioritises the food sovereignty of the local community above everything else.

We need to be clear about this - a set of sustainable practices alone will not help advance Agroecology. The training sessions we have in LVC are about both the practical and political aspects of Agroecology that allow us to make it a tool for achieving food sovereignty.



# voices from the field

## 6 The fruits of Food Sovereignty: Organized youth

David Otieno, Kenyan Peasant League Youth/LVC, Kenya.

Food sovereignty is about food producers and consumers taking total control of the food production process from seeds, land and water to markets, inputs and distribution. We as young people are critical in ensuring that Food Sovereignty is attained. Our greatest strength lies in our collective capacity to live and build a more fair and just world.

Within LVC, we have been organizing ourselves through training processes to establish youth brigades that strive to correct the current broken global food system, which is based on agribusinesses that are also responsible for climate change. We, the youth, have been doing this in order to place LVC members who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than at the mercy of markets and corporations as envisioned by agribusiness.

Through LVC Southern and Eastern Africa, our youth articulation has been in the forefront in reclaiming wastelands

for food production. A good example is in South Africa where youth, members of the Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Landless People's Movement - all members of LVC - have been engaged in an "occupy" campaign aimed at turning wastelands into spaces for producing food.

In Kenya through the Kenyan Peasants League youth collective we are engaged in ensuring that seeds and food has been distributed to members and others who have been in dire need during the coronavirus pandemic. Our efforts have also included assisting older members to till and plant their farms and documenting all the seeds among members to ensure ease of distribution.

MST youth brigades have also been engaged in reconstruction processes especially following cyclone Idai that hit most parts of Southern Africa and were also involved in solidarity initiatives during the coronavirus pandemic.

Looking back at the Nyéléni forum for Food Sovereignty held in 2007 in a small Malian village, one sees that food sovereignty and youths are strongly linked: the struggle for food sovereignty has helped organize youths while an organized youth is ensuring the achievement of food sovereignty.

### La cumbia del campesinx

La cumbia del agronegocio, la bailan los asesinos,  
La cumbia del agronegocio, la bailan los asesinos,  
El pueblo nunca la baila, unidos, jamás vencidos,  
El pueblo nunca la baila, unidos, jamás vencidos!

La cumbia del campesino, la baila el pueblo unido,  
La cumbia del campesino, la baila el pueblo unido,  
Esa sí que la bailamos, porque estamos convencidos,  
Esa sí que la bailamos, porque estamos convencidos,

¡Soberanía Alimentaria, queremos Reforma Agraria!  
¡Soberanía Alimentaria, queremos Reforma Agraria!

¡Pasito por aquí, pasito por acá, queremos la  
Reforma Agraria Integral!

¡Pasito por aquí, pasito por acá, queremos la  
Reforma Agraria Integral!

### The peasants' cumbia

The cumbia of agribusiness, the murderers dance it,  
The cumbia of agribusiness, the murderers dance it,  
The people never dance it, united, never defeated,  
The people never dance it, united, never defeated!

The cumbia of the peasants, the people dance it together,  
The cumbia of the peasants, the people dance it together,  
We dance that one, because we are determined,  
We dance that one, because we are determined,

Food Sovereignty, we want Land Reform!  
Food Sovereignty, we want Land Reform!

Step this way, step that way, we want  
Comprehensive Land Reform!

Step this way, step that way, we want  
Comprehensive Land Reform!

This newsletter is supported by AFSA, Brot für die Welt, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, FoEI, Food First, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IATP, La Via Campesina, Oxfam Deutschland, Oxfam Solidarity, VSF-Justicia Alimentaria Global, WhyHunger.



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