

Food Sovereignty



Photo by Bing Gong



Photo by Kris Krug

Food is 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. Each nation should declare that access to food is a constitutional right and guarantee the development of the primary sector to ensure the concrete realization of this fundamental right.

Via Campesina's Declaration on Food Sovereignty

After the global food crisis in 2007 –which left 75 million people hungry in that year alone (1) - access to food became a pressing concern for policy makers and social movements alike.

Presently, an estimate of 642 million people are considered chronically hungry in Asia and the Pacific, 265 million in Sub-Sahara Africa, 53 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, 42 million in the Near East and North Africa, and 15 million in developed countries(2). Drastic increase in food prices around the world have led to food riots in Haiti, Pakistan, Mozambique, Bolivia, Morocco, Mexico, Senegal, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh and Niger. This situation has also encouraged “land grabs” by wealthier countries in poorer nations (3).

Paradoxically, most of those affected by hunger and food shortages are small-scale farmers. Women have been particularly impacted. “In 2006, 60% of those who suffered from chronic hunger were women” (4) and the hardest hit by high food prices around the world were female-headed households (5). The “feminization” of agriculture as a growing global phenomena has implied increased vulnerability for small-scale female farmers who grow between 60-80% of the food in poor countries and half of the world’s food (6).

Food shortage has been associated to a number of interrelated politico-environmental reasons:

- Extremes weather conditions,
- The expansion of agrofuels and monoculture projects,
- The expansion of transgenic foods, and
- The concentration of land

While top-down schemes emphasize “food security” as the answer to food shortages, grassroots political actors around the world demand “food sovereignty”. The notion of “food security” considers hunger to be a technical problem –mainly how to get food to those who need it –and does not consider questions of systematic exclusion and inequality. The notion of “food sovereignty”, in contrast, acknowledges “the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods” (7).



Image from [The Environmental Food Crisis](#)

We declare and denounce that agribusiness and the inherent logic of production of foods oriented towards the market and not for the right to food, is one of the main causes of climate change through changes in the use of land (deforestation and the expansion of the agricultural frontier), monocrops, the excessive use of products derived from the petrochemical industry, food processing, and all the logistic involved in the transportation of food towards the consumer and also through the model of society, economy and culture of production and consumption

[Pre conference of Bolivian indigenous peoples and social organizations on climate change and the rights of Mother Earth](#)

Guiding questions

1. What is the difference between food security and food sovereignty?
2. What are some of the structural causes of the global food crisis?
3. How does climate change and the expansion of capitalist enterprises (agrofuels and monoculture projects) relate to global food shortages?
4. What are 'land grabs' and what are the political, social and economic implications of 'land grabs' for poorer countries?
5. What are some of solutions to the food crisis being proposed by grassroots political actors?

People's Declarations

[Statement from the People's Movement Assembly on Food Sovereignty](#)

[Pre conference of Bolivian indigenous peoples and social organizations on climate change and the rights of Mother Earth](#)

[Via Campesina's Declaration on Food Sovereignty](#)

[Declaration Women united for food sovereignty and against violence towards women](#)

[World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, Agriculture and Food Sovereignty](#)

Featured Videos

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By Ananya Mukherjee Reed

[The Kamburu Story](#)

By Green TV

Readings

["The Wrongs About The Right To Food"](#)

By Ananya Mukherjee Reed, OutlookInida.com

[The Environmental Food Crisis](#)

By UNEP

["Food Crisis: Causes, consequences and Alternatives"](#)

By Esther Vivas, Znet

["Mozambique's food riots – the true face of global warming"](#)

The Guardian.co.uk, September 5, 2010

["Food Riots or Food Rebellions?"](#)

By Julia Landau, *Common Dreams.org*

["Global food security and sovereignty threatened by corporate and government "land grabs"](#)

By he Food Crisis and the Global Land Grab

["Absolute Power Comes From Absolute Control Over Food"](#)

By Devinder Sharma, Living Farms

[Twenty years of fighting for seeds and food sovereignty](#)

By GRAIN, July 2010

["What's the new global source for fresh, shiny produce?"](#)

By Nance Macdonald, *MACLEANS.CA*

["Reinventing Food Systems"](#)

By Marty Fujita in *Climate Change: Catalyst or Catastrophe?* Vol. 16, No. 2, Fall 2009

["You Are What You Eat"](#)

By: John E. Peck, La Via Campesina: International Peasant Movement

[Responding to the Global Food Crisis: Three Perspectives](#)

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[The Via Campesina: Peasant Women on the Frontiers of Food Sovereignty](#)

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["Status of Female Farmers Rises During Food Crisis"](#)

By Rebecca Harshbarger, *WeNews correspondent*, Wednesday, August 11, 2010

["Food Security Further Undermined by Climate Disasters"](#)

By Edgardo Ayala, *International Press Service*

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By the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

[From Haiti: Peasants against Monsanto Company for food and seed sovereignty](#)

By La Via Campesina

[Agrocombustibles Industriales Generan Hambre y Pobreza](#)

Por La Vía Campesina, 2009

[Azúcar Roja, Desiertos Verdes. Informe Latinoamericano sobre monocultivos y violaciones al derecho a la alimentación y vivienda adecuadas, el agua, la tierra y el territorio.](#)

Artículo de Ricardo Navarro, Centro Savadoreño de Tecnología Apropiada (CESTA), Amigos de la Tierra El Salvador

[The Impact of the Crisis on Women: Main Trends across Regions](#)

By the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), 2010

["Seized: The 2008 landgrab for food and financial security"](#)

GRAIN, October 2008

["Land grabbing in Latin America"](#)

GRAIN, March 2010