



'I eat, you produce, they decide?'



What is Food Sovereignty?

"Food sovereignty is the peoples', countries' or groups of countries' right to define their agricultural and food policy, without causing any dumping to other countries."

Definition by la Via Campesina

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems."

Final declaration of Nyeleni Forum 2007

In general, this concept includes the following principles:

- > Access to **good quality and culturally appropriated food**, thus the right of consumers and producers to **decide** what they consume, how and by whom it is produced.
- > **Access to production resources** for all (water, land, seeds, livestock, credit, education...).
- > Priority to **local markets** to ensure the right to food and **decent income** for farmers. This implies the right of the people's to **protect** themselves from too low priced agricultural and food imports, in order to be able to define their own policy based on their needs and not according to the market demands.
- > The **participation of people**, especially women, in decision making processes on food and agriculture.

How this concept was born?

The concept was brought to the public debate during the World Food Summit in 1996 by Via Campesina and represents an alternative to neoliberal policies. Since then, that concept has become a major issue of the international agricultural debate, among numbers of NGOs and even within the United Nations bodies.

A lot of farmer- fisher- pastoralists- indigenous and rural organizations have made food sovereignty to their main objective, so did MIJARC in 2003 during the World Coordination in Brazil. Hundreds of organisations gathered at Nyeleni forum in 2007 in Mali to give a framework to this concept.



It is for MIJARC a relevant concept to solve the problem of hunger in the world in an environmentally, socially, economically and democratically sustainable way, as well as to keep rural areas alive on the long term.

4 challenges for Food Sovereignty:

1 What do we eat?

Food sovereignty starts with every one of us! Consumers have a big power: By buying or not buying certain products or brands we state how important we consider fair prices, socially and ecologically friendly production, fair working conditions. We contribute to food sovereignty by clearly choosing for regional products, local economy, small and medium-sized enterprises rather than big global players.

We consume daily and in many ways. The electricity we use, the water we drink, the bread we eat, the coffee we enjoy – all our consumption habits have direct and indirect consequences on nature, economy and other human beings.

To contribute to food sovereignty by consuming consciously signifies doing it also in our countries in Europe: food shall be produced locally as far as possible. That means: better buy apples at the farmer next door or in the next village rather than apples from the other side of the world. And better buy meat from animals that were fed with local rather than imported feeding stuff (e.g. Soya coming from Latin



America and destroying rain forests¹). The closer produced the better! It also means to adapt food habits to local and seasonal products (e.g. tomatoes do not grow naturally in winter).

To promote food sovereignty does not imply to object completely to world trade. Trade is good as long as its conditions do not put at risk the food sovereignty of people in the producing countries. To make sure producers and eco-systems are not exploited you can buy fair trade products. Another important contribution is to support campaigns for good and fair food, against unfair practices of supermarkets, against price dumping.

“Local- organic- fair” shall be the slogan for consumer’s decision. Let’s be aware of our power as consumers. Let’s act responsible to make food sovereignty possible.

¹ On this topic, please refer to the examples given in the quiz, questions 16, 29, 31

2 How do we produce?

Those who produce food are the core of food sovereignty. The word ‘sovereignty’ indicates the vision that producers should be able to decide by themselves what they want to cultivate and how. Precondition for this self-determination is to have access to local resources, particularly to water, land and seeds.

Food sovereignty signifies: Farmers are not pressured to produce for the export market since they can sell their products also on the local market. Ideally, governments support small-scale farming, organise local markets and encourage sustainable production methods.

Food sovereignty initiates a positive circle of local and sustainable food production: Farmers are encouraged to cultivate food rather than other cash crops (e.g. maize for agro fuel)². Thus, the local food production is sufficient for the local population. Food imports can be reduced and countries become less dependent from other countries and speculation on food prices. Good prices allow for better and more sustainable production methods. As a further consequence, working conditions become



more ecological and fair. The quality of food will rise and so will the quality of life for workers and producers. Consumers around the world re-discover the value of tasty, healthy and locally produced food. Producers can survive from their food production. Local value chains and local economy are stabilized and strengthened. New job opportunities are created.

Food sovereignty requires access to education. Education and awareness rising is the key to good and reasonable decisions. Education and training qualifies farmers to elaborate the production method and to produce in an ecologically and economically more sustainable way, as a worldwide concept. Education opportunities are particularly important for women all

over the world, who are often not recognized as producers even accounting for the biggest share of food supply and food sovereignty for the whole family. The positive impacts of food sovereignty for farmers and rural areas are not limited to so called third world countries, they also account for Europe.

² On this topic, please refer to the examples given in the quiz, questions 6, 48, 50

3 Who decides?

The agricultural system is in crisis. There is enough food produced on this planet to feed the global population but there is a lack of political initiative to organize the food sector in such a way that everyone can exercise his/her right to food³.

We explain this situation by a lack of democracy and unfairness in the food policies. The current "free" trade policies implemented all over the world by the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as well as free trade agreements prevent states from keeping tools (customs, food stocks,...) to ensure their food security, and endanger farmers' ability to feed their own communities because of dumping⁴.

Moreover, multinational companies have too much power. They represent the commercial interests of a small number of people, and yet they have gained control over farmers and consumers, production and consumption habits, dictating what we eat.



With Food Sovereignty, we consider that if the most vulnerable people were true actors in food and agriculture decisions, we would not reach such a situation of food crisis.

On European level, we have the chance to share a strong agricultural political tool: the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)⁵. Nevertheless, if civil society isn't involved in the decisions and heard in priority before the private sector, the European Union will continue promoting large scale commercial and environmentally hostile farming whereby consumers

have become detached from producers and the food processes.

³ On this topic, please refer to the examples given in the quiz, questions 1, 9, 13, 22, 24, 25, 28, 34, 37, 46, 47

⁴ On this topic, please refer to the examples given in the quiz, questions 3, 5, 15, 16, 18, 52

⁵ On this topic, please refer to the examples given in the quiz, questions 42, 43, 44, 45, 51

4 A focus on land issues

Food sovereignty considers that the food should be produced by the masses, and not by mass production. It means that we need many farmers if we want to produce sustainable and good quality food. Among the resources needed to produce, land is a big issue. By land, we also speak about sea, forests and natural resources. We can find a wide diversity of land sharing situations in the world, even within the European Union. But in many cases, the distribution of land is quite unfair.⁶



In Western Europe for example, the size of the farms are so big that the price of land is far too expensive for young people to buy it and start farming. The transformation of the land for other purposes (housing, roads, etc.), as well as the extension of the existing farms also increase the prices. "Land-grabbing" is when countries or companies buy large amounts of land in "underdeveloped" regions, which prevents access to land for local farmers.

In both cases, the actual food security is threatened, but also the future food production. If farmers don't have access to land today, we won't have food tomorrow!

«Food sovereignty implies policies of redistribution, equitable access and control over natural and productive resources (...), by young people, women, indigenous people, peasants and other rural communities. Access to and control over land must be achieved through an implementation of the right to land with respect to hereditary inheritance and protection from land grabbing in rural areas.»⁷

⁶ On this topic, please refer to the examples given in the quiz, questions 7, 27, 29, 31

⁷ *Final declaration of the Youth caucus*, People's Summit for Food Sovereignty, Rome, 13-17 Nov 2009

INITIATIVES

Farmer's dignity: *Les Agronautes*

by MRJC – France

A MRJC team (France) has created a role-play game with rural farming schools. The idea of the game is that each player is a farmer who aims to set up his own farm. This game incites reflection and debates among the participants, encouraging them to consider the different aspects of a farmer's job as well as how the profession impacts their aspirations in life (income, social activities, personal time, etc.).



Access to resources: Campaign on land grabbing

by Spire- Norway

This campaign is politically motivated to make the Norwegian government see the problems related to bio-fuels, which are produced in large amount in direct competition to food production. This event undermines the principles of Food Sovereignty. Large scale land acquisition are lead by foreign countries in developing countries to produce food or agro fuels for their own 'western countries'. So Spire makes promotional materials, seminars, summer camps, in dialogue with the Norwegian social forum and direct actions. They also organized a study-visit to Mozambique to visit place where people have had their land 'grabbed' for the production of bio-fuels and proposed a 'park grab' in Oslo to make people aware.



Education: La Marmite

by MRJC-France

This is a sort of meeting place in Brittany that provides information and counselling to people who want to set up their farms. This place is a forum/platform for you to get helped collectively, i.e. learning from group experiences. There are debate evenings, etc. These are frequently cases of pioneering & unconventional farming projects, promoting agro ecological practices and multi-function agriculture.

TOOLS TO WORK ON FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

> Final declarations of forum and platforms:

Final declaration of Nyeleni Forum 2007:

<http://www.nyeleni.org/>

Declarations of Civil Society Organizations parallel-forum to World Food Summit, Rome 2009: <http://peoplesforum2009.foodsovereignty.org/node/275>

European Food Declaration:

<http://www.europeanfooddeclaration.org/who-are-we>

> Websites:

Nyeleni Forum 2007 Website:

<http://www.nyeleni.org>

Nyeleni Forum Europe 2011:

<http://nyelenieurope.net/index.php?lang=en>

Via Campesina: www.eurovia.org

MIJARC World:

<http://www.mijarc.org/index.php?id=164>

> Studies and reports:

Jacques Berthelot, Solidarité, 12 June 2009

<http://solidarite.asso.fr>

Report "*Who will feed us*", ETC Group, November 2009 www.etcgroup.org

IAASTD Report : <http://www.agassessment.org/>

> Pedagogical Materials:

MIJARC World campaign and materials :

<http://www.mijarc.org/>

"*Food Sovereignty, Hope and Challenge for Rural Youth*", MIJARC World, March 2009.

MIJARC Europe political document (issued during a seminar on Food Sovereignty in Strasbourg, May 2010): www.mijarc.info

Website Belgium platform for FS, PFSA (in French):

<http://www.pfsa.be/spip.php?rubrique46>

<http://www.pfsa.be/spip.php?rubrique5>



> Quiz enclosed to this flyer



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MIJARC Europe Secretariat

Email: europe@mijarc.net

Website: www.mijarc.info



The International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth is:

> a movement based on Christian values

> a European network of national and regional movements

> a democratic movement of self-organised young people

> an educational movement, aware of the problems of the rural youth in Europe

> an action movement working for and with young people to create social change (through lobbying, advocacy...)

> a movement which gathers young people who want to commit themselves to improve the life of their villages and to build a better world