

## The right to food has unacceptably been made part of a food security paradigm

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--Centering this right on food security is hiding the true challenge of reclaiming a truly democratic path to the right to food and adequate nutrition.

Under the food security paradigm, the question of power in the food system never comes up. The notion of 'securing-the-needs-of-the-hungry' is only meant to signal the presence of a 'security' discourse that identifies hunger and the hungry as a threat to the political economy. The Via Campesina's food sovereignty narrative opposes the existing food security paradigm, particularly its key governance aspects. The increasing dependence on agriculture as a source of inputs for the food processing industry (mostly ultra-processed formulations) means that commoditized products will have a direct negative impact on human consumption and health.

Food sovereignty thus recognizes the right of consumers and countries to refuse agricultural technologies deemed inappropriate; it calls for the right to decide what we all are to consume, and how and by whom food is produced. This means communities must be free to decide on food produced in their own environments and countries. Food sovereignty, founded by peasant and subsistence farmers in the Global South, has grown to be an international rallying cry for equal, democratized food systems. In resisting food security --because it entails applying unnecessary technologies in agriculture, food sovereignty reclaims democratic politics in the unacceptable food security discourse.

Without a shared political outlook in the food system, both producers and consumers remain passive recipients of policy and of external funding. Food sovereignty activists accept the state's preeminent role as the guarantor of human rights, but demand that the control of these rights resides and remains in communities.

In the face of ongoing injustices in the food system, and of a growing double burden of malnutrition (triple if one considers undernutrition, overweight and micronutrient deficiencies), it is clear that the realization of the right to food will require a paradigm shift in the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food driven by needed economic, social and political transformations.

The global governance we live under points to the wrong causes of food insecurity and malnutrition. It assumes the causes are rooted in the necessity of capitalist markets, and in the roles of biotechnology and of commercial agriculture.\* How the existing market relations came to be and are maintained --and affect the human right to feed oneself-- is not questioned.

\*: The fitting examples here are the aggressive promotion of genetically engineered crops ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetically\\_modified\\_crops](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetically_modified_crops)) and particularly the Vitamin A enhanced 'golden rice' ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_rice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_rice)), as well as seeds sold by transnationals that can only be planted once since they produce infertile offspring ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic\\_use\\_restriction\\_technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_use_restriction_technology)).

The food security paradigm is further deeply implicated in the perpetuation of relations of domination that allot power to the profitable agro-industrial food sector. This understanding

has been rightly criticized as serving primarily states, institutions, classes, and individuals that stand to gain materially from capitalist agrarian systems. (Note that, in the food security paradigm, the question of power in the food system never comes up).

It is this hegemonic notion of the right to food linked to capitalist markets the one that is increasingly being questioned and rejected. A food justice movement that takes seriously the problems of equity, equality, health, and sustainability will thus need to start asking these harder questions --and these are indeed being raised.\*\*

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Noteworthy here is the work of FIAN (<https://fian.org/en/>) and of the Global Right to Food Network (<https://www.righttofoodandnutrition.org/network>), as well as of the World Public Health Nutrition Association (<https://wphna.org/>).

The food security narrative has been successful in offering a place to agricultural corporations to provide their 'solutions' to the problem of hunger. Governments have bought into the corporate food endlessly repeated myths, believing that without corporate agriculture, there would be inadequate food to meet the growing needs of the population.\*\*\*

\*\*\*: Corporate farming invites investments and operations that are heavily focused on big investors, squeezing small farmers. The power of agrifood corporates is deepening, as the people and peasant farmers of the Global South become increasingly disenfranchised. This model of food production has a strong political message: that land is not for those who work it. (<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-e&q=corporate+agriculture+critique>)

For the above reasons, the term 'food security' is becoming a concept of diminishing value for justice projects. This because, ultimately, the issue is one of justice --for people and for the environment.

### **Food sovereignty consistently means a 'right to act'**

--The concept of food sovereignty blends and integrates actions straight into our struggle for food for all according to need.

The food sovereignty narrative poses a rightful threat to existing market-based approaches; it calls for a longer-term socio-political restructuring process. It concentrates on ways to transition to a better use of agricultural land to produce food that promotes a healthier nutrition.\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*: Noteworthy here is the Andean people's theory and practice of 'buen vivir' that is gaining foot in the international food nutrition community as an example of truly sustainable development. (<https://theconversation.com/buen-vivir-south-americas-rethinking-of-the-future-we-want-44507>)

### **Going back to basics**

- 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. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and to change directions in the food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems so that these are controlled by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies

and markets and empowers peasant and family farming, artisanal fishing and pastoralists, in their food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just and fair income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce the food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations, free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations. (Nyeleni Declaration, Mali, 2007).

- Like many other rights, the right to food is commonly treated as a vague aspiration. However, it is, more and more, being taken seriously as the obligations of different duty bearers are being clearly spelled out.\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*: Twenty years ago, the Committee on Food Security (CFS) of FAO adopted its Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food that were approved as voluntary despite the objections of social movements that thought (and still think) they ought to be binding. (<https://www.fao.org/right-to-food/guidelines/en/> ; <https://www.fian.org/en/press-release/article/20-years-of-un-right-to-food-guidelines-time-for-full-implementation-3491>)