

THE PEOPLE'S CONVENTION ON FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Preamble

Food is essential to life. Food not only provides the basic sustenance for physical survival and nutrition for healthy human existence; food is also a key element of people's culture.

The world now produces enough food to feed everyone, and yet millions of people, including 6 million children under the age of five, die each year as a result of hunger and chronic malnutrition. Everyday the toll is 25,000 deaths from hunger.¹ This number does not include preventable deaths from illnesses related to malnutrition and poverty.

Hunger exists because food and resources are not equitably distributed. In 2000 the richest 20% enjoyed 86% of the world's total income and wealth while the poorest 20% still only has one percent.² Neoliberal globalization threatens to further intensify this imbalance as corporations of rich industrialized countries utilize new technology and policies to wrest control over genetic and other resources for food production, leaving the poor even more powerless and further preventing them from feeding themselves and their communities.

Food security remains an elusive but critically important goal of communities and countries. The irony of increasing global hunger in the midst of plenty reminds us that food security cannot simply be the UN FAO definition of being able to ensure that food is available at all times, that all persons have the means and access to it, that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety, and that it is acceptable within the given culture.

Neoliberal policies implemented by multilateral institutions such as IFIs, WTO and even FAO are continually breaking down the capacity of countries and peoples for self-sufficient food production and assuring food for everyone in their societies. While new technologies and 'modern' production controlled by corporations and promoted by these policies promise supposedly better and greater food production, these present new products that are poisoned and genetically modified for the poor rural and urban majority who have lost their livelihood and income as a result of corporate takeover of agriculture and food production, and poison the environment in the process.

For nations and countries, a rights-based policy to ensure community and peoples control over food systems is the only solution in assuring food for all, especially the poor and marginalized. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples, communities and countries to determine their own production systems related to agricultural labor, fishing, food and land and associated policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances.

¹ FAO, The State of Food Insecurity

² "The State of Food and Agriculture 2000, Lessons from the Past 50 Years". FAO of the UN, Rome, 2000

Food sovereignty is the power of people and their communities to assert and realize the right to food and produce food and fight the power of corporations and other forces that destroy the people's food production systems and deny them food and life. Nations and states must exercise food sovereignty to protect, promote and develop the people's food sovereignty from which it draws power.

Statement of Principles and Goals

1. Every human being has a fundamental, inalienable right to safe nutritious and culturally-appropriate food. As food is most essential to life, the right to food is an extension of the basic human right to life.
2. Systems of food production, distribution and exchange is a preeminent responsibility of the community and society. Assuring food stock, securing resources for food production, equitable distribution of food and management must be ensured and controlled by the community, giving first priority to the majority small food producers and conservers and preventing ownership and control over resources and production by corporations.
3. Food policy must be premised on achieving self-sufficiency in food production through the local food producers, particularly farmers, fishers, indigenous communities, pastoralists, etc., and not the corporations; such policy inevitably gives priority to domestic food production enhancing livelihood of people and not over export agriculture and fisheries that almost always indicates loss of livelihood and consequently compels people to be exploited in export oriented food industries.
4. Food production programs must be premised on mobilizing the majority small food producers and providing them, especially the marginalized sectors like women, Dalits and indigenous peoples, access to resources such as land, water, seeds and livestock.
5. Food policy and food programs must assure access to food not only through sufficient income for everyone, but also by providing mechanisms for free or subsidized distribution of nutritious and culturally-appropriate food to those who have insufficient income, as well as to those who suffer from natural and man-made calamities.
6. Food distribution and food production programs of communities and societies must be formulated and created with the full participation of the people, especially ensuring the participation of marginalized sectors of producers and consumers. Such programs must recognize and promote the initiative of the people to assert their rights to access to food and food production.
7. Food is inextricably linked to nature and the environment. Conservation of genetic resources and the environment should be promoted in food production through biodiversity based-ecological methods, providing the framework for technology development in food production, conservation and distribution that runs counter to patents on life and genetic modification of crops and livestock.

8. Food and by extension food production as fundamental human activities embody key elements of culture of a community and society, and such role must be recognized, conserved and promoted.

9. Safe and nutritious food must be assured through effective mechanisms and regulations the formulation and implementation of which promote and safeguard the interests of small producers and consumers in processes that involve the full participation of the people.

10. As food sustains life and society, food must remain an element of peace and cooperation among communities and among nations and societies. Turning it into instruments of whatever form of domination and even war by one community or society over another runs counter to norms of humankind in relation to food.

ENSURE THE PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO FOOD

1. National food programs must be based on strong community food programs that promote self-reliance and self-sufficiency, equitable distribution of food especially to the poor and supported by national food distribution programs.

2. Structural adjustment conditionalities of international financial institutions like the World Bank that dismantle food programs, food price regulations, and various forms of public food distribution must be rejected and reversed.

3. Workers wages and people's incomes must assure access to basic food and other needs through employment with dignity. Trade union rights must be promoted and protected so that living wages and working conditions are assured.

4. Price control laws and mechanisms must be put in place to ensure affordable and stable prices for staple and basic food products. Programs to provide free staple food or depending on circumstances, at subsidized prices, for the poor and marginalized.

5. The promotion of monopoly by food manufacturing corporations like Nestle and the resulting monocultures created by monopoly food retailers like Coca cola and Macdonalds erode food sovereignty and must be stopped.

DEVELOP PEOPLE-BASED BIODIVERSITY-BASED FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEMS OVER CORPORATE INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE

1. Implement genuine agrarian, fisheries, forestry and rangeland reform premised on the free distribution of land and other key productive resources to the tillers, effective access to marine, forestry and pastureland resources, and ensuring comprehensive and integral distribution of production resources, and the strengthening and development of their production through cooperation and technology development.

2. Develop appropriate, biodiversity-based agricultural technologies and recover community control over seeds and other genetic resources for agriculture. Dismantle industrial agriculture, and similar intensive livestock and aquaculture production that is premised on the use of pesticides and other poisons as well as genetic modification to achieve environmentally destructive methods of overproduction.
3. Ensure women's access to productive resources, protect women's capacity and knowledge such as seed conservation, animal husbandry and the like.
4. Promote and protect indigenous peoples' rights to ancestral domain and self-determination to their own production and food distribution systems and culture.
5. Support workers' struggles for higher wages, job security, better working conditions and safe environment, benefits and welfare and trade union rights, especially of agriculture, fisheries and other food production workers.
6. Dismantle the WTO Agreement on Agriculture that promotes dumping of subsidized excess production of the North, and reducing already limited subsidies critically needed by small farmers.

FIGHT AND DISMANTLE CORPORATE CONTROL OVER AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION

1. End the monopoly of giant agrochemical, agribusiness corporations led by Syngenta, Monsanto and Bayer, dismantle their control over agricultural inputs and production, and stop their production and distribution of harmful technologies.
2. Reject and dismantle structural adjustment policies that provide access by agribusiness monopoly corporations through investment, trade and other mechanisms in order to dominate and control productive resources and food production systems.
3. Stop patenting of all life forms, end biopiracy and dismantle the WTO TRIPS which promotes the corporate control and ownership of genetic resources and other food production resources.
4. Develop effective price management and community postharvest technology and end TNC and merchant price manipulation of produce and control of postharvest facilities.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

1. Ensure sufficient food stocks giving priority to domestic procurement and supporting local production through price and procurement mechanisms.
2. Develop local markets from the community level that ensures effective access by small producers and systematically destroy local and transnational monopolies.

3. Ensure sufficient, safe, nutritious and culturally-appropriate food, and water for free distribution during emergency, due to natural disaster or otherwise.
4. Food aid should be premised on and promote food sovereignty, enhance domestic food production of recipient communities and societies. Poisoned, unsafe and genetically modified food should not be provided as food aid.

ENSURE SAFE, NUTRITIOUS, AFFORDABLE AND CULTURALLY-APPROPRIATE FOOD

1. Support and develop as priority the community capacity to ensure availability of safe, nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food, especially ensuring the needs of the marginalized sectors.
3. Develop effective post harvest technologies and facilities as well as in manufacturing and food preparation to ensure that food is free from pesticides and harmful chemicals.
4. Food safety standards should be formulated with the full participation of people, and it should give primacy to human and environmental concerns. All genetically modified food should be taken out of the market, including for feedstuff.
5. The WTO agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards serves to weaken community and people based standards in order to serve corporate interests in international trade and should be rescinded altogether.

PEOPLES FOOD SOVEREIGNTY SHOULD BE THE FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT POLICY

1. Development cooperation and aid should promote equitable and mutually beneficial exchange of food and agriculture technologies and resources among communities and peoples and nations food sovereignty in all countries. It should not promote corporate interests in trade, control and resources and the promotion of technologies destructive to health and environment.
2. Promote fair trade that enhances people's food sovereignty and strengthens community self sufficiency, control and trade. Trading systems must be reformed according to the principles and promotion of fair trade.
3. WTO should be taken out of agriculture and eventually dismantled and replaced with a new multilateral trading system premised on fair trade and upholding people's food sovereignty
4. National and international trade policy and mechanisms should ensure that supply management in food and agricultural products promote people's food sovereignty and do away

with international cartels and TNCs that manipulate international prices of produce and food items

5. IMF, World Bank and other international financial institutions must stop the system of structural adjustment conditionalities including PRSPs that promote neoliberal reforms benefiting foreign monopoly corporations and enforce fiscal measures premised on the dismantling of public subsidies and mechanisms to promote the people's food sovereignty.

5. International and national research centers must be refocused towards the promotion of the people's food sovereignty. Governance mechanisms should be instituted on a global scale in order to ensure that technology development including those under TNC R & D and TNC-funded university research institutes promote pro-people, environmentally-friendly technologies.

6. The use of food as an instrument of domination of countries and communities, and as an instrument of war, such as the embargo imposed by the US on Cuba, the role of food aid to the invasion and occupation Iraq should be denounced and stopped.

We will strengthen our social movements, and develop the organizations of farmers, women, indigenous peoples, workers, fisherfolk and the urban poor in each of our countries to advance regional and international solidarity and cooperation, and strengthen our common struggles for food sovereignty.