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# Food for Thought *and* Action: A Food Sovereignty Curriculum





# Table of Contents

## Overview

Introduction: Why Food Sovereignty? ..... Overview / page 1  
 How to Use this Curriculum ..... Overview / page 2  
 Who We Are ..... Overview / page 4

## Optional Introductory Exercises

Discovering Our Common Ground ..... Overview / page 6  
 Where Does Our Food Come From? ..... Overview / page 7  
 Defining Food Sovereignty ..... Overview / page 8  
 Envisioning Food Sovereignty: What Are We Fighting For? ..... Overview / page 10  
 What Can I/We Do to Strengthen the Food Sovereignty Movement? ..... Overview / page 11  
 Factsheet: Food Sovereignty is Local Control! ..... Overview / end of section

## Wrap-up, Next Steps and Evaluation

Wrap-up Exercise ..... Overview / page 14  
 Evaluation Form ..... Overview / page 15  
 Next Steps: What I/We Can Do to Help Build the Food Sovereignty Movement ..... Overview / page 16

## Additional Materials

The 6 Food Sovereignty Principles ..... Overview / page 17  
 Glossary of Food Sovereignty-Related Terms ..... Overview / page 18

## Reflection and Action Modules

### Module One: Food Sovereignty for Consumers

Reflection Exercise: The Hidden Price Tags in Our Food System  
 (or, “I Simply Can’t Eat Another Externality!”) ..... Module 1 / page 1  
 Action Exercise: Designing Fair and Healthy Value Chains ..... Module 1 / page 15  
 Factsheet: Why Should Consumers Care About Agriculture and Trade Policy? ..... Module 1 / end of module

### Module Two: Food Sovereignty for Faith and Anti-Hunger Groups

Reflection Exercise: Designing a Food Aid Program  
 in Accordance with Our Values, Faiths & Beliefs ..... Module 2 / page 1  
 Action Exercise: How Do We Align Our Food Aid  
 Programs with Food Sovereignty Principles? ..... Module 2 / page 17  
 Factsheet: What Can Faith-based and Anti-hunger  
 Activists Do to Sustainably Feed the World? ..... Module 2 / end of module

### Module Three: Food Sovereignty for Environmentalists

Reflection Exercise: Building a Green Food System ..... Module 3 / page 1  
 Action Exercise: Food Sovereignty Treaty for a Stable Climate ..... Module 3 / page 12  
 Factsheet: Why Is a New Agricultural Policy Relevant to Environmentalists? ..... Module 3 / end of module

### Module Four: Food Sovereignty for Small Farmers and Farmworkers

Reflection Exercise: How Did We Get Here? Understanding The Policies  
 That Created Industrial Agriculture - And How We Can Change Them ..... Module 4 / page 1  
 Action Exercise: Mapping the Political Landscape ..... Module 4 / page 7  
 Factsheet: Farming and Trade Policy - What Is the Impact on Family Farmers? ..... Module 4 / end of module



# Food for Thought *and* Action: A Food Sovereignty Curriculum

## Overview

### Introduction: Why Food Sovereignty?

Our global food system is terribly broken. The United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the right of every human being to access safe, nutritious food sufficient enough in quantity and quality to ensure a life of dignity free from the violence of hunger. Yet the expansion of transnational agribusinesses in recent decades has undermined local food systems and denied communities the right to determine how they produce and distribute their own food. Agricultural resources are now concentrated in the hands of just a few corporations, and the “dumping” of food by rich countries into poorer ones is forcing farmers off their land and making food self-sufficiency unattainable for many people. Ironically, the vast majority of the world's hungry are farmers.

The agricultural and trade policies of the United States, such as the Farm Bill and the North American Free Trade Agreement, in large part have brought us to this place. Our country's policies shape and dictate how food is produced and distributed around the globe. Consequently, U.S. agricultural policy has a dramatic impact on what and whether people eat, the health of the environment and rural communities, and on the very lives of family farmers and peasants here and abroad. In other words, U.S. farm policy is *foreign* policy, *environmental* policy and *human rights* policy, all in one.

The food sovereignty movement is an exciting international grassroots movement that has developed in response to the indignities of the current food system. It is composed of small farmers, fishers, consumers, environmentalists and indigenous peoples, all seeking to reclaim the right of nations and communities to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies. The food sovereignty movement calls for policies that are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate for their circumstances.

Communities around the world that are embracing food sovereignty are supported by the Via Campesina, an international advocacy network of small-producer organizations representing over 150 million farmers, fishers, foresters and agricultural workers on five continents. In 2007, more than 600 delegates from five continents met at the World Forum for Food Sovereignty in Mali, West Africa, to develop the Principles of Food Sovereignty, a policy framework that calls for:

1. Food for People
2. Valuing Food Providers
3. Localizing Food Systems
4. Making Decisions Locally
5. Building Knowledge and Skills
6. Working with Nature

When these simple-yet-revolutionary principles are incorporated into national and international trade and agricultural policies, and when they become a visible reality in our own communities, we will know that food sovereignty has been achieved.

This collection of education-for-action exercises and factsheets has been developed by Grassroots International and the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) to help build the food sovereignty movement in the



## Introduction, continued

United States. As U.S.-based organizations and members of campaigns aligned with food sovereignty, we are convinced that bringing a global perspective on food and trade to U.S. consumers and producers is critical to any work that fights hunger, injustice or environmental degradation worldwide. We hope this guide will help participants:

- Understand the ways in which current U.S. agricultural and trade policies undermine the right of communities and nations around the world to determine their own food policies
- See how food sovereignty and locally-based food systems can be practical alternatives to industrial agriculture rooted in social justice and environmental sustainability
- Envision how people can act together across borders to build local food systems and pass fair agriculture and trade policies

## How to Use this Curriculum

This curriculum is a collection of exercises grouped into **four modules**: one for consumers, one for faith and anti-hunger groups, one for environmentalists and one for farmers. Depending on your audience, you may want to stick to the module that best represents that audience, or you may choose exercises from different modules to suit the needs of your group. For example, you could use a consumer exercise with environmentalists to explore the hidden costs of the food system. Or you might want to use one of the faith and anti-hunger exercises with a farmers' organization to explore how U.S. farm policies exacerbate world hunger.

Each module consists of a **reflection exercise** that lays out a problem of concern for the audience and an **action exercise** that encourages participants to brainstorm their own solutions to that problem. It is ideal for groups to engage in *both* a reflection exercise and an action exercise, as reflection and action are both necessary for creating change. Each module also includes a **factsheet** that can be handed out as a resource at the end of the workshop – or in some cases during the workshop for use as a teaching tool. Please note that fact sheets are 2 pages in length and can be printed out back to back.

We've also included five **optional introductory exercises** – one or two can be used to introduce people to one another and to the concept of food sovereignty. Due to the additional time that these introductory exercises require, they might be most appropriate for inclusion in workshops that are half a day or longer. Alternatively, they could be used on their own, separate from a workshop, to spark audience interaction following a guest speaker or the screening of a film on food issues. We recommend that if time is limited to an hour and a half or two, only the module exercises be used.

Whichever set of exercises you select, we recommend that you include a brief review of the **6 Principles of Food Sovereignty** in every workshop (see Overview, p. 17), and that you conclude with the **Wrap-Up exercise** (see Overview, p. 14), which asks participants to brainstorm a few actions they can take to strengthen local food systems. If there is no time for the Wrap-Up exercise, we ask that you end by simply distributing the **evaluation forms** (see Overview, p. 15), as we would greatly appreciate feedback on these exercises.



# How to Use this Curriculum, continued

## Sample Two-Hour Workshop Schedule

Names and introductions	5 min
Introductory Exercise: Defining Food Sovereignty	15 min
Reflection Exercise: Hidden Price Tags in Our Food System	45 min
Action Exercise: Designing Fair and Healthy Value Chains	30 min
Brainstorm: What Can I/We Do?	10 min
Wrap-up and Evaluation	15 min

*The table below summarizes the purpose of each exercise:*

Activity	Purpose
<b>Introductory Exercises</b>	
Discovering Our Common Ground	Discover shared concerns; get people moving and introducing themselves to each other
Where Does Our Food Come From?	Discover the great distances our food travels, as well as local food alternatives
Defining Food Sovereignty	Understand the concept of food sovereignty
Envisioning Food Sovereignty: What Are We Fighting For?	Explore what food sovereignty would look like in our communities; sense that change <i>is</i> possible
What Can I/We Do to Strengthen the Food Sovereignty Movement?	Consider and commit to concrete individual and group actions to transform our food system
<b>Module I/Consumers</b>	
Reflection Exercise: The Hidden Price Tags in Our Food System (or, “I Simply Can’t Eat Another Externality!”)	Understand the inter-connected parts of the food system and learn where food dollars go
Action Exercise: Designing Fair and Healthy Value Chains	Envision a food system that reflects your values
<b>Module II/Faith and Anti-hunger Groups</b>	
Reflection Exercise: Designing A Food Aid Program in Accordance with Our Values, Faiths and Beliefs	Understand how U.S. agriculture and trade policies affect hunger and food security around the world, and how to build alternative food aid programs
Action Exercise: How Do We Align Our Food Aid Programs with Food Sovereignty Principles?	Evaluate how close your community, congregation or organization is to meeting the principles of food sovereignty in their food aid and food policy work
<b>Module III/Environmentalists</b>	
Reflection Exercise: Building a Green Food System	Understand the impacts of U.S. agricultural and trade policy on the environment and create a green food system
Action Exercise: Food Sovereignty Treaty for a Stable Climate	Advocate for international food and agriculture agreements that will reduce climate change
<b>Module IV/Small Farmers and Farmworkers</b>	
Reflection Exercise: How Did We Get Here? Understanding the Policies That Created Industrial Agriculture – and How We Can Change Them	Understand how policies, people and events have shaped rural communities in the United States and the Global South; discover links with communities in the South
Action Exercise: Mapping the Political Landscape	Begin to strategize transforming the food system by identifying allies and obstacles for the food sovereignty movement
<b>Wrap-up</b>	
What I/We Can Do	Commit to taking action
Evaluation form	Improve exercises for future sessions



## How to Use this Curriculum, continued

You are encouraged to reproduce and use any and all portions of this curriculum for non-commercial education purposes. If you distribute this curriculum, please do so by providing a link to the Food for Thought and Action website: [www.foodforthoughtandaction.org](http://www.foodforthoughtandaction.org). While you are welcome to adapt this curriculum to meet the needs of your audience or community, please do not distribute your modified versions as your own. In all uses, credit Grassroots International and the National Family Farm Coalition, the co-developers of this educational resource. For more information, contact [info@GrassrootsOnline.org](mailto:info@GrassrootsOnline.org).

Finally, since these are exercises about the food system, we encourage you to serve food and beverages during your workshop – preferably locally grown or fairly traded items. The websites below can help you find local growers and identify fair trade products that might be available in your area.

Equal Exchange: [www.equalexchange.com](http://www.equalexchange.com)

Local Harvest: [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

Food Routes: [www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org)

Sustainable Table's Eat Well Guide: <http://eatwellguide.org/>

## Who We Are

As a grantmaker and social justice educator, Grassroots International has relationships with global justice and human rights groups both in the U.S. and the Global South. Since 1983, Grassroots has promoted global justice by partnering with social change organizations and granting over \$13 million. Currently, Grassroots International works with 24 partner organizations in Latin America & the Caribbean, the Middle East and the U.S., as well as globally through the Via Campesina. Our work is centered on resource rights, including the human right to food and the right to access fertile land, clean water and other resources.

The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) is the lead North American organization in the Via Campesina. Since 1986, the NFFC has provided a voice for grassroots groups calling for fair prices for family farmers, safe and healthy food, and economically vibrant, environmentally sound rural communities in the U.S. and around the world. NFFC's membership includes groups from every region of the U.S. Member organizations come together through the NFFC to work for policy change at the national and international level.

# Introductory Exercises





# Optional Exercise One: Discovering Our Common Ground

## ▶▶ Introduction

This is an ice breaker that also allows people to identify shared concerns about the food system. You can adapt it by using questions that are meaningful to your group.

 **Time: 10 minutes**

 **Materials needed: none**

## ↔ Procedure

1. Ask everyone to stand in a circle. Explain that this activity will help us discover our shared concerns about food and allow us to begin learning what we have in common when it comes to food.
2. Tell them the facilitator will ask a question. If the question rings true for them they should take a few steps into the center of the circle and look around to see with whom they share common ground. After each question, tell people to go back to their original places.
3. Tailor your questions to the group. Start with 1 - 2, low-risk questions that people will feel comfortable answering. (For example: “Were you born in the southern U.S.?”) If you are asking sensitive questions, avoid forcing people to identify themselves by prefacing the question with, “Who knows someone who....” For example, if the group is composed of farmers, ask “Who knows someone who has had to seek off-farm work?”
4. Keep to 5 - 8 questions in total. For example, you could ask people to step forward if they:
  - Have ever worked on a farm
  - Ate some kind of local food this week
  - Have ever gotten ill from food or know someone who has
  - Regularly read the ingredients on their food purchases
  - Have seen evidence of corporate control of the food system
  - Have taken steps to win back control over our food system
5. You might ask participants to suggest 2 - 3 questions of their own. Stop when the energy is still high.
6. After the last question, ask people to reflect on the number of people who ended up in the circle after certain questions. What concerned them? What gave them hope?





# Optional Exercise Two: Where Does Our Food Come From?

## ▶▶ Introduction

This exercise introduces the concept of “food miles” and takes stock of where our food comes from. It can be a short, easy icebreaker.

## 🕒 Time: 10 minutes

## ✂️ Materials needed

- A piece of newsprint entitled *Where Our Food Comes From*
- Markers
- Tape
- Optional: A map of the world taped to a wall (map and pins not provided in this curriculum)

## 👉 Procedure

1. Ask: “What did you eat today (or yesterday) and where was it from?” You can either write down the food products and countries on the blank newsprint or (using the optional version) stick pins into the world map to show the countries from where the food originated. Often people have no idea where their food comes from. Their carrots may have been grown in California, Massachusetts or Guatemala. If they don’t know where their food came from, please tell them to say so. The facilitator should write “unknown” on the newsprint, as this is an important insight.
2. Introduce the concept of food miles: The distance your food has gone from field to plate. You can explain that the concept is not always a precise measure of sustainability, as in some cases a local product produced with synthetic chemicals may be more sustainable than an organic product shipped in from far away or vice versa. Nevertheless, stress that it’s a useful analytical tool.
3. Ask: “From what kind of store did you purchase that food you eat today?” – for example, farmers’ market, supermarket, corner store, gas station, convenience store, etc.
4. After 5 minutes of contributions, ask: “What does this list tell us about how our present food system is organized?”



# Optional Exercise Three: Defining Food Sovereignty

## ▶▶ Introduction

This exercise introduces the concept of food sovereignty and asks people to grapple with what this new term might mean for their own communities. It can be done with a large group or in smaller, facilitated groups, depending on the number of participants.

 **Time: 15 minutes**

## Materials needed

- Copies of *Threats to Local Control* factsheet, located at the end of the Overview section
- Five newspapers:
  1. One with definition of “sovereignty” to be read aloud
  2. One with definition of “food sovereignty” to be read aloud
  3. One with summary bullet points describing food sovereignty
  4. One labeled: “External Threats to Local Control of the Food System”
  5. One labeled: “What a Locally Controlled Food System Looks Like”
- Markers and tape

## Preparation

- Prepare the newspaper sheets with “sovereignty” and “food sovereignty” definitions so that they are legible from a short distance (see Overview, p. 9)
- Tape these definitions to the wall. Allow the definition of “sovereignty” to be seen, but keep the definition of “food sovereignty” covered until it is time to reveal it
- Tape up the newspapers you have labeled “External Threats to Local Control of the Food System” and “What a Locally Controlled Food System Looks Like”
- Prepare and tape up the *Summary of Food Sovereignty Principles* (see Overview, p. 9), keeping it hidden for now

## Procedure

1. Start by reading the definition of “sovereignty” out loud. Ask people to shout out ways in which their local communities, states, or countries have not been able to determine how their own food is produced and distributed. If folks have a hard time getting started, give an example from the *Threats to Local Control of the Food System* factsheet, located at the end of the Overview section. Record participants’ answers on the blank newspaper labeled “External Threats to Local Control of the Food System”.
2. Read some of the facts from the *Threats to Local Control of the Food System* factsheet. State that in addition to the items that people listed in step 1, these are a few statistics on how communities and nations have lost the ability to govern their own food production. You can hand out the factsheet, as well, either during or after the exercise.
3. Reveal the previously hidden newspaper with the definition of “food sovereignty.” Explain that there are variations in the definition of this term, but that they all reflect the same basic principles. Explain that we will now be hearing one definition from the Via Campesina (or the NFFC Vision Statement, whichever definition you choose to use). Ask someone in the group to read the chosen definition aloud. Once you



## Optional Exercise Three, continued

### ↔ Procedure, continued

are done reading one or both of these statements, unfurl and read aloud the summary bullet points that define food sovereignty: *Summary of Food Sovereignty Principles*. These bullet points may be simpler for people to digest than the paragraph definition.

4. Ask people to give examples of what food sovereignty might look like in their own community. Write their comments on the newsprint titled “What a Locally Controlled Food System Looks Like.”

5. Give this brief background on the food sovereignty movement:

“The term food sovereignty was coined by the Via Campesina, an international coalition of small-scale food producers and indigenous peoples, at the United Nations Food and Agriculture World Food Summit in 1996. Since then, the movement has grown tremendously, with thousands of organizations representing over 150 million small farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples and agricultural workers from 80 countries and five continents working together for the same fundamental principles.” (Source: Via Campesina)

Ask people if they know of local organizations that they would consider to be working in line with the goals of this movement, even if they are not formal affiliates. Name them.

6. Thank people for participating. If you haven’t already, hand out the factsheet *Threats to Local Control*. The following are texts you will need for the newsprints.

#### Definitions of food sovereignty

Below are two definitions of food sovereignty; each has a slightly different point of emphasis. If there is time, prepare and read both, in case one of the definitions strikes more of a chord. If time is tight, choose one.

##### 1. Via Campesina Definition (emphasis on trade):

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production.”

—*Statement on Peoples’ Food Sovereignty*, 1996, by Via Campesina, et al.

##### 2. Non-governmental Organization (NGO) / Community Service Organization (CSO) Forum for Food Sovereignty definition, Rome, June 2002 (emphasis on values):

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies, which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies.”

—*“Food Sovereignty: A Right For All, Political Statement of the NGO/CSO Forum for Food Sovereignty,”* Rome, June 2002

#### Summary of Food Sovereignty Principles

1. Food for People
2. Valuing Food Providers
3. Localizing Food Systems
4. Making Decisions Locally
5. Building Knowledge and Skills
6. Working with Nature



# Optional Exercise Four: Envisioning Food Sovereignty – What Are We Fighting For?

## ▶▶ Introduction

This is a high-energy, fast-paced exercise that helps people imagine what food sovereignty would actually *look* like in their communities.

 **Time: 5 - 10 minutes**

## Materials needed

- Several sheets of newsprint, markers and tape

## Preparation

- Label one piece of newsprint with “Images of Food Sovereignty”

## Procedure

1. Explain that in order to build a movement, we need to articulate our vision to others. But sometimes it is difficult to visualize alternatives to a dominant system when that is all we are surrounded by. This exercise will help us imagine alternatives to the industrial food system, explain to other people what food sovereignty would look like in our communities, and share inspirational examples/stories with each other.
2. Ask people to shout out images of what things would look like in their communities if they had true control over their local food system. *Ask them to be as visual and specific in their descriptions as possible.* You can also have blank newsprint up on the wall so they can come up and draw images. Remind folks that this is a brainstorm, so at this point we are not going to discuss each other’s ideas, just shout them out. Anything goes; nothing is too fantastic!
3. Depending on the group, you may want to start off with an image – you can describe it in words, draw it, or if you want to, show a picture from a magazine – to get folks thinking in concrete and visual terms. One image might be of free ranging livestock. Another might be of a farmstead egg with a bold, healthy orange yolk in it. If people get stuck you can use these prompts:
  - How would food be transported?
  - Who would be farming?
  - Where would food be sold?
  - What would the food in community food pantries look like?
4. Continue recording the images for a few minutes, but stop the exercise when the energy is still high. If people want to describe a model project or program, you can put a star next to it and return for a longer description later.



# Optional Exercise Five: What Can I/We Do to Strengthen the Food Sovereignty Movement?

## ▶▶ Introduction

This is a supplementary exercise to be used with the other introductory exercises or within the various modules. It is important that people come away from an exercise or workshop module with a sense of how they can create change. This keeps spirits high for the long work ahead and gives people a chance to make a concrete commitment to a specific action.

 **Time: 10 minutes**

 **Materials needed**

- Several sheets of newsprint, markers and tape

 **Preparation**

- Label a piece of newsprint with: “What can I/we do to strengthen the food sovereignty movement?”

 **Procedure**

1. Explain that in order to build a movement, we need to pinpoint specific actions we can take as individuals, as organizations and within an alliance. Without identifying short and long term concrete actions, we will fall short of our goal – the radical transformation of our broken food system.
2. Ask people to turn to their neighbor – in dyads or triads – and ask each other the question, “What can I/we do to strengthen the food sovereignty movement?”
3. Popcorn style (meaning the facilitator takes comments from some but not all participants), ask people to report on their commitments. You should record them on the labeled piece of newsprint. Ask the person to identify when they might take this action and if it is an individual or collective action.
4. If the group is one which is likely to meet again – for example, a faith group or community organization – suggest that they hold onto the list and revisit it in three months to see how people are doing on their commitments.
5. The list will likely be a hodgepodge of actions. You should wrap up the exercise by drawing out the commonalities among the actions and making some upbeat comments about movement-building.



# Factsheet: Threats to Local Control of the Food System

Sovereignty is a shared value across the globe and is defined as “governance free from external sources of control.”<sup>i</sup> Yet the right of nations and communities to determine how their food is produced and distributed is being eroded on a number of fronts. How and why?

## Concentration of Agribusiness

In their efforts to gain a bigger share of the market and maximize profits, large agribusinesses frequently merge with, or buy up, smaller companies. Much of the world’s food system is under the control of a handful of a few transnational corporations.

- 10 companies control half of the world’s commercial seed sales.<sup>ii</sup>
- In the United States, the five largest supermarket chains are responsible for almost half of all retail food sales.<sup>iii</sup>

## Corporations Influence Food Policy

Transnational corporations wield tremendous power over food and agriculture policy both in the United States and internationally. Lobbyists for the agribusiness industry pressure elected representatives for subsidies and trade and environmental policies in their favor. The result is that food and agriculture policy are shaped to benefit large corporations and not small-scale farmers, consumers or the environment.

- During the 2004 election cycle, the agribusiness industry contributed \$53 million to political campaigns.<sup>iv</sup>

## Free Trade Agreements Trump National Policies

International free trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), can block a country’s ability to set its own laws regarding food and agriculture.

- To comply with NAFTA, the Mexican government removed an article from the country’s constitution that protected collective indigenous and peasant land holdings.<sup>v</sup>
- In 2006, the WTO forced six European countries to lift their bans on the import of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) despite widespread support of the bans by farmer and consumer organizations.

## Communities Can’t Pass Their Own Legislation

“Preemption” bills prevent local governments from passing policies, ordinances or initiatives such as environmental laws that would exclude certain seeds, plants and size of livestock operations. By 2007, 16 U.S. states had adopted statewide preemption bills.<sup>vi</sup>

## Consumers Don’t Know What’s in Their Food

Despite numerous polls demonstrating that the majority of consumers in the United States believe that foods with genetically engineered ingredients should be labeled, and requests from eight state attorneys general that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) require mandatory labeling of all genetically engineered foods, the FDA has so far refused to do so.<sup>vii</sup>





# Factsheet: Food Sovereignty & Local Control

*Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production.*

“Statement on Peoples’ Food Sovereignty” by the Via Campesina, et al., 1996

## What are specific food sovereignty policies for our communities?

**Fair prices to farmers** ensured through:

- Price floors for commodities that cover the cost of production and pay farmers a decent price for their goods.
- Reserves of storable commodities to ensure food security in times of scarcity and price stability in times of plenty.
- Conservation set-asides that take land out of production when there would be an over abundance of production (such over-production leads to low prices and unnecessary strain on the environment).

**Anti-trust laws enforced.** Pass a competition title in the Farm Bill that limits, for example, meat packers’ ability to own livestock and makes our anti-trust laws apply to the food industry, from seed companies to supermarkets

**Environmental programs tied to levels of production** that reward sustainable farming methods. The current Conservation Security Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program forces taxpayers to subsidize some of the largest water, food, soil and air polluters.

**Strong community food programs.** Increase funding for local procurement of food and for community gardens and farm-to-cafeteria programs, especially in poor communities.

**Increased public funding for sustainable and organic agriculture research, technical assistance and credit** to support farmers transitioning from conventional to organic farming.

**Mandatory “Country of Origin Labeling” (C.O.O.L.)** for our produce, fish and meat, telling consumers where their food was grown, harvested and raised.

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- v. *Anatomy of a Zapatista Rebellion* by Milt Shapiro, Committee for Indigenous Solidarity and Project South Member [www.projectsouth.org/resources/zap2.html](http://www.projectsouth.org/resources/zap2.html)
- vi. “Background: Industry Aims to Strip Local Control of Food Supply,” [www.environmentalcommons.org](http://www.environmentalcommons.org)
- vii. “Organic, not Genetically Engineered: Summary of Public Opinion Surveys Related to Labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods,” by Consumers Policy Institute/Consumers Union, available at Friends of the Earth; <http://www.consumersunion.org/food/summpollny699.htm>





# Wrap-Up and Evaluation

 **Time: 5-10 minutes**

## **Materials needed**

- Newsprint
- Evaluation forms (see Overview, p. 15)
- What I/We Can Do* sheets (see Overview, p. 16)

## **Preparation**

- Write the sentences below on a sheet of newsprint.
- Write your contact information on the newsprint so people can stay in touch with you.

## **Procedure**

1. Thank people again for coming. Hand out the *What I/We Can Do* sheets and explain that we will now briefly think about concrete next steps that people can take.
2. Ask folks to reflect on the following sentences (they can write down their thoughts, if paper is available):  
During this workshop, I was struck by...  
Because of this workshop I am inspired to...  
I want to find out more about...  
I am committed to acting for change by...
3. Ask a few people to share their response. After everyone has had a chance to share, tell people you would be happy to schedule a follow-up workshop on how people can get involved in hands-on advocacy to support the food sovereignty movement.
4. Hand out the evaluation forms and ask people to fill them out and return them to you. In turn, we would be grateful if you could send the forms to Grassroots International, 179 Boylston Street, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, 02130. Thank you.





# Evaluation Form

We would greatly appreciate your feedback on these exercises. Your comments will help us continue to build the food sovereignty movement. This evaluation can also be done as a verbal group exercise if you are seeking a group evaluation.

*Please share some of the more interesting and/or surprising insights and comments – both your own and those of others – that struck you during the workshop:*

*What was most useful to you?*

*What changes would you suggest to the exercise(s) you participated in?*

*Are there any individuals or organizations you think might be interested in these exercises? If so, please give us their name and contact information:*

We would be grateful if you could return these evaluation forms to  
Grassroots International  
179 Boylston Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02130, 617-524-1400  
[www.GrassrootsOnline.org](http://www.GrassrootsOnline.org)

# Next Steps: What I/We Can Do

Farmers, consumers and environmentalists around the world have mobilized millions of people on behalf of food sovereignty. They've passed legislation to protect local food systems, created community gardens, and protected their environment through community projects that bring together farmers and environmentalists. Here are some ways that you can help expand the movement.

**Spread the message!** Write to your local newspaper or some of your favorite blogs whenever food topics hit the news. You can provide a broader world perspective with your knowledge of food sovereignty and the shared interests of people in the Global North and Global South.

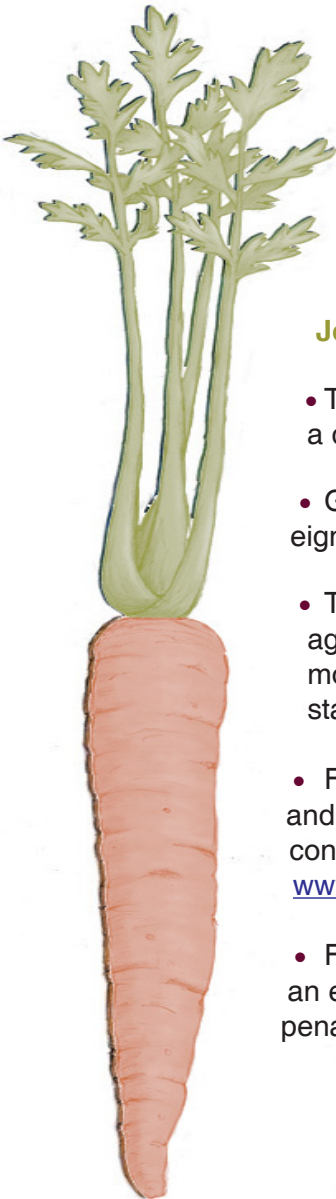
**Build alliances!** Today, the food sovereignty movement includes food producers, farmworkers, consumers, environmentalists, faith communities and more. Reach out to different constituencies in your community that have a stake in our food system – and we *all* have a stake. Environmentalists, for example, could seek alliances with wildlife organizations, demonstrating how a just food system could protect wildlife. Labor leaders could reach out to churches, synagogues or meditation groups to show how farmworkers' rights reflect religious teachings of compassion.

**Educate and act!** Changing the food system and protecting our environment means educating ourselves about the failings of today's food system and then working to change the values, behavior and policies around us. If you find yourself with some spare time after a meal, consider browsing the Internet to add to your knowledge of food issues. Throughout this curriculum, you will find information about key food sovereignty organizations.

**Mobilize your community!** When you find like-minded people in your community, consider working with them to organize town hall-style meetings, food policy councils, or GMO-free zones. Some people are saving their towns from the corporate privatization of local groundwater, connecting water sovereignty to food sovereignty. Get in touch with them and work together!

**Join a Food Sovereignty campaign!** Here are just a few:

- The National Family Farm Coalition is leading a campaign to make the U.S. Farm Bill a citizens' bill for food sovereignty ('The Food from Family Farms Act'): [www.nffc.net](http://www.nffc.net)
- Grassroots International supports organizing and movement building for food sovereignty worldwide: [www.GrassrootsOnline.org](http://www.GrassrootsOnline.org)
- The Alliance for Responsible Trade, an organization that works to stop trade agreements that hurt national and local food sovereignty and the environment, is mobilizing to preserve the ability of state governments to set their own environmental standards: [www.art-us.org](http://www.art-us.org)
- Food and Water Watch, a citizens' watchdog group that challenges corporate control and abuse of our food and water resources, is calling for stronger regulations to protect consumers' rights to know how and where our food is produced: [www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org)
- Friends of the Earth International leads several campaigns to stop climate change with an emphasis on food sovereignty. Their network is pushing to reduce energy consumption, penalize polluters and build a movement for climate justice: [www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org)





# The 6 Food Sovereignty Principles

**1. Focuses on Food for People:** Food sovereignty stresses the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities, including those who are hungry or living under occupation, in conflict zones and marginalized. Food sovereignty rejects the proposition that food is just another commodity for international agribusiness.

**2. Values Food Providers:** Food sovereignty values and supports the contributions, and respects the rights, of women and men, peasants and small scale family farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fishers, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples and agricultural and fisheries workers, including migrants, who cultivate, grow, harvest and process food; and rejects those policies, actions and programs that undervalue them, threaten their livelihoods and eliminate them.

**3. Localizes Food Systems:** Food sovereignty brings food providers and consumers together in common cause; puts providers and consumers at the center of decision-making on food issues; protects food providers from the dumping of food and food aid in local markets; protects consumers from poor quality and unhealthy food, inappropriate food aid and food tainted with genetically modified organisms; and resists governance structures, agreements and practices that depend on and promote unsustainable and inequitable international trade and give power to remote and unaccountable corporations.

**4. Makes Decisions Locally:** Food sovereignty seeks control over and access to territory, land, grazing, water, seeds, livestock and fish populations for local food providers. These resources ought to be used and shared in socially and environmentally sustainable ways which conserve diversity. Food sovereignty recognizes that local territories often cross geopolitical borders and advances the right of local communities to inhabit and use their territories; it promotes positive interaction between food providers in different regions and territories and from different sectors to resolve internal conflicts or conflicts with local and national authorities; and rejects the privatization of natural resources through laws, commercial contracts and intellectual property rights regimes.

**5. Builds Knowledge and Skills:** Food sovereignty builds on the skills and local knowledge of food providers and their local organizations that conserve, develop and manage localized food production and harvesting systems, developing appropriate research systems to support this and passing on this wisdom to future generations. Food sovereignty rejects technologies that undermine, threaten or contaminate these, e.g. genetic engineering.

**6. Works with Nature:** Food sovereignty uses the contributions of nature in diverse, low external input agroecological production and harvesting methods that maximize the contribution of ecosystems and improve resilience and adaptation, especially in the face of climate change. Food sovereignty seeks to heal the planet so that the planet may heal us; and, rejects methods that harm beneficial ecosystem functions, that depend on energy intensive monocultures and livestock factories, destructive fishing practices and other industrialized production methods, which damage the environment and contribute to global warming.

Source: Nyéléni 2007 - Forum for Food Sovereignty, February 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007, Sélingué, Mali, Synthesis Report  
<http://www.nyeleni2007.org/spip.php?article334>



# Glossary of Food Sovereignty-Related Terms

Some of the terms used in these exercises may be new or unfamiliar to some participants. Below are some definitions.

**Agribusiness**—any or all of the various businesses involved in industrial food production, including farming, seed supply, agrichemicals, farm machinery, distribution, processing, marketing, and retail sales.

**Cash crop**—a crop grown for money, as opposed to a subsistence crop which is grown to feed a farmer's family. Cash crops differ depending on region. Common cash crops include coffee, cocoa, sugar cane, bananas and cotton. Agribusiness tends to encourage production towards cash crops for national and international markets and away from those which can be consumed locally and sold on local markets. Dependency and reliance on cash crops can lead harmful environmental consequences and precarious incomes due to fluctuating prices.

**Commodity crop**—a relatively uniform raw material or primary product (e.g. soy beans, corn, pork) traded internationally either through a commodities exchange or in the cash market.

**Conservation set-asides**—land that is not cultivated for a period of time to conserve soil and other natural resources.

**Dumping**—the practice of exporting products at below the cost of production, especially to developing countries; often made possible by export subsidies.

**Economies of scale**—the idea that larger-scale production is more efficient because it permits higher productivity. For farms, larger scale permits market specialization, division of labor, optimized use of large pieces of machinery and easier borrowing.

**Export subsidies**—financial incentives given to exporters of products, such as U.S. wheat exporters.

**Fair trade**—of two types. One is a label certifying that a product has been produced according to explicit environmental and labor specifications. The other definition is more general – that small farmers (in this case) should receive fair pay for their harvest, that the production and marketing should be environmentally sustainable and that countries should be able to support their small farmers through policies and protections.

**Family farm**—a farm not defined by size, but by the fact that the family provides the vast majority of the labor and makes the management decisions.

**Food miles**—the distance agricultural products travel from producer to consumer.

**Food security**—the ability of a national government to feed its population. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, it means having “food that is available at all times, [and] that all persons have means of access to it, [and food] that is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety, and that is acceptable within the given culture.”



## Glossary of Food Sovereignty-Related Terms, continued

**Food sovereignty**—the right of peoples and communities to define their own food and agricultural systems. This includes the right to know where one's food comes from and how it is produced, and is best understood in contrast to the current system, wherein food is largely subject to the international market or the global economy and people are alienated from their food supply.

**Free trade or trade liberalization**—the flow of goods and services between nations, largely without taxes, quotas or other barriers to imports or exports. This includes the free movement of goods and services without trade-distorting policies such as subsidies (payments), tariffs (taxes on imports and exports), regulations or laws. Examples include the policies of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a treaty between the U.S., Mexico and Canada, and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), a treaty between the U.S., Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. Free trade agreements have been criticized for not being all that "free" – they are generally of telephone book length, with a great many quotas, exceptions and exclusions.

**Globalization**—changes in societies and the world economy that result from dramatically increased international trade and cultural exchange, brought about by the removal of trade barriers and the technological interdependence of countries. In a specifically economic context, the term refers almost exclusively to the effects of trade, particularly trade liberalization, or free trade.

**Globalization from below**—a term used by individuals and groups who advocate for fair international trade rules and are critical of current institutions of global economic governance. This is an alternative vision of globalization, in which communities around the world form grassroots alliances, find alternative ways of organizing and develop new approaches to agriculture, industry, and ecological management.

**GMO**—short for "genetically modified organism," an organism engineered by humans to include one or more genes from a different species.

**Industrialized farming**—farming that more closely resembles a manufacturing industry; it is practiced when there is a reliance on inputs manufactured off the farm (fertilizers, pesticides, machinery), when there is a displacement of labor by capital (machinery and purchased inputs) and when there is a specialization of labor and a use of mechanized production methods.

**International Monetary Fund**—International organization responsible for overseeing the international financial system. Established in 1944, its main roles are: to supervise the policies of its member countries on monetary and international trade issues; to act as a lender of last resort for governments; and to oversee exchange rates and payments flowing into and out of one country to another to ensure international economic stability. The IMF also offers technical assistance and promotes international trade. It often receives criticism for placing onerous conditions on poor countries for its loans and services.



## Glossary of Food Sovereignty-Related Terms, continued

**Monoculture**—the cultivation of a single crop in a field, farm or region.

**Multinational corporation**—a company with operations in more than one country.

**Oligopoly**—a market in which a small number of sellers (agrochemical corporations, supermarkets) exert power over a large number of buyers (farmers, consumers).

**Resource rights**—fundamental human rights to clean water, land for food production and other resources necessary for a healthy life.

**Small farm**—according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Small Farm Commission, a small farm earns less than \$250,000 in gross receipts annually and day-to-day labor and management are provided by the farmer and/or the farm family that owns the production or owns or leases the productive assets.

**Structural adjustment**—a policy that promotes privatization of state enterprises and the cutting of social services in order to reduce a poor country's debt and facilitate its entry into international investment and trade markets. These policies are put forward by the World Bank and other international finance institutions.

**Sustainable agriculture**—agriculture that is capable of meeting the needs of the present without diminishing the ability of those of future generations to meet their needs.

**Vertical integration**—the acquisition or development by a company of inter-related functions, e.g., when a cattle butchery buys up a feed company (or develops the capacity internally) and a seed company. Wikipedia offers the following relevant example: A hamburger manufacturer owns the farms where they raise the cows, chickens, potatoes and wheat as well as the factories that process these agricultural products. They might also own the shops or fast food restaurants where the hamburgers are sold.

**The Via Campesina**—an international movement representing over 150 million small farmers that coordinates organizations made up of small- and middle-scale producers, agricultural workers, rural women, peasants and indigenous communities in Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe. They advocate for family farm-based sustainable agriculture and first coined the term "food sovereignty".

**World Bank**—an international organization that provides loans and technical assistance to countries for the purposes of economic development and poverty reduction. The bank promotes neo-liberal economics and private investment. It often receives criticism for making investments without consulting civil society, exacerbating corruption through loans to unaccountable officials, and placing onerous conditions on loans to recipient countries, which can undermine national sovereignty.

**World Trade Organization**—an international organization established to provide ground rules for international trade. It is also charged with overseeing the regulation and implementation of trade agreements. One of the organization's tasks is to create trade policies that help lift poor nations out of poverty, but the organization has been accused of implementing trade policies that favor rich countries, thus creating more poverty.

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