

Pillar One of Food Sovereignty

Pillar One: Focuses on Food for People:

- Puts people's need for food at the center of policies
- Insists that food is more than just a commodity

Food sovereignty puts the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities, including those who are hungry, under occupation, in conflict zones and marginalized, at the center of food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries policies; and rejects the proposition that food is just another commodity or component for international agri-business.

Developed at Nyeleni 2007

No Money, No Food: The United Nations predicts that in 2023, 345.2 million people globally will experience hunger and malnutrition – more than double the number of food insecure in 2020. Food access has not caused this enormous level of suffering because the amount of food harvested globally would more than meet the supply of food needed to avoid hunger and malnutrition. An increasing number of people globally cannot grow their own food or have the income to afford food at the price point set by global food commodities trading causes this global injustice.

While conflict, drought, and disaster directly trigger famine, the corporate global food regime has the large responsibility for increasing hunger by transforming a common natural resource into a privatized commodity. The rising hunger and malnutrition in the world reflects the injustice of the corporate food regime, an unregulated, profit driven, privatized food system. This global regime now grows more food crops for livestock and bioenergy than it does for people.

The Food Sovereignty movement emerges out of the resistance of indigenous people around the world who resist the global corporate food regime's destruction of their right to food. Thus, the first pillar of the Food Sovereignty movement states that all people have the right to healthy foods that reflect their cultural ways. Throughout human history, many cultures have shared food, a limited yet renewable local resource, as a common resource because of the imperative that people must eat to live.

Multiple Values of Food: Price point defines the only value that food has for the global corporate food regime. Corporations have commodified food into a privately owned, globally traded object. This commodification process involved the development of certain traits of a few plants to fit the technological and industrial standards put in practice by the industry. The process persists in moving toward the complete objectification of food that strips it of all its

non-economic attributes. The corporate food regime has turned food into an unaffordable and unhealthy commodity that destroys cultures and steals peoples' land and labor.

However, the food of indigenous people has multiple values embodied within it.

Traditional knowledge has accumulated over thousands of years in the selection of food varieties and the ecological management of the landscape for food. Through trial and error, indigenous people identified all the edible plants and animals found in the natural world and preserved the genetic

material of the foods that offered their communities health and vitality. Regions developed their own cuisines based upon the native food and season. They have learned safe ways to keep and preserve food to keep them alive during the winter months.

People need food that nurtures their health and that they can afford. Native peoples view food as what heals and keeps us healthy. Over the centuries, they have selected foods that nurture our health. As a natural renewable resource, how we grow food reflects our ethics and morals. The food we eat embodies all the transactions that occur between the land and our table. Most people want the food we eat to be fair and safe for the growers, workers, other life forms, and the Earth. What we grow and eat defines our cultural identity. We are what we eat

Western diet: The global corporate food regime produces what we call the Western diet, which focuses on industrially grown meat, dairy, and eggs because these foods provide corporations the most profit. The diet also includes ultraprocessed foods, refined grains, high-sugar drinks, candy and sweets, fried foods, potatoes, corn (and high-fructose corn syrup). Corporate monopolies distribute these industrially grown proteins and ultraprocessed foods to consumers at different price points depending on market affordability: from fast food franchises and convenience stores to grocery stores. The global corporate regime generally does not target wealthier people as they can afford to purchase more naturally grown and healthier foods.

Health: The Western diet consigns those with insufficient income and time to poor quality, non-nutritious, and unethical food choices. The linkage between the Western diet to malnourishment and poor health outcomes continues to grow: obesity, diabetes, other metabolic diseases, cardiovascular disease, cancers, depression, anxiety, and more. Wherever the global corporate food regime markets its diet, the health outcomes of the local people plummet.

Consequences of Global Corporate Food Regime

10% of global population hungry or malnourished
Ongoing dispossession of indigenous peoples' land
Deforestation
The Great Species Extinction through loss of habitat and chemicals
Horrible abuse of nonhuman animals
Climate Crisis
Land degradation
Water pollution
Privatizing common intellectual and genetic resources.

Culturally Appropriate: The Western's global mass diet lacks the traditional values long associated with food: reciprocity, sharing, cooperation, self-sufficiency, gratitude, and sustainability. It focuses solely on the price point. We cannot keep on taking and taking from the land and other life and the Earth without properly taking care of the land and other beings that allow us to eat.

The European settlers and the United States destroyed the access Native peoples have to their ways of hunting and gathering food through forced removal to reservations, assimilation, pollution, and replacing their traditional foods with the Western diet. Revitalizing traditional food ways protect not only the health of Native peoples but also their cultural and spiritual relationships with food.

When control over food production returns to local communities, it means that people can live sustainably within their place. Their food provides the nutrition unique to the place. Indigenous people have long coexisted with the plants and animal where they live. When we have a reciprocal relation with the Earth and when all life thrives in balance and harmony with the Earth truly measures food sovereignty.

Global trade: Local food production conflicts with global trade. By leveraging the debt owed by Third World countries to Western economies, the World Trade Organization imposes international economic agreements that force debtor nations to open their markets to global imports and force local agriculture to grow cash crops for export to the global market. The corporations take the most productive from small local growers to grow crops for export, both commodities and vegetables and fruits to provide the Global North with a year-round variety.

More meat: The Business as Usual projection of the corporate food regime calls for a food system that centers on increasing the induced global demand for meat and animal products, especially in the Global South. The corporate food regime, which makes its largest profits from meat and dairy sales, has subverted the food system to provide feed for livestock and for ultraprocessed foods. Through government commodity subsidies, the corporate food system benefits from underpriced corn and soybean to maximize its profit on meat sales. Corporations anticipate that the Global South will double its imports of meat and cereals and nearly triple their imports of grains and other commodities by 2050.

Corporate Second Green Revolution: The corporate "Second Green Revolution" would double the yield on the same amount of farmland by intensifying the use of patented hybrid seeds, robotic technology, and "advanced" chemical inputs. To increase crop production at that level would greatly increase the environmental and justice problems with the current global food system.

World and national governments, subject to the wealth and control of global corporate food regime over them, support the global industrialized food system intention to triple its current production by increasing the production of a limited range of food commodities through

further intensification of production practices, forcing the debtor nations to remove more trade barriers, and using advanced technologies to diminish human labor.

Food Sovereignty and Feeding the Hungry: The corporate food regime's status quo offers a food system that harms people, cultures, other life forms, and the Earth. According to most researchers and the actual experience of affected people, meeting the challenges of world hunger depends upon increasing local food production in the Global South to feed the hungry within their countries. These countries already have a high dependence on agriculture for employment and income. Nations committing to self-sufficiency through domestic production would feed the hungry and increase the economic viability of growers. This option requires the breakup of large corporate farms that now grow for the Western market and the return of the land to the growers from which the land was taken.

Corporations do not feed the hungry. They ensure their continuing economic growth and profits by promoting the ever greater transition to the Western diet to those who can afford to pay its price.

Resources

[Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007](#)

[Six Pillars of Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007](#)

Holt-Gemenez, Eric, [Food Security, Food Justice, or Food Sovereignty?](#) Food First Backgrounder, Institute for Food and Development Policy (Winter 2010).

[Opening declaration of the counter mobilization to transform corporate food system.](#) Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security. (July 2021).

Pol, Jose Luis Vivero, [Why food should be a commons not a commodity.](#) UN University (October 2013).

Tomlinson, Isobel, [Doubling food production to feed the 9 billion.](#) Journal of Rural Studies (2011).