FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FOR THE RIGHT TO FOOD

A Guide for Grassroots Activism

COPAC
CO-OPERATIVE AND POLICY ALTERNATIVE CENTER
Building Human Solidarity to Sustain Life

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This activist guide emerges out of three important processes. The first is through the struggle to build the solidarity economy alternative over the past 5 years involving grassroots unemployed movements, community organisations, small scale farmers, cooperatives and unions.The second is through the campaign for advancing food sovereignty that comes out of the second national solidarity economy conference hosted in August 2013 where many of these grassroots movements endorsed the campaign. The third is through the right to food interprovincial dialogues in Gauteng, Northwest and Limpopo hosted by COPAC. We would like to acknowledge these grassroots movements and activists for their continued efforts and struggles to achieve food sovereignty in South Africa.

We would also like to acknowledge the largest global peasant movement La Via Campesina for leading the way toward food sovereignty and agroecology. This guide draws on their practice and inspirational experiences. We would also like to acknowledge the Siyakhana project for providing their garden as a space of learning during a Solidarity Economy Movement hosted food sovereignty activist school in February 2014. Lastly we would like to acknowledge the Ekukhanyeni Relief Project, their facilitators and their learning resources that helped empower activists on agroecology. This guide draws on their practical tools and methods for agroecology practice, the learning and feedback of activists and general research on agroecology.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This list gives the meaning of some of the key words used in this guide. If you come across any of these words in the guide that you need to remind yourself the meaning of, you can turn back to this page to check.

Agroecology – A way of farming that does not destroy nature, but instead works with the principles of nature. For example, it uses plants and animal manure to make compost, rather than throwing these materials away or using chemical fertilisers that destroy the soil. It is about building self-reliance, independence and power of those who produce our food, for example, by seed saving, recycling materials, and so on.

Climate Change – The global warming of the earth's temperature caused by all the carbon dioxide that our factories, coal power stations, transport and agriculture puts into the atmosphere. This causes changes in weather patterns, as well as extreme events like floods and droughts.

Facilitator – The person (or persons) who runs a workshop or process. A facilitator keeps the workshop on track and guides the workshop, ensuring learning is taking place.

Calories – the amount of energy that food contains in it. We need calories, which we get from food, in order to have energy.

Food security – Food security exists when a household has access to enough nutritious food for its members to lead an active and healthy life.

Food insecurity – When a household and its members to not have access to enough nutritious for to lead and active and healthy life

Food value chain – Refers to the different steps through which food goes to become the item of food that we eventually purchase for our consumption. For example, the farm where the seed is planted, the miller where the wheat is turned into flour, the storage facilities where the flour is stored, the bakery where it is turned into bread, the shop where the bread is sold to customers.

Food sovereignty – When people and communities control their own food systems, rather than markets and corporations. Those who produce our food are placed at the centre of food sovereignty and valued highly.

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) – Genetic modification of seeds, for example, is when scientists in a laboratory put genes into a seed to give it certain characteristics, like making it able to resist a pest or use less water. This technology is controlled by a few big companies who are forcing these seeds on farmers so that they can make a big profit out of selling them these seeds every season.

Hunger – In basic terms, when someone or a group does not have enough food. In this guide, we locate hunger as a key outcome of our current food system and unequal society, rather than just an individual experience of an empty stomach.

Liberalisation – When government removes barriers like taxes to imports like food in order to protect local producers, and promotes exports as well as a way of developing.

Market – Where goods and services are bought and sold. A mechanism where buyers meet sellers.

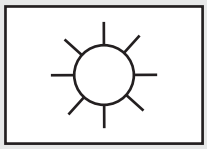
Neoliberalism – The idea that every problem in society can be solved by the market. Everything we as humans need should be done by businesses and bought and sold for the highest profit.

Right to food – According to our Constitution, everyone in South Africa should have enough nutritious food to eat every day, as a right.

Transformation – A deep and thorough change. This can refer to individual transformation where a person changes deeply from how they were before. It can also refer to society, in which case we talk about social transformation – the deep and thorough change in society, usually for the better, from how it was before.

A USERS KEY

Presented by Facilitator



When you see this sun, it means input by facilitator.
This material should also be read by workshop participants.

Plenary Group Exercises

When you see this exclamation mark it means this is a group exercise in the workshop involving everyone.

Small Group Exercises

When you see this face it means this is work for small groups in the workshop.

MODULE 1
Using the Guide as an Activist Tool

Module 1
Using the Guide as an Activist Tool

1.1 Objectives of this Module

- Introduce and give a background to this activist guide
- Provide tips on how to be a facilitator for a food sovereignty workshop and process
- Provide information on how to use this guide and to put into practice principles that ensure real learning takes place

1.2 Introduction

Since 2010 COPAC has been working with activists, community organisations and cooperatives to actively advance the solidarity economy as an alternative to unemployment and the social crisis that we face in South Africa. One of the key social crises that South Africa faces is that of hunger: at least 12 million South Africans suffer from hunger after 20 years of democracy. COPAC together with solidarity economy forces therefore started thinking about how the solidarity economy could contribute to ending hunger, by building ways in which communities could control their own food production, distribution and supply and so end hunger. This has meant connecting the solidarity economy to the idea and practice of food sovereignty, which will be explored in depth in this activist guide.

Food sovereignty has emerged as an idea and practice of its own from farmers themselves, but in South Africa we are also thinking about how to deepen how we use food sovereignty and agroecology to end hunger. In this sense, how can the solidarity economy be used to advance and achieve food sovereignty and ensure that every South African's Constitutional right to food is met? In 2010 COPAC published an activist guide on advancing the solidarity economy, which was widely used to develop education and awareness about the solidarity economy alternative. Following the success of this guide and the learning and awareness raised, we thought it was necessary to follow this guide up with linking the solidarity economy to food sovereignty. This present guide is therefore based both on research as well as on much practical experience of the community-based organisations and activists that have been advancing the solidarity economy approach. The emerging solidarity economy movement (SEM) is evolving an approach to food sovereignty that includes building the alternative in practice through solidarity economy structures. What informs this guide are therefore a number of factors:

- Research undertaken on the food sovereignty alternative and how it can be advanced through the solidarity economy alternative.
- Concrete engagements and learning with community organisations and cooperatives that are linking solidarity economy building to food sovereignty.
- At a solidarity economy movement (SEM) conference in August 2013, a food sovereignty campaign proposal was engaged with and agreed to as a key campaign of the SEM.
- The guide has also been through a process of testing at a food sovereignty and agroecology activist school as well as a dialogue process on the right to food involving a range of constituencies.

These above factors have all shaped the production of this guide.

1.3 Objectives of the Food Sovereignty Activist Guide

The main objectives of this guide are the following:

- **Provide tools for ending hunger and transforming society:** The guide aims to develop a thorough awareness of why we have so much hunger in our society, how it links to broader injustices and patterns of wealth creation, and how activists can work to begin building an alternative food system in their communities based on linking food sovereignty, the solidarity economy and agroecology. Such an alternative food system works on the foundation of using human solidarity as the main basis for transforming society and ending hunger.

- **Capacitate a new kind of transformative activist, a solidarity economy and food sovereignty activist:** Activism that aims to transform society in ways that are people-centred and -led, and democratic, requires a special kind of activist. An activist that aims to work for real transformation in his or her community and broader society cannot just lecture to communities about what they need to do. Rather, it is activism that analyses and is guided by the particular context that activists and communities face. It is about speaking and learning together with people, rather than the activist being the 'expert' that has to give their knowledge to the people through lecturing them. The aim is therefore for all people to be active participants in transforming their own conditions and that of society – to build power on many different levels.

- **Contribute to a new way of building a cooperative movement in South Africa:** This guide sees building food sovereignty and ending hunger as a key way of advancing and growing the solidarity economy movement (SEM) in South Africa. Up until today, the building of cooperatives has mainly been driven from the top by the state. In post-apartheid South Africa this approach is failing to build a vibrant, independent and growing cooperative movement. The previous activist guide produced by COPAC, *Building a Solidarity Economy Movement*, is part of developing an alternative way of building a cooperative movement guided by the vision and principles of the solidarity economy. That is, bottom-up, driven from the grassroots and democratic. This guide aims to add to this approach by using a key need that we as humans all have: that of getting enough healthy and nutritious food everyday. This is something that millions of poor South Africans are failing to get. Therefore, communities using the information in this guide and organising to meet their food needs together can further contribute to this grassroots approach to developing the solidarity economy movement in South Africa.

- **Provide practical skills for organising for food sovereignty and the right to food:** Linked to all of the above, the guide also aims to further develop practical skills for organising for food sovereignty. The guide therefore also covers the link between food sovereignty and the right to food,basic agroecology skills (a way of farming that does not destroy nature, but instead works with the principles of nature) and a few basic steps for organising for food sovereignty in your community.The guide aims to strongly link theory and practice.

1.4 Being a Facilitator

The aim of how this guide has been designed is that anyone can pick it up and, with some preparation and effort, use it as a tool to facilitate a workshop on the food sovereignty alternative and a broader process to fight for and build food sovereignty. To be a facilitator therefore does not mean that you have to be an expert with all the answers.

In a workshop setting and in engagement with others, we all learn from each other and the materials we are working with. The facilitator also learns from the process of the workshop and community engagement and activism itself, and from all those who he/she interacts with.

The facilitator therefore has a variety of roles to play: animator, trainer, skill-sharer, clown, enabler, sharer of real experience, and theorist. There are many roles to play, but you as a facilitator must find what role you are comfortable with playing.

It is important for the facilitator not to see themselves as "only" a facilitator. In order to ensure that the training is relevant for those in the workshop and in the process of building food sovereignty more broadly, we need real problem-solving leadership experience to confront the hardships and struggles that we have experienced. Thus, the facilitator must share his/her skills and experiences freely. Working closely and generously with other facilitators, whether more or less experienced, builds their capacity and one's own. It allows one to grow and to form genuine teams in every situation. It also protects against the virus of self-inflation – thinking that one is an expert and therefore unable to learn from others.

It is important to remember that by learning through experience and sharing the facilitator learns from the group he/she is working with. In other words, it is important to remember that the facilitator may not always "have all the answers". It is through this process that active learning takes place. The facilitator must capacitate people to take action, and then reflect on and evaluate the situation in order to draw light on the right lessons from the action taken. In this way learning becomes a constant and never-ending process.

1.5 Key Principles for Learning Process Facilitation

In order to play the role of facilitator successfully, there are some principles that can guide facilitation.

Learning *is a continuous process, an everyday activity and an integral part of what it means to be a human being. Learning is about how we change and become difference from the way we were before.*

For real learning and capacitation to take place, a solidarity economy movement and food sovereignty facilitator using this guide cannot behave like a school teacher or lecturer. People cannot be empowered just by lecturing to them. The learning process is about opening and awakening critical consciousness so that fear to live as a full human being, in association with others, is overcome.

To achieve this in both a workshop setting and in the process of building and organising for food sovereignty, the following principles should be applied:

- ***It is people-centred:*** it encourages participation, values people, celebrates diversity, and puts people first. It recognises people's skills and experiences as key resources.
- ***It is active:*** it involves people doing and experiencing things.
- ***It is enquiry-based:*** it continually tries to uncover why something is the way that it is and to explore what is going on under the surface.
- ***It is critically reflective:*** being aware of oneself, one's position in the world, and one's impacts on others is seen as an integral part of taking action.

- ***It builds on existing knowledge:*** it draws out relevant information from the participants about their needs and context and provides processes which encourage people to critically analyse and discuss from their own experiences. Particular effort is therefore made by the facilitator to get people to contribute the knowledge that they may already have.
- ***It responds and adapts to people's needs:*** it is flexible enough, open enough and sensitive enough to recognise people's needs and to change to meet them.
- ***It recognises the importance of feelings:*** human transformation is as much about what happens to how you feel as it is about how you think.
- ***It is NOT neutral:*** rather, it is clear about where it is coming from, why certain situations exist, what it is trying to achieve and why, and whose interests it aims to serve.
- ***It is holistic:*** It looks at the whole picture of things. It looks at linkages between the past, present and future, between the individual, the group, society and the environment as well as between local, regional and global levels.

1.6 Workshop Guidelines

This activist guide uses a workshop method to ensure two-way learning and to encourage bottom up movement building. In this approach the facilitator has to put into practice the principles of training mentioned above. The workshop-based learning approach is meant to gather solidarity economy actors into small groups in which they are able to learn together and from each other.

This guide sets out an intensive workshop-based training that can happen over three days. However, this is just a guideline.

The training content is made up of modules which follow a sequence of building block learning – each module builds on the previous ones. This means it is important to work in-depth with the ordering of each module. However, this does not mean that the time spent on each module has to be as suggested. Depending on the group, more or less time might need to be spent on each module. Facilitators must remember that this learning process requires patience.

The theory content of the modules should be presented by the facilitators. But there are also plenary and small group exercises and discussion points that are specifically designed to ensure active participation in the workshop and bottom-up learning.

The actual location of the training workshop should be guided by the circumstances faced. This requires creativity and ability to adapt. For example, training might take place in a house, in a community hall, in an office, on a piece of farming land, or under a tree. Workshop-based learning is a tool that can be used in various places and settings. You can also use the tool flexibly. For example, most of the workshop might take place in a room, but if there is a food garden or farm nearby, then you may want to conduct Module 4 (which focuses on agroecology) at the garden so that practical demonstration and learning can take place.

Facilitation tools (e.g. flip chart paper, pens, slides, audio-visual materials) compliment training, but are not essential for it. A lack of facilitation tools should not prevent the training workshop from taking place. In many other cultures and societies learning has also happened orally – by talking to each other and using whatever is available in the immediate environment like drawing with sticks in the sand or using words, symbols and objects to represent the people, events or ideas. We would encourage trainers to adapt the content in this guide to what is appropriate and necessary in your circumstances.

Small Group Exercise:

Workshop participants must be broken up into small groups to answer the following questions:

1. How do you learn? What tools do you use to learn?
2. How can the workshops be used as a learning process and space?
3. What are you willing to do to ensure the workshop is a learning process and space?

MODULE 2
Understanding Hunger and the Food System

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2.1 Objectives of this Module:

- Develop a broad understanding of why we have so much hunger in South Africa and in the world;
- Develop an understanding of the structure of the South African food system, who controls our food production, and who benefits; and how this links to the creation of hunger;
- Develop an understanding of how this links to the global food system.

2.2 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to develop an understanding of the food system in South Africa and in the world, in order to help us answer why we have so much hunger in South Africa and the world. We will see that a key reason why we have hunger is because of how the food system itself is structured: it has been designed to serve the interests of profit rather than human need.

What do we mean by 'hunger'?

There are many technical ways of measuring hunger. At one level, hunger essentially means that people are not getting enough food. This includes when people do not get enough nutrients that their bodies need. The Food and Agriculture Organisation therefore defines hunger in terms of undernourishment. This then becomes very technical and is measured according to how many calories and micronutrients people are consuming. Based on this measurement, groups of people can then be classified according to their intake of calories, from the best category of food secure to the worst of experiencing famine. Famine usually exists when there is an event like war or drought that cuts groups of people off from their source of food.

However, when we talk about 'hunger' in this guide and in our activism, we are referring to the fact that even in a 'stable' society like South Africa many people are hungry. We are talking about the fact that even though there is no war or drought in South Africa, our society still produces hunger. We are looking at how the food system is built and who runs it in fact produces hunger in the long term. We are looking at the political and economic causes.

To begin our task of examining the causes of hunger in South Africa, let's start with a few minutes of discussion.

Plenary Discussion:

1. Does your household and your entire community always have enough nutritious food to eat every day?
2. If not, why do you think this is the case?
3. Do you think the food and agricultural system contributes to hunger? Why?

In the above discussion, some people may have focused on the fact that many households suffer from hunger because of unemployment and so people cannot afford to buy enough food. But this module will challenge us to think even further than this and to examine the South African, and global, food system as a whole. We will begin to ask questions of, who exactly controls the production and distribution of our food and who is profiting from it? Why do food prices keep rising so that even those who at one point could afford enough food for their households, at another point in time can no longer afford all of what they need? Who is benefitting from these price rises?

2.3 Hunger and Food Insecurity in South Africa

What do we mean by 'food security'?
According to the official definition of **household** food security, food security exists "when all households, at all times, have sufficient access to safe and nutritionally adequate food for leading an active and healthy life". That is, for a household to be food secure means that 1) it is able to access enough food for all its members every day, and 2) the food that it accesses is sufficiently nutritious. So, if a household is food insecure, it means that it is not *always* able to get enough food for its members. Maybe this week there is enough food, but maybe next week the household won't have enough food. Hunger, however, means that a household consistently does not have enough nutritious food to eat.

It is important to note, however, that there are different levels at which food security can be measured. For example, **national** food security refers to a situation in which a country is able to manufacture and/or import to ensure that its population has enough nutritious food. But, there is also a contradiction then with the idea of food security, which is illustrated with the example of South Africa: we produce more than enough food at a national level to feed our whole population, but millions of households suffer from hunger and food insecurity. Why is this the case?

Hunger in South Africa is widespread:

- According to the government, 12 million South Africans currently go to bed hungry every day;
- A recent study by the Human Sciences Research Council found that only 46% of South African households are food secure (that is, just less than half of South African households have enough nutritious food to eat). The same study also found that 26% (a quarter) of South African households experience hunger, while 28.6% (almost a third) are at risk of hunger (so they are food insecure);
- Other studies then look at specific groups of people. So for example, one study conducted in 2008 found that of poor urban households surveyed, 70% were food insecure! So when we are looking at poor households alone, the level of food insecurity and hunger experienced is extremely high;
- Addressing hunger is not only about people being able to eat just any food, but *nutritious* food, so that we eat a wide range of food that gives us all the vitamins, minerals, proteins, fats and carbohydrates that our bodies and minds need to develop and function well. But according to the National Development Plan, 1 out of every 4 children will experience stunted growth and mental development due to malnutrition. This means that hunger and malnutrition have negative consequences for these children later in life, where they will not be able to study as well at school, and will be limited in the extent to which they can positively contribute to society later in life. Hunger therefore has significant implications for the wellbeing of our society in the future.

Plenary Group Exercise:

Each participant in the workshop should think about and answer the following questions on a piece of paper.

1. What types of food do you and your household eat in an average week? You can write down a list.
2. Now write down a list of the food that you would like your household to eat every week.
3. Is there a difference between the two lists? Why/why not? What decisions inform the choices you make? What challenges do you face in getting the food that you feel is nutritious and healthy and good for your family?

Due to time, the facilitator can ask 2 or 3 people if they would like to report back on these answers, and take notes of their answer on the flip chart. Also allow for everyone to engage in open discussion around the issues raised.

2.4 The Right to Food and South African Policy

We have now briefly explored the state of hunger in South Africa and the challenges that households face in securing their food needs. But before we move on to look more deeply at the deeper causes of this hunger by examining the overall food system, let us briefly look at the context of food policy in South Africa, aimed at overcoming food insecurity.

Did you know that in South Africa it is a RIGHT that everyone should always have enough nutritious food to eat? According to Section 27 of our Constitution, "everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water … the state must take reasonable legislative and other steps within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of the right." Furthermore, according to Section 28 of the Constitution, "every child has the right to basic nutrition." Arising out of this, in addition to policies on land and agriculture that of course relate to food, our government has specific policies and strategies on food and food security. These include:

- The Integrated Food Security Strategy (developed in 2002)
- Food Security Policy (developed in 2012)
- The Zero Hunger Programme (developed in 2012)

Astonishingly, none of these have ever been implemented to any meaningful extent. The Zero Hunger Programme was developed as a plan for implementing the Integrated Food Security Strategy (10 years after the strategy was produced), but its only implementation was that it became collapsed into President Jacob Zuma's Masibambisane rural development programme. This programme has since been turned into an NGO, but financed by R900 million of government money. The Zero Hunger Programme, which was supposed to be very broad in its activities by focusing across the food chain and in different locations, urban and rural, was reduced to a 'rural development' NGO, which has now been scrapped in favour of the FetsaTlala programme. The basic flaw of these programmes is that they just focus on increasing production. But as we have seen, South Africa already produces more than enough food to feed our population. It is a question of who produces this food and what happens to it after it has been produced. The pioneer on a Zero Hunger Programme was Brazil, which in that country involved the government creating programmes that directly intervened to deal with hunger. The programme had a significant impact on reducing the rate of hunger in Brazil.

But South Africa essentially does not have any policy or programme that is being implemented to directly deal with hunger. This high level of hunger in South Africa is not just a policy issue then, but because everyone's right to food is guaranteed in our Constitution, a right is actually being violated and the state is failing to play its role in realising this right.

Furthermore, while we have policies on agriculture and land, these are aimed mainly at increasing production of food, but do not focus on altering how food is produced nor how the food that is produced is distributed – that is, does it go to the market where the seller can find the highest price or is it directed in ways that connect with the human need for food? Let us now turn to examine the structure of the South African food system and how it undermines the right to food and contributes to the creation of hunger.

2.5 Understanding the South African Food System

The first important thing to note is that we do not have widespread hunger in South Africa because our population has grown too fast for us to feed or because we cannot afford to import enough food, and so on. In fact, in South Africa we produce more than enough food to feed everyone. But we tend to export a lot of it to the world market and other countries rather than to feed our people first. We do this because our government, its policy makers and food distributors have decided that we should make food subject to the market. That is, according to the idea of **neoliberalism**, we must rely on the market and profit making to provide for all our needs in life, including food.

What do we mean by **'the market'**?
Essentially, the market is a relationship between those who are selling things, and those who are buying what is being sold. But in our market economies today, the relationship usually only involves a transaction, not a personal relationship, between the seller and buyer, such that the seller makes maximum profits. In fact, there are many sellers selling things in the making of one product, and there are very many buyers. As such, there are few personal relationships, but rather a whole lot of businesses and people that are selling, for as much profit as they can, and buying things on the market. When you go to Pick n Pay to buy your food, you are actually buying your food from the market, and the loaf of bread that you have bought has gone from the wheat grown on a farm, to be grinded at a mill into flour, to the bakery that makes the bread, to PicknPay that sells it to you. You, nor each actor in the chain before the loaf of bread got to you, actually has any direct connection to each other. What connected you was the market. In simple terms, **neoliberalism** is the idea that we should allow all human needs to be met by the market and business: water and electricity, education, food and so on.

Group Exercise:

Divide the participants into their groups and have them discuss the following questions for about 10 minutes. Afterwards, allow for 10 minutes of general discussion on them.

1. Has the market always been the only way that people get their food?
2. Think back to how some people in rural areas still live, and how people might have lived in their traditional ways in rural areas. How did they get their food? How is this different to how people get their food now?
3. What are the main aims of those in the food market (commercial farmers, bakeries, supermarkets) in selling food? What impacts could this have on people who need to eat food?
4. Is it a good thing to have the market as the main mechanism through which we get our food?

At a national level, much of what happens with the food that we produce and consume in South Africa is determined by the market. There are two markets that we are talking about: the international market, and the national/domestic market. What is the impact of allowing markets to determine how food is produced? Let us first turn to the idea and practice of selling the food that we produce in our country to international markets.

Our government and policy makers have decided that we should sell a lot of what we produce not only in South Africa, but a lot of it on the world market. We should export a lot of what we produce, such as our maize, in order to earn income as a country. Then, because we as sellers have pursued the highest price by selling our agricultural produce on the world market, we can as buyers buy the food we need as cheaply as we can, also from the world market through trade. That is, rather than focusing on seeing food as something to produce to ensure our people get fed directly, we should instead focus on **international trade**. The idea that drives this is called **trade liberalisation:** that we should, with sectors like agriculture, increase international trade by dropping protection for the sector from cheap imports, and focus on exporting what we produce to earn income to pay for food imports. The National Development Plan (NDP), in its chapter on agriculture, calls for South Africa to focus on producing 'high-value' products like fruit and so on, and not to focus too strongly on staples like wheat and maize. Rather, we can just import these from neighbouring countries. Again, does this sound sensible? Well, let us examine a case study to see what impact following an export-led model of agriculture, driven by the market, produces.

Case Study: The Impacts of Trade Liberalisation on Food

Participants to divide into groups to analyse case study and discuss questions.

Early in 2014 it was reported that the price of chicken, the main and cheapest source of protein for workers and the poor, would increase by 30%. This means that if people were paying R40 per kg of chicken before, they will now pay R52 per kg. The reason for this increase in the price of chicken is that the price of yellow maize, which is what chickens are fed with, is going up because the rand has become weaker against the dollar. We pay in dollars for the maize that we import, which means that because the rand is weaker against the dollar we pay more for the maize that we import. However, at the same time, we produce a lot of maize in our country, but grain traders export a lot of it as well.

This means that we have to then import maize to make sure we have enough to for people to buy to eat and for feeding chickens and livestock, which is why we pay more for maize when the rand gets weaker.

The price of white maize, which is the staple food of most South Africans, is also going up because of a combination of the drought in the North-west province and the weaker rand (we also import some of our white maize).

This means that South Africans that depend on maize meal and chicken meat for their nutrition can now afford less of it.

Discussion:

1. In the case study, how is hunger being created?
2. Who do you think is benefitting from increased maize prices?
3. Do ordinary citizens who rely on buying mealie meal and chicken have any control over the price of maize? Does it have to be like this?
4. Do you think that, based on the above case study, allowing the market to determine how we get our food is a good thing?

We have now touched on what some of the impacts are of seeing food as something to be traded internationally through trade liberalisation. Now we'll turn to look at the nature of the market around food and agriculture in South Africa. Earlier we said that the market is essentially a relationship between those who are selling things and those who want to buy. This may sound like a perfect relationship. But what if one of them has more power than the other? What if, for example, supermarkets and bakeries have more power than you and me who need to buy the bread? What impact can this have in general in the market for food?

2.6 Power in the South African Food Chain

When we look at a food system and want to examine what impacts it has in terms of getting nutritious food to people, we should look at each point in the value chain and ask:

- Who controls this point of the chain? That is, who has the most power?
- What are the interests and aims of those who control and have power in the food value chain?
- What are the impacts of them pursing their interests – on people, on levels of hunger, on the environment, and so on?

What do we mean by **'value/supply chain'**?

The value chain simply refers to the different steps through which food goes to become the item of food that we eventually purchase for our consumption. To use the example of a loaf of bread: the value chain includes the farms on which wheat is grown, the distributors to which the wheat is sold, the millers where wheat is turned into flour, the processors where flour is turned into bread, and the supermarkets where it is sold to consumers.

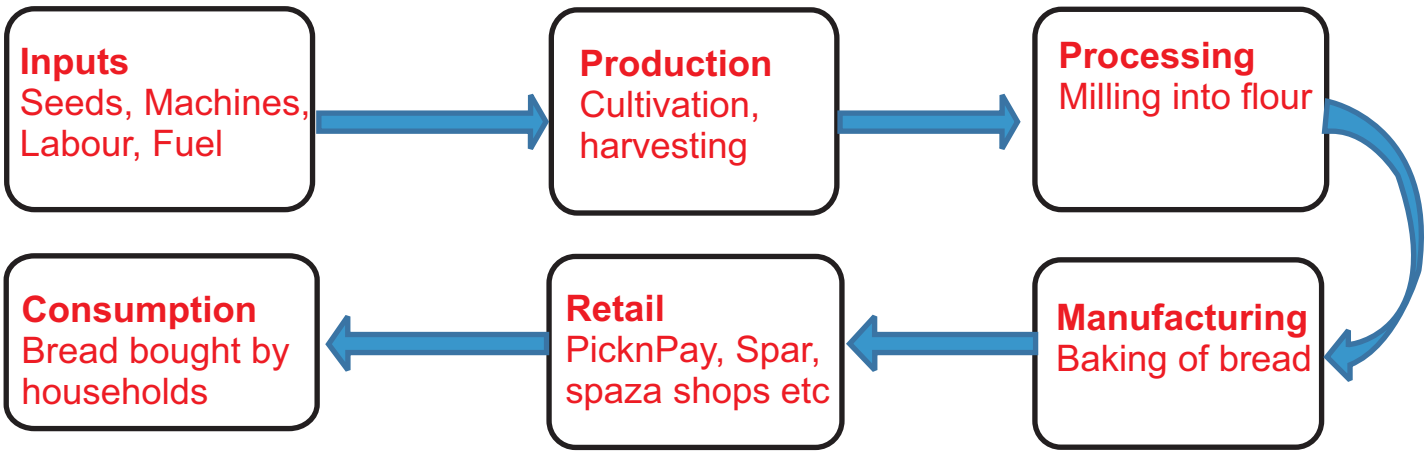


Diagram: Example of a food value chain for bread

Group Exercise: The Story of Food

Note to facilitator: Ask the participants to divide into their groups, and ensure each group has an item of food to analyse.
Time required: 15 minutes

Take an item of food, such as an apple, a loaf of bread etc, and discuss how this item of food got to us. Think right from the beginning of where it started in the value chain, and think through each step of the value chain. At each step, ask:

1. Who controlled the inputs and other things that were needed to produce it? That is, who controlled its production and processing?
2. Who benefitted from production at each stage?
3. What were the aims of those who controlled each step in the food item's production in producing the food?

Each group can choose how they wish to present this story – they can either write notes, they can create a picture showing the story, they can even act it out in a play.

After each group has presented back, the facilitator should take note of some of the patterns and commonalities. What would everyone like to see different in their story? What are the alternative stories they can tell?

Now that we've started thinking about how our food is produced, who controls its production, who benefits from its production, and what the impacts are, let us examine more closely each step in the production of our food in South Africa.

2.6.1 Land

To produce food, we need land. Land is therefore a key element that we need to have access to and control over if we want to feed ourselves. But who controls most of the land in South Africa?

Before the arrival of European colonialists who took much of the land away from the African people who were already living on it, they depended on themselves for their food and nutrition needs. Thus as soon as colonialists started taking land away from Africans to prevent competition for white commercial farmers and free up people to work in the mines and factories, more and more people in what is now South Africa began losing control over and access to a key element in feeding themselves: land. Most agricultural land was then put in the hands of white farm owners. The state and the church also owned large amounts of land. However, this did not stop Africans from continuing to farm and produce food in the former Bantustans as well as in urban areas.

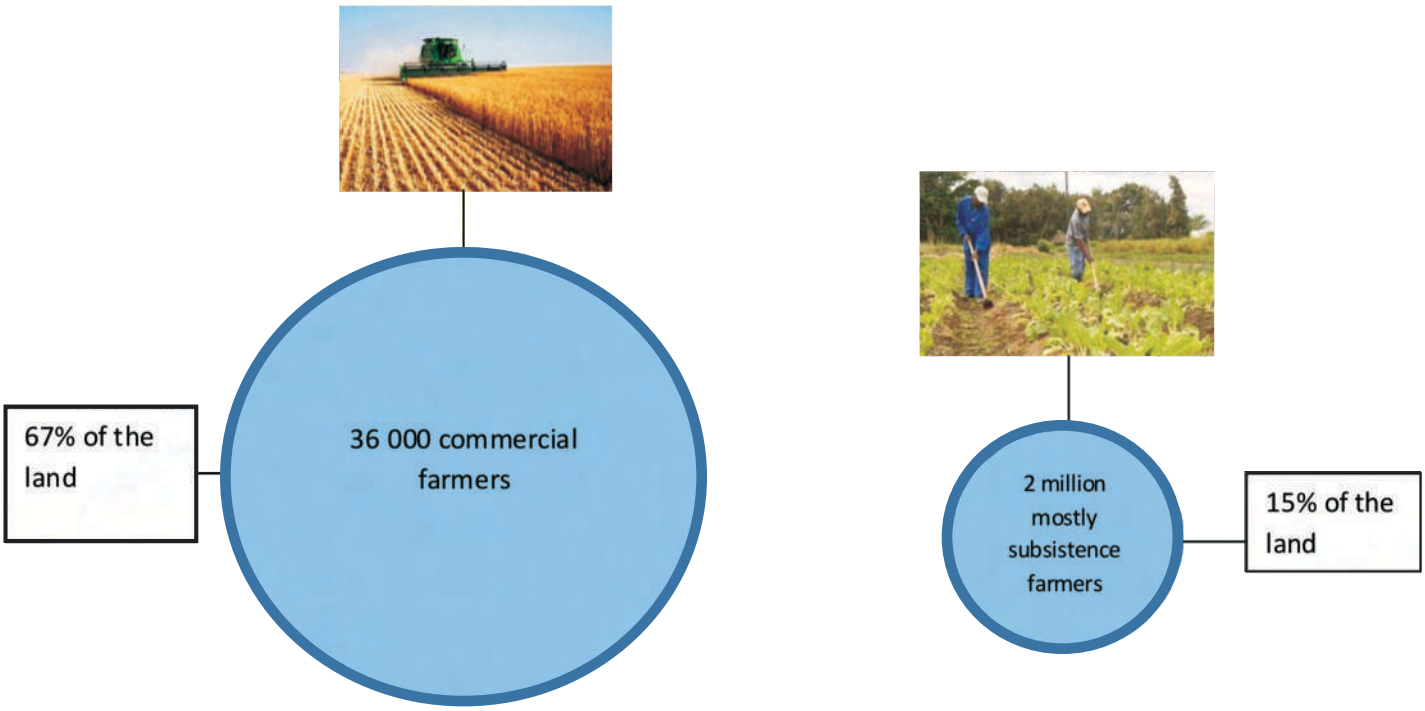
This was basically the pattern of land ownership that continued until the ANC was elected to government in 1994. In that year, they set a target that they would redistribute 30% of land from white owners to black owners by the year 2005. But to date, only about 7% of white-owned land has been transferred from white to black ownership. But the picture of land ownership in South Africa is slightly more complex than just whites owning almost all of it and Africans accessing a tiny portion.

The following is the division of the total land area in South Africa:

- 'White' commercial agricultural land – 67%
- 'Black' communal land (mostly owned by the state) – 15%
- Other state land – 10%
- Remainder, including urban areas – 8%

Thus while the picture of land ownership in South Africa is more complex than just white farmers owning almost all of it and Africans having access to a tiny portion, a majority of the land in South Africa still belongs to only a few thousand people, and the country has one of the most uneven distributions of land in the world.

2.6.2 Agricultural Production



1. Who has the power over land in South Africa?
2. Who has the power to produce our food and benefit from it?

Because most of the land on which our food is produced is still controlled by a small number of people, it means that the production of our food (maize, fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry etc) is in the hands of a small number of farm owners. The fact that land was taken away from a lot of people and only given to a few meant that we have very big commercial farms, with many single farms being hundreds and even thousands of hectares in size, but belonging to only one farmer. In South Africa we have 36 000 large commercial farmers. This compares to an estimated 2 million small scale and subsistence, mostly black, farmers who are mostly located in the former homelands.

Out of a population of 54 million people, we have only 36 000 large commercial farmers who produce most of the country's food. Food production has in fact become even more concentrated after 1994, when there were 60 000 large commercial farmers. But many of these farmers have gone out of business because the government opened up our economy to imports of cheaper food from other countries and so many farmers could not compete with these prices and went out of business. For example, after the government began allowing more food imports into the country, imports of both processed and unprocessed foods increased by billions of rands. What this means is that less of our food we eat is coming from farmers within our country, and so less and less farmers can stay in business. This has meant that we have had a decrease in the number of large white commercial farmers, but it also means that it is that much more difficult to increase the number of new, small scale farmers and allow them to produce the food for our country. However, we should take note that there food production by small scale farmers is taking place, in rural areas, former homelands, as well as in poor urban areas. But the bulk of food that people buy still comes from the commercial farming sector.

Plenary Group Exercise

!

1. Are there small scale farmers where you live?
2. What role are they playing in producing food for your community? Could they be playing a much larger role?
3. What challenges do they face?

Also, whereas before 1994 the government provided direct support to farmers, like credit, marketing services and skills, it stopped providing this after 1994. This then created a very difficult environment that new emerging farmers had to try and enter if they wanted to farm, so you can imagine why we have so few successful small scale and African farmers! What is more, about 20% of large commercial farms produce 80% of our food! Therefore, because of a lack of land reform and support for new and smaller scale farmers, in South Africa we rely on a very small number of people to produce our food.

To add to this, farm labourers who do most of the work to actually produce our food are the lowest paid workers in the country and hence benefit the least from the production of food at this point in the supply chain. Hence, can we say that there is justice in how our food is currently farmed? The farmworkers produce our food, but they are not actually in control of the conditions under which they produce, what they produce, and how they benefit from what they produce. The farmworker strikes that exploded in the Western Cape in December 2012 showed us how exploited those who produce our food are, and just who benefits from the production of food in South Africa.

2.6.3 Lack of Agrarian Reform

The lack of land reform, with a small number of people owning a large amount of agricultural land and therefore the means of production of food, also links to the fact that there has been a lack of **agrarian reform** in South Africa as well. Agrarian reform means more than land reform: to change relations in the countryside and in the farming sector, we need to do more than just hand over existing land from white capitalist farmers to new emerging black capitalist farmers. Agrarian reform means that we should question whether it is just and feasible for only a few people, whether black or white, to own vast amounts of land, while millions more lack access to land and the means of production. Agrarian reform means that we should increase the number of people that have access to land as well, and increase their rights and control over it. This means looking at smaller farm sizes rather than the massive farms we are used to in South Africa and which on each farm only a very small variety of crops are actually grown. It also means that small farmers and rural communities should have access to the resources needed for production and for livelihoods, such as water. The state should therefeore also play a role in ensuring that these farmers have affordable access to inputs (equipment, seeds and so on) and markets and infrastructure for them to sell their produce. It also means promoting and supporting urban agriculture, for example, through making land available, providing water, ensuring markets, and so on. Urban agriculture has been shown to play an important role in feeding urban communities. Agrarian reform therefore means that the entire agricultural system is changed, instead of just replacing white farmers with black farmers.

2.6.4 Corporate Control and Power in Our Food System

We have seen how concentrated land ownership and farm production is in South Africa, and how this places control over the production of our food in the hands of a very small number of people. This trend of concentration continues when we look at farm inputs (seeds, machinery etc) and further down in the value chain, of marketing, processing and retailing.

Let's look at who has the most power in different stages of the food value chain:

• ***Seeds:*** Only 3 companies – Monsanto, Pannar and Pioneer – control 90% of the market for grain seed (maize, wheat, sorghum). In the maize seed market alone, bone company, Monsanto, has 50% market share. Furthermore, in South Africa we've also had a massive increase in the use of genetically modified seed. For example, in 2012 86% of the maize seed sold in South Africa was genetically modified. This makes South Africa the only country in the world where we've allowed our staple food, maize, to be genetically modified and, to add to this, where 86% of it is genetically modified. GM technology is yet to be proved that is in fact safe for the health of humans in the long term. Also, the technology increases the power of the companies like Monsanto that produce GM seeds over a key input in production and over farmers, rather than farmers having control over their own seed.

• ***Maize and wheat milling:*** Before 1994 commercial farmers used to have virtually guaranteed markets for their maize and wheat. This was because the government set up and supported, through subsidies, grain marketing boards and cooperatives that bought maize and wheat from the farmers to ensure they could always sell their produce. These cooperatives were not just aimed at making profit, but at ensuring farmers always had somewhere to sell their produce (these cooperatives therefore played a big role in making the white commercial farming sector as big and powerful as it is today). But beginning in the late 1980s, these cooperatives started to be **privatised** – turned from being government owned/supported, or owned by its members, to being like private companies, whose first aim is now to be a business that makes a profit. After this happened, only **4 companies**, which used to be cooperatives, control 90% of the maize and wheat milling market.

• ***Food Processing:*** Food processing essentially refers to the manufacturing stage of food: the baking of bread, the making of tomato sauce, and so on. All the products that you see on the shelves at Checkers, Pick n Pay or Spar have gone through a processing stage. Only 4 companies (National Brands, Pioneer Foods, Tiger Brands and Nestle SA) account for 80% of processed food staples. These companies are also highly profitable, making large amounts from us when we buy the food in the shops that they have been responsible for manufacturing.

• ***Retail:*** There are also a very small number of supermarkets chains that most of us buy our food from. Only 6 supermarkets (Pick n Pay, Shoprite, Woolworths, Spar, Massmart and Metcash) control 94% of the grocery market. Of these 6, just 2 of them, Pick n Pay and Shoprite (which owns Checkers), control 50 per cent of the grocery market, and together bring in an income of R61.7 billion! Between 1996-2006, the total number of corporate supermarkets in South Africa grew by 38%. This means that more and more people are being encouraged to buy their food here, and as they do, so the profits of the big 6 corporate supermarkets go up, and other small grocery traders lose their markets and income.

For those who come from rural areas and small towns (and even townships), have you noticed an increase in the number of big retail shops in rural towns? What impact have you seen this have on small shops, street traders, local markets and small farmers?

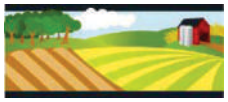
In summary, we have a **food value chain** in South Africa that is dominated by a small number of actors and corporations. Let us summarise what this looks like in the following picture:

Inputs

eg. 3 seed companies: 90% of market

Farming

36 000 commercial farmers

Storage and Milling

4 companies: 90% of market

Processing

4 companies: 80% of the market


Households and Consumers

54 million



Retail

6 companies: 90% of the market

2.6.5 Profit-taking by the corporate food sector

This increase in power of corporations in the South African food value chain has meant that their profits have also been increasing. Before 1994 the government used to have price controls in place, which ensured that the price of particular food stuffs did not go above a particular level, so that food was kept affordable for consumers. But these price controls were removed in 1991. This allowed the price of food to keep going up every year in South Africa, and has profited those involved in marketing (storage, processing and retailers). In fact, it meant that every year about R1.7 billion was transferred from consumers to storage and processors, and retailers. This means that consumers were paying R1.7 billion more for food per year, and that these agents in the marketing system were making R1.7 billion more in income every year.

In 2007 the main bread producers, including Tiger Brands which produces Albany bread, were found guilty of price-fixing on the price of bread. These companies were working together to push up the price of bread in order to increase their profits. That is, they were targeting a key source of staple food for millions of South Africans, most of them poor, in order to make more profits than they already were. This was a direct attack on the poor for the sake of their profits. But why were they able to do this? Because they have so much power in the bread value chain that they are able to increase the price of bread across the whole country if they wish.

2.6.6 Government Favourable to Corporate Interests

What role does our government play in regulating the food value chain in South Africa? What we tend to see is that our government has played a role that is largely favourable to these corporate interests and that has allowed and facilitated the corporate 'takeover' of our food system. This has been on two levels:

1. Removing, or not implementing, regulations that control prices, prevent concentration, provide support to small farmers, and protect local farmers from cheap imports of food;
2. Pursuing policies that have favoured corporate interests in the food system rather than small producers, small retailers and traders and so on.

We have now briefly analysed the South African food system, and how it is organised by the corporations that dominate it to increase their profits rather than to feed people. South Africa is not alone in these trends, but reflects many of the challenges and struggles that are experienced all over the world. Furthermore, this is not limited to only countries experiencing them on their own. We have a food system that is global in its operation and reach. It is therefore important that we understand that South Africa is linked into this global food system as well, which helps us to further understand the problems that we have in the South African food chain and how it undermines the right to food.

2.7 The Global Food System

> "The global food industry is organised, not to feed the hungry, but to generate profits for corporate agribusiness." – Jacklyn Cock, 'Declining Food Safety in South Africa'

We do not have time to explore the global food system in-depth, but rather to scan over some of the key features. These features illustrate how the global food system is being organised to remove control from farmers and consumers, and to place this control more and more in the hands of corporations and 'the market'.

You may remember that in 2006-2008 the world experienced a food crisis. We say crisis because all of a sudden millions of people all over the world could not afford to buy the food that they usually depended on. This was because the price of food staples like maize, rice and wheat on world markets shot up in a very short space of time. The wheat price increased by 130%, rice by 74% and maize by 31%. Overall, between 2005 and 2008 food prices increase by 83%. As a result, over 33 countries experienced food riots, including Haiti where the government was actually toppled by the riots. A number of factors contributed to this food price crisis. What these factors showed is that this was not just one isolated crisis, but that the global food system was in fact broken, and by being re-shaped to serve the profits of corporations and investors was not capable of achieving the wellbeing of all humans and the environment. The following are some features of the global food system that also contributed to the global food crisis of 2008:

Watch:
Seeds of Freedom

• ***Corporate Concentration and Control:*** like in South Africa, globally we see a few corporations that are spreading themselves across the world and entering the food markets of countries. As the do this, they change food systems to serve their own interests of profit, and so remove control from existing food producers and local food systems. For example, 80% of the world market for seeds are controlled by just 10 seed producing companies. They are entering national markets and encouraging, sometime even forcing, farmers to buy their seed. Once they have bought this seed, they cannot keep their own seed for the following year, but have to buy seeds from the company again for the next planting season. The food processing sector is also highly concentrated. The picture on the next page gives us an idea of how many of the foodstuffs that we know are actually produced by a very small number of corporations globally.

Group Exercise:

Examine the picture on the next page and discuss the following questions:

1. What is the picture showing us?
2. What impacts do you think this situation has for local food systems, small farmers, consumers and their health, and so on?
3. Who is benefitting from the production of all these different food products?
4. How do these corporations get people to buy these different food products that they make?

- **Ecological impacts** – the model of agriculture that most of our food is produced through in South Africa is called **industrial agriculture** (we will explore this more deeply in Module 4). In short, industrial agriculture is based on using a high level of technology in agriculture. This includes using seeds that have been modified in laboratories for various purposes, using chemical fertilisers and pesticides (made in factories) to increase production, using big machines for ploughing, planting and harvesting, and so on. Industrial agriculture also usually involves farming on huge pieces of land, often only growing one crop. This is called **monoculture** – we are familiar with it in South Africa when we see huge fields of maize in the Free State and North-west province, for example. This is in fact very unnatural, and can only be done by using huge amounts of chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

  It is becoming more and more clear that industrial agriculture is not good for the health of the planet or for humans. Using chemical fertilisers and pesticides kills natural organisms and minerals in the soil and so turns the soil into 'dead sand'. The result is that to maintain high harvests, more and more of the chemical fertiliser needs to be added every year. These fertilisers and pesticides then also get washed into our water systems and poison our rivers and drinking water.

- **Climate change** – Industrial agriculture, which uses a lot of energy because it uses so much fuel for the big machines, for transporting food over long distances and even across continents, for manufacturing fertilisers and so on, is also contributing about 30% to global emissions of carbon dioxide. How our food is being produced is thus a key cause of climate change. However, in turn climate change is also having significant impacts on the food system, and will continue to have in the future as climate change becomes worse. Climate change reduces crop yields due to changing weather patterns such as increasing temperatures and reduced rainfall.

This means that in areas impacted by climate change, less food can be produced. It also leads to more droughts and floods, further reducing the ability to produce food, especially in Africa. It also leads to rising food prices, making food even harder to get, especially for the poor.

- **Dispossession of small scale farmers and peasants**– it is interesting to note that while large-scale, industrial agriculture is growing in size and producing many negative impacts, the majority of the world's food is still produced by small scale and peasant farmers (see Module 3 for more discussion on small scale and peasant farming). But these farmers are facing severe challenges due to the power of corporate agribusiness, globalisation, and dispossession of land. Ever year millions of small scale farmers leave their farming activities due some of the following pressures;
- **Land dispossession:** currently we have occurring what has been called a 'global land grab'. Peasants and livestock farmers are literally having their land stolen from them as their governments sell their land to big corporations that want to produce food for countries like China and Saudi Arabia. This is happening on a massive scale in Africa, and it means that land is being taken from those producing food for their communities and their country and given to corporations to produce food that will be exported to rich countries that want to buy it. This means that land is being taken to produce food for export rather than for feeding local people, which further causes hunger;
- **Reduced State Support:** all over the world many small farmers are suffering because their governments no longer provide support to them such as credit and access to markets. In some cases corporations have stopped this to do away with competition, and in other cases governments have stopped supporting small scale farmers because they want to support a big agribusiness model of agriculture and focus on large scale farms for producing food for export;
- **Globalisation and Liberalisation:**the idea of globalisation is that countries across the world must connect to each other through more trade, and so they governments must drop barriers that prevent this from happening. To make an example: this means that even countries that produce a lot of their own maize must allow cheap maize grown in the United States to be imported into their country. But in countries like the United States and in Europe, their governments give a lot of money to their agriculture sectors to keep their farmers in business. This means that their farmers can produce their produce at a very low price, and then export it to other countries. But this is usually hugely damaging to the farmers of countries in the South. Let us look at an example:

  In 1994 Mexico signed a Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Among other things, this said that Mexico (where maize originates from) would allow the import of cheap American maize. But because maize production in the US is subsidised a lot by the government, it is very cheap. As a result, people in Mexico start to buy American maize instead of maize produce by Mexican small scale farmers. The result was that over the next few years, 1.3 million Mexican farmers left their land because they could no longer survive from farming! These people who once fed themselves and the country are now added to the poor and the hungry. Now, Mexico is also less reliant on its own production of food, but relies on countries like the United States. Do you think this is a good thing, or do you think that this is in fact how hunger is created?

- **World hunger:**All of the above factors contribute to the fact that there are almost 1 billion people who suffer from hunger in the world, and a further 2 billion who are classified as food insecure. The big contradiction is that the world has never produced more food than it does now. Some estimates are that if all the food produced in the world was shared equally

between its 7 billion inhabitants, everyone would have 1,5 times more food than their bodies actually need every day. This reinforces what we have been emphasising throughout this module: that we therefore need to look at how food is distributed (what is done with what is produced), and to do that we find that its distribution is largely controlled by the rich and powerful who only see food as another way to make more profit.

Plenary Exercise:

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Allow everyone to examine the picture for three minutes and think about the questions below. Then have a 5-minute discussion with everyone giving input on the questions.

1. What do we see happening in the picture?
2. How does this happen?
3. What impact will climate change have on corporate controlled food systems and hunger?Who will suffer the most?
4. What are the other impacts of what is happening in the picture?

2.8 Summary

In this module, we started off by analysing the situation of hunger in South Africa and why it exists. We then went on to explore the nature of our food system and saw how it is in fact controlled by a very small number of players whose main aim is to make a profit from distributing, processing and trading food. This gives them a lot of control over the conditions that determine who does and who does not get food. Essentially, what we found is that our food system is not controlled by the people: that is, there is very little real **democracy** in our food system. These factors are also largely true when we look at the food system at a global level.

This module may have painted a depressing picture, but it is important for us to first clearly understand what the problem is and why it exists, before we can propose and work for an effective, long lasting and democratic solution. This is why in the next module we will turn to exploring the positive alternative that small farmers, consumers and activists are fighting for in the face of the unjust food system that we have globally, and which we are concerned with developing our capacity to fight for and build: **food sovereignty.**

MODULE 3
The Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Economy Alternative

Module 3
The Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Economy Alternative

3.1 Objectives of this module:

- Develop an understanding of the food sovereignty alternative in theory and in practice, grounded in South African conditions and defined in this context;
- Develop a South African conception of food sovereignty that embraces the right to food, food justice, the solidarity economy and agroecology (dealt with in next module);
- Explore how the solidarity economy can build food sovereignty.

3.2 Introduction

In the previous module we explored the question of hunger and how our current food system, in South Africa and globally, in fact contributes to creating this hunger. In short, our current dominant food system is not a just one, and does not promote democracy and control by people over how our food is produced, what is produced, and who benefits from its production. But what do we do about this situation – how do we overcome hunger? Consider the following quote by an activist and writer, Susan George:

> "Charity is not the relevant virtue for fighting hunger… That virtue is justice, because charity can never be more than a stop-gap – it does not and cannot change unjust structures."

Plenary Brainstorm:

1. What is the difference between a focus on charity and a focus on justice and its structures?
2. What examples of 'addressing' hunger do you know of that can be characterised as charity?
3. Which offers a better solution in the long term: charity, or changing unjust social and food system structures?

The structures of the unjust food system are not going unchallenged around the world. In response, small farmers and citizens are promoting and building an alternative that highlights the injustices of the current food system structures and proposes a very clear alternative: food sovereignty. In this module we will explore and understand the concept of food sovereignty; explore how it relates to the solidarity economy; and engage in practical thinking and exercises on how we actually go about building food sovereignty through building structures of the solidarity economy.

3.3 Understanding the Food Sovereignty Alternative

La Via Campesina, a Spanish word meaning 'The way of the Peasants', is the world's largest social movement with over 250 million members organised in over 80 countries. It was formed by small scale peasant farmers as a response to the suffering that they faced under the impacts of neoliberalism and the power of international agribusiness, such as land grabs, loss of income due to competition, lack of state support and so on. It was a movement established by small farmers themselves to fight back and defend their right to be the producers of the world's food to feed its people.

At a meeting of La Via Campesina at the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) conference in Rome in 1996, members of the movement concluded that "food security" was not sufficient in explaining and solving the problems faced by small farmers, as well as the broader global problem of hunger. "Food sovereignty" was instead adopted by La Via Campesina and defined as a more radical alternative for meeting the needs of communities for livelihoods, dignity, healthy food and sustainable ecosystems.

It put forth the notion that land, seeds, water and ecosystems should be under the guardianship of food producers. That is, those who produce our food should have control and rights to the land, the seeds and the water that they need to produce our food.

In 2001 food sovereignty was defined by members of Via Campesina as:

"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 the aspirations of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations."

Food sovereignty is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but an expansive set of principles, policies, and practices. It is grounded in the belief that everyone has the right to healthy, sustainably produced food, and that people and nations must have democratic control over their food and agricultural systems. In South Africa and in our food sovereignty campaign we will define our approach.

Watch: *Via Campesina in Movement*

In 2007, in the West African country of Mali, small farmers, food producers, and activists from around the world came together for the Nyeleni Forum for Food Sovereignty, named after a legendary woman farmer from the region. The final statement from the meeting outlined 6 key principles of food sovereignty. The table below summarises these principles:

Principle	Food Soverignty is FOR	Food Sovereignty is AGAINST
1. Focus on food for people	Stresses the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities. The Right to Food is upheld.	Food sovereignty rejects the idea that food is just another commodity for international agribusiness.
2. Values food providers	Values and supports the contributions, 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.This includes food justice.	It rejects those policies, actions and programmes that undervalue them, threaten their livelihoods and eliminate them.
3. Localises food systems	Puts providers and consumers at the centre of decision-making on food issues; protects food providers from the dumping of food and food aid in local markets. Challenges liberalisation and international trade that is detrimental to local food economies.	Resists governance structures, agreements and practices that depend on and promote unsustainable and inequitable international trade.

Principle	Food Soverignty is FOR	Food Sovereignty is AGAINST
4. Local decision making	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, deepens participatory democracy.	It rejects the privatisation of natural resources through laws, commercial contracts and intellectual property rights regimes.
5. Builds knowledge & skills	Builds on the skills and local knowledge of food providers and their local organisations that conserve, develop and manage localised food production and harvesting systems, and that pass on this wisdom to future generations. Affirms people's knowledge, experience and control of food.	Food sovereignty rejects technologies that undermine, threaten or contaminate these, eg. genetic engineering (see page 53)
6. Works with nature	Food sovereignty seeks to "heal the planet so that the planet may heal us." It uses techniques of production that work with the principles and strengths of nature rather than against them; low external inputs (like chemical fertilisers and pesticides, a lot of machinery etc). (See Module 4 on agroecology). It protects nature and assists people to organise food production to deal with the challenges of climate change.	It rejects methods that harm beneficial ecosystem functions, that depend on energy intensive monocultures and livestock factories, destructive fishing practices and other industrialised production methods.

Group Exercise:

Divide the participants into 6 groups and assign each group one of the principles above. If the whole group is too small, then divide them into 3 groups and assign each group 2 of the principles. The groups can then each discuss the following questions:

1. Explore the principle fully, discussing what it means, and talk about examples from your own lives.
2. What are the major opportunities for the principle and what are the major threats to it? Your own experience as well as the material we covered in Module 2 should help you to think about this.
3. What would this principle look like in practice in your own community and in the daily life of food producers? What would need to be done to actually implement and build this principle in practice in your community?

Each group may just wish to present back to the whole group their discussion points on each question. But to make it more interesting, ask each group to do an artistic presentation of their discussion, like a mini-play, a song, or a visual story drawn on a piece of flip chart paper.

Time required: 30 minutes

3.4 Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Food Justice

What is the difference between food sovereignty and food security? Why are we confusing things by talking about 'food sovereignty' when we already have the term 'food security'? Well, food sovereignty and food security are in fact very different terms, that originate from different sources, that are informed by different values, and that look at the problem of hunger differently.

Food Security: The term 'food security' was first used by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), which is the agricultural organisation of the United Nations (UN). It is an international organisation made up of the member countries of the UN and staffed by professionals, diplomats, agriculturalists and so on. In 1996 the FAO hosted the World Food Summit which was attended by the top leaders, diplomats and government officials of member countries. At this summit, food security was defined as when "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their daily dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

Food Justice: The term 'food justice' largely arose in America out of the recognition that most poor and black urban communities lacked access to fresh, healthy and nutritious food. This was represented mainly through the lack of formal supermarkets in poor, black areas where people could access such fresh and nutritious food. As a response, some people in these communities have established initiatives, like the People's Grocer in the city of Detroit, to make available fresh food at affordable prices to these communities to try and 'plug the gap' of lack of fresh food.

Linked to this idea is that of **food worker justice**, which essentially aims to promote and realise the rights of workers who produce our food in the existing system, on farms and in factories, to fair wages and working conditions.

An example of pursuing food worker justice is to put pressure on employers on farms and companies who purchase from farmers in the food system, like MacDonalds, Woolworths, Tiger Brands and so on, to pay slightly higher prices for the produce that they buy from farmers and that they then process into food products or sell in their shops, so that workers can then receive better wages. This is relevant in South Africa, where the farmworkers that produce our food are the lowest paid category of worker in South Africa, which is why we had the uprising of farm worker strikes beginning in late 2012. We understand food justice as part of food sovereignty in South Africa.

Group Exercise:

In this exercise, groups will discuss the different terms 'food sovereignty', 'food security' and 'food justice' (all discussed above). Divide the participants into 3 groups. One group will discuss the definition of the term 'food security', one will discuss the term 'food justice' and the other group will discuss the definition of 'food sovereignty'. If available, give each group a piece of flip chart paper and koki pen to write down the key features of the term they are discussing, otherwise they can just write it down in their notebooks. You might also want to ask them to use the following questions as a guide to their conversation:

1. What values does the term uphold?
2. Who is involved in achieving it?
3. What might happen to our families and communities should it be achieved?
4. What might happen to our existing food system? Who might win, who might lose, and who might remain in the same position?

After giving the groups 10-15 minutes to discuss these terms, bring them back together and have one person from each group present their main points. Then discuss as a group:

What are the differences, and what are the similarities, of these terms?
How do they relate to each other?
What are the origins of the terms, respectively?
Why do you think these different terms are used?
What is the ultimate aim of each term?
How do these terms impact on your life?

After completing the above exercise, the facilitator may want to bring it all together with the following input on the difference between food sovereignty and food security, as well as food justice:

The term food security essentially says that everyone in the world should have **access** to enough good quality food every day. It is a term that arose out of genuine concern with the state of hunger and malnutrition in the world. It was arrived at by international institutions like the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), governments, experts, scientists and so on. But the term food security has been criticised for being relatively shallow, and failing to ask deeper questions about how the food system itself is structured.

Food sovereignty, on the other hand, argues that under the current structures of the industrial food system food security can never be achieved. The term and practice of food sovereignty was created by those who suffer from the existing food system themselves, mostly small scale farmers, urban food producers and peasants from around the world. It goes deeper than food security to ask questions like, who controls production and distribution of food? Who benefits from production and distribution of food? Who loses in the way in which our food system is currently organised? What are the impacts on the environment of how our food is produced and distributed? Does food justice exist – what are the conditions of those who produce our food? Food sovereignty means that we must challenge and transform our existing food system, and the international and national institutions that support it (like the World Trade Organisation), towards justice and democracy, before we can actually achieve food security.

Food sovereignty is therefore about, firstly, challenging the structures of the food system (discussed in Module 2) that produce injustice and hunger and, secondly, it is about building a new, human-centred, community-controlled and just food system.

How do we go about undertaking these two tasks? Let us begin with the task of building a just and community-controlled food system from below by connecting food sovereignty to the solidarity economy.

3.5 Organising for Food Sovereignty Through the Solidarity Economy Process

In order to build a movement and campaign for food sovereignty, we need to be clear on what exactly we aim to build, and we need to be able to explain to others in simple terms what food sovereignty is. Sometimes this can be difficult to imagine alternatives when we are surrounded by the dominant system. This section of the module aims to help us see and define the alternative clearly, and to get us thinking about the central role that structures of the solidarity economy – like worker and producer cooperatives, cooperatively owned and managed marketplaces, people's restaurants, Solidarity Economy Education and Communication Cooperatives (SEECCs) – can play in helping to practically realise food sovereignty in our communities and in South Africa. We will also learn from existing experiences of working to build food sovereignty both in South Africa and other parts of the world. This section will work best if everyone participates and offers their ideas on what food sovereignty should look like in their community, and even share inspirational examples/stories with each other. To get our imagination and ideas flowing, let's turn to a short but high-energy exercise:

Plenary Brainstorm Exercise: Envisioning Food Sovereignty – What Are We Fighting For?
Time Required: 10 minutes

The facilitator should 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. The facilitator should also have flip chart paper and koki pen available so that people can come up and draw images if they want to. 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!

Depending on the group, the facilitator may want to start off with an image to motivate people – you can describe it in words, draw it, or if you want to, show a picture from a magazine – to get everyone thinking in concrete and visual terms. One image might be of an agroecology farm, of healthy produce and so on. If people get stuck the facilitator can use these prompts:
How would food be transported?
Who would be farming?
Where would food be sold?
What would the food that people eat look like?

Stop the exercise while people's energy is still high, so that we can move on to the next exercise of thinking in more focused ways of linking the solidarity economy to building food sovereignty.

3.5.1 Food Sovereignty Means Social Transformation

Discussion Point: Is everyone clear on what we mean by 'transformation'?

Thus far in this activist learning guide we have been examining how the structure of our food and agrarian system is unjust and not designed according to the needs of people, but largely that of corporate profit. This also reflects how society itself is structured. What this means is that the question of food sovereignty is not just about food itself, but also about changing who has power in society, and of building our power from below. It is also about changing society. (Refer back to the discussion on the first page of this module). That is, we need to think about what we actually need to build to change how our communities and society work to ensure we achieve food sovereignty in the long term. This is where the institutions of the solidarity economy are important, and where we can see the link between food sovereignty and the solidarity economy.

We have now learned how key elements of food sovereignty include our control over our local food systems, and increased democracy in the food system so that all who are involved in it get to decide how it works and how it meets our food needs. So how do we actually establish ways of ensuring our control and of building democracy in our food systems? Let us turn to the solidarity economy.

Note: COPAC has also produced an activist guide on understanding and building the solidarity economy, called *Building a Solidarity Economy Movement: A Guide to Grassroots Activism.* It is designed according to a 3-day workshop and is aimed at building a deep understanding of the solidarity economy and developing activism on solidarity economy movement building. If participants have already gone through a workshop on this guide, it will be very helpful for this section. If not, it may be useful to hold a workshop on this guide sometime after this food sovereignty guide, or to refer participants to it if they wish to explore the solidarity economy alternative more deeply as well.

3.5.2 How the Solidarity Economy Builds Food Sovereignty

The solidarity economy is not a pre-designed plan for how to change society, but rather is a set of values, principles and institutions that guide us in how we struggle to change society, and define the kind of society that we wish to achieve.

The solidarity economy is a response to the crises that we face (unemployment, poverty, hunger and so on) that is built by people acting together based on achieving the wellbeing of all humans and expanding democracy. It draws on our common humanity as the basis for solidarity action.

The solidarity economy is a voluntary process organised through collective struggle and conscious choice to establish a new pattern of democratic production, consumption and living that promotes the realisation of human needs and of the environment.

Discussion point: How does this definition of the solidarity economy relate to food sovereignty? How are they similar? How are they different? How do they complement each other?

3.5.3 The Solidarity Economy Aims to Advance Values and Principles

In different parts of the world solidarity economy movement and networks emphasise a core of ethical values and principles. Some of the main ethical values of the solidarity economy are ***caring, sharing, self-reliance, honesty, democracy, equality, learning, ecological consciousness, social justice and openness.***

The process of the solidarity economy is guided by the following principles:

- **Solidarity:** provides the social basis for the solidarity economy. It informs the cooperation between members inside a solidarity economy enterprise, between such enterprises and with the community more broadly.
- **Collective ownership:** ensures the assets and resources of the solidarity economy enterprise brings benefits to all within the enterprise, to the community and future generations. It ensures control and power are shared.
- **Self-management:** gives members (women and men) and worker owners the rights to impact on decision-making. Such a principle ensures one-person-one-vote institutionalises accountability and responsibility. Ongoing education and training is crucial for viable self-management.
- **Control of capital:** is a crucial practice to secure benefits for the individual enterprises, the wider solidarity economy and the community. It requires developing mechanisms to build up capital from below and subordinating it to democratic control so that the vision, values and principles of the solidarity economy informs lending practices. Such criteria will also inform the behaviour of the borrower.
- **Eco-centric practice:** places an emphasis on a non-destructive relationship with nature through inputs, production processes, services rendered, consumption and household practices.

- **Community benefit:** encourages a broader social awareness as an integral part of how the solidarity economy works. Such community benefit to be accounted for through transparent financial reporting.
- **Participatory democracy:** provides an institutional space for the decentralised power of citizens and solidarity economy actors for and with the solidarity economy process. Such an institutional space to bring together and unite such social forces to ensure effective coordination and development of the solidarity economy.

3.5.4 The Solidarity Economy Builds Power to Achieve Food Sovereignty

Discussion point: What do we mean by 'power'?

The process of building our power is guided by these values and principles, which also help define the type of society that we want to achieve as we exercise our power. The solidarity economy aims to build the power of communities, the poor, the unemployed, the marginalised, to change society in order to meet the needs of all humans in the long term. Food sovereignty is also about power: for producers, consumers, and humans to collectively have power over the food system as a requirement to end hunger. The solidarity economy movement aims to build 4 types of power:

- **Structural Power:** is about alternative production, consumption, financing and living patterns being developed. When we organise ourselves as communities and in particular ways and when we produce and consume things in ways that are different to how it is done in the wider economy, then we are building different **structures** of production and consumption through which the needs of our communities can be met. This builds power! If people meet their needs through a solidarity economy enterprise (such as a cooperative farm to get their food) rather than a capitalist one (such as Pick n Pay), we are taking power away from capitalist enterprises and building structural power and food sovereignty. We also build structural power by linking different solidarity economy enterprises, both within Ivory Park and across different sites in South Africa.

- **Movement Power** – we help build our movement power by bringing together the different institutions of the solidarity economy process, cooperatives, small farmers, informal traders, churches, residents associations etc. It means broadening the activist base of the solidarity economy to build our movement power to expand our presence in a site.

- **Direct Power** – We build our direct power by using different methods to influence the public. This can involve mass campaigns, mass marches and other types of mass **awareness raising** through, for example, distributing flyers and pamphlets, going on radio, holding public events about the solidarity economy and food sovereignty, newsletters etc

- **Symbolic Power** – This refers to the alternative vision that solidarity economy and food sovereignty represents. The ethical values, principles, vision and practices inside the solidarity economy process, and putting them into practice, add up to symbolic power. It demonstrates how the solidarity economy and food sovereignty is different and how it is a real alternative for people to participate in building. To build our symbolic power we must be serious about what we are doing and put our values and principles into practice.

3.5.5 Key Institutions of the Solidarity Economy Process to Build Power

The solidarity economy, as an anti-capitalist practice and process emerging from below, involves key institutions and organisations that provide the structures through which to

build power and meet human needs in ways that are guided by key ethical values and principles. These ethical values and principles are different to the values and principles that we see in our capitalist society today, and they are a guide to a different type of society. Some of these key institutions include:

- **The Worker Cooperative:** The cooperative form began as a response by workers to the difficulties they faced in meeting their needs as low-paid factory workers. The cooperative form evolved over the years to be very flexible and respond to different needs and contexts, such that today we have different types of cooperatives. For example, the consumer cooperative is a way that people can come together to form a consumer cooperative, become members, and purchase the food and other items that they need in their households together in order to reduce the cost. As members they are also entitled to parts of the revenue of the cooperative and other benefits. Or, a producer cooperative is formed by people who are producing something but struggle to sell it on their own. For example, small farmers might be struggling to find markets for the maize and vegetables that they produce, and so can come together to form a producer cooperative, in which they pool what they produce and the cooperative then buys it from them and sells it to the market. The producer cooperative is also controlled by its members, the producers.

  The most radical type of cooperative, however, is the worker cooperative. The worker cooperative began as a response by people to the need for employment. It is essentially an enterprise in which the workers employ themselves – that means there are no bosses. They make decisions together and they have control over their own work. That means that in the enterprise there is real **democracy**, because the workers decide what policies will guide their work in the enterprise (rather than a boss), how and what they will produce (rather than a boss), and how they will manage the cooperative, including its finances (rather than a boss). The worker cooperative is very flexible and can be applied to almost any form of economic activity, such as farming, producing things like shoes, clothes, bread, machinery and so on, and services, like shops, hotels, car and bicycle repairs, and so forth. This therefore gives the worker cooperative very much potential to actually change the whole economy if applied widely in every sector, including food and agriculture.

- **Solidarity Economy Funds and Finance Cooperatives:** Crucial to build the solidarity economy and the institutions and enterprises that are part of it, like cooperatives, is the finance needed to do so. The solidarity economy therefore needs to develop its own institutions, like funds and cooperative banks, that can supply finance to solidarity economy enterprises and actors that are guided by the vision and the values and principles of the solidarity economy. For example, a farming cooperative may need finance to purchase equipment like a borehole pump, tools etc. Or it may need finance to purchase inputs to increase production, like compost. (For more information on solidarity economy finance mechanisms, see Module 5 of the solidarity economy activist guide).

- **Solidarity Economy Education and Communication Cooperative (SEECC):** Crucial in building the solidarity economy, and food sovereignty, is the role of education to share and expand knowledge and build the capacities of individuals to be active agents in changing their community and society. The SEECC is a cooperative that plays a coordinating role for building the solidarity economy and food sovereignty in a site. It provides capacity building and training to solidarity economy actors and enterprises on establishing a cooperative, managing a cooperative including financial management, assisting in providing and accessing training needed to produce a product or provide a service, and an organising role in mobilising the community around the solidarity economy alternative.

- **Solidarity Economy and Food Sovereignty Forums:** A forum is a platform to bring together organisations and members of the community to become a part of the solidarity economy process. It is used as a space to share knowledge, problems and solutions, and coordination and planning for taking the solidarity economy and food sovereignty process forward.

- **Campaigns:** The solidarity economy process in each site may have particular issues that need to be addressed by building awareness in the community or challenging the state for. The national Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM) also has two national campaigns: the Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Worker Cooperative Alternative Campaign. These can be implemented at local level in a site, to raise awareness and to actively mobilise the community to build food sovereignty and worker cooperatives, for example.

Discussion Point: Do you think these solidarity economy institutions are suitable for building food sovereignty and realising the aims and structures that were outlined by participants in the exercise we did on Envisioning Food Sovereignty on pg 38? How do each of the above build power? Which types of power?

Case Study – Example of a Cooperative Contributing to Food Sovereignty in Ivory Park:
Tswelelane Bakery Cooperative

Note to facilitator: *Depending on the size and the mood of the group, you can either ask them to break into groups to analyse the case study and discuss the questions; or you can read the case study out to everyone and have a general discussion guided by the questions.*

Tswelelane Bakery Cooperative is situated in ward 78 of Ivory Park township, North-east of Johannesburg. Like most townships in South Africa, Ivory Park has a high level of poverty and hunger. About 50% of the residents are unemployed, and over 60% of households are food insecure.

Tswelelane Bakery Cooperative was started by unemployed women in 2007,who used to bake scones and cakes at home individually and go door to door to sell them in the community. They were encouraged by a social worker with the Department of Social Development to use their baking skills and work together in a cooperative rather than trying to survive by themselves. Since then the cooperative has been a great success, with long queues of people waiting outside every morning to buy fresh bread, rolls, scones, muffins, vetkoek and other products.

The cooperative has an important impact on the local community, who have a source of fresh bread that is near to where they live. One of the most noticeable impacts is that Tswelelane sells its bread at R6 a loaf, which is half the price of brands such as Albany. Therefore, because the cooperative is not only aiming to make profit off of the local community, it sells bread at an affordable price and is still able to make a surplus, to pay fair wages to the worker members, and to build up savings.

Continued over the page

The cooperative is managed by all the members who work in it through weekly meetings in which everyone participates in making decisions. The women say that the cooperative has improved their lives, because before they were surviving hand-to-mouth and now they have a stable income and are able to provide for their children and families. They would like to see their salaries increased, but realise that they have to continue to build the finance in the cooperative and increase its revenue so that salaries can be increased as well.

This relates to the fact the cooperative does also experience challenges. These relate to the price of inputs and lack of finance. Firstly, Tswelelane buys its flour from one of the main millers in South Africa and so its challenge is that it finds inputs like this flour very expensive, which means that a couple of years ago they had to increase the price of their bread from R5 to R6 in order to ensure they could cover their costs and continue to make a surplus. Secondly, the cooperative would like to expand and buy more and bigger baking ovens to meet demand, and they would also like to purchase a vehicle so that they can supply more shops and traders all over Ivory Park.

However, they have not built up enough finance within the cooperative to be able to do so, and so need an external source of a low-interest loan. This also shows that the future of the cooperative looks positive, as there is too much demand for it to handle at the moment, which is why it needs a source of capital!

Discussion Questions:

1. How is this solidarity economy enterprise contributing to meeting and building the principles of food sovereignty in Ivory Park? Why do you say so?
2. What steps could it take to further contribute to building food sovereignty in Ivory Park?
3. How could it address some of its challenges through the solidarity economy process? How would these solidarity economy solutions contribute to increasing food sovereignty in Ivory Park?
4. Do any initiatives exist in your community that could be brought into a solidarity economy and food sovereignty process, such as food producing cooperatives, small farmers and so on? What challenges do they face and could they be worked toward solving through the solidarity economy institutions and processes?

We will now turn to engaging with how we build food sovereignty through the solidarity economy by further deepening our understanding of the solidarity economy and practically link it to structures that build food sovereignty.

Plenary Exercise: Putting Solidarity Economy Values and Principles into Practice to Build Food Sovereignty
Time Required: 30 minutes

The aim of this exercise is practically link the solidarity economy to building food sovereignty and to start getting participants to think practically what this would actually look like in their community.

To start the exercise, while everyone is still in plenary, on a piece of flip chart paper (or other suitable material) draw a line down the middle to create two columns. At the top of the first column write the heading 'Solidarity economy institutions' and at the top of the second column write the heading 'Advocacy/campaign issues'. Based on all the learning we have done so far in this workshop on food sovereignty, let us now ask the following question:

• What do we need practically to build food sovereignty in our community?

Allow people to just shout out their answers one by one. Their answers should either be written under the first column or the second, depending on whether it relates to a need that can be achieved through institutions of the solidarity economy (as discussed above and in the activist guide on the solidarity economy) or whether it is something that needs to be campaigned or mobilised for through pressure on specific actors like the state. For example, someone might say 'land', which relates to the need to lobby the local state in a township to make it easier for people to access land to grow food on, or at the national level the need to pressure the state on national land reform. Some things that people shout out could also go under both columns, which means we can both build it through the solidarity economy and we also need to lobby for it more broadly.

Once everyone has finished giving their input (stop when the energy is still high) the facilitator can summarise the points given – what points were given, why particular points were written under which column and so on.

Small Group Excercise

Now, to continue the exercise, we are going to take all those factors in the first column and explore how they can be achieved through the values and principles of the solidarity economy and the solidarity economy institutions through which they are put into practice. The table over the page has 4 columns: one with the principles of the solidarity economy, the second explaining the principles. The third and fourth columns are left open for participants to fill in. In the third column the participants should fill in how the principle is put into practice in the solidarity economy and its institutions, and in the fourth column should fill in how this is practiced in building food sovereignty. An example can also be provided from their own communities of how it could be practiced. For the first principle, 'Solidarity', all the columns have been filled in as an example of what is expected.

Divide participants into groups to do this exercise. At the end, get them to report back and allow the groups to give each other comments etc. Once this is complete, allow for reflections on the report backs. Was there anything that people struggled on? Why? How can this be addressed? Does deeper engagement on the Solidarity Economy Activist Guide need to be undertaken?

Solidarity Economy Principle	Explanation	How put into practice	How practiced to build food
Solidarity	Provides the basis for the solidarity economy. It guides the cooperation between members in a solidarity economy enterprise (such as a worker cooperative), between these enterprises, and with the community.	The wellbeing of all worker owner members of a worker cooperative ensured. Production of high quality items needed by community at affordable price. Sharing of time and knowledge between members of an enterprise,with community and so on.	Production of nutritious food for community to ensure their health and wellbeing. Affordable prices charged for food sold. Actions guided by ideal of improving nutrition and ending hunger. Sharing of agricultural knowledge, sharing of seeds, etc
Collective ownership	This ensures that the assets, like equipment and buildings, and other resources, like finance, of the solidarity economy enterprise are controlled by all who work in it and bring benefits to all, to the community, and to future generations.		
Self-management	Members (women and men) and worker owners have the rights to impact on decision making. This principle ensures that one-person-one-vote results in accountability, responsibility and democracy.		

Solidarity Economy Principle	Explanation	How put into practice	How practiced to build food
Eco-centric practice	Places an emphasis on a non-destructive relationship with nature through inputs, production processes, services, consumption and household practices.		
Community benefit	Encourages a broader social awareness as an integral part of how the solidarity economy works.		
Participatory democracy	Spaces to be built to ensure that people are able to democratically contribute to decision making. Brings together and builds the power of citizens and solidarity economy actors. Such a space to also unite actors to ensure coordination and development of the solidarity economy.		

Plenary Exercise

Case Studies: Land, Food Sovereignty and the Solidarity Economy

The Landless Workers Movement (MST), Brazil

There is exciting work happening around the world to link food sovereignty and the solidarity economy. For example, a massive movement in Brazil that has over 1 million members, the Landless Workers Movement (MST) was established in 1986 around the key struggle of land. It began when a group of peasant small scale farmers occupied unused land owned by an absent landowner in Brazil and demanded that the government give them the rights to the land so that they could use it to produce food for themselves, their families and for Brazilians and overcome years of oppression and poverty. After years of living on the occupied land in plastic tents, experiencing oppression from the Brazilian military and police, and enduring hunger, the land was finally granted to them. This sparked the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) who, through similar tactics and broadening the struggle for land and agrarian reform in Brazil, has since its formation resettled over 450 000 families on new land.

The MST's key guide in its action is the fight not just for land, but for the struggle for land to be part of the struggle to achieve food sovereignty. The MST knows that it is not enough just to fight for and receive land – it must also fight for a different society. This means a society in which small farmers do not struggle to survive, and where all people get affordable, healthy and nutritious food. This means that society needs to be changed, and new relationships and networks of production need to be created: this is where the solidarity economy comes in. The MST's political and social action of land occupations and political organising are therefore combined with the development of cooperative and solidarity economics. It does this by building cooperatives in the settlements established on occupied land and by building linkages and networks to link production and services across different sites, so that MST members and those living in the new settlements start creating their own economy for meeting their needs. This shows how the solidarity economy is used as a way of building food sovereignty by building institutions like cooperatives for producing goods and services, and linking these solidarity enterprises and farmers to each other to build their power and ensure that more and more people's needs are met through these structures. At the moment, at least 300 000 families (over a million people) meet many of their needs through these new enterprises and networks.

Tsakane Land Occupation, South Africa

Tsakane is a township on the East Rand of Johannesburg. It experiences a high unemployment rate due to job losses in the manufacturing industries in the area, and so high levels of hunger as well. A group of retrenched workers that were part of the Masibambane Unemployed Project (MUP) learned about the solidarity economy and decided that they wanted to travel on this path of struggle to create work and income for themselves and transform their community. After much planning and strategising, in 2011 they formed and registered the Hlanganani Agricultural Worker Cooperative, deciding that they wanted to link the solidarity economy to the struggle for food sovereignty to end hunger in Tsakane.

However, they required land on which to start farming, set up an agroecology training centre and have a small market place to sell their produce to the community. Tsakane township has many open spaces that mostly belong to the municipality. They identified a 4 hectare piece of land that they wished to farm on and approached the local council to ask for formal permission or a lease to the land. However, the council refused. After much thinking and planning, the members of Hlanganane Agricultural Worker Cooperative decided to occupy the piece of land. They developed a strategy for doing so and for developing the cooperative afterwards, and in February 2012 occupied the land with support from members of other social movements, including the Landless Peoples Movement (LPM) who participated in solidarity.

They dug up the grass and started planting and to this day they remain on the land and continue to farm on it. From a position of strength, having occupied the land, the cooperative is now negotiating with the local council for a formal lease. The cooperative has developed itself as a solidarity economy enterprise with key objectives of self-reliance and self-management, building the capacities of its members, worker control, establishing links with other solidarity economy enterprises in the area, and ending hunger in Tsakane.

The council is currently trying to link them to support from the retail giant Walmart, and to supply them as well. However, the cooperative has rejected this as it will just lock them into selling their food for profit to Walmart, without knowing whether it will help to provide affordable and nutritious food to their community. They want to stick to their solidarity economy values and principles and contribute to ending hunger in their communities by supplying cheap and nutritious food to their community while at the same time creating democratic work and income for themselves. The cooperative clearly faces many challenges, but it is committed to the path of the solidarity economy and food sovereignty.

1. How is the MST linking the solidarity economy and food sovereignty?
2. How is the MST building power and what is it using this power to achieve?
3. What can we learn from the Tsakane land occupation in terms of building food sovereignty in our communities? How can the solidarity economy help advance this struggle?

3.6 Summary

After exploring the problems of our current food system and how it causes hunger in Module 2, in this Module we turned to exploring the alternative that is currently being struggled for all over the world: food sovereignty. We explored the principles of food sovereignty and what it means in practice, and we learned the difference between food security and food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is a more radical alternative developed from below by those at the forefront of the dispossession and damage caused by the industrial food system – small scale and peasant farmers – and proposes a deep restructuring of our food system towards local control and democracy. But then we asked, how can we deepen the transformative thrust of food sovereignty, and how do we actually build structures that really help to change our society and our food system and develop collective control over our food systems? This is where we turned to the solidarity economy and engaged with how its institutions and its values and principles help to advance the food sovereignty alternative.

In the next module, Module 4, we will focus on a key element of food sovereignty, relating to how we produce our food: agroecology. Then in Module 5 we will turn to bringing these modules together into practical planning of advancing a solidarity economy and food sovereignty process in our communities and building the national food sovereignty campaign.

MODULE 4
Advancing Agroecology as a Key Component of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty

Module 4
Advancing Agroecology as a Key Component of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty

4.1 Objectives of this Module:

- Understand agroecology as an alternative to industrial agriculture;
- Understand the key principles and advantages of agroecology;
- Explore agroecology as important in building food sovereignty, the solidarity economy and achieving the right to food;
- Develop basic abilities to put agroecology into practice.

4.2 Introduction

A key component of building food sovereignty is to regain control over production of food, and to produce our food in a way that does not harm the earth or humans. The alternative of agroecology has been growing all over the world as the negative impacts of industrial agriculture become more and more clear. This module provides an overview of the impacts of industrial agriculture and explores the alternative of agroecology and the role that agroecology plays in achieving the right to food and food sovereignty. It then introduces some practical methods of how to put agroecology into practice on your farm and in your community.

4.3 What is Industrial Agriculture?

Industrial agriculture is a way of producing food that has developed over the last couple of centuries. It is a very new way of producing food, which has been produced for about 10 000 years before the methods of industrial agriculture were developed. Industrial agriculture involves the following:

- **Mono-cropping** – industrial agriculture is mostly based on planting one type of crop in neat rows over a large area of land. For example, the rows and rows of mealie fields that we see in parts of the Free State and North-west Province are a good example of monocropping. Only one crop is grown and the fields are kept clear of any other kind of plant.
- **Use of chemicals and pesticides** – because only one or two plants are grown in each area, the types of insects that naturally feed on it are provided with a huge amount of their food and so they can survive and grow in number, and eat the crop that is being grown. They then become what is called a pest, which damages crops. This means that farmers then use a large amount of chemical pesticides to kills these pests. Also, to speed up the growth of crops, industrial agriculture uses chemical fertilisers to supposedly increase the food in the soil for the crops to feed on and grow. This means industrial agriculture relies on a large amount of external inputs. This means that farmers have to buy things like pesticides, fertilisers, seeds from outside of the farm, rather than getting it from the land within the farm or the area, like cow manure for compost instead of chemical fertilisers.

- **High use of machinery that needs petrol and oil** – another key feature of industrial agriculture is that it uses a lot of machines, like tractors, combine harvesters, irrigation equipment and so on that use petrol and oil to work. This adds another cost to farmers and contributes to climate change through the pollution that the engines and electricity produces.

- **The use of genetically modified (GM) crops** – another key feature that has developed over the last 20-30 years or so is the growth of genetic modification (GM) of seeds. Genetic modification is when scientists take a gene from an animal or another plant and insert it into the seed that they want to modify, such as of maize. For example, they might want to try and make the maize able to use less water and so survive drought, so they will insert a gene that makes the maize plant use less water. Big corporations like Monsanto control this technology and are trying to get more and more farmers all over the world to buy their GM seeds from them, rather than farmers saving and using their own seed every year.

  The big seed companies that promote GMOs and the governments that support it say that it is the answer for increasing production to meet the food demands of rising populations, and will help farmers to cope with the changing conditions caused by climate change. However, the reality is that there are some key challenges associated with GMOs, which include:

  - The methods and techniques developed by small farmers over centuries actually better allow them to build their resilience;
  - Promoting GMOs is largely about big seed companies wanting to make a profit off of selling their seeds to farmers every year. When farmers use GM seeds they are not allowed to save them to plant them in the next season, so they lose their independence.
  - GMOs are a key part of the industrial agriculture system, as it continues to promote mono-cropping, pesticide use, export agriculture and a lot of machinery.

Watch: The World According to Monsanto

Plenary Brainstorm:

1. What do you think might be some of the disadvantages of industrial agriculture?
2. Do you think GMOs provide the answer to feeding the world?

4.4 The Impacts of Industrial Agriculture

Many people and governments think that industrial agriculture is the best way of producing enough food to feed the world's growing population. But it has in fact produced many negative impacts. These include:

- Climate change –climate change has been caused by societies creating energy by burning coal, petrol and oil, which produce gases that are causing the temperature of the earth to increase, which is changing weather patterns all over the world. Industrial agriculture uses a lot of machinery and energy to produce inputs like fertilisers, to transport food all over the world, and so on. Industrial agriculture is responsible for 25-30% of the emissions that cause climate change!

Declining soil fertility – Soil fertility refers to the amount of **nutrients** that soil has in it – essentially the amount of food that it has to feed plants that grow in it. People thought at first that applying a lot of chemical fertilisers and herbicides would increase the amount of crops that they could produce, in a shorter amount of time. But while this happens for a few years, after a while the productivity of the soil drops. This is because chemical fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides essentially kill all of the nutrients that the soil naturally has in it and which is built up over a long time, as plant and animal matter breaks down in the soil. To keep up high yields, farmers then have to keep applying more and more chemical fertilisers.

Food Wastage – the industrial food system, with its many 'standards' and the amount of steps that food goes through to get from the farmer to the consumer (see food value chain in Module 2), results a huge amount of food being thrown away. Every year, one-third of all food produced in the world is wasted – this is enough to feed the entire African continent! Food wastage is highest in regions like Europe and North America that have very developed industrial food systems.

Rising food prices – a key reason that food prices are so high is because industrial agriculture needs so many inputs, like pesticides and oil. This means that the costs of producing food through industrial agriculture keep going up, and so food prices also keep rising. As an example, industrial agriculture uses pesticides to kills pests. Every year, about R250 billion worth of pesticides are used around the world. This means that the cost of producing food by using pesticides is R250 billion more than if pesticides were not used. Add to this the costs of fuels, buying seed and so on, and we can understand why food prices are so high and keep rising!

Creation of hunger – There are currently about 7 billion people on the planet, but enough food is produced every year to feed 9-10 billion people. However, almost 1 billion people suffer from hunger in the world. The food that is produced is controlled by a small number of corporations globally, which stands in the way of the food that is produced and those who need it being able access to it (see Module 2). Rising food prices caused by the industrial food system also causes hunger. Furthermore, a huge amount of the grains that are produced in the world are used to feed livestock (to produce meat for the middle classes who can afford it) and for biofuels to power cars, trucks and buses. Lastly, the industrial food system produces inequality by reducing the access and control that people have over land, water, seeds and so on.

Corporate Control – As discussed above, the industrial agriculture system relies on a large amount of external inputs. External inputs are things that have to be bought to be used on the farm to produce food, like seeds, machines, fertilisers and so on. In the industrial agricultural system, the control over these things that farmers need to produce food are no longer in the hands of farmers, but in the corporations who sell them to farmers. Also, the food that is produced then goes on to a small number of corporations who trade it on the world market, and process and manufacture it into the products that we buy in supermarkets.

Dispossession of land and resources – As the impacts of industrial agriculture begin to take effect and yields cannot be kept up, countries like Saudi Arabia, China and other European countries are worried about being able to grow enough food to feed their people. They are therefore turning to land in Africa, Asia and South America, and often with the help of governments, are grabbing it away from local small scale farmers, herders and indigenous people that depend on it for growing, gathering and hunting for their food. This causes hunger in these areas. Industrial agriculture is also put into practice here, which requires very large amounts of land, further encouraging stealing very large amounts of land from these local people who once controlled the land for their survival.

4.5 The Alternative: Agroecology

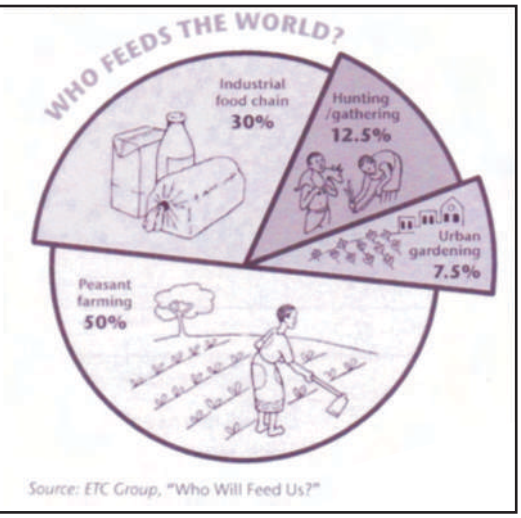
In response to the destructive impacts of industrial agriculture, the alternative practice of agroecology is being developed and is growing around the world, being practiced mostly by small scale and peasant farmers. Agroecology has been defined as a way of producing food that "uses ecological concepts and principles for the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems where external inputs are replaced by natural processes such as natural soil fertility and biological control." Let's examine this definition more and expand on it. Agroecology is a method of agriculture that is based on:

- **Ecological principles –** Designs ways of producing food that is based on how things work in nature. A key goal of agroecology is to design an agricultural system that copies local natural ecosystems, that has a high number of different plant, insect and animal species, soil that is full of life, that uses natural pest control, recycles nutrients, and covers the soil with vegetation to prevent the loss of water and nutrients;
- **Low external inputs** – Uses as little external inputs as possible, like chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and rather uses natural processes to increase the fertility of soil, control pests, harvest and save seed, and so on. This makes it cheaper for farmers to produce food because they do not have to buy these inputs, and it reduces their dependence on corporations who they have to buy them from;
- **Traditional knowledge** – whereas industrial agriculture is all about using new technologies that are developed by 'experts' in laboratories, agroecology is very knowledge-intensive in the field, based on farmer knowledge and experimentation. Farmers themselves are therefore key agents in the agroecology alternative, and it is therefore not a top-down approach but bottom-up;
- **Scientific knowledge** – However, the practice of agroecology is more than just a method that uses traditional and small farmer knowledge. Not all traditional farming methods are always effective. Modifications and adaptations of traditional and small farmer methods can therefore often be necessary. Agroecology is able to modify and adapt existing farmer knowledge by introducing science and research. This has mostly resulted in increased productivity of farms and the protection of the environment. One writer has said that agroecology is based on "a dialogue between scientific knowledge and traditional wisdoms".

Agroecology is growing around the world, with millions of farmers turning to and practicing the agroecology alternative, with positive results. Even the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, that has over one million members who are small farmers, promotes agroecology. The world movement of small farmers, Via Campesina, also officially promotes agroecology as the best method of production for small farmers and the earth.

Did you know?

Most of the world's food needs are currently met by small/peasant farmers. Although the industrial agricultural system is powerful and has so many negative impacts, it only produces about 30% of the world's food. About 50% of the world's food is produced by peasant farmers, many of whom use traditional and agroecological ways of farming that works in harmony with the earth and has been feeding people for thousands of years.



Source: ETC Group, "Who Will Feed Us?"

Plenary Exercise:

!

1. Do you think that agroecology is a better alternative to industrial agriculture and feeding your community? Why do you say this?
2. How does agroecology overcome the negative impacts of industrial agriculture?
3. In what ways does agroecology help to advance food sovereignty?
4. What is the role of small farmers in advancing agroecology and food sovereignty?

4.6 Advantages of Agroecology and Its Role in Advancing Food Sovereignty

Agroecology is growing around the world as an alternative practice of agriculture and of growing food in a sustainable way that benefits farmers, society and the earth. This has been helped by major international reports by organisations such as the United Nations which have announced the need to move to sustainable forms of agriculture like agroecology. While we need to dismantle the industrial agri-food system and restore local food systems, this must be accompanied by the construction of agroecology alternatives that suit the needs of small scale farmers and of the populations that require affordable and nutritious food. Furthermore, agroecology aims for the transformation of agriculture. Industrial agriculture and its ecological impacts are part of a broader capitalist economic system that seeks maximum economic gain from everything, including farming. To achieve long lasting ecological change in agriculture we also have to achieve social, political, economic and cultural changes in society.

Plenary Brainstorm:

1. What political, economic and cultural barriers exist to transforming agriculture and implementing agroecology?
2. How can they be overcome?

Agroecology is therefore a crucial practice to build food sovereignty. The practice is spreading because of its practical advantages and contributions to food sovereignty, which include:

- **Resilience to climate change –** the methods and techniques that agroecology makes use of help reduce the contribution that agriculture makes to climate change. They also assist farmers to cope with the effects of climate change, like flooding. This is because it increases vegetation and ground cover, which slows down the flow of water, for example;

- **More productive and more efficient** – Agroecology has been shown to be more productive than industrial agriculture, in that it can produce more food on less land, while using less energy and less water;

- **Ecological well-being –** Agroecology works with nature rather than against it and so it helps to nurture and protect the environment. All life on earth, including humans, require a healthy planet to live on. The ecological wellbeing that agroecology creates in a site also then benefits the farmer through ensuring that the land will be more productive and over a longer period of time;

- **Less dependent on external inputs –** because agroecology works to build up natural processes on a farm to keep it productive, rather than adding external inputs like chemical fertilisers, it reduces the costs for the farmer. This benefits the farmer, and it also means that consumers can get cheaper food. Because farmers then do not have to rely on corporations for their inputs, it also builds the power, self-reliance and independence of farmers, and thus food sovereignty.

- **Access to and control of resources –** In order to practice agroecology, farmers need access to land, water and seeds. This therefore links to the struggle for land and agrarian reform. It can also mean a certain role for the state in providing support. Agroecology is therefore a part of the broader struggle for food sovereignty

- **Democratic –** Agroecology is also therefore more democratic. This is because it grounds control over farming back in the hands of the farmer, and allows them together with the people that they feed to decide what the priorities of agricultural production should be. This builds food sovereignty by helping to prevent the food system from being captured by corporations.

- **Builds on existing knowledge –**whereas industrial agriculture believes that 'experts' have all the answers to problems of production, and that farmers must depend on them for knowledge and how to farm, agroecology values the knowledge that farmers already have. Furthermore, new knowledge that is developed is often done so together with farmers in their specific places, so that solutions suit their specific challenges as well. While agroecology makes good use of science to improve production and efficiency, it does so together with farmers. This builds food sovereignty because it means that knowledge is controlled by those who produce our food and open to everyone, rather than being owned by corporations.

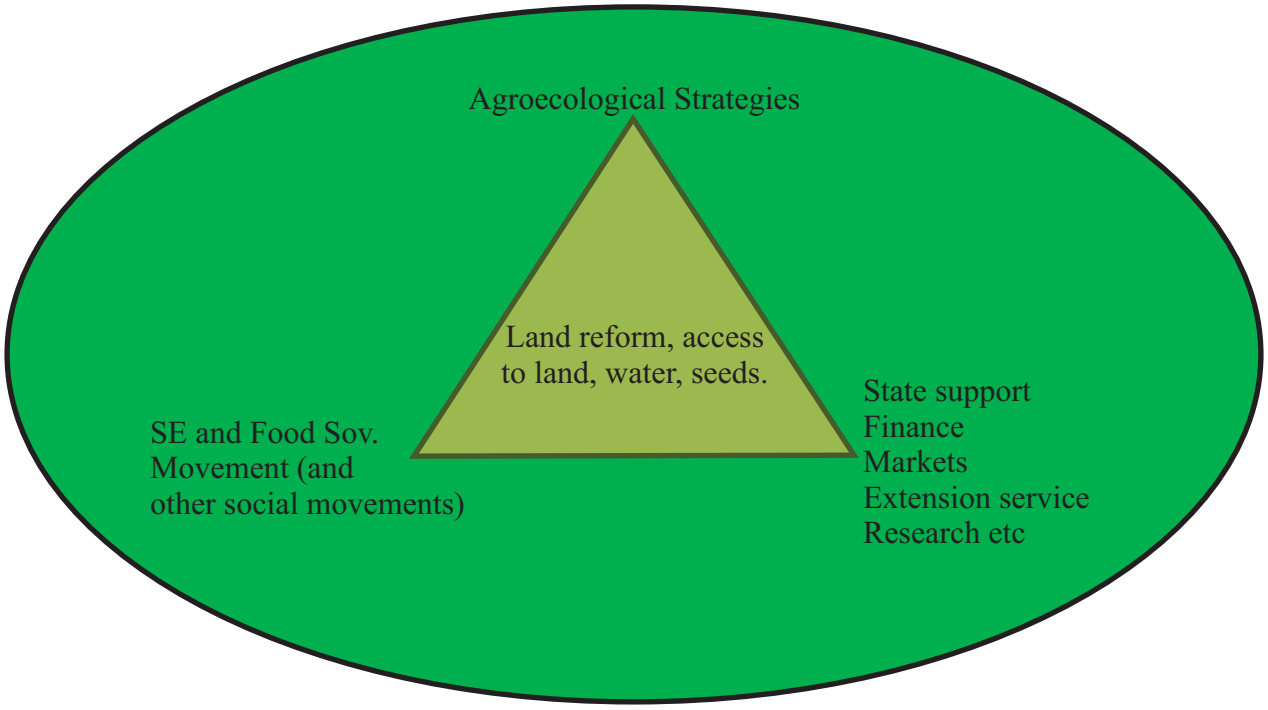


Figure : Food Sovereignty and Agroecology

4.7 Design Principles of Agroecology

Now that we have studied what agroecology is about and how it is an important part of building food sovereignty, let us turn to providing a brief guide to how to start producing food through the principles of agroecology.

A key element of agroecology is that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach to agriculture. It is grounded in specific contexts – social, economic, ecological and cultural. But as discussed above, there are key principles that help guide the design of an agroecology system. After examining these, we will then turn to looking at some key practices to begin practicing agroecologyand advancing it in your community.

In order to create an agroecological system on a farm, garden plot or community, the following are the principles that the system should aim to do:

- **Increase the recycling of organic material** – organic matter means the things that come from natural materials such as leaves, plants, insects, worms, animal manure and so on. In an agroecology system, we do not throw out weeds that we have removed, leaves from vegetables that we have harvested, or manure from animals we have. We keep these and put them back into the soil, directly, by composting and so on. This is to keep nutrients in the soil. We therefore keep a cycle going: plants/manure $\rightarrow$ into soil $\rightarrow$ feeds plants and animals $\rightarrow$ plants and manure produced $\rightarrow$ back into soil. This is called recycling, and means we keep our nutrients in the soil.
- **Strengthen the resistance of the agricultural system to disease and pests** – in nature, plants usually do not die off on a large scale due to disease or get attacked by pests, like what happens with crops produced through industrial agriculture. To avoid this, agroecology uses nature to fight disease and pests, by building the soil so that crops are strong and can resist, by planting plants that repel pests and so on.

- **Make soil conditions good for plant growth –** the healthier the soil, the stronger crops will be and able to resist pests and disease. The crops will also be more nutritious. The soil is kept healthy through crop rotation, composting and other means. We also want to increase the amount of life that is in the soil, like organisms, earth worms and so on. This is essential for good plant growth.
- **Minimise loss of energy, water and nutrients –** in agroecology we do things to conserve the soil, to gather and conserve water and biodiversity.
- **Increase the number of plants, animals, and good insects in the agricultural system –** this builds diversity and strengthens natural systems.

Group Exercise:

When the above principles are put into practice, the result is a farming system that produces diversity, productivity, resilience and efficiency. The participants should break up into 4 groups, and each group be given one of these outcomes to focus on ('diversity', 'productivity', 'resilience', 'efficiency'). They should discuss:

1. What does the word mean?
2. Give an example of this in a farming system
3. Why this outcome is important for achieving food sovereignty

4.8 Putting Agroecology Design Principles into Practice

To put the design principles of agroecology into practice and achieve agricultural diversity and the outcomes discussed above, agroecology uses certain practices. These include:

1. **Crop Rotation –** Crop rotation means planting a different crop on each section of the farm, either each season or every few seasons. This improves nutrients in the soil and it also helps to fight pests, diseases and weeds by breaking their life cycles by moving the crops that they depend on.

2. **Polycultures/intercropping –** 'Poly' means 'many'. Unlike industrial agriculture which uses monoculture where one crop is planted in a field, agroecology plants different crops next to or near each other. This helps to fight pests and increases the strength of the plants by helping each other, or by competing with each other, in which case they also grow stronger.

3. **Agroforestry systems –** This is when trees (like fruit trees, but also other types of trees) are grown together with crops and/or animals in ways that they help the growth of each.

4. **Cover crops –** These are crops that are planted underneath and in between taller crops like fruit trees, mealies and so on, which improve the fertility of the soil, fight pests and so on. For example, mealie plants take nitrogen out of the soil, which is very important for plants to grow. Bean plants put nitrogen back into the soil, so planting them in between the mealie plants provides food for the mealie plants and other crops to grow.

4.9 Techniques for Producing Agroecologically[1]

It is not possible to give a full engagement with how to put agroecology into practice – that is another whole guide on its own. Rather, here we will focus on some basic activities to help you get started in implementing agroecology in your existing farm or garden, or for starting a new one.

4.9.1 Planning Your Site

When deciding to start a garden or farm, it is important to understand the environment and land around your proposed site. It is also important to understand what and who the garden is for. Being sure about what you want to achieve with your garden will be important to inform how you plan it. You can ask some of the following questions:

Why do you want to develop your garden/ farm?
Who will be designing and implementing the garden?
How will you develop the garden? (secure the land, equipment, labour, tools, plant materials)

- **Observation**

After this, you then need to observe the land where you want to start your garden or farm, and then to use this information to draw a basemap. Walk around the land you want to start farming on and ask the following questions:

What is the size of the land in metres? Draw a rough sketch of the land and draw in the distances.
What direction does the land face in terms of the slope?
What buildings, houses etc are on the land?
If there are these structures, do you know what the roof area is in metres? This is important for knowing whether you can do rainwater harvesting.
Where does the sunshine reach in summer and winter?
Do you have access to water on the land? Is it from the municipality or a borehole?
Do you know what is the average rainfall in your area?
Which areas of the land are shady – does this change in winter and summer?
What is the soil like on the land? Sandy, loamy, clay, mixed?
Do you have any animals or livestock?
What plants already exist on the land? Are they indigenous or aliens?
What is currently on the land and what is it used for? List all the objects, trees etc
What direction does the wind come from and in which season? This is important for planning for wind and firebreaks.
What insect life is there on the land?
Is the land on a slope (you should mark on the map you are going to draw where the high and low points are).
Is there soil erosion?
Is there the danger of flooding?
What natural resources do you have? Do you have access to grass, wood and plant materials?

- **Base Map**

Once you have done this, you can use this information to start planning and draw a base map. A base map is a map that shows all the features on the piece of land you are working on. It includes the buildings, rivers, roads, trees, paths and other objects.

[1]Much of this section borrows directly from the contents of Learner Guide: *Identify and Explain Permaculture Principles,* produced by Ekhukanyeni

Exercise: Drawing a Base Map

If you are conducting this module outside or in a food garden/household yard/farm, break the participants into groups of about 5 or 6 and get them to undertake the following simple exercise:

Try and get as large a piece of paper as possible, such as size A1. Start by drawing the borders of your map. Make sure the map is drawn facing north when we draw the land border. Write in meters how long each side of the border is.

After this, start mapping out all the features that you observed in the observation exercise above. Draw them from above as though you are a bird flying and looking down on them. For labelling each feature, do not write on the drawing. To save space, create a key on a separate piece of paper or under the drawing. Label each feature with a letter of the alphabet, and in the key indicate what the letter stands for. For example, A=pathway. B=Trees etc.

You can then use this map to plan and design your garden. Remember to keep adding to it as you work and build your garden.

- **Highest Points and Lowest Points**

It is very important to know where the highest and lowest points of the piece of land are, because this will tell you which way rainwater is going to run. This determines how we design our beds and mechanisms for catching water. You will need to construct the beds horizontal with the high and low point to help catch water and prevent erosion. Be sure to mark on your base map the high and low points.

4.9.2 Water Harvesting and Conservation

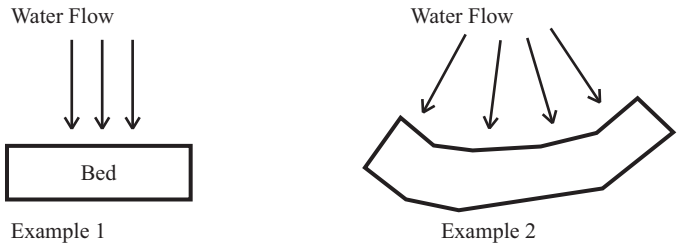
A very important part of keeping our soil healthy and fertile is to manage the water flow. We need to both keep the water in our garden so that it nourishes the crops, and we need to prevent the water from causing erosion and washing away the nutrients in the soil. First, we need to know the highest and lowest points of the land. We can figure this out by watching where the water flows when it rains.

We want to **slow down the water** by having vegetation, trees, rocks and mulching. We also want to **spread the water**, which we do by constructing swales and terraces. This allows the water to flow slowly through our system and spread itself productively. Once we have slowed down the water and spread it, we then want to make sure we **sink the water** into the soil to irrigate the crops. We do this by making contour swales, mulch pits and diversion swales.

You can also harvest water from roofs with gutters and tanks.

4.9.3 Making Swales and Garden Beds

Once we know how the rain water flows, we need to make our beds perfectly at right angles to the water flow. We want to use the beds to 'catch' the water.



The swale is the lowered part of the ground between two beds. It should be about 30-50cm wide, enough use to walk on between beds. We mark out the border of our swales based on the slope and water flow, and then dig them out. We do not throw the sand away, we put it next to the swale. This is used to construct the raised bed.

We construct raised beds to allow air into the soil, because compact soil makes it harder for plants and vegetables to grow.

To construct the beds, dig the swale about the length of a spade apart from each other. In between them you construct the bed. Once you have dug out the soil for the swale, use a rake to level the soil between the swales. This will be your bed. Make sure the bed is level as well.

4.9.4 Soil testing and soil fertility[2]

Soil is a crucial basis of life on earth. It is also a key basis of life in our garden or farm. The quality of the soil will impact on how good and strong our crops are. The quality of the soil depends on how it already exists as well as on how we look after and condition the soil through planting, composting and so on.

The following are different types of soil:

Sandy soil – this is soil that is very loose, does not compact or stick together, and has very little nutrients and minerals in it.

Loamy soil – this is a good balance of different types of soil, and has good fertility. It is the best type of soil for most crops.

Clay soil –this is soil that is mostly hard and compacted and does not allow much air to pas through it. It is sticky when wet and holds a lot of water.

Silt soil – this is a soil that is between clay and sandy soil, but has particles that are bigger than sandy soil.

Stony soil – this soil has more small stones in it than loamy or clay soil. It does not hold water very well.

[2]Ekukhanyeni, pg. 35-51

To test what kind of soil you have on the piece of land that you want to farm on, collect handfuls of soil from different parts of the land and put them each in a separate glass jar. Fill the jar with water, mix it, and allow it to stand for about a day. You will then see that the soil has divided into layers, as above. You should have a relatively thick layer of loamy soil and thinner of the others. This is good soil for most crops.

4.9.5 Building the Fertility of the Soil

As we said above, the soil is the basis for the health and strength of your crops. Plants take nutrients out of the soil to grow, so we cannot just keep planting crops without putting nutrients back into the soil. We have to constantly work to keep the soil healthy and full of nutrients. Here are some ways to do this:

- **Dynamic Accumulators**

Dynamic accumulators are plant species that feed the soil with minerals that keep it fertile and allow it to regenerate. Some of these plants include: borage, yarrow, comfrey, nettles, watercress, dandelion, clovers, wild garlic and more. It is very important to have these planted all over your garden to build up dynamic life systems and minerals in the soil.

- **Ground Covers**

Another way to build the fertility of the soil is to grow plants that cover the ground and put minerals into the soil. Once planting these ground covers we need to keep cutting them back so they don't take over the whole garden, but we can also just leave their cuttings on the soil to put their rich minerals back into the ground. Some ground covers that are useful for this are:

- Beans
- Mustard
- Lupine
- Horse radish
- Lucerne
- Clover

- **Composting**

To keep our soil healthy and to avoid using chemical fertilisers, it is crucial that we make compost all year round to keep feeding the soil with. One method is to make heap compost. You will need to collect:

- Green and dry plant material
- Vegetable peels and waste
- Leaves
- Weeds/pioneers/legumes
- Grass and straw
- Small sticks
- Kitchen waste
- Animal manure (If possible. If you do not have access to this, you can do without it, but it certainly helps to have it!)

If these are not all available directly on your farm, then you may need to sit and plan how you are going to get these materials and how you will keep getting them over time to keep up your compost-making.

Instead of dumping all our materials in one pile, we should make layers. Use the small stones and twigs to make the first layer.

This foundation will allow air to flow through the bottom of the compost heap. You can make your compost heap as big as you like, but if you have smaller space, start by making it 1m by 1m. Now add your dry mulch. At this point insert a few wooden sticks into the heap. Once your heap is made, this will allow you to move the sticks around a bit every so often to allow air into the heap. When you are making your compost heap, spray some water after each layer.

Now add the green materials and/or the kitchen waste. If you have animal manure, add a layer of it. Keep repeating the layers until you have your compost heap.

Check that they compost heap is working every few days by sticking your hand in and checking it is warm inside. After a few weeks if you see there is hardly any dry matter left, rotate the compost onto another pile. Whatever is not yet decomposed use to make the new heap. Use the compost that is ready. In this way you should be consistently preparing compost to ensure you have a ready supply to keep the soil healthy and well-fed!

- **Mulching**

After making our swales and beds, and adding compost to the soil if it needs it, we apply mulch. Mulch is dry organic matter like dry grass, leaves, chipped bark and so on. We put these on top of the beds to:

- Conserve the moisture in the soil and save water, because we then have to water less
- To help stop weeds from growing
- To help keep the soil warm in winter

- **Liquid Manure**

Liquid manure is a good way of making quite strong natural fertiliser for the soil. Take 2-3kg animal manure from cows, horses, sheep, goat, chicken etc. and put it into a woven sack (even an orange bag will do). Put it into a steel drum that is filled 80% with water. If you don't have a steel drum, you can also use a plastic bucket. Just put less manure in the bag. Leave it for 2-4 weeks with a lid on. Stir it once a day to ensure the manure is breaking down. When it is ready, dilute it with 1 part liquid manure to 5 parts water (you need to do this otherwise the liquid manure is to strong and can burn the plants). Be sure not to apply to the leaves of the plants, as it can burn them. Rather apply it to the soil around the plant. This can be applied to any plant, but it is especially useful to apply to newly planted seedlings, as it gives them a good boost early in life!

- **Green Manure**

We make green manure in the same way that we make liquid manure. We do not use any animal manure, but rather fresh plant matter. Plants like yarrow, comfrey, nettle and so on (dynamic accumulators) are especially good for this. We usually use green manure when some minerals are missing in the soil and we need to put them back. Make the green manure the same way as the liquid manure, but use 5kg of plant matter for a steel drum.

4.9.6 Planting, Intercropping, Companion Planting[3]

- **Planting and Spacing**

Once we have prepared and watered our beds, we can start planting our seedlings. We need to leave enough space for our plants to grow. At the same time we don't want to waste space. For most plants you should plant them about 20cm apart from each other, which is about the distance between your thumb and forefinger when spread out.

- **Companion Planting**

Polyculture is an important part of agroecology, which means planting more than one variety of crop next to each other. This is because some plants help other plants by, for example, putting nutrients in the ground that other plants take out. We call these 'companion plants'. The table below shows what companions can be planted with your vegetable plants, that help to provide nutrients to the other plant, repel pests etc.

Plant	Companion
Beans	Beetroot, carrots, cauliflower, celery strawberry, maize, lavender
Beetroot	Beans, onions, lettuce, cabbage
Borage	Strawberries
Carrots	Lettuce, chives, radish, rosemary, sage
Cauliflower	Celery
Celery	Beans, leeks, tomatoes
Chives	Lettuce and beets
Comfrey	All plants
Coriander	Potatoes
Cucumbers	Most plants
Horse radish	Potatoes
Lavender	Peas and beans
Leeks	Celery
Lettuce	Radish, kohlrabi, beans, carrots
Marigold flowers	Potatoes
Maize	Sunflowers, legumes (beans, peas, soybeans ets), peanuts, cucurbits (squash, cucumbers, melons, etc), amaranth, white geranium, morning glory, parsley, potatoe.

[3]Ekukhanyeni, pg. 46-48

Cabbage	Geraniums, dill, alliums, rosemary, beans, beet, lettuce, onions
Broccoli	Geraniums, dill, rosemary, nasturtium, borage
Egg plant	Marigolds, tarragon, mints
Peppers Onion Potatoes Pumpkin/squash	Tomatoes, geraniums, petunias Carrots Horseradish Buckwheat, catnip, radishes
Spinach	Peas, beans
Tomatoes	Basil, oregano, parsley, carrots, marigolds, celery, geraniums, petunias, nasturtium, borage

Source: Ekukhanyeni, 'Learner Guide: Identify and Explain Permaculture Principles'

4.9.7 Seed Saving

Seed saving is a very important practice in agroecology. It builds independence of farmers because they do not have to reply on seed companies to buy their seeds from. It also allows farmers to save seeds that are best suited to their local conditions.

How and when to harvest seed can be different from plant to plant. But in general, you can harvest your seed once the plant has finished flowering and produced its fruit or seed pods and the leaf has started to discolour.

Before storing your seed, it is very important to clean it. We must remove all plant matter that is still on the seed. If plant matter is left on the seed it cancause fungus and rot during storage.

One technique that works well with tomato seed is to put your seed at the bottom of a bottle and add a little water, just enough to cover the seeds. Then cover the bottle with plastic wrap and punch a few holes in it. Leave the water to dry up and soak up all the plant matter that remains on the seed. Once this has come off, separate the seed from the 'jellows' that have come off the seed.

For some other seeds, all you have to do is rinse them off with water or soak them for a few minutes to remove any plant matter. Once your seed is ready for storing, brown paper

Group Discussions

1. What production challenges do farmers that you know of face? Eg. poor soil fertility, erosion, pests etc
2. How can practicing agroecology help to address these challenges?
3. What needs do small farmers have in order to shift to agroecology. How can these needs be met through the solidarity economy?

4.10 Summary

As we have discussed in this module, agroecology is not only a technical method of producing food. Is also part of a boader social and economic alternative of food sovereignty and the solidarity economy. We must therefore think about and promote agroecology in the context of wanting to transform our communities, and South Africa, through the solidarity economy and food sovereignty. In the last module, we will now turn to some basic steps for practically planning, mobilising for and advancing the solidarity economy and food sovereignty, together with agroeology.

MODULE 5
Organising and Mobilising For Food Sovereignty

Module 5
Organising and Mobilising For Food Sovereignty

5.1 Objectives of this Module:

- Develop a contextual understanding for a starting point and intervention in your community to build food sovereignty;
- Mapping the local issues and building solidarity with existing support organisations in your community;
- Using education resources and developing education programmes to raise awareness and demonstrate the alternative;
- Organising platforms and forums for coordination and planning;
- Develop a strategic plan for direction and navigating obstacles, challenges and struggles.

5.2 Introduction

The purpose of this module is to guide you toward organising and mobilising your community in building the food sovereignty alternative. The previous modules have explained and highlighted the food crisis and its social impacts. It is now time for action for building the alternative in your community! Given the enormity of the crisis, one might feel that transforming the food system is impossible given the concentration of power, state policies and resources of the dominant food industry. However, the key is to build from below in the spaces where the food industry does not serve the needs of people – communities experiencing hunger – as well as on the a broader front to campaign against the power of the dominant food system.

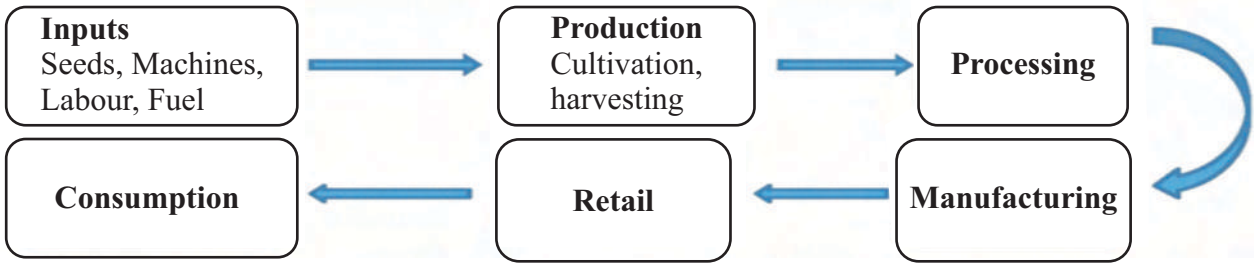
This module is set out in phases and is aimed at providing an organisation, or a group that you may form, with a guide to developing local food sovereignty practice. It also provides ways of linking this work to the national campaign. These phases are as follows:

Phase 1 – Initiation
Phase 2 – Mapping
Phase 3 – Education
Phase 4 – Organising
Phase 5 – Piloting and interventions for worker cooperatives
Phase 6 – Strategy development
Phase 7 – National Campaign linkages

5.3 Phase 1: Initiation

The key is to begin organising and mobilising your group in stages. The initiation phase is important for analysing your community's value chain and gives you and others a sense of who is supplying food in your community and how you can begin to think about building your own food sovereignty value chain. In module two you learnt about who controls the food value chain through the story of food exercise. We will now perform a similar exercise on understanding how you can imagine producing an important food item in your community particularly. The aim of this exercise is to help you identify areas of opportunity and intervention using a food sovereignty approach. Using the diagram and the group exercise questions below design a food value chain for that item of food that operates according to food sovereignty and solidarity economy principles. In other words that is fair to farmers, is good for the environment and builds community power in the food system.

This item of food needs to be placed in the context of the local food value chain.



Group Exercise Questions:

Step 1 - Think about your current food value chain:

1. Are any of these steps in the supply chain already happening in your community? Example farming, baking etc.?
2. Draw the diagram above and itemise under each category, who is providing that service or product in your community? Remember to base it on the most important food item you have chosen.

Step 2 – Design an alternative food value chain:

3. Using the food item you have chosen, design a food chain that is based in your community and builds food sovereignty and the solidarity economy. To do this, draw the above value chain on paper. For each step in the value chain of your food item, describe how it would be undertaken in your community in ways that build food sovereignty. Remember to think whether a solidarity economy institution could play a role. For example, in the second step of the value chain, 'Production', could a worker cooperative play a role here or in 'Retail', could an existing street trader or spaza shop supply your produce?
4. How would you go about marketing and distributing this important food item in your community?
5. Who will win and lose from each step in the process?
6. Identify what are your needs for achieving production and distribution of your important community food item you have chosen.

After completing this exercise of analysing your context based on your choice of the most important food item in your community, you should now be able to identify the opportunities in your community's context for initiating participation within your local value chain. You should also be able to identify the forces that control your local value chain. This leads us to the next aspect of mapping the issues affecting your community and potential support organisations that you can begin partnering with.

5.4 Phase 2: Mapping

Our communities are divided into various wards that are under the management of various municipalities within cities. Within our wards there are various spaces that the state, businesses and the public utilise. Understanding the activities and locations of these various entities are important as it shapes the value chain of food in terms of production and distribution. Essentially ward mapping is about using your local knowledge and understanding in locating these various entities. What is in the ward in terms of open spaces, clinics, schools, churches, cooperatives, and social movements and how can they be connected and organised into the campaign for food sovereignty?

Therefore the purpose of mapping is to help identify organisations in your community that you can network with, give solidarity, who provide support and resources. The following exercise will help you develop a database of these organisations.

Plenary Exercise Questions:

1. Obtain a map of the ward you are working in or draw a map of it. Begin to map the food issues geographically:
    - **a.** Identify where people get their food from on the map? Supermarkets, spaza shops, gardens, Malls etc.
    - **b.** List what food households generally consume daily and regularly
    - **c.** Identify open spaces and public institutions on the map both public and private that could potentially be used for food production. E.g. schools, clinics, cooperatives, public open spaces and churches etc.

2. Identify a list of potential support and partner actors in your ward such as faith based organisations, home based care, cooperatives, street traders, social movements, NGOs, farmers associations etc. The purpose of this exercise is to build a database of existing organs of civil society that operate within your ward. They can be approached for solidarity and support for building food sovereignty. These organisations can be

No.	Name of Organisation	Contact Person	Contact Number	Email	Physical Address	Ward No.	Activities	Type of Organisation	What & How they can support	FS Campaign Role
1										
2										
3										
4										

Through this exercise you should now have a clearer picture of various spaces of where members of your community obtain their food from as well as a general understanding of their consumption patterns in terms of quantity and pricing. This exercise should also indicate spaces that can be utilised for food production as well potential support organisations that can be invited to come on board toward food sovereignty building. The mapping leads us to the next phase of deepening awareness and education with your community members and civil society organisations on the food and hunger crisis and how we can begin to build the alternative of food sovereignty.

5.5 Phase 3: Education

Now that you have identified important social actors in your community that can be a part of building food sovereignty, how do you bring them together into an education and learning process? Many of the organisations you have identified may not be aware of what food sovereignty is and the issues with the current food system. Hence providing education is important for raising awareness and building an informed position. Initiating a process of education with social forces within your community can be achieved both practically and theoretically. It is important for people to understand what food sovereignty is and how it can transform your community and be championed. One of the principals of agroecology is to utilise local practice and indigenous knowledge as outlined in Module 4. The following are methods of learning and sources of learning materials and training tools:

- **Learn from local practice and indigenous knowledge** – Identifying and learning from existing farmers in your community who use ancestral and traditional farming methods help deepen the principals of agroecology. Approach these farmers and ask them to join the struggle for food sovereignty and share their knowledge and skills

- **Agroecology Training** – There are very few organisations providing agroecology training in South Africa. COPAC is working on putting together a database of agroecology trainers and community activists practicing agroecology. For further information contact COPAC.

- **Use the Food Sovereignty Activist Guide** – The use of this guide in a workshop format over three days is a good start in terms of introducing food sovereignty to support and partner organisations.

- **Use the Readings from the Activist School and Food Sovereignty Guide** – A reading and discussion group can be convened once a week or twice a month in your community. The readings list referral at the end of each module can be accessed through the USB memory stick or the COPAC website www.copac.org.za .

- **Use the *Solidarity Economy Alternative: Emerging Theory and Practice* book case studies** – This publication is an important activist resource and tool for understanding and building the solidarity economy movement. Two chapters in the book cover responses to the food crisis. The chapters on the Solidarity Economy Response to the Agrarian Crisis and Linking Food Sovereignty and the Solidarity Economy from a South African perspective. The book can be incorporated into the reading and discussion group circles.

- **Use Solidarity Economy Activist Training Guide** – This guide is an activist training tool assisting activists in advancing the solidarity economy alternative contextually through their struggles. It assists with organising and developing worker cooperatives and education and training cooperatives. It also explores two self-financing mechanisms supporting worker cooperatives and a national solidarity economy fund for broader cooperative development. The guide is available at www.copac.org.za and can be workshoped over a 3-day period.

- **Documentary Screenings** –There are a number visual resources focusing on the food crisis and alternatives that can be screened in your community namely:
  - Food Inc.
  - Seeds of Freedom
  - The Power of Community: Surviving Peak Oil, lessons from Cuba
  - The World According to Monsanto
  - Biowatch short documentary.

- **Promotional Events and festivals** – Hosting these events help promote food sovereignty, share information, practices, traditional food, and seeds with your community. It is also promotes inter-cultural artistic expression and sharing. It symbolises an alternative to the dominant commercialised promotion of food and culture.

These are some of the education tools, programmes and methods that can help raise awareness and consciousness around the food crisis and food sovereignty. This leads us to the next phase that is organising within a space that promotes a diffusion of knowledge, planning and action.

5.6 Phase 4: Organising Local Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Economy Forums

The purpose of having a local forum is to unite struggles, keep all actors and support organisations informed, build a programmatic plan of action and support education and training. Hosting regular monthly forums continues to keep networking and information-sharing alive for your struggle. It ensures dialogue and democratic participation exist within the broader struggle for food sovereignty. Local forums can be open to the public and support organisations and their constituencies.
Broadly the objectives of a forum are:

- Platform for building unity and solidarity
- Raising awareness and building consciousness
- Education and training
- Organising and planning
- Networking and information sharing
- Communication and actions
- Campaigns design and planning

5.6.1 Convening the Forum

There are various methods of convening forums. An elected convenor or convening organisation can help organise a suitable meeting venue and communicate with all parties concerned. Using the mapping database list above as an initial starting point, one can invite and convene the first forum. Communication can be sent out via email with a proposed agenda or via SMS. Another option could be a pamphlet distributed with a call to convene the first local forum. The first forum should lay the objectives and purpose of the gathering or meeting. It should develop a common vision that unites you. Most importantly it will provide a way forward on what are the initial steps and plans needed in achieving food sovereignty for your community.
Organising without a strategic plan and direction will not have a lasting impact in the long term. This leads us to formulating a declaration that embodies our thoughts, plans and intentions.

5.6.2 Drafting a Declaration

It is important that through the forum process a declaration encompassing your resolutions is developed. A declaration is a public announcement of intentions or of the terms of agreement of your meeting.

How should a declaration be drafted? A declaration should be a short statement with an opening statement problematising the key food and hunger challenges affecting your community. The declaration statement can then share who is made up of your forum and the forum's objectives. Finally your declaration statement can share your intentions around how you will be addressing your challenges through listing your interventions, such as education and training programmes, broader campaign plans, new cooperatives etc.

5.7 Phase 5: Start Planning and Building a Food Producing Worker Cooperative

A worker cooperative can be an essential vehicle in meeting the needs of your group and helping self-manage yourselves for food production. This could be one such option. The second option is based on your earlier mapping; instead of starting a new worker cooperative you may also support and develop existing cooperatives you have mapped.
A great resource for more information on how to develop a worker cooperative and support existing cooperatives is the Solidarity Economy Activist Guide. The guide is available at http://www.copac.org.za/tools/solidarity-economy-activist-guide . Please refer to module four of the guide on the importance of worker cooperatives and steps on how to set up a worker cooperative.

5.8 Phase 6: Food Sovereignty Strategy and Vision

Strategies provide direction, both ideologically and politically. It assists in building tactical approaches and actions toward achieving your vision, given the diversity of the social forces engaged in struggle. A strategy is a plan for how we want to get from where we are to where we want to be. A strategy prioritises key elements and steps in achieving your vision. A basic food sovereignty strategy will have the following component parts:

- **Introduction**
  Introduce your context through your problems, challenges, research and demographics. Outline your process of how you have began to come together and organise yourselves to address these challenges
- **Objectives**
  Develop key needs that your strategy aims to achieve.
- **Mapping and analysis**
  Based on your research you conducted in in module 2 and the mapping exercise in phase 1 of this module, conceptualise your results and analysis.
- **Obstacles and Challenges**
  Itemise all the obstacles and challenges facing you from obtaining your objectives
- **Food sovereignty vision**
  Write a short paragraph encapsulating the ideal and beneficial food sovereignty situation you would like to see in your community.
- **Values and Principles**
  List the values and principals that best describes your ethos and approach to building food sovereignty.
- **Elements of the strategy with tactics**
  In this part of the strategy you deal with key intervention methods on how you are going to achieve the following elements. Important questions to be asked for each of the below elements is who will be involved? What are the various programmes and methods you will develop? How are you going to achieve it?
    - Production of food
    - Consumption of food
    - Trade and Solidarity Linkages both internally in the community and externally
    - Finance
    - Education
    - Mass communication
- **Action Plan**
  Develop a table itemising tasks that need to be accomplished based on the above elements, people responsible for achieving the designated task, the timeframe they have in order to achieve the task and monitoring progress if the task has been accomplished or not.

Task	Persons Responsible	Timeframe	Monitoring

Broadly the above component parts will help set targets to be achieved and solutions to obstacles and challenges in advancing various elements of food sovereignty in your community. A strategy will continuously change over time as the terrain of struggle shifts. Using the forum platform continuously shapes your strategy and actions. It is important to share and locate your local work with the broader national food sovereignty strategy being developed. This is another way in which you are able to shape the national direction of the broader food sovereignty campaign.

Group Exercise: Working Towards a Food Sovereignty Strategy for Your Community

Below is a an example of a food sovereignty strategy from the township of Ivory Park near Johannesburg. The workshop participants should break into their groups to read through the strategy and then engage with the questions at the end of it.

The following strategy draws on the experiences of cooperatives and community members from the township community of Ivory Park in Midrand, Gauteng. The community-based cooperatives went through a process of education on the solidarity economy and set up an education and communication cooperative to strengthen their cooperatives and to facilitate solidarity economy movement building in Ivory Park. The solidarity economy education and communication cooperative conducted surveys on 429 households and 150 enterprises to gain insight and map issues affecting households, enterprises and the local economy. The results of the survey were published in a mapping research report which is available on the COPAC website. In order to raise awareness on the published results the education and communication cooperative together with its affiliates began convening monthly solidarity economy forums open to the community members and supporting organisations. The sample strategy comes out of a process linked to these forum engagements based on issues and challenges raised in the survey and the need to build more awareness on food sovereignty and local production of food.

Sample Strategy:

Ivory Park Food Sovereignty Strategy

Most of us who live in urban areas eat food that has not been produced and processed by ourselves or in our areas, but by large corporations and companies that we have no personal or direct connection to. These corporations are part of an agricultural and food system that operates far beyond the control of us as citizens or even our governments. This food system has three important negative effects for people and the planet. Firstly, big agricultural operations use large amounts of pesticides that destroy the environment and consume a lot of petrol and oil, which contributes to climate change. Secondly, small farmers all over the world cannot compete with these large agri-businesses and so are having to leave their lands to look for work in urban areas or remain in rural areas and live a life of poverty. The third important effect of our global agricultural system is that the prices of basic foods are determined by factors other than human need, so prices are rising independently of whether people need food or not. It is the urban poor that are hit the hardest in this respect. We therefore need to think of ways of producing food that are good for the planet and that are good for people in that they do not displace people from their lands, and provide healthy food and jobs.

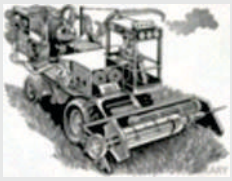
The research conducted by the Solidarity Economy Education and Communication Cooperative (SEECC) and the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) found that there was a high level of food stress in Ivory Park. This was indicated by the fact that for 44% of surveyed households, food is the main thing that they spend their money on. On average, households spend R704.97 on food per month. This can be contrasted with the fact that nearly two-thirds of households earn less than R1000 per month. Together with having to spend money on other important things like energy, transport, school fees and rent, this means that it is very difficult for households to pay for all the food that they need.

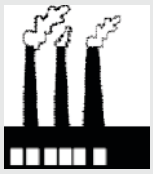
Many households in Ivory Park are not completely food secure. Food security refers to whether people have access to sufficient food at all times and is part of the South African government's food and agricultural policy. Food insecurity is not unique to Ivory Park: at least 20% of South Africans do not have adequate access to food. However, looking at the relationship between people and food by focusing only on food security leaves many questions unanswered. Food security does not show us who produces food, how it is produced and who controls food production.

People mostly do not have access to enough food because of rising food prices caused by factors that have nothing to do with most of them. Furthermore, the world food system is largely controlled by corporations that only want to make a profit from selling food, instead of whether people are able to eat healthy, affordable food. Since last year food prices have increased by 34% and some say that they will double by the end of this year.

But despite these rising food prices, people's needs around food have not changed. Why then should we be paying for food at prices that have nothing to do with how much we as human beings need to survive? Surely there is something wrong with this system? Surely I should be able to have access to the food that my body needs regardless of how rich or poor I am? To address these questions we can instead speak of **food sovereignty**. Food sovereignty refers to the right of people and countries to control their own food systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments. It essentially means saying "Right! We do not need to depend on buying food from big corporations, we will grow and sell food in ways that we as communities can control, so that it is easier for everyone to get the food that their bodies need. It also means building a local food economy to meet the needs of households and the community."

Modern Industrial Agriculture
Agriculture





Healthy, Organic Community

ACHIEVING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN IVORY PARK THROUGH THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Achieving food sovereignty and the ability by individuals and communities to influence how food is produced and consumed requires greater equality and new understandings of what an economy should look like. This means building a social alternative based on gender and economic equality and through which our rights to food can be achieved. Building the solidarity economy in Ivory Park is therefore a crucial element in building food sovereignty.

The solidarity economy is a voluntary process organised through collective action and conscious choice to establish a new pattern of democratic production, consumption and living that promotes the realisation of human needs and environmental justice. It is based on solidarity and cooperation with our fellow human beings, instead of competition with others as the basis for advancement in our lives. The possibilities of what people acting together, unified and bonded to each other by genuine desires to see the whole of our communities flourish, is remarkable. In building food sovereignty through the solidarity economy, we are guided by the following principles:

Solidarity: provides the basis for the solidarity economy. It informs the cooperation between members inside a solidarity economy enterprise, between such enterprises and with the community more broadly.

Collective ownership: ensures the assets and resources of the solidarity economy enterprise brings benefits to all within the enterprise, to the community and future generations. It ensures control and power are shared.

Self management: gives members (women and men) and worker owners in cooperatives the rights to impact on decision-making. Such a principle ensures one-person-one-vote institutionalises accountability and responsibility. Ongoing education and training is crucial for viable self management.

Control of capital: is a crucial practice to secure benefits for the individual enterprises, the wider solidarity economy and the community. It requires developing mechanisms to build up capital from below and subordinating it to democratic control so that the vision, values and principles of the solidarity economy informs lending practices. Such criteria will also inform the behaviour of the borrower.

Eco-centric practice: places an emphasis on a non-destructive relationship with nature through inputs, production processes, services rendered, consumption and household practices.

Community benefit: encourages a broader social awareness as an integral part of how the solidarity economy works. Such community benefit to be accounted for through transparent financial reporting.

Participatory democracy: provides an institutional space for the decentralised power of citizens and solidarity economy actors for and with the solidarity economy process. Such an institutional space to bring together and unite such social forces to ensure effective coordination and development of the solidarity economy.

Achieving food sovereignty in Ivory Park will be based on extensive education and training that requires clear coordination and a spirit of working together in solidarity with our fellow humans to achieve the well being of all of Ivory Park's residents. This short document will lay out elements of a proposed food strategy for Ivory Park. Such a strategy will involve increasing food production within Ivory Park through strengthening existing food producing worker cooperatives and starting new ones, increasing household food production, starting food gardens in schools and clinics, creating market spaces where locally produced food can be traded, and starting various forms of food processing worker cooperatives in the form of cheap restaurants, bakeries and the like. Central to this effort is education, on the food system as a whole, how to grow food, and learning new and fun ways to cook and eat delicious food with cooking classes and recipe books.

EDUCATION

For people to engage meaningfully in food policy, and more specifically, in the case of how food gets produced in Ivory Park, education and training is key. Part of this training needs to involve understanding what the solidarity economy is and how it works. Furthermore, education and training on a local food economy is critical because people in Ivory Park must want to buy and consume locally produced food in order for the local food economy to be successful. For people to want to do this, they must understand why it is a good thing to eat locally produced food. This requires education on understanding who benefits from the current food system and how a local food economy can begin to challenge this system. It also means people learning how to grow food in ways that are aimed at the wellbeing of people and are environmentally sustainable.

The role of the SEECC in education is crucial and should cover the following aspects:

1) Understanding the broader context of the necessity to develop food sovereignty – education on the food system, the politics of this system, understanding GMOs, understanding the benefits of growing food locally as well as buying food that has been produced locally by cooperatives etc. The very first workshop in this regard should therefore be on highlighting the dangers of unhealthy food, including actually showing displaying such food, like chips, coke, and showing who benefits every time they buy it; why eating healthy food is so essential and hence following on from this why it is so essential to develop a local food economy.
2) The technical side of growing food, including education on composting, seed banks, cooking and understanding food (nutrients, what is healthy food, the benefits that different foodstuffs have)

Solidarity economy education must also be focused on strengthening existing worker cooperatives and establishing new ones. This is essential to equipping

1) them to improve their production and to ensure that they are able to meet community needs in terms of healthy and sufficient food.
2) Through the SEECC, informal traders must be engaged with, for example around setting up locally controlled community restaurants and food stores run by worker cooperatives. They can also be assisted in setting up soup kitchens and restaurants selling cheap, nutritious food that has been grown locally.
3) The SEECC therefore needs to provide education and training on setting up new cooperatives. A key possible area is around staple foods like bread and meilie meal. For example, a bakery cooperative can be set up in each ward to provide communities with healthy, nutritious and diverse breads to choose from. A mielie growing and milling cooperative can also be set up to grow and mill mielies into mielie meal for the Ivory Park communities.

HOUSEHOLDS AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

1. Household Food Gardens – A key way for households to reduce their food costs is to grow some of their own food. Therefore, a key component of developing food sovereignty in Ivory Park is to equip people to grow food at home. Training of people will be carried out at the demonstration sites, and one beacon household food garden will be established and equipped with water harvester, composting techniques and implements to provide an example of how people might go about starting a garden at home. These gardens and subsequent ones will receive support from the SEECC in the form of seedlings, capacity, composting, equipment etc.

2. Financial Diaries – In order to understand more clearly how households in Ivory Park spend, save and manage their money, financial diaries will be handed out to certain households in which they record their financial processes, which will include how much they spend every day and on what, how much they managed to save, where they get their money from, how much they borrow and how they get it, and so on. This is key to gaining a greater understanding of local finances, and based on this, what institutions can be established to suit household's financial needs. Importantly, it will also allow us to think about how engaging in the solidarity economy can address such needs, like growing your own food and selling the extra that you might grow, how saving money by growing your own food can free up income for spending on other needs, and working out how agricultural worker cooperatives can sell food at prices lower than what you currently pay.

THE STATE AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Very important to the idea of food sovereignty is the role of the government in providing various forms of support to those who grow food locally. We therefore need to harness government resources and support in establishing food gardens in Ivory Park. With this state support, spaces where food gardens can be established include:

1. Open land to be developed into worker cooperatives – A key way in which the local state could be engaged in Ivory Park is in focusing toward creating conditions in Ivory Park that aid the development and burgeoning of agriculture by, for example, ensuring areas earmarked for food growing are adequately supplied with water. The Gauteng Department of Agriculture has a support mechanism whereby a group of people wanting to establish a food garden can approach a regional development office (Ivory Park would approach the Germiston office), and representatives will come out and assist applicants in interacting with the local municipality to access available land. People can then apply to the Gauteng Department of Agriculture regional office for infrastructure support in the form of fencing, storage container, borehole, irrigation equipment etc. However, engaging with government must be done on the terms of the Ivory Park solidarity economy movement in ways that do not threaten its autonomy and achievement of aims. In this regard, COPAC and the SEECC can assist people in their interactions with the government.

2. Schools – A further potential area for creating food gardens is in clinics and schools in Ivory Park. One of the three key objectives of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) is to promote self supporting school food gardens and other production initiatives. It therefore advises all schools to have food gardens to supply school children with lunch during the day and to provide them with skills for growing their own food. The NSNP also mandates that a school governing body member and the principal need to be responsible for overseeing the day to day management of the food garden. Both schools and the Gauteng Departments of Health and of Education can therefore be engaged with respectively on support for developing food gardens in these spaces.

3. Clinics – The Department of Health also recommends that clinics have food gardens where people with health problems can go to learn how to grow food at home as part of eating a nutritious diet to keep healthy. Clinics in Ivory Park therefore provide a further key space for establishing food gardens.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A FOOD SOVEREIGNTY COMMITTEE

This will operate as a sub-committee of the SEECC and will be composed of members from food producing cooperatives, school principals and learners. It would coordinate all the activities around building a food economy in Ivory Park and would have a number of responsibilities:

- Coordinating the education and training workshops mentioned above
- Education will also involve a large amount of campaigning and mobilising in the form of short pamphlets, events etc to showcase a local food economy. Critical to the success of a local food economy in Ivory Park is sufficient local demand, so campaigning and education will play a key role in generating this demand. The food sovereignty committee therefore needs to be very vocal on these food issues and take it to churches, schools and community organisations to spread the message of the need to grow and consume locally produced food.
- Keeping records of external volunteer members and their areas of expertise and coordinating their activities in terms of informing them and inviting them to provide training in particular areas as required based on training days being held, general requirements around building the economy etc
- Responsible for developing a plan that lays out exact dates for particular training and implementation activities eg. training days on composting, and will be responsible for advertising it to the community, securing relevant trainers; cooking workshops; ensuring the regular running of training demonstration sites (and the programme that goes with it) etc. It will therefore be responsible for coordinating education on food and food growing in Ivory Park.
- It could also be responsible for procurement of things like seeds and seedlings so that these can be given to community members after training for them to plant at home.

This is commensurate with its role of being the key point of communication and coordination with external assistance organisations and individuals
Mapping of Ivory Park in terms of food production. This would include recording where all the spaces are that food can be planted on a significant scale, where planting has begun to occur (such as the planting of fruit trees along a street) etc
Assistance to the establishment of new agricultural cooperatives
Engaging the state, along the lines of the ways discussed above. For example, to obtain land, infrastructure and technical support.

Key Short-Term Tasks for Food Committee

Secure one demonstration site in ward 77,78 and 79 respectively
Engage with relevant parties to secure each site
Liaise with public institutions like libraries and schools for creating food gardens
Source sufficient trainers for each site for training people on local food growing
Engage with external volunteers around training (seed banks, composting, organic and permaculture methods, water use etc)
Tabulate external volunteers and precisely what they are able to offer, then assign them to specific tasks that fit in with the programme going ahead
Once these are achieved, plan the first official training session

Group Exercise Questions

After reading the strategy, groups should talk about the following questions:

1. What did your group find useful from the strategy?
2. What are some of the strategic elements that would work and would not work in your community?
3. Are there components that are missing from the strategy but that would be important components of a strategy for your community? Describe these.

5.9 Phase 7: Links with National Campaign

The current national campaign framework is activist centred and practical toward achieving its objectives. Hence localised actions in your community are crucial in order to achieve the overall national objective. The following components are a guide for you in achieving your strategy and supporting the national campaign framework:

(1) Reclaiming our Food System Through Building Food Sovereignty Structures

Understanding food sovereignty – use the guide to train others in your community

Agroecology training and practice – utilize the methods of agrecology in your initiatives and train and share the knowledge in your community.

Establishing local seed banks

Through the Solidarity Economy Movement establish worker cooperatives in farming, bakeries, peoples restaurants and other food processing activities

Develop local solidarity economy and food sovereignty forums for local education, communication, knowledge sharing, problem solving and coordination;

Consumer awareness raising about the importance of food sovereignty and eating nutritious, healthy food

Develop networks between sites and cooperatives. For example, worker cooperatives to consumer cooperatives.

(2) Targeting the State and Corporations in the Food Sector

- Campaigns for land and agrarian reform
- Campaigns against high food prices – these can be both national and localized, depending on the food mapping undertaken of each community. For example, a local campaign against retailers for high bread prices could then lead to an establishment of a community worker cooperative bakery as an alternative to high bread prices, linking the oppositional struggle against the corporate food regime to an alternative to begin reclaiming the system
- Demands for agroecology-based extension services
- Campaigns against GMOs
- Pressuring the state to support urban agriculture: designating land for urban agriculture, providing assets and equipment, ensuring access to water, providing local market places for selling of output etc
- Pressure the state to provide infrastructure and support for small scale farmers in rural areas to move their surplus to markets in urban areas
- Campaign against the NDP's plan for agriculture and rural development, which aims to further commodify and 'partition' food production systems in South Africa, geared towards export of 'high value' foods and import of staples.

(3) Awareness Raising and Communication

- Pamphlets for use in local campaigns and spreading information on food sovereignty in general, specific issues around food etc
- Radio – activists speak on local radio shows as well as on national radio about the campaign
- Newspaper – activists write articles for local, provincial and national newspapers. They can also get local newspapers to cover initiatives, such as marches, establishment of new cooperatives etc
- Photo exhibitions on food issues and alternatives
- Activist training guide on food sovereignty
- Community dialogues to help design local campaigns
- Agroecology training
- Exchange visits – there are many organisations working in the country on important local initiatives that are part and parcel of building food sovereignty. Exchange visits could be organized to visit initiatives in order to learn, network and connect these initiatives.

(4) Mobilising for a Food Sovereignty Act

How do we force the state to undertake actions that support the building of food sovereignty in South Africa? A possibility is to mobilise for a Food Sovereignty Act. This raises two important issues. Firstly, we must be clear on what we want to see in the act. Secondly, we must be extremely careful that we do not hand over the initiative for food sovereignty to the state. Rather, we, as communities, activists, the landless, farmers, workers and faith groups want to be the central actors in food sovereignty. The state must just be forced to play a role that supports the building of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is ours, and we must not give it to the state! As we build the campaign, we will clarify what we want the contents of the Act to be and what we want it to achieve. The following are some possibilities:

- Support food sovereignty institution building (such as worker cooperatives, community markets etc, through funding, capacity building and so on);
- Criminalise certain actions, such as markets and supermarkets throwing away fresh food;
- Enforce standards on the consumption side, such as labelling, nutritional requirements, and so on of corporate controlled agriculture;
- Support the local promotion of food sovereignty produce, markets and linkages;
- Support small farmers' rights to water;
- Support small farmers' rights to seed, through promoting local seed saving, infrastructure for seed banking, government only supplying organic and locallysaved seed to farmers,etc;
- Protect land from mining and other land grabbing;
- Deepen democracy at ward level, communal areas, towns and cities by defining roles for wards, municipalities, traditional authorities, provincial governments to support what we are doing to build food sovereignty.

5.10 Networking and Coordination

As the national food sovereignty campaign emerges and is shaped, sharing your interventions and work in advancing food sovereignty is crucial for building the campaign. Below are various platforms you can engage on to share your experiences:

- Joining the food sovereignty Google group. Send an email to semovement@gmail.com and ask to be added
- Participating in teleconferences
- Participating in social media spaces i.e. Facebook, Twitter and Whats App groups
- Endorse and shape national media statements
- Share current activities, upcoming events and actions
- Write for Solidarity Economy News and share your experience with others
- Link with other Solidarity Economy sites in and outside your province
- Participate in Solidarity Economy Movement activist schools
- Share your declaration through the Google group
- Share your directory and mapping of contacts and networks with the national movement

5.11 Conclusion

In conclusion the following steps if initiated will definitely begin a process in the positive direction toward building food sovereignty in your community. It will provide hope, inspiration and give guidance toward our struggle. It will build autonomy and demonstrate that there is a solution to our food crisis. Not a false solution but a people's solution.

VIVA FOOD SOVEREIGNTY!

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