



Guidelines for Setting Up a Food Sovereignty Forum

Objective of this document:

Outline a step-by-step process for developing a food sovereignty forum in your community. This is in order to build the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) in your community, to ensure that it is a campaign that is driven at the grassroots.

What are the purposes of a food sovereignty forum?

- The forum is a meeting space that brings together different grassroots organisations and forces in a community that are concerned with hunger and food sovereignty, and want to work together to advance the SAFSC in various ways;
- Information sharing and education;
- Problem sharing and solving;
- Campaign planning and campaigning;
- Engagement with other actors like the state.

Who can organise a food sovereignty forum?

Any organisation or person who wants to mobilise their community behind the SAFSC and fight for food sovereignty issues in their community, and will do so according to key values and principles of the campaign.

Step 1: Venue

- Organise a venue for the forum meeting to take place in

Step 2: Identify who to invite to the forum

- Who are the organisations and individuals that you feel should be invited to the forum and who could be interested in playing a role in advancing the SAFSC? You can write this up into a list, including their contact details, what activity they are engaged in, and where they are located. These can include:
 - Local cooperatives
 - Local farmers
 - Informal food traders
 - Churches
 - Social movements

- Residents' associations
 - Creches
 - NGOs
 - Farmers associations
 - Community-based organisations
 - Etc
- However, one should not just invite everyone that can be identified. The choice of actors and organisations to invite to the forum should be strategic. That is, they should be capable of supporting the values and principles of the SAFSC, for real justice in the food system. Political parties are not welcome in the SAFSC.

Step 3: Invite those identified organisations and people to the forum

- Once having identified who should be invited to attend the forum, go out and invite them. Inviting them should include explaining to them what the SAFSC is about, what you hope to achieve with the food sovereignty forum, and why you are inviting them to attend.

Step 4: Hold the first forum meeting

- The aim of the first forum meeting can just be to introduce the SAFSC and its objectives, the objectives of the forum, and to undertake education to introduce people to why we have hunger in South Africa and the food sovereignty alternative. It should then be used to chart the way forward. For example, a possible agenda might look something like:

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Introduction to the SAFSC

- Give an overview of the Declaration that came out of the first SA Food Sovereignty Campaign Assembly
- Give an overview of the report from the People's Tribunal on Hunger, Food Prices and Landlessness
- Allow for some discussion

3. Main food issues in community

- Ask those present what the main problems around hunger are in the community, and why such hunger exists and have a discussion. These key issues should be taken note of.
- Ask those present about who produces food, how and who consumes that food.

4. Education on food sovereignty

- Using the activist guide *Food Sovereignty For the Right to Food: A Guide for Grassroots Activism* you can conduct some education with the forum participants on why we have hunger and the alternative of food sovereignty. You could make this a full 3-day workshop, or you could summarise the key issues in a couple of hours, so that participants get a basic understanding of food sovereignty.

5. Objectives of the forum

- Now that people have understood what the SAFSC and food sovereignty is about, you can facilitate a discussion for everyone to agree on the objectives of the forum. This discussion can be initiated by asking the question, 'What do we want this forum to achieve?' You can write the objectives up in a list (the list should not be lengthy, the forum should have a sharp and strategic focus).

6. Principles to guide participation in the forum

- To avoid any potential conflict at later stages, based on the objectives of the forum, there should be a discussion of what the principles are that will guide all individuals' and organisations' participation in the forum. Examples of principles might include democratic decision making, commitment to agreed tasks, openness and democracy etc.

7. Responsibilities for convening the forum

- Here you should decide how the forum meetings will be convened and by whom. How will the dates of forum meetings be decided? Who will ensure a venue is secured for forum meetings? Who will be responsible for ensuring the development of an agenda for each forum meeting? Who will be responsible for ensuring that when it is agreed to invite particular actors, like government representatives, or trainers etc, that they will be invited and attend?
- To undertake the above tasks, a forum convening committee could be established. In terms of who is in the committee, it should not be too big. Who should be in the committee is also an important question. A possible route is to have representatives from different sectors in the community that are part of the forum (eg. Farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, resident associations etc).

8. Closure and Way Forward

- All of the above discussions should be carefully taken note of and a record kept of the agreements, objectives, guiding principles, convening roles and so on. These records should be shared with all forum participants at the next forum meeting.
- The date and agenda of the next meeting can be decided here as well.

Step 5: Undertake tasks agreed to at first forum meeting

- After the first forum meeting, the tasks agreed to, like the writing up of the agreements and inviting other actors to participate in the forum, should be undertaken.

Step 6: Hold second forum meeting to draft declaration

- As agreed at the first forum meeting, after the understandings participants now have of the politics of hunger and the food system, this second forum meeting can focus on developing the local programme of action, written up as a Declaration for Food Sovereignty.
- This declaration can be drafted by asking and discussing the following key questions in the forum meeting:
 1. What are the key challenges/barriers to food sovereignty in our community and who is responsible for these challenges? You might find that these include high food prices, landlessness, access to water, lack of agroecological training and so on.
 2. What are the key activities we will undertake to challenge these barriers and actors responsible for them?
 3. What demands are we going to make locally as a campaign and to who will these demands be targeted?
 4. What activities will be taken forward to ensure food sovereignty takes root as part of local production and consumption of food?
 5. How would the local forum link with the SAFSC to ensure solidarity and support?

These discussions can then be drafted into a Declaration for Food Sovereignty. The declaration only has to be a short document, and can include the following sections:

1. Background

Who the community is, why you came together around the campaign, and what the barriers to food sovereignty in your community are.

2. Activities to advance the campaign

Simply state what activities the forum will undertake to advance the campaign. This content will come from answering question 2 above.

3. Key Demands

Simply list the demands of the campaign and to whom they are being made, as discussed in question 3 above.

4. Key Local Food Sovereignty Activities

5. Links with SAFSC

Step 7: Use the declaration and other campaign documents for mobilization

- Once having drafted the declaration, the document can be taken to other community structures to raise awareness and build community support for the campaign; it can be taken to local government to make clear to them the demands of the campaign; and it can be sent to the national coordination team of the SAFSC to keep a record of and to help them in assist you in your local campaigning. The declaration can be sent to safodsovcampaign@gmail.com. If email access is a challenge, fax or other means can be arranged.

Step 8: Continue growing the food sovereignty forum

- Forum meetings should continue as a key planning and mobilising space for the campaign.
- The agenda of each forum meeting will be determined by the implementation of the local programme agreed to in the Declaration. It will also be determined by the local context, the progress that is made, the challenges that come up, the opportunities that occur, and developments in the SAFSC at the national level. It is the role of those who have been tasked with convening the forum meetings to plan these meetings according to the key priorities in the local campaigning process.