

# Solidarity Economy News

*Building Human Solidarity to Sustain Life*

Newsletter No. 4 2013

## contents

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Activist Resources to Build the Solidarity Economy Movement From Below</b>	<b>13</b>
Chavez, Allende...From Democratic Socialism to Democratic Eco-Socialism in the 21st Century !	2	Threats to Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Eastern Cape: Impacts of the Massive Food Production Programme (MFPP), GMOs and Cash Crops in Four Villages in the Amathole Municipality	13
<b>National News</b>	<b>4</b>	New Book and Activist Hand Book Available Free Online: Harvesting Justice: Transforming Food, Land and Agricultural Systems in the Americas.	13
The DTI's <i>Integrated Strategy on the Promotion of Cooperatives</i> : Recipe for Success or More of the Same?	4	The Solidarity Economy Arts and Culture	14
<b>International News</b>	<b>7</b>	Tips for Using the Internet for Activism: Using Email for Activism	15
Co-operatise the state?	7	<b>Contact Details</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The Food Sovereignty Campaign</b>	<b>9</b>		
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Develops Draft National Strategy for Agroecology - An Analysis	9		
Amadiba Community Defends Food Sovereignty in Resisting Proposed Mining on Wild Coast	11		

## Editorial

---

### Chavez, Allende...From Democratic Socialism to Democratic Eco-Socialism in the 21st Century !

By Vishwas Satgar (Board Chairperson, COPAC)

Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, made an enduring mark on the short history of Democratic Socialism. From 1999-2013, Chavez opened a new chapter for left politics. His tragic death, due to cancer, has been mourned by progressive forces all over the world and his legacy has been defended from the outright propagandistic distortions of the Western media. In a world increasingly subject to the tyranny of transnational capitalist power, Chavez dared to confront neoliberal financialised capitalism with a '21st Century socialism'. This Bolivarian project was anti-imperialist, unstinting in its use of democracy against capitalism (not just electoral democracy and democratic rights, but also neighbourhood councils in Barrios or urban slums, worker run factories, solidarity economy cooperatives and direct democratic action in the streets) and about state intervention in the economy. There were both redistributive and transformative elements to the Bolivarian Revolution. However, this was not without challenges and neither was it free of mistakes.

Moreover, Chavez was not the first in Latin America to challenge capitalism in this way. Salvador Allende, President of Chile, from 1970-73 did the same. Allende confronted capitalism in the midst of the Cold War and courageously experimented with a peaceful and democratic path to socialism. On September 11, 1973, Allende's democratically elected government was overthrown in a CIA sponsored military coup and he killed himself before being captured by fascist soldiers. Allende's democratic socialism was replaced with the first brutal experiment of neoliberal market adjustment, under a fascist military dictatorship headed by Augusto Pinochet. This ruthless General was a close ally of Reagan and Thatcher, crucial Western leaders championing neoliberalism (a class project of transnational capital) in the heartlands of capitalism in the 1980s.

Both the Democratic Socialisms, of Chavez and Allende, shared certain common challenges. While they both did not have absolute majorities in their parliaments, both attempted to use state power to initiate radical reforms from above, based on the democratic mandates achieved. These state led projects, from above, threw up challenges of bureaucratisation and corruption. Another

challenge shared was the resource base and dependency of their countries economies. Chavez was dependent on rents earned from oil, Allende depended on copper mines. However, both needed to use the wealth created by these commodities to manage international trade and ensure redistribution. These resource dependencies made their Democratic Socialisms vulnerable to commodity price changes, sabotage and even right wing worker strikes.

In the process of deepening social transformation both were forced to mobilise a democratic bloc of social forces against a pro-capitalist and imperialist bloc of domestic forces bent on blocking change. This deeply polarised their societies. Moreover, both faced imperialist destabilisation and US sponsored opposition. Allende tried to ensure this did not escalate into civil war and maintained a principled commitment to legality and constitutional democracy. At the same time, the democratic left in Chile rallied to late to build and institutionalise peoples power in defense of their democratic revolution. Chavez on the other hand ensured early on and through constitutional reform that popular power was entrenched in driving democratic transformation from below. This proved to be a crucial defense against the US sponsored military coup in 2002.

A democratic path to socialism is not an easy road, but neither is it impossible. Actually, it is the only way forward for the left in the 21st Century. Allende and Chavez have given us valuable historical experience to learn from.

First, building, institutionalising and deepening peoples power has to come before electoral power. Electoral and state power must merely strengthen whats already happening from below. In this context the solidarity economy, community owned renewable energy, localised food sovereignty, participatory budgeting in communities, local community controlled media, democratically managed schools, community policing forums and so on, become important. This means the state must be embedded or surrounded by peoples power to ensure it can be held accountable, prevent corruption and can also be defended against imperialist destabilisation. Even losing electoral power or even not having it does not stop such a project from continuing from below. More

democracy, not less is the key! This also means grass roots collective leadership drives and coordinates change with left forces in the state.

Second, we live in an age in which capital is given policy concessions, enabling conditions to make super profits and power to lead. This has led to obscene wealth for the few, a crisis ridden world and unviable societies. Patrice Motsepe, Cyril Ramaphosa, for example, are part of this super-rich sometimes called 'billionaires' or 'plutocrats'. Their wealth is the result of the inequality of the majority. This has to end, while appreciating the future does not lie with the rich but with workers, the poor and the middle class. It is time to turn popular power against these elites and ensure popular classes lead society. This means the impulse for transformation, anchored below, must form the basis for a new symbolic politics of alternatives for society and which needs to be presented to the country. These actual experiences of advancing alternatives have to be the content for a national dialogue for unity and advancing the interests of all South Africans. Put differently, national unity has to be actively promoted on the terms of workers and the poor as the basis to call for capital and the rich to make sacrifices. For example, capital must be blocked from making profits in renewable energy so that feed in tariffs can be put in place to enable poor households to benefit from renewable energy generation and for community owned renewable energy to come to the fore. The 'sacrifice' of capital means society benefits, particularly the workers, the poor and the middle class. Another example will be public transport: capital out, the state in to ensure all of South Africa benefits.

Third, besides grounding socialist change in radical democracy, pluralism and ethical values there is a need to deal with the challenge of imperialism differently. Instead of confronting imperialism, in the context of a unipolar world order, the redistribution of power going on in the world today holds out the prospect for a post-hegemonic world in which multiple centres of power co-exist. This requires a new transformative regionalisation, strategic state alliances, strengthening of multi-lateralism and transnational solidarity across global civil society.

Finally, it is important to have a democratic plan to move beyond commodity dependent economies. In the case of South Africa we have to advance a transition beyond a carbon based economy, dependent on the minerals energy complex, and which is contributing to green house gases and global warming. Human induced climate change will affect workers, the poor and the middle class the most. In this context, Democratic Socialism has to be a Democratic Eco-Socialism in the 21st Century!



## National News

---

### The DTI's *Integrated Strategy on the Promotion of Cooperatives: Recipe for Success or More of the Same?*

By Athish Kirun

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) published a co-operatives strategic development plan in 2012. The vision of the strategy is to develop and grow a self-sustainable co-operative sector with the aim of employment creation and poverty reduction, thus bringing about economic transformation and an equitable society. COPAC reviewed the strategy and found many problematic areas largely centred around its top down approach.

The strategy is divided into three sections. The first section shares international co-operative best practice with impressive statistics from Canada, Spain, Italy, India, Kenya and Bangladesh, making the case for the importance of co-operatives and their economic and developmental achievements. However, in section two of the strategy, which reflects on the South African cooperative history and achievements, there is a disappointing contrast to these international experiences. This is attributed mostly to the perverse colonial and apartheid co-operative legislation from 1922 to 1994 that only supported white owned co-operatives in the agricultural sector which did not comply with the international co-operative values and principals. Failed union attempts in the late 1980's in response to retrenchments and workers economic needs are also highlighted.

In the late 1990s the state promoted from above the National Cooperatives Association of South Africa (NCASA). The Department of Trade and Industry was central in this drive from above, alongside the Department of Agriculture. This period, however, is largely characterized by failure, thus ushering in the promulgation of the 2005 Co-operatives Act that allowed for all types of co-operatives and sectors, a shift of the responsibility for co-operative development and support from the Department of Agriculture to DTI and the creation of a dedicated co-operatives unit. This led to an explosion of co-operative registrations from 2005 to present. A total of 19550 coops were registered between 2005 and 2009. However, most of these are marginal and not operational with a 12% survival rate and 88% mortality rate out of the current number of registered cooperatives of 22030. The section outlines several factors that has caused this, namely, a non-existent dedicated co-operatives support agency leading to uncoordinated support, poor mentorship, minimum investment dedicated to co-operatives, neglect from

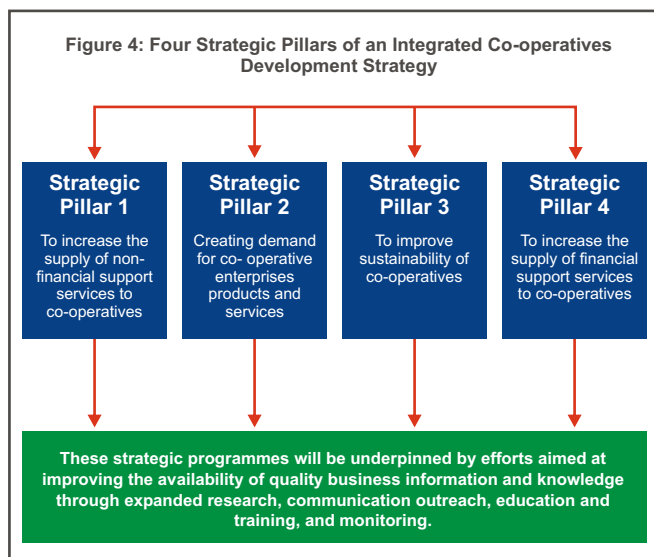
various spheres of government and respective enterprise development agencies and many existing co-operatives have not been formed on a genuine basis. These co-operatives have merely been established to access grant funding from the state.. These challenges are summarized and fall under the categories of government, internal co-operative management, market and co-operative organizational challenges. The solution to these challenges outlined in the DTI's strategy is based on a four-pillar strategy.

Although the strategy acknowledges historical and present challenges its strategic pillars are still articulated through central and top down planning; to globalize cooperatives as another business form! The strategy has aligned its objectives to several other national policy frame works such as the National Industrial Policy Framework (NIPF), Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP 2), Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA), Women Empowerment Strategy (WES); Regional Industrial Development Strategy (RIDS), Integrated Strategy on the Promotion of Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMMEs); Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Strategy, National Youth Economic Strategy, Anti-Poverty Strategy, Micro-Agricultural Finance initiative of South Africa (MAFISA); Black Business Supplier Development Programme (BBSDP) and Export Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA). The first problem is that most of these policies focus on government's industrial and macro economic growth path strategies that are largely disconnected from, and failed to address, the realities and needs of people on the ground. While alignment of policy at state-level is important, such situating of cooperatives within these mainstream, largely neoliberal and market-focused policies misses the essential thrust of international experiences of successful, grassroots-driven cooperative movements. A key lesson from these is that for cooperative movements to be successful, they should be democratic, grassroots movements as opposed to state-led, top down structures.

Furthermore, in the DTI's conception of cooperatives, it views them as a sector and an economic policy issue. But cooperatives are more than just an economic option - they are about a more fundamental structural alternative



that aims to reconfigure work, community, democracy and the economy. This points to the more radical transformative agenda of the solidarity economy movement and its vision for a solidarity society. As such, genuine cooperative movements are not simply a third sector into which all cooperatives are lumped (as the strategy does); they bring together a range of social actors working in different economic and social activities (from garbage pickers, to workers controlling factories, to community controlled banks, community owned renewable energy to small scale farmers) that wish to transform society.



### Strategic Pillar 1

Four programs are outlined here to provide non-financial support services to co-operatives based on education, training, skilling, conflict resolution, legislative compliance and registration. The strategy does not give clear details of how the agency will be rooted in communities but vaguely alludes to relationships with local municipalities and shared support services centers with co-operative support organizations, NGO's and community-based organizations. The weakness of local government to deliver basic services and corrupt patronage relationships raises questions of access, quality and contradictions of co-operative development linked to these institutions. Furthermore, the co-operative pre- and post-formation education curriculum does not seem to clearly reflect the historical and global economic context of co-operatives objectively; South Africa's historical experience of cooperatives through colonialism, apartheid and post apartheid. Moreover, the rise of co-operative movements in Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela as a

transformative alternative in responding to the global economic crisis. The current education curriculum focus can dilute the level of co-operative autonomy and foster dependency relationships on the state. State support is crucial for cooperative development but this has to be strategic, enabling and not intrusive. Put differently cooperatives must be member driven, informed by their own strategic needs and accountable to their own standards- values and principles and not to state bureaucracy.

### Strategic Pillar 2

Three programs are outlined here to assist co-operatives gain access to foreign markets and preferential procurement from government department's, thereby creating demand for their products and services. The issue of foreign markets and competition further makes clear the view of the government about the role of cooperatives: as one leg of participating in global market competition as a supposed means to create jobs rather than directly meeting communities' needs. This approach also contradicts ecological principles around localizing the link between production and consumption as far as possible. For example, on the East Rand of Johannesburg co-operative commercial farming incubation models are being promoted by the City of Ekurhuleni to supply food to Walmart. This works against the principals and ideas of food sovereignty, by promoting corporate control of the food chain, and inducing small scale producers to produce for commercial markets rather than directly for their communities' food needs. More government neoliberal policies that focuses on the hopes of attracting and managing foreign direct investments again shape this. Preferential procurement is only effective as a support instrument if it is not politicized and not part of corrupt politics.

### Strategic Pillar 3

Under this pillar three support programs are outlined to improve the sustainability of co-operatives. These are an enterprise networks program, business infrastructure support and co-operative taxation concessions. Under their enterprise networks program the CDA will be responsible for formulating a program for co-operatives to begin to network and establish cluster networks. The horizontal linkages and networks are important for both market access, problem solving and shared services. However, this rests on the assumption of a singular cooperative sector and movement, rather than a number of cooperative driven movements, some horizontal,

some sectoral and linked to diverse social movements arising from many different social groups and activities (as mentioned above, from garbage pickers to farming coops). The DTI needs to lose its British colonial understanding of cooperatives and as expressed through the ICA, that every cooperative movement is built as a neat hierarchy: primary, then secondary and then apex, for each sector and geographical area. Cooperative movements have diverse structures in different parts of the world. The DTI needs to inform itself about this and will need to respect the autonomy of emerging movements and support the programs they are implementing. In South Africa besides the state sponsored cooperative movement, there is also an emergent and independent movement: the Solidarity Economy Movement, which is organized in a very different way from how typical cooperative movements are organized.

Infrastructure is a huge challenge for co-operatives. Many co-operatives do not have premises or local marketplace infrastructure. Many of these spaces have been captured by big shopping mall developments. The business infrastructure support program linked to Local Economic Development Departments, public works programs and B-BBEE strategy promises access and renovation to old public buildings. Through our experience these departments are dysfunctional and lack the capability and capacity to implement this. They also are not transparent and work in very technocratic and haphazard ways in supporting co-operatives. The business support program will only work if co-operative movements are included in the infrastructure mapping and identification process. Clear timeframes, lease agreements and title deeds need to be allocated for surety to the cooperatives.

### Strategic Pillar 4

Pillar four focuses on three financial support services programs for co-operatives. These are micro-finance loans through the Small Enterprise Financing Agency (SEFA), co-operative grant funding through the co-operative incentive scheme (CIS) and specialized funding through their Co-operative Special Project Fund (CSPF). The CDA will be responsible for implementing this financial support. It remains to be seen whether SEFA and CSPF are appropriate to funding cooperatives embedded in the aims, values and principles of the solidarity economy, or whether they will place inappropriate and difficult conditions on cooperatives, such as having to meet criteria of global competitiveness and

profitability, rather than direct social objectives. From COPAC's experience of the CIS fund, it is cumbersome and bureaucratic in terms of its requirements. Many of the co-operatives need a lot of support in terms of accessing quotations for assets that meet their tax clearance requirements. Currently a number of apparently patronage-linked business consultancies are filling in this gap by assisting cooperatives to complete their applications to access the funding and assisting with business plans, but take a large chunk of the grant as their fee for doing so. This diverts resources that should be going to cooperatives to fly-by-night, profit-driven consultancies. Thus these support funds need to be sensitive to the co-operatives limits and challenges. They must be able to supply start up and working capital financial support more efficiently to the co-operatives directly. Government officials should be able to help co-operatives easily problem solve around their funding requirements and not create more technical obstacles for them in order to access funds. The fund should also consider supporting services based co-operatives such education co-operatives; financial services co-operatives or co-operative movement funds. This will greatly assist co-operatives who are affiliated to these co-operatives and movements to gain access to funding more broadly and efficiently. Currently the system takes too long in administering funds, from 6 months to a year. This forces members or co-operators to look for temporary employment out of desperation, filling them with disillusionment on the hopes of starting their co-operative. State efficiency is slow and problematic. This needs to be addressed immediately.

In conclusion the strategy needs to relook at its objectives beyond its state centric and co-operative sectoral vision. Building strong co-operative value chains within local markets should be prioritized versus international markets. Independent co-operative movements programs and struggles need to be supported. Finally funding support needs to be streamlined and made more easily accessible for co-operatives. This strategy can easily repeat the mistakes of the previous failed attempts.

## International News

### Co-operatise the state?



As the UK government outsources state services, **Hilary Wainwright** shows that the options for ensuring democratic and accountable services is in practice going beyond the choice of either state or private sector: cooperatives may be providing the alternative.

In the free-for-all over the spoils of the public sector, UK government ministers are energetically promoting the concepts of co-operatives and mutuals. They talk carelessly about encouraging public sector workers to form co-operatives, and running the public sector on the model of John Lewis, an employee-owned retail company. They evoke the co-operative tradition of the UK in their speeches. The fact that they are referring, in however a mystifying way, to co-operatives with their non-capitalist traditions indicates that big business is facing something of a crisis of legitimacy. However, to really test their commitment, one can simply ask: would they want to see currently private businesses converted to cooperatives, or only the state entities and services that they are selling off?

Despite this somewhat confusing political context, genuine co-operative alternatives are making progress. As the government pushes to cut back on expenditure it is privatising state services and entities. But as these activities become marketised, so there are also increasing failures. The majority of people do not want to see public services being provided by private companies. On the other hand, few people want a return to public state management as we know it. There is therefore now in England an urgent interest in how to defend public services but manage them in a more responsive and democratic way.

The co-operative movement, with its practical experience of democratic management, its labour movement traditions and its significant resources through the Co-operative Group, is proving a distinctive source of support for alternatives to the marketisation of public services. In education, a key development is the spread of co-operative trust schools, supported nationally by the Schools Co-operative Society (SCS) and funded through



local authorities, which also provide what support services they can on diminishing budgets. There are now 200 co-op schools, with numbers growing rapidly.

Rather than be forced into 'an academy' (secondary schools run by boards autonomous from local councils, as businesses - and often with businesses represented on their board) schools are looking for alternatives that enable them to realise their public service values. 'Especially important,' explains the enthusiastic Mervyn Wilson, head of the Co-operative College, 'is the way SCS has helped schools develop effective collaboration' - in dealing with inspections, for example, and sharing resources.

Trade unions are becoming warily supportive of the development. SCS is working closely with the unions, which stress the contrast with academies. 'Academies are about marketisation, whereas co-operative schools maintain education as a public service, funding [it] on the basis of social need,' says John Chowcat, a leading official in the Prospect union. (The Co-op does sponsor some academies in very specific circumstances, but this is not their main concern and they run them on the basis of a public ethos in close collaboration with local authorities.)

What does this mean for local authorities that see the role of the state as both to deliver public services and also to enable the means of delivery to be more responsive to users and staff alike? This is where the Co-operative Council Network comes in. One of the network's members is Newcastle Council. Labour Party councillor Nigel Todd welcomes its formation because it 'brings the authentic socialist imagination back into the labour movement'. It does so with a stress on opening services to greater involvement from users and staff.

This is what inspires Unison branch secretary and Co-op party member Jonathan Sedgebeer from Telford Council, a new recruit to the network: 'This is an opportunity to move beyond simply reacting to the Tory agenda [and] setting out our alternative strategy.' He reflects the position of Unison nationally, which also sees the co-operative model as a basis for intervening in privatised services and helping staff create co-operatives that will improve services as well as wages and working conditions.

The Co-operative Council Network is controversial, however. 'We are walking a fine line,' admits Sedgebeer, fully aware that talk of co-ops, mutuals and social enterprises can 'simply soften the path to privatisation'. Unions, the co-operative movement and councils are exploring ways of locking assets into trust arrangements that prevent private takeovers. They are looking at collaborative - rather than outsourcing - models around very specific services where co-ops or other transparent and accountable social enterprises can improve the service delivery.

The word 'socialism' in the English language had its origins in the co-operative movement of the 1820s. Its opposite was competitive individualism. In the context of state-promoted competition of wild proportions, the co-operative movement is opening once again a contested space for developing what socialism means in practice.

**Hilary Wainwright is a founding editor of Red Pepper magazine in England and a fellow of the Transnational Institute. The original version of this article can be found at [www.redpepper.org.uk/co-operatise-the-state/](http://www.redpepper.org.uk/co-operatise-the-state/).**





## The Food Sovereignty Campaign

### Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Develops Draft National Strategy for Agroecology - An Analysis

By Andrew Bennie, Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC)

In 2012 the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries released a draft strategy on agroecology (see Issue No. 1 of this newsletter for an explanation of agroecology) for South Africa. The Department must be commended for its recognition of the problem of sustainability of industrial agriculture and the need to move towards agro-ecology as an important method, and social alternative, for producing food to feed people. The strategy represents a potentially important step forward in building a sustainable agricultural sector in South Africa and, if implemented correctly, could play an important role in rural development. What role does it play in relation to building food sovereignty? What follows is an assessment of the strategy and its implications for food sovereignty in South Africa.



#### What is Agroecology?

Agroecology has been defined as “the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agricultural ecosystems”. It is essentially a way of farming that works *with* nature rather than *against* it, using traditional knowledge as well as new knowledge generated largely through practice and scientific research.

The strategy demonstrates a clear and comprehensive understanding of agro-ecology and its principles. It must also be commended for recognising the inherent social and political dimensions of agro-ecology as an agricultural, ecological and social alternative, by acknowledging the democratic content of this practice.

However, there are also issues that the strategy does not deal with, nor make clear how it stands in relation to other aspects of South African society. For example, it does not state how the roll-out of agroecology in South Africa would relate to the large-scale, commercial agricultural sector, which by its nature is ecologically opposite to agroecology, which emphasises small scale farming and ecological techniques of farming rather than pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

It also does not specify how it relates to the structure of the South African agricultural system. Who will the strategy apply to? Will it be only applicable to small scale farmers in former homeland areas, while leaving the existing commercial agricultural sector intact, thus reproducing South Africa's dualist agricultural structure consisting of a relatively small number of, mainly white, commercial farmers, on the one hand, and a large number of small scale, mainly black, farmers, on the other? That is, the strategy does not deal with the position of agroecology in broader agrarian reform.

Furthermore, there is also a need in the strategy to be more clear about how the strategy relates to (perhaps even conflicts with) other policies, specifically those on agriculture, rural development and land reform (such as the Green Paper on Land Reform). For example, how does this strategy on agro-ecology, which is about more than being 'commercial farmers', relate to other government policies and attempts to develop small scale *commercial* farmers? Commercial implies largely driven by economic priorities (i.e. profit), whereas, as the policy states, agro-ecology is not only about environmental sustainability, but also about social concerns for justice, addressing hunger directly, democracy and control.

The South African government has welcomed with open arms Genetic Modification (GM) technology (see issue 3 of the newsletter for more on GM technology). This technology favours corporations who aim to make large profits from controlling seeds, and therefore life itself, and does not benefit small scale farmers nor the environment. Agroecology is therefore completely against GM technology. In this sense DAFF's agroecology strategy is in contradiction with broader government policy, but this contradiction is not dealt with. To fully champion agro-ecology as a production and social alternative, the strategy should openly reject GM technology.

The draft agroecology strategy covers the issue of access to markets, which is important as a major difficulty for small farmers in South Africa is such access. It is increasingly becoming recognised around the world, and it is key to food sovereignty, that to transform the agricultural sector towards sustainability a first step is to focus on localisation of production and consumption. This also requires a focus of production that is not just aimed at producing for the market as a first step, but producing for people. This means connecting farmers to consumers as closely as possible and it requires that the strategy does not focus only farmers accessing retail chain markets. It should also focus on developing alternative markets and circuits of distribution, which can take the form of community markets, consumer cooperatives, linking production to local non-retail chain stores, and even to so-called informal traders. This also applies to the support for urban agroecology farmers, who need local points to sell their produce, such as street corner kiosks and community markets. New forms of linking producers to the hungry are urgently required.



The strategy also mentions cooperatives as a form through which to achieve agroecological production. In order for cooperatives to play a successful role in developing the agro-ecology and small farmer sector, lessons from the South African experience in cooperative development must first be learnt from. Thus far South Africa has failed to develop a successful cooperative movement, largely because of the top-down and state-driven manner in which it has been implemented. Furthermore, it has been conceptualised as another area to promote BEE entrepreneurship rather than as a bottom-up, democratic alternative to existing globalisation and failed economic policies. If the strategy aims to develop an agricultural cooperative sector, how does it plan to do it in a way that ensures cooperative success?

While the strategy explains very well what agro-ecology is and situates it in a social context, when it deals with actual implementation it tends to position it only as a production technique. The above comments point towards the need to more *practically* position agro-ecology in line with the principles that are outlined in the first few pages of the strategy. This requires not only looking at the producers, but also the whole supply chain and the transformation required at each point of it in order to ensure that farmers thrive and that (especially poor) consumers can access nutritious and safely produced food. As has been mentioned above, this then requires a policy focus on production of food not for international markets or markets *per se*, but a policy focus that aims to directly ensure that food produced gets to those who need it, as directly as possible.

Internationally agro-ecology is thus coming to be placed within the broader frame of food sovereignty. It therefore moves beyond the notion of food security to analyse the roots of hunger by asking who produces our food, who benefits from its production, and places the questions of democracy and control at the centre of the food system. Agro-ecology should be seen as a central part of the achievement of food sovereignty, which the strategy does not deal with. Overall, while the strategy is necessary and welcome in the need for sustainable agriculture, the DAFF does not place the strategy in the broader context of social transformation. This is something that a food sovereignty campaign in South Africa would need to build momentum for from below there is therefore still work to be done to fight for food sovereignty!





## **Amadiba Community Defends Food Sovereignty in Resisting Proposed Mining on Wild Coast**

*By Nonhle Mbhutuma*



The Amadiba community in the northern Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape are part of AmaMpondo people, renowned for their 1960 uprising and revolt against the Bantu Authorities Act and betterment planning which, according to the apartheid government, was meant to rearrange communities so that the government could service them better. But this was understood by the AmaMpondo as a way to alienate them from their land. They did not understand that, if this was for their benefit, then why it was not discussed and agreed with them? The result is that small parts of Pondoland, especially on the coast, had betterment planning implemented. But we see that many regions where the plan was implemented now do not grow food for themselves. If you ask them why, they say it is because their fields are far away. It is therefore difficult for them to work on them.

The Amadiba community is one of the communities that did not accept betterment planning. They still live from the food they grow and the animals they keep. Food grown here comes from the seeds they keep. This liberates them from the cost limitations which often stop poor people from producing or accessing their food.

The community members grow maize, sweet potatoes, potatoes, different traditional beans, amadumbe (terroyams), and other vegetables like onions, spinach, tomatoes and so on. These crops are usually grown for subsistence and when there is a surplus, sold locally. If one produces more than what locals may buy then that it is sold in regional towns. Some crops are sold to buyers in Durban, like sweet potatoes and amadumbe. By so doing they make money to buy those items they cannot produce from their gardens and cover other costs like sending children to school as well as higher education.

This community may be poor in terms of cash but there is no hunger. Ubuntu is still practiced here - this means if one homestead does not have enough to sustain themselves then they are helped by family members and neighbours. In this way no one dies of hunger and so no one is forced to engage in crime and so on.



But the Amadiba community and their relative food sovereignty has been facing the challenge of an Australian company wanting to mine the area for titanium-related minerals. The company has promised the community opportunities like jobs, running water and electricity. These services currently do not exist but the community does still not want to the mining, which will mean that much of the land currently used for cultivating crops and for animal grazing will be lost. Furthermore, our forefathers' graves will be exhumed, violating Pondo beliefs and custom.

The community has been fighting the mining for 7 years now, but a few corrupt politicians and officials have been assisting the Australian miners all the way through to get the licence to mine. There has been a lot of conflict over the mining, some of it within the community. There have been constant attempts by some parts of government and the mining company to divide the community because it has been impossible so far to get the community to unite in support of the mining.

The community, however, has resisted division and do not intend to give away their land because it is life to them. They argue that once they give away their land no one will be able to use it afterwards, so they will then have to rely only on jobs for their survival. The problem therefore is that the mine is short term and cannot benefit everybody. They say there is no price for land and they therefore will not give away their land for a short term project.

Part of fighting the mining is therefore for the community to carry on defending their right to a healthy environment and producing their own food, and to continue building the ways in which we meet our needs, like what the Simbhademe Programme is aiming to do (see Issue 2 of this newsletter). This will further show that we do not need the mining to satisfy our needs. This also shows the importance of the solidarity economy and further strengthening the food sovereignty of the communities.



**Nonhle Mbhutuma is a member of the Amadiba community, a community development worker with the Simbhademe Programme, and an anti-mining activist with the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC).**

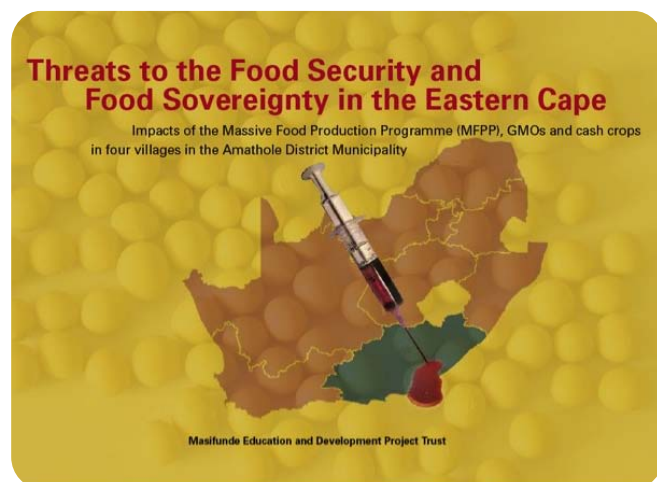
**She can be contacted at [nonhlem@vodamail.co.za](mailto:nonhlem@vodamail.co.za).**

**To learn more about the struggle and Simbhademe, you can visit [www.swc.org.za](http://www.swc.org.za).**



## Activist Resources to Build the Solidarity Economy Movement from Below

***Threats to Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Eastern Cape: Impacts of the Massive Food Production Programme (MFPP), GMOs and Cash Crops in Four Villages in the Amathole Municipality, by Masifunde Education and Development Project Trust.***



This report, published in 2010, highlights the impacts of the Eastern Cape government's Massive Food Production Programme (MFPP) on small farmers, using those from Amathole Municipality as a case study. Since 2003 the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture, with the active support of central government, has adopted a 'Green Revolution' strategy in its approach towards agricultural development in the province. The central tenet of the Green Revolution is that increasing production through crop yields will alleviate both poverty and food insecurity. This is to be achieved by providing farmers with 'high performing' hybrid or genetically modified seed, chemical inputs and access to the finance to purchase these.

The general experience has been that any short term yield gains have soon tapered off. The environmental costs have been immeasurable, as water supplies have dwindled, soils have been leached of all nutrients, and rich biodiversity has been replaced with industrial monocultures. Farmers with little or no say in the uptake of these projects have found themselves saddled with debt and no means to pay it off.

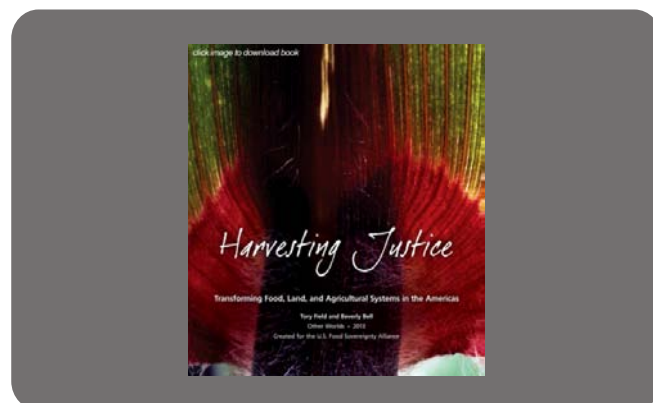
The report analysed four such cases in the Amathole Municipality, and found in all the cases that farmers complained that they were given inadequate information and support, and that they were exploited by unscrupulous operators when it came to selling their produce to commercial markets. Masifunde found that the MFPP is a poor substitute for genuine land and agrarian reform, and that that movements on the ground are already working on real solutions, including the importance of supporting agricultural systems that are suited to their local ecologies and communities.

The report provides a valuable insight into the impact of genetic modification and industrial agriculture and its impacts on the poor in the context of our highly unequal agricultural system. It is an important tool for activists to understand this current situation as well as the concrete options for pursuing food sovereignty in South Africa.

You can download the report at  
[http://www.biosafety-info.net/file\\_dir/9260820094dda3a605ad33.pdf](http://www.biosafety-info.net/file_dir/9260820094dda3a605ad33.pdf)

Masifunde can be contacted at  
[masifunde@telkomsa.net](mailto:masifunde@telkomsa.net) or  
046 622 6527.

**New Book and Activist Hand Book Available Free Online: Harvesting Justice: Transforming Food, Land and Agricultural Systems in the Americas.**





## The Solidarity Economy

### Arts & Culture

Zion Eyes, a journalist, poet and activist from Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, sent us the following poem expressing his perception of the pain and oppression of people caused by capitalism, but also 'the power of collectivity' to struggle for a better society. We would love for all our readers to send us any form of artistic and cultural expression that you wish - such creativity and imagination is crucial in inspiring and guiding us as activists and in building a more human society. We look forward to a vibrant and exciting new artistic and cultural section of this newsletter!

#### THE DEATH OF CAPITALISM by Zion Eyes

I cannot wait to see the death of capitalism  
Through the mirror of the universe,  
Deep and energetic voice of innocent man,  
The last warning of the doom,  
His body will fall to the dust and  
His deeds to hell.

No jewellery nor gold nor arms  
Shall help him now:  
His black and white mask shall be ripped off  
And through the shadows of dark  
My vibrant tongue will strike fear  
To his guilty soul

The sweat of his death is heavy and overweighed  
His body will fall to the dust and  
His deeds to hell.  
The last and great capitalism of the world,  
Turning into poverty and inequality and wrong  
Is down to global economic and civilization crises

I thank thee, lord, that, through the power of collectivity  
Thy blood redeemed us from thy greedy at last:  
The power of time is moving with an hour  
When violence and capitalism shall have passed,  
When his follower in his murderous pride,  
Shall perish from the earth and from the sea.

All bondages of capitalism shall be cast aside,  
And every oppressed nation shall be free,  
His body will fall to the dust and  
His deeds to hell.  
I take off the crown of capitalism and fear  
And let no man do honor at their burial

**RING FOR THE REIGN OF FREEDOM  
CAPITALISM IS DEAD!!!**

In the Food Sovereignty Campaign section of the newsletter, we've been covering both the problems - of concentration, control, uneven power and injustice - of the food system and the need for a campaign for the alternative of food sovereignty. All over the world, people like you are reclaiming the food system from multinational agribusiness and putting it back in the hands of small farmers, low-income families, farmworkers, guardians of Native culture, and health-conscious communities. The organisation Other Worlds has released a new 140-page book called *Harvesting Justice: Transforming Food, Land and Agricultural Systems in the Americas*. The result of five years of research and interviews from throughout the Americas, it describes actually-occurring strategies to build and achieve food justice and food sovereignty.

#### The chapters of the book are as follows:

1. Time to Make Salt: Food Sovereignty
2. A Level Planting Field: Challenging Corporate Rule
3. Good Growing Conditions: Changing Government Policies
4. Bringing it Home: Creating and Reviving Local Food Systems
5. Land of Plenty: Making Good Food Accessible to All
6. Honor the Hands: Food Worker Justice
7. Inherit the Earth: Land Reform
8. Homelands: Indigenous Territories and Sovereignty

Although it focuses on North and South America, the basic lessons and value of the book are relevant to most contexts and places. The great thing is that the book can be downloaded free of charge at [www.harvesting-justice.org](http://www.harvesting-justice.org). Just click on the image of the book and it will download.

Also available for free download is an appendix and a popular education curriculum that offer hundreds of concrete ways to learn with and educate your community and to actively construct local food sovereignty alternatives. Some of the activities may be more suitable to a different context like the United States, but overall the activities and exercises are extremely useful for local activism. You can just pick and choose which are most useful for your context. This curriculum guide can also be downloaded free of charge at [www.harvesting-justice.org](http://www.harvesting-justice.org). Just click on the heading 'Curriculum' and downloaded it!



## **Tips for Using the Internet for Activism: Using Email for Activism**

*By Mark Weinberg (Alternative Information and Development Centre and Right2Know Campaign)*



**Note:** You may remember that in Newsletter No. 2, 2012 (pg. 15), we looked at how to set up and use an email account for your activism. This insert takes a little further to understand more about the importance of email for activism and how to make best use of it for you and your organisation's activism.

Electronic mail (or email) is one of the most well established forms of digital interpersonal communication. Emails can include text and attachments (documents, pictures, etc) and can be sent to one or many people. All activists should try and have an email account and your organisation should also have a generic account (like [yourorganisation@gmail.com](mailto:yourorganisation@gmail.com)) so that people can contact the organisation irrespective of changes in the leadership. There are many free email accounts available including [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com) and [www.mail.yahoo.com](http://www.mail.yahoo.com).

Your email will include an 'address book' where you can save people's contact details. You can create groups or lists of people with a common theme (like 'journalists' or 'Gauteng comrades') and send emails to everyone in this group without having to select them each individually each time. In Gmail, when you are signed into your account, you will see a 'Gmail' icon to the left of the screen. Click on it and select 'Contacts'. Once there, scroll down the list on the left and click 'New Group...'. Then type in the name of the group, and after this click on the picture of a person's upper body with a plus sign next to it, and add in the email addresses of the group. If you want to send emails to a group of people and don't want them to see each other's email addresses put the emails in the bcc (background carbon copy) space under the 'To' and 'cc' at the top of your mail.

More sophisticated groups/lists can be created using services like [www.groups.google.com](http://www.groups.google.com) or [www.groups.yahoo.com](http://www.groups.yahoo.com). These groups take a few minutes to set up, can be set to 'public' (anyone can join) or 'private' (only for people you add or approve), 'discussion' (all group members can send to all members) or 'announcement' (only you can send to all member), and 'moderated' (you must approve all posts) or 'unmoderated' (members can post without any approval).

The great advantage of these lists is that people can manage their own membership (automatically subscribing or removing themselves) without you having to administer the list. This empowers list members and reduces the possibility that you will be send out spam. These lists also have an on-line archive of all mail and attachments so list members can visit a website to refer to past emails that they may have lost.

One of the big challenges today is the amount of email that gets sent. We are bombarded with so many emails that it has become quite acceptable to ignore and delete email that is not addressed to us directly. We also receive email about things that do not interest us at all - this is called 'spam' or 'junk mail'. If people think you are sending spam they will begin to ignore your email and may even block you completely. To avoid this, only send relevant email to relevant people, and be conscious of the quality of mail you send.

Lastly, you may consider getting a free fax number for your organisation from services like [www.faxplus.co.za](http://www.faxplus.co.za) or [www.faxfx.net](http://www.faxfx.net). After a simple registration process you will receive a fax number and faxes sent to this number will come to you as email attachments.

## contact us

---

We invite organisations and activists to make contributions to the Newsletter through writing stories, contributing photographs or cultural contributions, such as poetry, art, songs etc.

### COPAC Contact Details:

---

#### Contact Persons:

**Athish Kirun**

Mobile: 078 257 3764

Email: [copac2@icon.co.za](mailto:copac2@icon.co.za)**Andrew Bennie**

Mobile: 072 278 4315

Email: [bennieand@gmail.com](mailto:bennieand@gmail.com)

---

#### Postal Address:

PO Box 1736, Killarney, 2041

#### Office Tel:

+27 11 447 1013

#### Fax:

+27 11 252 6134

#### Website:

[www.copac.org.za](http://www.copac.org.za)

All back issues of the **Solidarity Economy News** are available at our website.