

The Six Pillars of Food Sovereignty

(developed at the International Forum for Food Sovereignty, Mali, West Africa, February 2007)

1. Focuses on Food for People:

- insists on the right to food for everyone
- insists that food is more than a commodity

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

2. Values Food Providers:

- supports the right to produce food
- supports sustainable livelihoods

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

3. Localises Food Systems:

- places providers and consumers at the centre of decision-making
- rejects dumping and inappropriate food aid
- resists dependency on remote and unaccountable corporations

Food sovereignty brings food providers and consumers closer together; 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; protects consumers from poor quality and unhealthy food, inappropriate food aid and food tainted with genetically modified organisms; and resists governance structures, agreements and practices that depend on and promote unsustainable and inequitable international trade and give power to remote and unaccountable corporations.

4. Puts Control Locally:

- places control in the hands of local food providers
- recognizes the need to inhabit and to share territories

- rejects the privatization of 'natural resources'

Food sovereignty places control over territory, land, grazing, water, seeds, livestock and fish populations on local food providers and respects their rights. They can use and share them in socially and environmentally sustainable ways which conserve diversity; it recognizes that local territories often cross geopolitical borders and ensures the right of local communities to inhabit and use their territories; it promotes positive interaction between food providers in different regions and territories and from different sectors that helps resolve internal conflicts or conflicts with local and national authorities; and rejects the privatisation of natural resources through laws, commercial contracts and intellectual property rights regimes.

5. Builds Knowledge and Skills:

- builds on traditional knowledge
- uses research to support and pass this knowledge to future generations
- rejects technologies that undermine or contaminate local food systems

Food sovereignty 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, developing appropriate research systems to support this and passing on this wisdom to future generations; and rejects technologies that undermine, threaten or contaminate these, e.g. genetic engineering.

6. Works with Nature:

- uses the contributions of nature in sustainable food systems
- maximizes resilience
- rejects energy intensive, monocultural, industrialized, destructive production methods

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