



Solidarity Economy News

Building Human Solidarity to Sustain Life

Newsletter No. 8 2014

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Editorial

Feed South Africa Through Food Sovereignty! End Hunger! Build a People led Food System to Realise the Right to Food! Advance the Just Transition From Below, Now!

Dr. Vishwas Satgar, Chairperson, COPAC Board

Introduction

Fifteen years ago the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC) started its cooperative development work in Ivory Park township, midway between Johannesburg and Pretoria. This intervention was part of an effort to support the development of the Eco-city concept and village in the township. The first cooperative COPAC attempted to set up was a women's consumer cooperative. While the need existed for cheap food and bulk buying through pooling market power made absolute sense, this cooperative did not take off. Suspicion amongst prospective members, complex group dynamics and a general lack of commitment undermined the institutional development of such a cooperative.

However, this did not stop the development of worker cooperatives engaged in farming and local food production. Several worker cooperatives engaged in food production were set up in Ivory Park and linked to the Eco-village. A nursery was also built to supply seedlings and the makings of a local food sovereignty based economy was underway. A visioning exercise and plans for a community food market were also part of this process. This stage of things was not realised but COPAC in partnership with the local Eco-City Trust laid the foundations for a popular understanding of the cooperative solution and its role in building a locally controlled food system. Years later a second wave of cooperatives have taken root in Ivory Park, marked by this earlier experience, with many being food producing cooperatives.

Beyond Ivory Park, COPAC has endeavoured over the years to promote food producing worker cooperatives as part of the Peoples Housing process in Gauteng and ran an organic farming training course in partnership with the Green House project for prospective housing beneficiaries, it has supported food producing cooperatives in the Vaal (in Sebokeng), in the East Rand, has researched small scale farmer cooperatives both in rural South Africa and Africa more generally and is currently supporting the development of worker based food producing cooperatives in different parts of the country. COPAC is working in about 15 township communities (urban and rural) to ensure locally controlled food production and consumption takes root. It is from this historical experience and commitment to ending hunger at the grassroots that COPAC has decided to advance a national food sovereignty campaign.

The Food Crisis

The food and hunger crisis is worsening in the world. In the mid 1990s about 800 million were considered hungry on the planet. Today there are 1 billion people considered hungry and another two billion food insecure. Obesity is also on the increase as people are changing diets to eat cheap but unhealthy food. Between 2006-2008 food prices increased. Many factors fed into this: high oil costs, climate change (particular extreme weather events like droughts), food commodity speculation and bio-fuels production (which took away food crop cultivation). Again between 2010-2012, similar factors and dynamics fed into food price increases and contributed to the Arab Spring. The current corporate controlled food system has not dealt with these underlying systemic causes of hunger and hence we live with the paradox of plenty of food produced but growing numbers of hungry human beings. At the same time, many countries have responded to the growing dynamics of food crisis by 'land grabbing' in other parts of the world to ensure a steady supply of food. Many Arab Emirates have done this in different parts of Africa for example.

South Africa has not escaped the dynamics that create a food crisis. In addition, it is well known that the systemic roots of hunger in South Africa are also linked to a lack of agrarian transformation, including a lack of land reform, liberalisation of white controlled agriculture - which has merely served to consolidate monopoly ownership of food value chains - monopoly control of food distribution and now with the penetration of Walmart South Africa's food system is increasingly tied into global circuits. More white farmers are choosing not to farm, while competitive advantage is taking farming into niche exports, game farming and other commercial ventures. In this context South Africa is increasingly importing staples like wheat. Government estimates that 12 million South Africans go to bed hungry every night. We believe this is an undercount. With high unemployment, stagnating low wages for most workers, increasing costs for food and increasing household costs, the food crisis in South Africa is set to worsen. Climate change is certainly going to impact on this crisis even more. The drought in the North West recently had devastating impacts on farmers and climate change scenarios are showing serious threats to farming in regions like the Western Cape. Shifts to biofuel production (something government seems to be encouraging again), acid mine drainage into river systems (South Africa gets most of its water from rivers) and growing mining expansion in Mpumalanga for coal is also destroying some of the most arable farming land available in the country.

The Alternative: Food Sovereignty

The dominant agro-industrial food system is not working and is unable to address the challenges of the food crisis. Actually it is the cause and the problem. South Africa's National Development Plan, understands food as an export commodity, rather than a national priority requiring state and non-state intervention to ensure the right to food is realised. Moreover, and married to notions of food security, which are merely about ensuring adequate supply of food, the dominant agro-industrial food system is violating the right of citizens to nutritious food. In addition, 'food security' is a violation of the right to food and needs to be replaced with a systemic alternative to the right to food, namely food sovereignty.

The Food Sovereignty Alternative is championed by La Via Campesina, the largest peasant and small scale farmer movement in the world. In the South African context there are various NGOs and small scale farmer organisations experimenting with Food Sovereignty. The time has come to bring this together into a national campaign and platform. In the South African context the campaign for Food Sovereignty embraces the following:

- constituting and claiming the right to food through the realisation of food sovereignty;
- grounding farming practices in agro-ecological practices;
- building local food sovereignty through the solidarity economy process, such as linking worker based food producing cooperatives, seed banks, water harvesting, agro-ecological training, consumer cooperatives and community markets;
- Defending the cultural value of local food varieties, recipes and diets that are nutritious and support ecological sustainability;
- Mobilising producers, consumers, the rural and urban landless, workers, the precariat and sections of the middle class into supporting a national platform and alliance for food sovereignty.

In short advancing the food sovereignty alternative in South Africa means giving power to the hungry to address hunger, building powerful class and social alliances as the backbone of a food sovereignty movement, advancing a transformative alternative in villages, towns and cities to the agro-industrial system and laying the basis for a just transition to address the impacts of climate change.

Phases of the Food Sovereignty Campaign

Since 2011, COPAC has been engaging various NGOs and community organisations about the food challenge. At the first international solidarity economy movement conference held in 2011 this issue was discussed extensively, then again in 2013. Coming out of this process is an evolving campaign

framework, shaped by various intersections and grassroots engagements. In its broad strokes this is what is emerging as a potentially grassroots driven national campaign for the next 3 years:

Phase 1 (2014): COPAC has been engaging in Food Dialogues in partnership with various NGOs such as TCOE, ACB and ECARP, across the country. These dialogues have revealed the failings of the current agro-industrial food system. Provincial dialogues have ensued and this will culminate in a right to food conference at the end of November. COPAC would like this conference not only to engage the state and capital but also to lay the basis to further strengthen the building of a national food sovereignty campaign. Crucial in all this is the roll out of a food sovereignty activist tool across various local community sites and in movements. The objective of this process is to anchor the campaign in communities that publicly declare their commitments to food sovereignty. COPAC will build a directory of such communities and organisations. This will continue throughout the campaign.

Phase 2 (2015): collectively identifying intervention points to expose the problems and crises of the existing agro-industrial food system. This would require a bi-monthly focus on six of the most serious food system contradictions. This ranges from high food prices, food imports, GMOs, bio-fuels, food waste and health issues. This should continue into 2016 while also identifying other issues (such as mining impacts on farming, land and agrarian change, climate change, food horrors etc.) and profiling the food sovereignty alternative. Such a program to be driven by grassroots tactics such as marches, pickets, pamphleteering etc.

Phase 3 (2016): will be about championing a national food sovereignty Act to achieve the right to food, deepen all campaigning actions to expose the crises of the food system and to advance the food sovereignty alternative, strengthen the national alliance and possibly set up a national Food Sovereignty Institute to support the research, training and transformative role of the national Food Sovereignty Alliance.

How You Can Get Involved

There are various ways in which you can get involved as a Food Sovereignty Activist:

1. volunteer with COPAC and the Solidarity Economy Movement to support the building of the campaign;
2. Run community workshops using the food sovereignty activist guide (available on COPAC webpage) and set up local community food sovereignty and solidarity economy forums after doing the necessary education work;
3. Train activists to run such community workshops;
4. Support campaign actions through social media mobilisation, face to face mobilisation and through involvement in the actual actions.

We look forward to hearing from you and advancing this necessary transformative alternative for South Africa.

Feed South Africa Through Food Sovereignty!

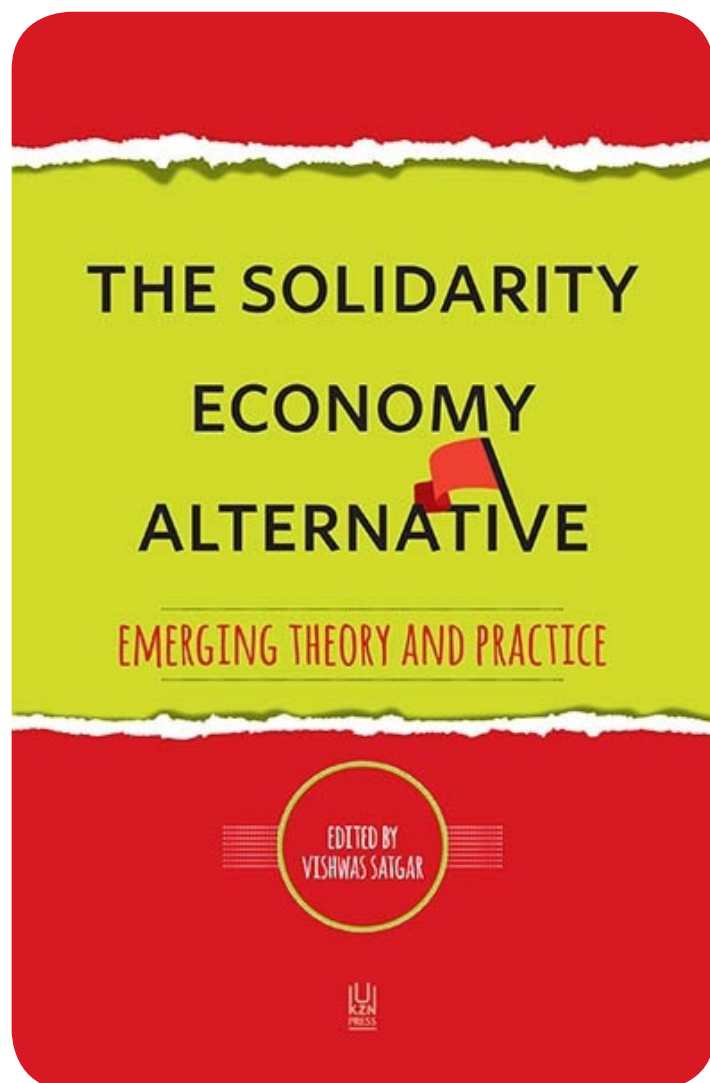
**End Hunger! Build a People led Food System
to realise the Right to Food!**

**Advance the Just Transition From
Below, Now!**



National News

The Solidarity Economy Alternative: Emerging Theory and Practice Launched!



In October 2011 COPAC hosted an international conference on the solidarity economy in Johannesburg. The conference brought together leading activists, scholars and practitioners from the solidarity economy movement in different countries, including the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Italy, Britain and South Africa to share perspectives and emerging practices on the solidarity economy worldwide. The conference involved both theoretical clarification of the solidarity economy as well as learning from actual experiences from the most advanced solidarity economy movements in the world. The inputs from the conference were further evolved into this exciting new book, *The Solidarity Economy Alternative: Emerging Theory and Practice*, edited by the Chairperson of COPAC, Dr Vishwas Satgar.

The book therefore brings together contributions from leading thinkers and practitioners supporting the solidarity economy alternative in South Africa, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Italy and the United States. For the first time there is an attempt to clarify, rather than codify, meanings of the solidarity economy, emphasise crucial theoretical concepts at work in the emergent solidarity economy, and highlight situated movement-building experiences in ways in which the anti-capitalist logic of the solidarity economy can be constituted from below. This book is for anyone concerned about democracy, transformative politics and emancipatory utopian alternatives and is an activist resource to help shape perspectives and practice on the solidarity economy.

There have been a number of book launches of *The Solidarity Economy Alternative* so far. More than 60 people attended the launch in Johannesburg at Wits University, and the launch in Durban was equally well attended. Seminars on the book were also hosted in both cities.



Furthermore, a book launch cum seminar for the book was also hosted at the Transnational Institute (TNI) in Amsterdam, Holland in late May (above picture). The event was addressed by contributors to the book, Hilary Wainwright, Vishwas Satgar and Michelle Williams. TNI has a research agenda on alternatives and supported the first international conference on the solidarity economy hosted by COPAC in South Africa in 2011.

The book is available at book stores or can be ordered from www.ukznpress.co.za.

The Workers College Hosts Seminar on The Solidarity Economy Alternative: Emerging Theory and Practice

Athish Kirun

On the 11th of April, COPAC was invited by the Workers College in Durban to present and share experiences based on its recently published book, *The Solidarity Economy Alternative: Emerging Theory and Practice*. The Workers College currently runs an education curriculum on the solidarity economy and aims to empower workers on its approach and development.

The attendees of the workshop included trade unionists enrolled at the Workers College and activists from the Unemployed Peoples Movement (UPM) in Umlazi. The objectives of the workshop were to share contextual terrains of struggle for solidarity economy development in South Africa. This was presented through a chapter contribution by Athish Kirun on the Meline attempted factory occupation, representing a pathway to the solidarity economy that involves workers and trade unions. That is, an important context for the emergence of solidarity economy enterprises, or worker cooperatives, can be through a process of worker take-overs. In terms of the Meline factory occupation, Kirun shared the complexities of trade union support and control as well as the outcomes from tactics that the workers were engaged on during the factory occupation of this important struggle. Given our current labour struggles in South Africa, worker takeovers potentially offer an important tactic for building worker control over the economy.

The second aspect of the seminar explored the power structures that capitalism engenders and the complicit nature of the state in maintaining its power. Michelle Williams covered this through her presentation on distinguishing the solidarity economy from the social economy. Aspects of the social economy look superficially at social inclusion within neoliberalism and ameliorating its impacts, rather than transforming the structures that reproduce inequality. The essence of the solidarity economy is a transformative vision seeking to change the relations of power and wealth in the economy and society.

Finally, Vishwas Satgar shared emerging movement-building strategies in South Africa and campaigns around the solidarity economy. He gave an overview on the global civilizational crisis and national crisis we are living through. A crucial response to this crisis is through social movements and organs of civil society uniting in building movements with a transformative agenda and programmes in responding to the crisis, the solidarity economy being one such crucial actor in this process. He shared outcomes of the second national solidarity economy conference and emphasised two important campaigns, the first being Create Work

Through Worker Cooperatives and the second the Food Sovereignty Campaign. Both campaigns are important in the sense of responding to unemployment, inequality, and hunger but at the same time challenging the neoliberal framework that concentrates power within the current food value chain that exploits labour and reproduces hunger. These two campaigns are fundamentally aligned in terms of embedding the reproduction of the food system within the control of communities and farmers and solidarity economy.

All the presentations stimulated fruitful discussions on the roles of trade unions, social movements, activists, and communities in terms of their challenges in challenging the system and changing power relations both politically and economically. Some of the challenges raised were overcoming apathy, disillusionment, intimidation, and subjection that communities, trade unionists, and activists face. Given these, challenges there is still a resolve to challenge the “status quo.”

The Workers College is an important institution for providing a space for workers to engage on these ideas and learn more about strategies linked to solidarity economy movement building and based on the engagement they are committed to further collaboration.



Food Sovereignty and Agroecology Activist School Held in Johannesburg

In February this year, 30 grassroots activists gathered in Johannesburg for a 5-day activist school to further develop understandings and capacities on the food sovereignty and agroecology alternatives. An exciting feature of the school was that it was not all spent in the classroom, but involved half of the day learning the theory and practice of food sovereignty. The other half was spent at Siyakhana garden where practical training took place on how to practice agroecology and permaculture.



The aim of the school was to further develop capacities as part of advancing the food sovereignty campaign. In addition to the practical agroecology training, it involved understanding why we have hunger in South Africa and the world, how this is linked to the inequalities and concentrated power in the food and agriculture system, how food sovereignty is an alternative to this and how the solidarity economy can advance food sovereignty, and practical organizing skills for advancing the food sovereignty alternative at the grassroots.

The school was a great success, and was characterized by enthusiasm, sharp engagement and clearer perspectives on advancing the food sovereignty campaign.

International News

Blockupy the European Central Bank (ECB) – Blockupy Europe? The Growing Radical Movement Against Neoliberalism in Europe

Corinna Genschel



The crisis in Europe, also known as the 'Eurocrisis', which followed the global financial crisis has to be understood first of all as a process through which the European political and economic elites are succeeding in restructuring the European Union (EU), its institutions, processes of decision making and profiting according to a new era of economic governance. This new type of governance is characterised by low government spending as the norm and by reaffirming capitalist relations between the EU and other capitalist countries and regions, and between people and classes.

These policies were enforced against mass conflicts, rebellions from below, new organisational forms especially with Greece, Spain and Portugal leading the way. In that regard, the 'crisis' not only divides the impoverished 'European South' from the economically more prosperous and political dominant 'North', but also resulted in very different movement responses. Simply said, these responses have ranged from mass uprisings and the building of new popular progressive formations on the one hand (plus right wing formations), to left minority discourse and small scale actions against austerity measures and neoliberal economic governance on the other hand.

However, the European election on 25 May 2014 also showed something that not many commentators speak about: there has been some progress on the left in terms of new left parties (such as Podemos in Spain or Syriza in Greece) as well as in terms of progressive European movement building and networking beyond national borders. This growing network of movements and organisations – what some call a 'movement of movements' – demonstrates the potential to link uneven struggles throughout Europe and find some commonality in content, action, form and strategy. This networks intends to build on the different struggles but also to find that what brings them together in a meaningful way: in street practice as well as in common discussion going beyond the initial moment of austerity and crisis.

Social movements and left forces in Germany, part of the 'North' of Europe and whose government is at the forefront of driving the restructuring of Europe, are part of this emerging network. This is because these progressive forces did not just orient themselves towards popular movement formations in 'the South', but due to their positioning they had to work out another strategy for movement building against 'the crisis', a strategy that would not gear necessarily towards mass participation but would find a symbolically distinct target (financial district of Frankfurt/European Central Bank) coupled with a conflictual form of action (blocking) that would allow for a form of intervention that would capture public attention. Due to its positioning this strategy furthermore always needed to be explicitly based in international solidarity. This is how the 'Blockupy' in Germany was born.

Blockupy is a play with words, combining Blocking with Occupy. Blockupy wanted to develop a disobedient, bold character by blocking sites that matter. It started in 2012 and continued in 2013, targeting the financial district of Frankfurt with the aim of exposing the crisis' systemic character and its link to relations of ruling within the Eurozone. Blocking the financial district and taking the squares of the inner city of Frankfurt was intended to become a moment of resistance in a place that is important economically. Blockupy hit a nerve: in 2012 the city of Frankfurt and its police banned all marches and assemblies before anything had happened. In 2013 it isolated 1 000 protestors from a march of over 10 000 for more than eight hours in 2013.

The decision to go for radical, direct, bold actions in Frankfurt with a stable, committed alliance might make it difficult to become an alliance of truly mass forces. However, Blockupy could evolve into a vocal minority with the potential to become a gathering point for all critics against the politics of the right, neoliberal European Union coalition: From the radical movement left to Attac in Germany, from The Left Party (Die Linke) to youth and student organisations, from activists from the unemployment to some from the peace and other movements.

Blockupy is now in its third and maybe most important year. In early 2015 the European Central Bank (ECB) will open its new residence in the highly visible and symbolic Twin Towers in Frankfurt City. The ECB and EU heads of state will use this occasion to once again try to convince the European public that 'the crisis is over' and the neoliberal model of European economic governance is its successful outcome. Blockupy plans to mobilise tens of thousands of people to come to



Frankfurt and stage a bold protest of marches and various disobedient actions to counter this narrative. As Blockupy becomes an active part in the network of progressive forces throughout Europe, this mobilisation will be a European one, again.

'Blockupy' is also in the process of growing and transforming. Through discussion, organising and debate, a new idea came to the fore to not only blockupy Frankfurt in Germany but to blockupy the whole of Europe. Mobilising and actions will now be carried out across Europe to counter the narrative that the crisis is over by targeting those who profit from the crisis, to support those struggles which have already started to build solidarity structures and to work out alternatives – for housing, health, trade etc. – and find those places for common street practice.

The last years have demonstrated that a Europe in crisis is also a field in which we can develop new strategies of confrontation against the capitalist re-structuring of Europe and democracy – and potentially of building alternative social spaces that go beyond the national. Yet there are a number of challenges to achieve this. It is up to us to expand to other organised networks, European alliances and processes from below as well as to other regions of Europe, such as Eastern Europe with their painful but rich experience in living and fighting under conditions of massive, fast neoliberal reform. We also need to politically deepen this process and find the most suitable points for effectively confronting the EU crisis

and the neoliberal 'solutions' being imposed from above. It seems clear that, while 'they' want capitalism without democracy and will continue to work for that forcefully, we, however, want democracy without capitalism, as one of the Blockupy mottos once said.

Blockupy has become a moment for realigning the left in Germany and a potential rallying point for those forces that oppose the neoliberal restructuring of Europe. Blockupy has also become a part in a process for European movement re-building and common strategising, a space to articulate the necessary unevenness of social conflict and struggles across Europe in crisis, a desire to work out commonalities, differences and practices – a new space in, against and for Europe, from below.

For more information on Blockupy and the radical grassroots movements and alliances that are developing, visit <http://blockupy.org/en/>, <http://www.tni.org/work-area/democratising-europe> and <http://www.thecommuneofeurope.org/>.

Corinna Genschel works for the Left Party (Die Linke) in the German parliament as a liaison between the party and social movements. As such she is active in the Blockupy coalition, especially right now in the Blockupy International coordinating structure.

From Occupy to a New Economy in the United States

Leah Hunt-Hendrix



For many who participated in Occupy Wall Street, the uprisings that took place in 2011 were part of a long tradition of using occupations to assert popular or worker control. During the economic crisis in Argentina, for example, workers took over factories, repeating a chant that had been proclaimed even earlier by Brazilian peasants who claimed their right to the land: “Occupy! Resist! Produce!” For many of us, Occupy was one moment in a history of struggle against privatization, deregulation, and the consolidation of ruling class power. And despite the fact that the fierce but fleeting flame of Occupy has become an ember, that struggle continues.

In the United States, much of the passion and energy that burst forth during 2011 has found expression in what is being called the “new economy movement.” This emerging movement is not primarily characterized by street protests and cries for change, but is composed of a very patient, determined, long-term vision of economic democracy. The belief is that political democracy is incomplete without shared and accountable control over the economy.

In some cases, this has taken the form of an emphasis on the structure of finance and corporations. The Working World (TWW), for example, is a fund that provides start-up capital for worker cooperatives, using an innovative model of finance that ensures a fair partnership between the lender and borrower. In 2012, when Occupy was declining, TWW partnered with the workers of a Chicago factory previously known as Republic Windows and Doors, who had occupied their workplace several years prior. Together, they bought the factory at auction prices and have now converted it

entirely to democratic control.

TWW’s model of finance does not seek to maximize profits but instead makes finance subordinate to those who are attempting to build up the real economy to meet the needs of communities. Ultimately, the idea is about finding ways to distribute wealth and power, not simply through redistribution after capital has been accumulated, but by redistributing ownership.

Organizations like the Working World are beginning to find each other and build together towards a shared vision. This past month, the New Economy Coalition, which is an umbrella organization for groups with a similar orientation, had its first convention to explore possibilities for a common platform. Progress is being made, but this movement faces two key challenges. First, it must correctly identify the dynamic between the economic and the political, between building alternatives outside of the political process and using the political process to achieve greater impact and scale. And second, it will be crucial to understand that activism for economic justice in the US cannot be achieved without taking into account the role of the US in the world and ongoing imperialistic practices. A truly just economy will have to be global.

Leah Hunt-Hendrix is a writer, activist and organizer. She has a PhD from Princeton University and works on issues related to economic justice, corporate power, and global political economy.

The Food Sovereignty Campaign

National Right to Food Dialogues Wrapped Up!

Since the end of 2013, a dialogue process on the right to food began, with the support of the Foundation for Human Rights. These dialogues were aimed at understanding the experiences, issues and challenges faced by different constituencies in relation to the right to food.

The South African Constitution guarantees the right to food for all, but the reality is that millions suffer from hunger and malnutrition. These dialogues were therefore aimed at understanding the actual experiences of communities, small farmers, workers, faith groups and so on in relation to the question of food and hunger. They aimed to uncover the challenges that such groups are facing in relation to food, and also to lay a basis for a national right to food and food sovereignty campaign. They were therefore key building blocks in advancing the national campaign. The right to food dialogues were held in all 9 provinces and involved a wide range of participation. Three organisations, COPAC, ECARP and TCOE each conducted the dialogues in 3 provinces. The three articles below each give a brief report of the dialogues conducted by each organization.



The Right to Food Dialogues in Gauteng, Limpopo and North-west

By Andrew Bennie

The Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) undertook a right to food dialogue process in Gauteng, Limpopo and North-west provinces. The objectives of this process included an enquiry-based engagement with various constituencies to understand food challenges in South Africa; to develop a dynamic and grounded understanding of the right to food and food sovereignty that largely emerges from grassroots forces themselves; to understand state policies and responses to hunger; to map existing food initiatives and practices that contribute to realizing the right to food; to develop partnerships to further champion the right to food and food sovereignty; and to prepare the ground and create a platform for further campaigning.

To achieve these objectives, COPAC hosted mapping workshops in Gauteng, Limpopo and North-west provinces respectively. A wide range of organisations attended the workshops, including social movements and community-

based organisations, small farmers, trade unions and faith groups. From these mapping workshops a discussion paper was then written that synthesized all the information that we learned through the workshops. Also, at these workshops a few activists were given disposable cameras to go out and photographically map food issues in their communities. This produced wonderful photos, which were displayed at the interprovincial dialogue. Furthermore, what we learned at these provincial workshops helped to shape the contents of an activist guide on the right to food and food sovereignty, produced by COPAC.

These provincial workshops showed us that some of the key challenges being faced by various constituencies in relation to the right to food included:

- Hunger and malnutrition;
- Rising food prices;
- Challenges experienced by small scale farmers;
- Access to and control over land;
- Lack of and inappropriate state support;
- Lack of markets for small farmers;

- Access to water;
- Genetic modification technology and control over seeds;
- Lack of finance;
- Climate change;
- Mining undermining the right to food by stealing land and resources;
- Struggles of informal traders;
- Education and awareness;
- Exploitation of workers who produce our food.

After conducting this mapping work through the provincial workshops, all those who attended them also attended the Interprovincial Dialogue on the Right to Food, held in Johannesburg in late March 2014. This dialogue was aimed at bringing together everything we had learned in the provincial workshops, to further evolve our understandings of the right to food and food sovereignty, to engage with the discussion paper on the right to food and food sovereignty, to learn from the photo exhibition that mapped food issues experienced by various constituencies, to engage with the draft of the activist guide on the right to food and food sovereignty (which is now complete and available – see Activist Resources section), and to discuss the objectives of the national conference on the right to food, to happen in September, as well as demands to be made to government and food corporations at this conference. A particular highlight of the dialogue was the photo exhibition, which showed the photos taken by activists with the disposable cameras given to them in the provincial workshops on food issues experienced by their communities. Participants were

given time to walk around and look at the photos, talk to the photographers, and then to report back on what they had learned from the photos. The discussion was extremely enthusiastic and a lot was learned.

The discussion paper that was engaged with at the dialogue also laid out key factors for the roll out of the national food sovereignty campaign. Thus a further key outcome of the interprovincial dialogue was to begin developing localized momentum in the food sovereignty campaign leading up to the national conference on the right to food, by holding community-based workshops on the new right to food and food sovereignty activist guide and then drafting declarations for advancing a local food sovereignty programme. This will hopefully build momentum, consciousness and excitement leading up to the national conference!

Viva food sovereignty and the right to food! Viva!

The full discussion paper from the right to food process in these three provinces can be downloaded at <http://www.copac.org.za/publications/discussion-paper-right-food-and-food-sovereignty-south-africa-challenges-and-prospects>. The full report of the Interprovincial Dialogue on the Right to Food can also be downloaded at <http://www.copac.org.za/publications/inter-provincial-dialogue-right-food-gauteng-limpopo-north-west-conference-report>.



The Marginalised Speak Out: Right to Food Dialogues in Free State, Western and Northern Cape

Siviwe Mdoda

The Right to Food Dialogues in the Free State, Northern and Western Cape provided an opportunity for farmers, producers and land rights activists to speak out and stand together in a struggle for the right to food. The process began with dialogues organised in the respective provinces and afterwards representatives of grassroots organisations met in Bloemfontein to take forward the issues that emerged in provincial dialogues.

The first phase of the project, entailing provincial dialogues where different stakeholders in the sector were afforded a platform to reflect on the state of food accessibility, enhance the effectiveness of existing systems in terms of how they impact on the living conditions of the marginalized and the policies governing such processes, was held in 3 provinces. Generally, these gatherings were characterized by an energetic engagement by community structures where challenges with regard to production, quality and accessibility of food were strongly raised. Structural issues like prevailing patterns of accessing land, water, seeds and support services were also sharply highlighted. The discussion also touched on the issue of responses and alternative interventions of various stakeholders with regard to maximising production through creative management of land and water. The issue of saving traditional seeds and multiplying them also raised a lot of interest from producers. The drawback from a majority of these gatherings was the lack of participation by government officials, despite timeous invitations and in some cases confirmations of attendance.

The interprovincial dialogue at the University of Free State took place on 29-30 March where a total of 156 delegates were in attendance, representing the organisations of the marginalized from all 3 provinces. The inputs from La Via Campesina, African Centre for Biosafety, Program for Land and Agrarian Studies and No Student Hungry Bursary program added value to the debate and created better conditions for future collaboration and joint campaigning. The dialogue enabled the consolidation of networks forged at provincial levels, during provincial dialogues, and the formation of new linkages across provincial lines. The exchange enabled for the emergence of consensus about inputs to the national dialogue and a framework for a national campaign that would not only include policy submission but also the broader mobilization around rights to food. The identified campaign issues included opposition to GM seeds, promotion of agro-ecology, campaigning for access to land and other natural resources like water and marine resources.

The Right to Food Dialogues for Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga

From 26–28 November in 2013 ECARP hosted the initial inter-provincial Right to Food Dialogue in Grahamstown for the provinces of Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. This dialogue was used to set the agenda and tone for the following Right to Food Dialogue also hosted by ECARP in Grahamstown on 7-9 April 2014. Social movements comprising farm workers and dwellers, small-scale farmers, urban based collectives, NGOs and academic representatives from the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal participated in the inter-provincial dialogue.



The Right to Food Provincial Dialogue achieved three main objectives. Firstly, it created a platform wherein stakeholders could share their voices and views on the structural causes and values, norms and ideologies perpetuating and exacerbating of food insecurity. Secondly, it gave space to delegates to showcase and share creative and innovative interventions to secure food and champion food rights in terms of both the quantity and quality of food consumed. Thirdly, stakeholders prioritised issues and areas for further engagements and for lobbying at national and provincial levels that address the problems for food insecurity.

In this frame both dialogues focused on the way food is produced with a focus on food quality, distribution, factors fuelling food insecurity, and poverty. Alternatives to the current system of food production, distribution and consumption were discussed key to which was local control over productive resources such as land, seed and water. Importantly, discussion also covered food distribution and the strategies communities and growers follow in this regard. There was also discussion on linking the right to food with on-going community struggles, for example unemployment, low wages, homelessness, landlessness, etc. The delegates also stressed the need to reflect on what is happening on the ground in particular the different ways people deal with food insecurity, and alternative production methods such as agro-ecological farming and attaining and maintaining seed sovereignty.



The dialogues provided a valuable space for the delegates from the three provinces to not only share their experiences with poverty and inequality; they also made it possible for people to talk about their coping mechanisms and showcase their interventions. The sharing of experiences and obstacles to the right to food was done verbally, through display and posters on indigenous seed, educational videos on farming and so on. A farmer from the Eastern Cape brought along his maize grinding machine and green mealies produced from open pollinated seed. He did a demonstration for the others on how he makes his own mealie meal that is chemically free, tasty and healthy. This was a good example of how people and local communities can push forward with alternatives to the current food regime.

Delegates felt inspired and committed themselves to continuous networking to deal with the problems of food insecurities, and secondly to implement different strategies to organise through a bottom-up and grass roots approach to strengthen advocacy and lobbying for people-driven food systems inclusive of all vulnerable groups in urban and rural spaces.

High Levels of GMOs in our Bread – But Few Are Aware of This

Zakiyya Ismail

Bread is an essential part of the diets of people all over the world and in South Africa it is the second most consumed staple after maize. South African consumers consume about 2.8 billion loaves spending more than R28 billion rands to a bread cartel comprising Tiger Brands, Premier Foods, Pioneer Foods and Foodcorp, that controls 70% of the wheat-to-bread value chain.

South Africans have been consuming GMOs in their foods without their knowledge or consent for over 12 years now. While there is no consensus on the long term safety of GM foods, it's benefits to the socio economic conditions in the country or to a just and equitable food system, the South African government and our food cartel have proceeded to saturate our foods with GM maize and soya.

Recently, tests conducted on behalf of the African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) on white breads revealed high levels of Monsanto's GM soya in the soya flour that is used as an ingredient in the making of the bread as shown in the table on the next page.

The chemical used in the production of GM soya, called glyphosate, has been linked to numerous health risks including increased risk of chronic kidney disease, birth defects in humans and animals and spontaneous abortions, while other animal feeding studies have shown that the consumption of foods from GM sources have had adverse health effects like increased stomach inflammation and enlarged uteri.

It is further disappointing to see that companies are flouting labelling laws that requires producers to label any good or ingredient or component whose GM content is 5% or more as "Contains Genetically Modified Organisms" or "Produced Using Genetic Modification", as required by the Consumer Protection Act.

The concentration of the bread market – milling and baking – by just four companies lends itself to uncontested control while consumers, especially the poor are at the mercy of price fluctuations. In a country where 54% of people are food insecure, Tiger Brands and Pioneer made a profit of R2.4 Billion from their baking division alone in 2013. While this bread cartel has also been found guilty of price fixing of bread and maize by the Competition Commission, they still dominate and profit from this market. This concentrated bread market feeds into a further concentrated food retail market, controlled by Shoprite/Checkers, Pick n Pay, Woolworths and Spar.

South Africans spend R28 Billion on GM Bread Enriching SA's Bread Cartel

SA's GM Bread Brands

Blue Ribbon
Albany
Sunbake
Checkers
Woolworths
Spar
Pick n Pay



Breads Submitted for Testing for GM Soya

| Brand | Company | % of GM Soya |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Checkers White Bread | Shoprite Holdings | 91.09% |
| Woolworths White Sandwich Bread | Woolworths | 85.62% |
| Spar White Bread | Spar | 72.69% |
| Blue Ribbon White Bread | Premier Foods | 64.90% |
| Pick n Pay White Bread | Pick n Pay | 42.81% |
| Albany Superior White Bread | Tiger Brands | 23.23% |
| Sunbake White Bread | Foodcorp | 20.46% |
| Sasko White Bread | Pioneer Foods | GM Detected, but not quantifiable |

www.acbio.org.za <https://www.facebook.com/AfricanCentreforBiosafety> @LGMFoods

The domination of our staples by a cartel, its complicity in price fixing and the inclusion of GMO into our staples – bread and maize – highlight the urgency for a new, equitable and socially just food system in our country: food sovereignty!

The ACB's report GM Contamination, Cartels and Collusion in South Africa's Bread Industry can be found at <http://www.acbio.org.za/index.php/publications/gmos-in-south-africa/457-gm-contamination-cartels-and-collusion-in-south-africas-bread-industry>

The ACB's research into the maize value chain, GM Maize: lessons for Africa - Cartels Collusion and Control of South Africa's Staple Food, can be accessed at: <http://www.acbio.org.za/index.php/publications/rest-of-africa/449-gm-maize-lessons-for-africa>

Alliance of Land and Agrarian Reform Organisations Holds Indaba to Plan Movement Building and Campaigning Approach

Claire Martens

Tshintsha Amakhaya is an alliance of civil society organisations that seek to support local community struggles in land and agrarian reform. During the initial years of its existence, the alliance members focused on building the capacity of their constituent communities to undertake research in order to strengthen efforts to change the rural agenda. The slogan, "Working together for rural change"

indicated a common approach, achieved through collective actions. The second phase of Tshintsha Amakhaya is a more broadly inclusive approach, focusing on movement building, campaigning and advocacy at the national level. The important principle for collective action is that everybody agrees on a common way forward.



The Tshintsha Amakhaya Indaba, which took place from 15-18 July in Cape Town, was a platform for the alliance members, as well as other civil society organisations, to find a common theme and understanding of their work and to agree on ways in which to take this into the national dialogue, influencing narratives and telling the stories of the communities that are represented.

The Indaba was not just a space to network within the alliance, meet old friends and talk about respective actions, but also to connect with similar organisations who are also working towards land, food and climate justice. The Indaba acted as a platform to increase collective knowledge on movement building, campaigning, communications, action research, media advocacy and gender justice. These actions will be used in the next phase of Tshintsha Amakhaya, strengthening the efforts of the first phase and bringing local efforts into a national consciousness.

Parallel sessions allowed participants to decide on what would be more useful to them, based on their level of understanding and experience. Value was derived from the experiences of other organisations such as the Treatment Action Campaign, Anti Schools-Closure Campaign, as well as the work of other Tshintsha Amakhaya alliance members.

Common themes that arose included a need for the land reform programme to be responsive to community needs, supporting the process of land claims, the protection of farm workers and farm dwellers, the need to increase awareness and advocacy regarding food sovereignty and increasing community mobilisation. In this regard, the developing food sovereignty campaign was also invited to and attended the Indaba.

Tshintsha Amakhaya hopes to see the learnings from the Indaba taken forward into the work of every organisation. Tshintsha Amakhaya will be supporting the actions of the alliance members, including the component of action research, which will be undertaken in various geographical locations through partnerships between alliance members.

Claire Martens is the communications officer for the Legal Resources Centre, Johannesburg. In this capacity she also assists the Tshintsha Amakhaya collective. For more information about Tshtintsha Amakhaya go to <https://sites.google.com/site/tshintshaintranet/>, or Tshintsha Amakhaya can be contacted at 033 260 6173 / salomon@ukzn.ac.za.



Activist Resources to Build the Solidarity Economy Movement from Below

Activist Guide on Food Sovereignty and the Right to Food Launched!

As part of developing tools for advancing the food sovereignty campaign, COPAC has recently launched a new activist guide, *Food Sovereignty for the Right to Food: A Guide for Grassroots Activism*.

The guide can be freely downloaded at <http://www.copac.org.za/publications/food-sovereignty-right-food-grassroots-activist-guide>. Limited numbers of hardcopies can also be arranged by contacting COPAC.



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FOR THE RIGHT TO FOOD

A Guide for Grassroots Activism



COPAC
CO-OPERATIVE AND POLICY ALTERNATIVE CENTER

The guide is aimed at further building understandings and consciousness around the food sovereignty alternative as a radical idea and practice to challenge the corporate-controlled food system and provide long term solutions to overcoming hunger in South Africa. The guide is informed by research COPAC has been doing over the last few years, by engagements with grassroots organisations and communities in South Africa, the experiences of the world's largest peasant movement La Via Campesina, and from the right to food dialogues that COPAC hosted. The guide was also tested and refined at the activist school held in February 2014 as well as the Interprovincial Dialogue on the Right to Food.





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.

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