

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN EUROPE NOW!

Nyeleni Europe 2011: European Forum for Food Sovereignty

Krems, August 21st

Europe's people are now experiencing the first structural adjustment policies which governments are imposing on their populations that until now have been imposed on peoples in other regions in particular the Global South; this with the sole interest of saving capitalism and those who benefit from it (private banks, investment groups and transnational corporations). All signs are that in the near future these antisocial policies will become more severe and extensive. The first general mobilizations to denounce the economic and governance systems which have brought us to this point have begun and we offer - creatively and energetically – the response of European social movements to confront the model of global agriculture which is the exact reflection of the capitalist system that created it.

Food systems have been reduced to a model of industrialized agriculture controlled by a few transnational food corporations together with a small group of huge retailers. It is a model designed to generate profits, and therefore completely fails to meet its obligations. Instead of being dedicated to the production of food which is healthy, affordable and benefits people, it focuses increasingly on the production of raw materials such as agrofuels, animal feeds or commodity plantations. On the one hand, it has caused the enormous loss of agricultural holdings and the people who make their living from those holdings, while on the other hand it promotes a diet which is harmful to health and which contains insufficient fruit, vegetables and cereals.

This industrial model of production is dependent on finite fossil fuels and chemical inputs; does not recognize the limitations of resources such as land or water; is responsible for drastic losses of biodiversity and soil fertility; contributes to climate change; forces thousands of people into jobs without recognition of their most fundamental rights; and leads to the worsening of working conditions for farmers and workers, in particular migrants. It moves us further away from a respectful and sustainable relationship with nature. Exploiting and treating the earth in this way is the fundamental cause of rural poverty and hunger for more than a billion people in the world (such as now in the Horn of Africa). In addition, it causes forced migration, while creating a surplus of industrial foods, which end up being wasted or dumped in markets both within and outside Europe, destroying local production.

This situation is the result of food, financial, trade and energy policies, which our governments, the EU (especially through its Common Agricultural Policy), multilateral and financial institutions as well as transnational corporations have been imposing. Examples include the policies of deregulation and liberalization of agricultural markets and speculation on food.

Changing the direction of this dysfunctional food system will only be possible through a complete reorientation of food and agricultural policies and practices. It is vital to redesign the food system based on the principles of Food Sovereignty, particularly in Europe, and to do it now.

As a consequence more than 400 people from 34 European countries from the Atlantic to the Urals and Caucasus, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, as well as international representatives from diverse social movements and civil society organisations, met from the 16th to 21st of August in Krems, Austria to take a step forward in the development of a European movement for Food Sovereignty. We are building on the foundations of the Declaration of the Nyéléni 2007: Forum for Food Sovereignty, which reaffirmed the international framework for Food Sovereignty - the right of peoples to democratically define their own food and agricultural systems without harming other people or the environment.

Numerous experiences and practices already exist here and now, at local, regional and European levels, which are based on Food Sovereignty and which demonstrate how it can be applied.

We are people who share values based on human rights. We want free movement of people, and not free circulation of capital and merchandise which contributes to the destruction of livelihoods and therefore forces many to migrate. Our aim is cooperation and solidarity as opposed to competition. We commit to reclaiming our democracy: all people should be involved in all issues of public interest and public policy making, deciding collectively how we organize our food systems. This requires the construction of democratic systems and processes, free of violence, corporate influence, and based on equal rights and gender equality, which will also lead to the abolition of patriarchy.

Many of us are young people who represent the future of our society and of our struggles. We will ensure that our energy and creativity make our movement stronger. In order to do so we must be able to participate in providing food and to be integrated in all structures and decisions.

We are convinced that Food Sovereignty is not only a step forward towards a change in our food and agricultural systems, but it is also a first step towards a broader change in our societies. For this we commit to struggle for:

Changing how food is produced and consumed

We are working towards resilient food production systems, which provide healthy and safe food for all people in Europe, while also preserving biodiversity and natural resources and ensuring animal welfare. This requires ecological models of production and fishing as well as a multitude of smallholder farmers, gardeners and small-scale fishers who produce local food as the backbone of the food system. We struggle against the use of GMOs and grow and recuperate a wide diversity of non-GM varieties of seeds and livestock breeds in these systems. We promote sustainable and diverse forms of food culture, in particular the consumption of high quality local and seasonal foods and no highly processed food. This includes a lower consumption of meat and animal products, which should only be locally produced using local non-GM feed. We engage in re-embracing and promoting knowledge of cooking and food processing through education and sharing of skills.

Changing how food is distributed

We work towards the decentralization of food chains, promoting diversified markets based on solidarity and fair prices, and short supply chains and intensified relations between producers and consumers in local food webs to counter the expansion and power of supermarkets. We want to provide the building blocks for people to develop their own food distribution systems and allow farmers to produce and process food for their communities. This requires supportive food safety rules and local food infrastructure for smallholder farmers. We also work to ensure that the food we produce reaches all people in society, including people with little or no income.

Valuing and improving work and social conditions in food and agriculture systems

We struggle against the exploitation and the degradation of working and social conditions and for the rights of all women and men who provide food as well as those of seasonal and migrant workers, workers in the processing, distribution and retail sector and others. We work towards public policies that respect social rights, set high standards and make public funding conditional upon their implementation. Society must give greater value to the role of food producers and workers in our society. For us, this includes decent living wages. We aim to build broad alliances among all people who work in the food system.

Reclaiming the right to our Commons

We oppose and struggle against the commodification, financialisation and patenting of our commons, such as: land; farmers', traditional and reproducible seeds; livestock breeds and fish stocks; trees and forests; water; the atmosphere; and knowledge. Access to these should not be determined by markets and money. In using common resources, we must ensure the realisation of human rights and gender equality, and that society as a whole benefits. We also acknowledge our responsibility to use our Commons sustainably, while respecting the rights of mother earth. Our Commons should be managed through collective, democratic and community control.

Changing public policies governing our food and agricultural systems

Our struggle includes changing public policies and governance structures that rule our food systems – from the local to the national, European and global levels – and to delegitimise corporate power. Public policies must be coherent, complementary and promote and protect food systems and food cultures. They must: be based on the right to food; eradicate hunger and poverty; ensure the fulfilment of basic human needs; and contribute to Climate Justice – in Europe and globally. We need legal frameworks that: guarantee stable and fair prices for food producers; promote environmentally-friendly agriculture; internalise external costs into food prices; and implement land reform. These policies would result in more farmers in Europe. Public policies must be designed with the help of publicly accountable research to achieve the objectives outlined above. They must ensure that speculation on food is banned and no harm is done to existing local or regional food systems and food cultures – either by dumping or by landgrabbing in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe, or the Global South. We work towards new agriculture, food, seed, energy and trade policies for Food Sovereignty in Europe which are internationally sound. In particular these must include: a different Common Agriculture and Food Policy; the removal of the EU Biofuels Directive; and global governance of international agricultural trade located in the FAO and not the WTO.

**We call upon the people and social movements in Europe to engage, together with us,
in all our struggles to take control of our food systems and
Build the Movement for Food Sovereignty in Europe NOW!**