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editorial

nyéléni process: recognizing the power of people's movements

In 2007 the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) played a vital role in uniting small-scale food producers and their allies to establish

a shared vision of food sovereignty and implement strategies to make it a reality. Over time, a robust global movement for food sovereignty emerged, gaining significant political recognition. Together, we have achieved the democratization of global food and agricultural arenas, including the reform of the Committee on World Food Security. Our struggles also influenced food sovereignty policies in various national contexts and successfully secured political acknowledgment of peasants as rights holders through the ratification of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

However, our achievements are now under threat due to an extended period of systemic crises. Right-wing forces, authoritarian regimes, and the corporate capture of democratic governance spaces are on the rise globally, accompanied by the dismantling of the United Nations multilateral system. Human rights violations against peasant and Indigenous communities, along with climate change, biodiversity loss, armed conflicts, and hunger, are escalating rapidly. Furthermore, renewed threats to food sovereignty come from new business configurations,

in which hedge fund speculation firms and digital technology titans join forces to oil the wheels of the failing agro-industrial production system.

In this context, the IPC for Food Sovereignty advocates for a new global Nyéléni process, leading up to the next Nyéléni Global Forum in India in 2025. Recognizing the power of people's movements, we aim to strengthen solidarity and unity by bridging local and global struggles. We are striving to adopt an intersectional perspective to address the multi-dimensional global crisis effectively.

By collaborating with climate justice, workers' rights, feminist, solidarity economy, anti-war, youth, and other movements, we seek to resist the corporate takeover of governance spaces, safeguard human and collective rights worldwide, protect ecosystems, and secure a dignified life on Earth for present and future generations.

IPC for food sovereignty, FoEI, La Via Campesina, TNI

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India's historic farm struggle explained

The Agricultural Producers' Market Committee (APMC) in India provide a regulated space for farmers to collectively trade their produce, protected from market volatility. Minimum Support Price (MSP) is another policy that provides a minimum remuneration for farmers, ensuring they can recover their costs of cultivation and make a profit.

However, in 2020, the Indian government passed three laws without consultation that sparked protests from farmers across the country. The first law allowed private entities to set up de-regulated private markets, which farmers feared would end the APMC system and their collective bargaining power. The second law allowed for contract farming, leading to concerns about corporate concentration in agriculture and land disputes. The third law removed stocking limits and other regulatory mechanisms on agricultural commodities. Farmers alleged that these laws pushed for a massive privatisation of the Indian agricultural system without any legal safeguards for the MSP in place.

The farmers across the country mobilised against these laws, and after a 15-month long protest, the Indian Government repealed the three controversial laws in 2021, bowing to public pressure. However, more than 750 farmers reportedly lost their lives during the struggle. While the functioning of APMC markets must improve, the farmers' struggle highlights the need to consult with stakeholders before passing legislation and the importance of protecting farmers' collective bargaining power and MSPs in the Indian agricultural sector.

in the spotlight 1

Solidarity and unity to confront the global crises: Towards the third global forum for food sovereignty

The Third Global Forum for Food Sovereignty is being organized by the International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty (IPC) in India in 2025.

The IPC is now building a 'Nyéléni Process' urging mobilization within and beyond the Food Sovereignty movement to create a response and form alliances with climate justice movements, labor unions, feminist groups, and environmental organizations to foster shared proposals for systemic change. The food sovereignty movement faces systemic threats and needs to collaborate with other groups fighting various forms of oppression for social, racial, gender, economic, intergenerational, and environmental justice.

Through the Nyéléni process, we are implementing a 'Dialogue of Knowledge' to build unity and reinforce territorial organizational processes, that resist neoliberalism and establish equitable and sustainable food and economic systems. This multi-year process involves democratic consultations in regions worldwide, and results and proposals from this process will be presented at the Global Forum in India in 2025, where representatives will discuss strategies for creating just and ecological food systems and renew a global alliance against multidimensional crises caused by forces like free-market capitalism and destructive trade.

India: a remarkable struggle for food sovereignty

In 2020-21, India experienced a historic period of unrest led by farmers' for food sovereignty. Right in the middle of a pandemic, the Indian government brought in three controversial laws that pushed for a massive privatization of the Indian agricultural system without any legal safeguards for price protection in place. Although the Minimum Support Policy offered some protection, it was not yet a legal guarantee, and farmers alleged that the new legislations threatened to remove even such protections.

In this context, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella organization of various farmer unions, led a 15-month-long protest against the three controversial legislations. The protest transformed into a public movement, witnessing millions of farmers protesting in Delhi and elsewhere, despite repressive measures and hard COVID-19 protocols from the government. The movement gained amazing solidarity and support from various sectors, leading to a national-level public strike. Eventually, in 2021, bowing to public pressure, the Indian Parliament repealed the three contentious agriculture laws. This successful farmers' struggle is an inspiration for similar movements for food sovereignty worldwide. It is a demonstration of what cross-sectoral alliances can achieve in united struggles.

The upcoming Nyéléni Forum in India aims to draw inspiration from the remarkable struggle of Indian farmers to invigorate and reinforce the food sovereignty movement. It seeks to promote solidarity, generate momentum, amplify the voices of grassroots organizations, and provide a shared direction for social movements in the years ahead.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the forum itself is not the ultimate objective of this process. Instead, the primary goal is to put into practice the decisions and guidelines formulated during the process. Let's globalize our hope and struggle for food sovereignty!

Nyeléni calls on us to strengthen social and popular coordination

We live in a time where it is increasingly clear that the crises of social and economic inequality, environmental, food, health, housing, and national and global democracy are deeply connected. Meanwhile, corporations and transnational big business are promoting and implementing drastic and rapid changes in order to accumulate greater power from these crises. These changes come at the cost of setbacks in the rights won by the peoples and are often an attempt to co-opt our proposals and narratives, to disguise their false solutions, to continue advancing in the privatization, commodification and financialization of public services, land, nature and data, and to increase the exploitation of working people.

To these ends, a growing fascist wave is highly useful. An extreme right-wing and deeply conservative project in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres, with a long-term vision and the endorsement (by support or omission) of the dominant media, works to dominate society with an extremely conservative common direction that is elitist and aporophobic, racist, xenophobic, misogynist, sexist, queerphobic, anti-pacifist and anti-democratic. It is a project that ignores and attacks any form of organization that defends popular interests.

But this interconnection of crises is also pushing social and popular movements to look beyond their specific agendas and revive paths of popular convergence to halt the conservative advance and transform our realities. Paths of convergence that, on the basis of agreements, and working through nuances and divergences, allow us to build systemic responses.

We must be many more walking together towards unity, without forgetting the urgent threat we face. This requires the political will of the organizations, as well as the resources and dedication of comrades to coordinate strategies, proposals and common demands from the diverse thematic agendas of the social and popular movements.

As stated in the newsletter no 48¹, Nyéléni is a space and a process to coordinate “analyses and positions, make struggles visible and resist their criminalization, strengthen solidarity links, build programmatic agreements and agree on actions to transform food systems and our societies”.

The Nyéléni process calls on us to join forces to strengthen the popular mobilization of resistance, and also to defend the rights and sovereignty of the peoples and the common goods, and to build social, racial, gender, economic, intergenerational and environmental justice.

1 - Newsletter no 48 – *Nyeléni process: towards a global forum of food sovereignty*, <https://nyeleni.org/en/category/newsletters-nyeleni-in-english/newsletter-no-48-nyeleni-process-towards-a-global-forum-of-food-sovereignty/>

Roadmap to the Nyéléni process

After a one year period of exchange and discussion within the IPC's members, we have now started the process to build alliances with other sectors. During the following year and a half, the Nyéléni process will enter its main phase.

Currently (June 2023) the first Stocktaking meeting of the International Nyéléni Steering Committee is taking place in Rome. During this meeting we aim to create solid basis for a dynamic coordination with those sectors that are not part of the IPC.

The Steering Committee will then serve to create guidelines to conduct six regional meetings (Latin America, Asia and Pacific, North America, Africa, Europe, and North Africa and Middle East) that will take place from September 2023 to September 2024. Different actors from different sectors will participate into these regional fora to gather an all-inclusive regional perspective.

During the final phase, the Global Nyéléni Forum will build on the regional consultations' outcomes to conduct cross-regional, cross-thematic discussions and prepare a final analysis and proposals. Concurrently the forum will aim to achieve the other goals: such as (re)energizing and strengthening the food sovereignty movement, fostering solidarity between actors and sectors, creating momentum to make the voices of grassroots organizations and people heard, and giving a common direction to the social movements for the years to come.

The main objective of the Nyéléni process is not the Forum itself, but rather the implementation of the decisions taken, and the guidelines adopted throughout the process.

box 3

Power, violence, and food systems: Insights from an address by Michael Fakhri, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

Power, violence, and food systems: Insights from an address by Michael Fakhri, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

“The right to food is about celebrating life through food in communion with others”. This was the practical definition of the right to food favoured by Michael Fakhri, the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, during a keynote address given at the Peace Palace in the Hague in April . Fakhri shared that he was inspired to become a Special Rapporteur by the global food sovereignty movement, which gives the right to food its power. This is a power built on reciprocal relationships as opposed to the power of the rich which is built by acting as ‘gatekeepers to the necessities of life’.

He outlined four forms of violence in our food systems that are necessary to confront in order to advance the right to food including: 1) Discrimination as a result of denying people their right to food based on their class position or other markers of identity; 2) Bodily harm that is inflicted on people as a result of armed conflict or

other forms of domination and submission; 3) Ecological violence wrought by the industrial food system both on the climate and on nature; 4) Erasure of people by emptying landscapes to make way for resource extraction and capital accumulation.

These four forms of violence in food systems pose a significant challenge to the food sovereignty movement and beyond. They illustrate the urgency of building up counter-power through processes of convergence and alliance building that stand at the core of the Nyéléni global gathering. Harnessing the power of the global food sovereignty movement has been demonstrated to prove effective, whether it be through the negotiation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants or by exposing the corporate sham of the UN Food Systems Summit. Given that hunger and malnutrition are, as Fakhri stated, always a political problem, not a consequence of scarcity, there is much to be fought for.

A video recording of the lecture is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NT9XO0d890k>



voices from the field 1

From the international forum to the field 1

Kusnan, National Seeds Centre, Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI), Tuban, East Java, Indonesia

The global food sovereignty movement, which organized its first forum in Nyéléni, Mali, in 2007, was instrumental in providing political clarity and a common understanding of what food sovereignty means in our diverse national contexts.

In Indonesia, for several decades, Serikat Petani Indonesia has been struggling for agrarian reform that will ensure that our territories obtain food sovereignty. We call these regions “food sovereignty areas.”

I am currently in Tuban, East Java, in a Food Sovereignty Area that has been protected from large-scale grabbing for industrial use. Here, we cultivate the land as a community with autonomy over our tools, seeds, and methods of cultivation. Our cooperative system is run and managed by peasants who share the principle of agroecology and have built an integrated system of production where our cattle, crops, and nature exist in harmony, complementing each other’s functions.

We plant a diverse set of crops, such as rice, corn, horticulture, fruits, and vegetables and oppose any

attempts to create industrial monocultures. We use small-scale farm mechanization that provides autonomy to the peasants who use it. Our seeds are bred and produced by selecting and crossing local seeds to improve their genetic properties, productivity, and resistance to climate change.

Our farm practices are derived from local wisdom and ancestral knowledge, and we use solid organic fertilizers from livestock waste and biological fertilizers containing various kinds of micro-bacteria. This helps to break down organic matter in the soil and create conditions of ecological balance in a balanced ecosystem. This approach fulfils the availability of macro and micronutrients and controls pests and diseases so that we can produce healthy and nutritious food.

To market our produce, we have formed the Indonesian Farmers’ Cooperative, a farmer’s institution that processes and distributes production in rural areas and cities in the Food Sovereign Area. This cooperative system provides a sustainable and equitable approach to agriculture that prioritizes the needs of the community and helps to protect our food sovereignty.

voices from the field 2

From the international forum to the field 1

Ibrahima Coulibaly, The National Coordination of Peasant Organizations of Mali (CNOP-Mali)

Food sovereignty struggles in Mali have been ongoing since the Nyéléni Forum of 2007. It has materialized on the ground with the aim of opposing the production and distribution model dominated by private interests and supporting the local economy to fight against hunger and poverty.

The National Coordination of Peasant Organizations of Mali (CNOP-Mali), in 15 years, has made Nyéléni a beacon that sheds light on the future of family farming by putting peasant agroecology at the heart of food sovereignty.

This commitment by the CNOP resulted in the organization of an International Forum on Agroecology in 2015 held in Mali, the establishment of a system ranging from the identification of a pool of peasant trainers to the development of 12 modules developed around practices in the land, a charter of relay farmers, and an Agroecology

manifesto. Additionally, a peasant agroecology platform in Mali was created at the initiative of the CNOP in April 2017, along with a system for training peasant trainers in peasant agroecology to achieve economic, social, and environmental justice.

Today, this system has thousands of producers trained and committed to the practice of Agroecology. However, the challenge remains to implement an approach to remove obstacles to the multiplication of markets for agroecological and organic products. How can we move from target markets to mass markets? How can we structurally involve peasants in the consultation of actors related to food systems? And how can we ensure a political position of decision-makers, both nationally and within regional governing bodies and the African Union? These are all questions that require necessary answers.

voices from the field 3

A glimpse into the struggles and resilience of fisher communities

Md. Mujibul Haque Munir, COAST Foundation, Bangladesh

Recently I embarked on field visits to Cox's Bazar, Bhola, and Sunamganj, to assess the current situation before our regional consultation. I witnessed first hand the resilience and strength of fishers' communities despite the numerous challenges they face.

In Cox's Bazar, I witnessed the harsh realities caused by the ongoing Rohingya crisis. The region is known for its marine fisheries but the fisherfolk battle numerous challenges. They long for proper registration and written contracts to secure their jobs and ensure fair compensation in case of accidents. Many fishermen expressed mixed experiences with the assistance provided by the District Fisheries Office, where only some of them received essential safety equipment. Financial hardships were also evident, with meagre monthly incomes and reliance on advances from boat owners. These challenges take a toll on their families, impacting access to education and healthcare.

Traveling to Bhola, the devastating impact of natural disasters on the coastal region became apparent. Recent cyclones had left communities in ruins. The local fishermen displayed incredible resilience as they worked tirelessly to rebuild their lives. However, immediate assistance in the form of shelter, clean water, and livelihood support was crucial for their recovery.

Strengthening disaster preparedness and resilience in this area is paramount to mitigate the impact of future events and protect their lives and livelihoods.

In Sunamganj, a region characterized by rivers and wetlands, I encountered a different set of challenges. Flooding, erosion, and waterborne diseases were prevalent issues. Despite the adversities, the community showcased remarkable adaptability, devising innovative ways to cope with recurrent floods. However, long-term solutions such as embankment construction, early warning systems, and improved healthcare facilities are urgently needed to safeguard their well-being. Enhancing their resilience is essential in this unique environment.

Community members, local authorities, and humanitarian organizations provided me with a holistic understanding of the challenges and potential solutions. Collaborative efforts involving all actors are crucial to address the multifaceted issues faced by these communities: to begin with adequate government support, financial security, safety measures, and access to essential services need to be ensured. By recognizing the fishing communities' contributions and extending a helping hand, we can empower them and create a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.



voices from the field 4

A Peoples' Food Plan by the people, for the people!

Jessie Power, Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA)

In 2012, the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) launched its original Peoples' Food Plan in response to the Australian Government's National Food Plan, which has since been abandoned. Unlike the Government's National Food Plan, which was developed without participation from small-scale farmers and local communities, the Peoples' Food Plan reflected the concerns and aspirations of eaters, farmers, community organisations, independent food businesses and advocacy groups. The Peoples' Food Plan process was conducted as a model of participatory democracy in policy development – open, inclusive, and democratic – because we knew the scale of the challenges and the urgency of the work needed to transform our dysfunctional food system, and that decision making is best handled by those it affects.

Through the collectivising work around the original Peoples' Food Plan, the food sovereignty movement in Australia emerged as an alliance of farmers, food systems organisations and individuals ready to take food justice into their own hands. Eleven years on, AFSA has grown into a farmer-led civil society organisation championing the fight for food sovereignty. With over a decade of policy submissions to federal, state, and local governments, now is the time to update the Peoples' Food Plan as a policy framework and grassroots action plan towards food sovereignty in Australia.

AFSA released the updated Peoples' Food Plan draft for public consultation on 1 June, which will invite anyone

involved in food system activism and transformation to get involved in shaping peoples' actions and policy recommendations for Australian government at all levels. Our international allies are also invited to help us build a library of case studies that illustrate food sovereignty and agroecology in action to let our governments know that we the people should have full agency to determine our own food and agricultural systems, where Indigenous Peoples and small-scale producers have been effectively doing so for millennia!

Since 2019, Australia's food system has experienced a wave of shocks: catastrophic bushfires, the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating flooding across the eastern coast. The Australian Government has prioritised industrial agriculture and large-scale food producers set up for exports through enabling policies, legislation, and scale-inappropriate regulation. Yet, three years of systemic crisis has highlighted that it is small-scale food producers who are able to weather these storms and feed local communities. We aim to launch our updated Peoples' Food Plan 2023 at AFSA's annual Food Sovereignty Convergence in October as a rallying call for change in the wake of crises.

If you'd like to get involved in AFSA's updated Peoples' Food Plan 2023 or send a case study for inclusion, email us: coordinator@afsa.org.au.



to read, listen, watch and share

- *Nyéleni booklet 2023*, <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/NYELENI-BOOKLET-EN-1.pdf>
- Video, *Nyéleni Mistica 2023*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhvT6pSZNsw&t=1s>
- For more info on the Nyéleni process, check this space: <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/nyeleni-process/>
- Campaign, *We belong to the land* - <https://webelongotheland.org/>

who we are

In the last years hundreds of organisations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organisations were present in the *International Nyéleni Forum 2007* and feel part of a broader **Food Sovereignty Movement**, that considers the Nyéleni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéleni Newsletter is the voice of this international movement.**

Organisations involved: AFSA, ETC Group, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for Food Sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Real World Radio, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, Transnational Institute, VSF-Justicia Alimentaria Global, WhyHunger, World Forum of Fisher People, WAMIP.