



# THEME COMMONS

SUB-THEME:

***FOOD CULTURE AND SOVEREIGNTY***

TITLE OF WORKSHOP

**Changing Agriculture: Food Sovereignty of the  
territories in response to the energy crisis and  
the new world revolution**

**PROPONENT**

**AIAB FEDERALE**



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## **The European food sovereignty movement engagement**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The 2011 Nyeleni Europe Forum set up the conditions for the establishment of a wide European movement for food sovereignty that aims at a thorough redefinition of food and agriculture systems towards more sustainable and socially responsible policies and practices. Three pillars were identified as outcomes of the Forum, meant to 'resist', 'build' and 'transform' the current food system as follows:

- ▶ Working towards an ecologically sustainable and socially just model of food production and consumption based on non-industrial smallholder farming, processing and alternative distribution
- ▶ Decentralizing the food distribution system and shortening the chain between producers and consumers
- ▶ Improving working and social conditions, particularly in the field of food and agriculture
- ▶ Democratizing decision-making on the use of the Commons and heritage (land, water, air, traditional knowledge, seeds and livestock)
- ▶ Ensuring that public policies at all levels guarantee the vitality of rural areas, fair prices for food producers and safe, GMO-free food for all.



## **Changing Agriculture: Food Sovereignty of the territories in response to the energy crisis and the new world revolution**

Michelle Arroyo, Phd Candidate in Sociology Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales

In México, one of the most agriculturally-based countries in the Americas, there is a growing tendency among rural farmers to promote a new type of rurality. This new approach aims to solve their ecological, economic and social problems through actions that encourage a de-growth instead of a sustainable growth in development. In this essay I aim to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which the agro-ecological cooperative Las Cañadas redefined the goals of twenty-two small producers in Veracruz, México. In an effort to improve their livelihoods, they shifted their methods of food production during a time in the 90s in which the country faced a backdrop of challenges including the opening of markets and institutional reforms. This is primarily an empirical essay, intended to present collected data on the cooperative during the period of 1996-2012.

To provide some background, I will begin with a summary of Mexican agricultural history and the consequences of the signing of the North America Free Trade Agreement. This is followed by a discussion of what I understand to be de-growth, as well as a description of key concepts within the case study research: institutions, cooperative, social cohesion, identity, agro-ecology and food sovereignty. Finally, I intend to illustrate some empirical lessons from Mexico's agriculture. My hypothesis is that small-scale farmer cooperatives have the best potential for achieving the de-growth oriented goals of agro-ecology.

The materials used in this essay were compiled as part of my doctoral field research in México during 2011 and 2012, and include internal documents from Las Cañadas and interviews with members of the agro-ecological cooperative. My perspective on the Mexican rural areas has been shaped significantly by my interaction and participation with environmental and peasant organizations since 1998 and the present essay no doubt reflects such a bias. Nevertheless, I hope that this essay will be valuable to any researcher considering cooperatives in Mexico today

## **NEW DISTRIBUTION MODELS: THE ORGANIC FARMERS WAY TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**



ANDREA FERRANTE, LIVIA ORTOLANI

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems”. The organic movement developed and led by farmers who wanted to change the relation between consumer/citizen and producers, with an explicit critique to the distribution model that was affirming at that time and dominant today. The complete distance between consumers and producers had strongly weakened, if not eliminated, the role of producers in food consumption. The producer is

substituted by a product without any local reference, coming from the “world market”.

In this sense the meeting between organic and food sovereignty movements is natural, as both movements fight for consumer and producer rights to access to high quality, cultural adequate and sustainable food. The main idea common to organic farming and food sovereignty movements is the right to choose the model of production by both farmers and consumers, that cannot be imposed by multinational companies of agrochemicals and great food retailers through initiative of “green washing”.

The need of getting back peoples’ rights as the centre of the organic model, determines also the need for a new food distribution model, as food not be considered just a commodity. This paper is organised in 3 different sections: starting from analysing experiences of new distribution models in Italy led by farmers (individuals and organised), in section I, the/ paper will propose public policies to support those experiences. Finally, an action plan for new models of distribution at European level will be proposed.

## TACKLED ISSUES:

### I. RIGHTS

- To decide what/how to produce and what to eat
- To know the origins of the products consumed



- Workers/imigrats

## 2. PRODUCTION/DISTRIBUTION ( crops and )

How to produce

- Agro-cology
- Permaculture
- Organic

What to produce

- Biodiversity — local varieties
- Organic seeds vs. GMO seeds

Who produces

- Small farmers
- Network of local farmers vs. localism/closed societies
- Dependency vs. freedom to chose ( seeds, animal feeding import, fertilizers, etc. )
- Energy crisis: Oil — based agriculture ( agricultures consumes energy more than produces it)
- Local markets vs supermarkets/ big distribution
- Relationship between producers and consumers
- Link urban and rural debate/needs

## 3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Common agriculture Policy ( PAC European POLICY) benefit industrial agriculture /negative impacts on small scale farmers.
- EU foreign policy supporting land grabbing in Africa to produce biofuel

## 4. FINANCIAL SPECULATION

- Food commodities volatility
- Food crisis ( increase of food prices)



## 5. WAY FORWARD

- need to regulate ( policy making )
- de-financialisation of food commodities ( to avoid speculation)
- foster bottom up approaches
- to transform European food security policy in food sovereignty policy
- Reconnect crop production and meet production

## GIVEN ANSWERS

The next step after Nyeleni Forum will be a meeting in October 2012 in Milan

How to provide legal enforcement to food sovereignty rights? By including it among Constitutional rights.

The existing tools to enforce food sovereignty rights needs: include available democracy tools. The citizens have the possibility to choose their representatives who bring the issue at the political level.

In Europe the concept of food sovereignty is not yet included in the legal framework.

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

### Rights

- Which kind of rights we're talking about ?
- Can everybody decide what to produce? Wouldn't that be dangerous?

### Hunger

- What does hunger teach us?
- Should we re-discover the sense of taste?
- What do we really want to eat?
- To detox ourselves from the advertising-based imaginary and from the solutions ( products) coming from agro-industry

GAS- Gruppi di acquisto solidali: what could be the GAS's role in food sovereignty?