

Wageningen International, ICCO and Graduate School Vlag Food Sovereignty: promoting or undermining food security?

Wageningen, Tuesday 20 March, 2007

Food Sovereignty is one of the emerging concepts in present-day debates on food security and the right to food. Different than the Right to Food, which is a legal framework, Food Sovereignty is a political and policy framework that requires that states regain the necessary policy space to conduct their fight against food insecurity. The political challenges include the following elements: the implementation of the right to food; the realization of the right of peoples and nations to decide on their own agricultural and food policies; access of smallholder farmers to productive resources to produce food; and the development of sustainable local food networks.

Food Sovereignty was launched by the global farmers' movement 'Via Campesina' in 1996 at the World Food Summit in Rome. However, the principles and values that underlie the concept of Food Sovereignty are not new and also not limited to farmers' movement or NGOs. Food Sovereignty is basically about self-sufficiency and national self-reliance. In its 'modern' meaning, Food Sovereignty has to do with the right of and room for individuals, communities, peoples and states to define their own agricultural and food policies in a globalizing world. The concept has been adopted by several NGOs and farmers' organizations. Increasingly, the concept also draws the attention of national policy makers and multilateral organizations.

The concept of food sovereignty provokes both highly supportive and highly opposing reactions. Advocates of food sovereignty claim that the right of states to decide on their own food policies is in the best interest of safeguarding food security of their peoples. They consider food sovereignty as one of the best guarantees to maintain local food systems, to preserve agro-ecological diversity and to provide a good and strong position for the (small holder) farmers. Those opposing food sovereignty argue

that it hampers international food trade and herewith undermines global food security. They argue that trade liberalization can bring prices down and make food accessible for all. In addition, they point at the limitations of promoting agro-ecological diversity within national borders, arguing that the (ecologically) most suitable area for production of food crops cannot always be found within such borders.

Food Sovereignty is increasingly being discussed in international debates. Yet, the concept in its 'modern' meaning is not (yet) well understood. The seminar aims to explore not only the key elements of the concept in itself, but also the (possible) consequences of accepting or rejecting food sovereignty policies, seeking examples and evidence for this purpose.

**The seminar will be held in English.
Participation in the seminar is free of charge.**

Venue

WICC (Kleine Veerzaal)
Lawickse Allee 9
6701 AN Wageningen

Time

09.30 to 17.30 hours
(With opportunity for drinks and a chat afterwards)

Registration

You are requested to register ultimately by March 9 by returning the registration form to Mrs Titia Magendans titia.magendans@wur.nl.

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Date: March 20, 09.30-17.30 hours
Location: WICC Wageningen, Kleine Veerzaal
Day chairperson: Pim Verhallen (ICCO)

09.30-10.00	Coffee/tea on arrival
10.00-10.15	Opening <i>Marcel Verwoort</i> , Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, The Netherlands
10.15-10.45	The Right to Food and Food Sovereignty compared: the FAO vision <i>Julian Thomas</i> , Right to Food Unit, FAO, Rome
10.45-11.15	Break
11.15-11.45	Opportunities for reaping the benefits of food sovereignty <i>Sofía Monsalve Suárez</i> , FoodFirst Information and Action Network; FIAN International, Heidelberg
11.45-12.15	Opportunities for reaping the gains from trade and trade liberalization <i>Thom Achterbosch</i> , LEI-WUR Agricultural Economics Institute, The Netherlands
12.15-12.45	Plenary discussion
12.45-14.00	Lunch
14.00-16.00	Parallel sessions: I. Food Sovereignty: the international perspective. <i>Julian Thomas</i> (FAO) <i>Mariken Gaanderse</i> (ICCO, coordinator Food, Trade and Nutrition coalition) II. Organizing multi-stakeholder consultation and monitoring at national level: worthwhile or waste of time? <i>Sofía Monsalve Suárez</i> (FIAN) <i>Thom Sprenger</i> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DGIS) III. Safeguarding food security: local food networks or international trade? <i>Guido Ruivenkamp</i> (Wageningen University) <i>Tjalling Dijkstra</i> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DGIS)
16.00-16.30	Tea break
16.30-17.00	Plenary session
17.00-18.00	Drinks