

## 4G - Strengthening the food sovereignty movement in Europe

Theme: Access to land and land rights  
Moderator: Sylvia Kay (TNI)  
Speaker(s): Claudia Orlandini (LIFE – Low Impact Fishers of Europe), Ludwig Rumetshoefer (ÖBV, Via Campesina Austria), Ramona Duminicioiu (Eco Ruralis), Judith Hitchman (Urgenci)

### Report

This workshop was designed to bring together and develop themes from three workshops in Round 3 (3H, 3I, and 3J), and prompt further discussion on further growing the food sovereignty movement in Europe. The workshop began with an introduction of some themes from the earlier sessions. Contributors from the previous round discussed the importance of recognizing the role of heathland grazing as a sustainable way of managing biodiverse natural spaces including nature reserves; the importance of engaged and committed consumers who care about the quality and sustainability of the food they consume, and the lives and livelihoods of those who produce it; the challenges facing young, aspiring, and small-scale farmers in Europe today and how these might be partially overcome through a wide-scale campaign for re-valorization of peasant agriculture, beginning with what children learn about food in school. These insights set the stage for an informal panel discussion in which participants shared perspectives from a range of backgrounds.

Panelists began by addressing the question of whether they see their own activism as part of a broader movement. All of the participants viewed their work in this way, with most identifying as part of multiple connected movements: food sovereignty, La Via Campesina/the global peasants' movement, the Solidarity Economy movement, and the artisanal fisheries movement.

Asked to identify the central aims and concepts of their diverse movements as well as their allies, panelists discussed the importance of cultivating food systems centered on citizens and food-producers rather than profit. Alliances between consumers and producers emerged as an important theme, though several panelists cautioned that producers' perspectives need to remain central in the movement: small-scale and peasant food producers are most closely tied to the process of food production and are therefore highly knowledgeable about challenges, opportunities, and alternatives. This knowledge needs to influence policy processes, and consumers can be powerful allies in making this possible.

"Food sovereignty" was identified as a key concept that helped to articulate the shared concerns of consumers and producers, and which could be used to bring people together 'under one umbrella' as allies and as citizens. Food sovereignty was understood as a way to unite people across the food system. It was suggested that building food sovereignty requires working on three levels: resistance to harmful practices, transformation of existing mechanisms (e.g. subsidies), and the construction of alternatives. However, participants also cautioned that as interest in different systems grows there is an increasing threat of appropriation by a threatened corporate mainstream which will try to get consumers to continue supporting the dominant system - for example supermarket box schemes are increasingly marketing themselves as more convenient alternatives to CSAs.

Panelists identified other challenges to a more just and sustainable food system as well: difficulty accessing land, seeds, the right kind of markets, and the commons, as well as issues in the wider economic context including a speculation in land and commodities, a lack of understanding about alternative food networks, the continued draw of cheap food, and exclusion of peasants and other citizens from some major policy arenas. However, participants argued that many of these challenges can be best addressed by working from the ground up, developing alliances across diverse social movements, and re-building local markets. The group shared a number of hopeful examples of emerging alliances and projects developing in the Netherlands and beginning to build Food Sovereignty.

A stronger network, growing alliances, and shared goals are necessary for a truly effective movement for food sovereignty, and to support the other movements that panelists identified with. To this end, the workshop ended by informing the crowd about the Europe-wide event by Via Campesina, the second European Nyeleni process, which will take place in Romania from 26 - 30 October 2016 and which will provide an opportunity for activists for food sovereignty from across Europe to come together and discuss shared needs and interests, and how to build a more effective and transformative global movement. Panelists involved in organizing this event emphasized the importance of engaging in a coherent national process in advance of the October meeting, so that the many perspectives on Food Sovereignty in the Netherlands can be captured by national representatives at the event in Romania.

## **Outcomes**

1. Food Sovereignty must put people, not profit, back in the center of food systems, with a special focus on the needs of all food producers.
2. Food Sovereignty requires building coalitions among many different actors in the food system, and exploring alternatives built from the ground up.
3. Nyeleni Europe- come together in Romania to build the European Food sovereignty movement. It must be informed by a national process so that representatives know what to represent.

## **More information**

- Website Nyeleni Europe, <http://nyelenieurope.net>