



Food Sovereignty

It's the right of people to determine their own food systems

Food sovereignty puts the people who produce, distribute and consume food at the centre of decisions on food systems and policies, rather than the demands of markets and corporations that have come to dominate the global food system. The food sovereignty movement has over 250 million members and is supported the world over by urban growers, farmers, peasants, pastoralists, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, women, rural youth and environmental organizations.

The 6 pillars of food sovereignty:

1. Focuses on food for people: The right to food which is healthy and culturally appropriate is the basic legal demand underpinning food sovereignty. Guaranteeing it requires policies which support diversified food production in each region and country. Food is not simply another commodity to be traded or speculated on for profit.
2. Values food providers: Many smallholder farmers suffer violence, marginalisation and racism from corporate landowners and governments. People are often pushed off their land by mining concerns or agribusiness. Agricultural workers can face severe exploitation and even bonded labour. Although women produce most of the food in the global south, their role and knowledge are often ignored, and their rights to resources and as workers are violated. Food sovereignty asserts food providers' right to live and work in dignity.
3. Localises food systems: Food must be seen primarily as sustenance for the community and only secondarily as something to be traded. Under food sovereignty, local and regional provision takes precedence over supplying distant markets, and export-orientated agriculture is rejected. The 'free trade' policies which prevent developing countries from protecting their own agriculture, for example through subsidies and tariffs, are also inimical to food sovereignty.
4. Puts control locally: Food sovereignty places control over territory, land, grazing, water, seeds, livestock and fish populations on local food providers and respects their rights. They can use and share them in socially and environmentally sustainable ways which conserve diversity. Privatisation of such resources, for example through intellectual property rights regimes or commercial contracts, is explicitly rejected.

5. Builds knowledge and skills: Technologies, such as genetic engineering, that undermine food providers' ability to develop and pass on knowledge and skills needed for localised food systems are rejected. Instead, food sovereignty calls for appropriate research systems to support the development of agricultural knowledge and skills
6. Works with nature: Food sovereignty requires production and distribution systems that protect natural resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, avoiding energy-intensive industrial methods that damage the environment and the health of those that inhabit it.

Why food sovereignty; is it different to food security?

The short answer is yes! Food security is an end, without much concern with how we get there – the end is used to justify the means. Food sovereignty is concerned with how we become food secure, so the means is as important as the end - the journey is as important as the destination.

Food security is concerned with ensuring adequate access to food, but it does not specify where food comes from, the agricultural and environmental values with which it is produced, or the social conditions of those producing it.

Food sovereignty by contrast ensures food security by placing the environment and people who produce, process and consume the food at the centre of food systems. In essence food sovereignty is about the people having democratic control of their food system with an eye on the triple bottom line.

Food sovereignty in Australia; why is it important?

Australia produces enough food for some 60 million people, nearly 3 times her population, yet some 2 million Australians are food insecure. This points to serious systemic dysfunction that will not be resolved by simply producing more food.

There are many more indicators that food security is a simplistic and false indicator of food system health and resilience, such as food waste, obesity and diabetes epidemics, farmer suicide rates, and many more.

Suggestions for further reading and viewing

Visit www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/

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Some tricky questions about food sovereignty answered.

www.wdm.org.uk/sites/default/files/food_sov_tricky_questions.pdf