



REPORT OF THE SAFSC ASSEMBLY

17 OCTOBER 2015

1. Introduction

The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) was launched in February 2015 by a number of organisations, from the agrarian, environmental justice, mining, small farmer and rural and urban community sectors. The campaign aimed to bring together actors around the question of hunger and food sovereignty in South Africa, and to develop a campaigning platform for mobilising society to confront the power of corporations and the state and their role in undermining food sovereignty, and to advance alternatives for food sovereignty.

This kicked off an exciting year of grassroots and national campaigning, with a number of key national events taking place to raise the question of hunger in the public conversation, grassroots building work, and significant media coverage and interest. The Assembly that took place on 17 October 2015 therefore had the following objectives:

1. To assess the grassroots and national campaign building work for 2015
2. To plan the key focuses of the campaign for 2016
3. To consolidate coordination of the campaign in 2016

The Assembly took place on the back of enthusiasm from the previous day, 16 October, which is World Food Day and on which the SAFSC hosted a Food Sovereignty Festival at the Greenhouse Project in Johannesburg. A member of the 2015 National Coordinating Committee (NCC), Pat Tshikane, opened the Assembly by welcoming everyone, summarising the year, and explaining the objectives of the Assembly. He then facilitated a short open session in which participants at the Assembly gave feedback on the festival that had taken place the previous day. The overall thrust of the feedback was that the festival was a hugely positive experience, with fantastic content and range of activities, and was an eye-opening and significant learning experience for those who attended.

The remainder of the Assembly focused on assessing the campaign for 2015 and planning for 2016. This took place mainly through commissions who reported back on their discussions. This short report presents the key outcomes of the Assembly. It does not present in detail the discussions that happened on the day, but rather a consolidated summary of proceedings to provide a strategic guide for campaigning into 2016.

2. 2015 Campaign Assessment

2.1. Campaign Building Work

From discussion and reports during the year, it is clear that a key feature of the campaign is that it has been built in different ways in different locations and organisations, according to key priorities of different communities and organisations. Although at the founding Assembly of the campaign it was discussed the key campaigning focus of the year would be on high food prices and land and agrarian transformation, the key issues and means through which the campaign has been advanced locally include:

- **Promoting agroecology** through training and initiation of production. This has been one of the most prevalent campaign building activities;
- **Local education** – this has taken the form of discussions and information sharing in organisations, cooperatives and communities, as well as mass awareness raising through speaking at particular events. This education has included issues of corporate control of the food system, agroecology, impacts of chemicals and pesticides, GMOs and so on. This has also involved taking the campaign and food sovereignty issues into existing structures like farmers’ forums.
- **Learning exchanges** – five learning exchanges have taken place, in which activists with particular skills have visited other communities to provide training on particular issues such as seed saving. The exchange visits have also involved particular groups travelling from one community to another to see the local work that they are doing relating to food sovereignty and the solidarity economy;
- **Land struggles** – in some places the campaign has also been used to mobilise farmers for land, such as Botshabelo where mobilisation for access to commonage land and municipal support on that land is ongoing.
- **Advancing cooperatives and the solidarity economy** – many organisations within the campaign have taken forward cooperative building linked to food sovereignty. For example, Nkuzi Development Association has assisted a community that accessed land through the restitution process to form a cooperative and provided them with agroecology training, so that they collectively own and work the farm, and undertake production for food sovereignty through agroecology. Many have also started work to initiate worker cooperatives after the activist school on worker cooperatives that took place in July (see below).
- **University organising** – a group of students at Wits were introduced to the SAFSC and have now formed a student’s forum to focus on food sovereignty and climate justice issues on campus, called the Inala Forum. It hosts documentary screenings for education, has started a food garden on campus to supply the Wits Food Bank, and has been mobilising to get the university management to support the planting of fruit trees all over campus as a step towards creating a food commons where all students can access nutritious food and thus deal with the problem of student hunger.

On the national level, a significant campaigning impact was also made, and included the following activities:

- **First SAFSC Assembly** – this Assembly took place in February and planned the campaign and coordination. Over 50 organisations were represented, and the subsequent declaration garnered significant media attention. It also set a positive basis for building the campaign in 2015;
- **People’s Tribunal on Food Prices, Hunger and Landlessness** – The tribunal brought together the hungry and the landless, as well as researchers, to explain experiences of hunger and landlessness and what it means for households and communities. The Tribunal, through these testimonies, aimed to put food corporations and the state on trial for their role in producing the hunger crisis. Although media did not attend the

event, it was reported on to some degree and a number of interviews were conducted with members of the campaign afterwards;

- **Promotional Video** – a short video explaining the campaign and building awareness about the website was produced and distributed. (Watch the video at www.safsc.org.za).
- **Social Media** – A social media presence has been established through a Facebook page and Twitter, with the Facebook page being very active and over 600 followers;
- **Website** – the SAFSC website was launched in October (www.safsc.org.za);
- **Learning exchanges** – 5 learning exchanges were coordinated as part of building capacity in the campaign through horizontal learning
- **Media engagements** – over the year the SAFSC has gained significant media coverage, especially after events and after the issuing of media statements. This has included radio interviews, television interviews, and newspaper articles. For a list of media engagements for 2015 see the first issue of the SAFSC newsletter (you can download it at <http://us11.campaign-archive1.com/?u=6eb374fe9b580101982b7b47c&id=5cde16c3c6&e=cf8ac83b0>);
- **Documentaries** – The first of a series of campaigning documentaries, this one on GMOs, is almost complete and a first cut was screened at the festival on the previous day.
- **Food Sovereignty Festival** – on 16 October, World Food Day, the first national Food Sovereignty Festival was held, which aimed to be a celebration of people's alternatives to the unjust food system, and involved a comprehensive programme of panel discussions, workshops, movie screenings, and practical demonstrations.

2.2. Commitments From Organisations to Continue Building the SAFSC

Commitments from organisations to continue building the campaign in 2016 include:

- Support to small scale farmers on marketing and seed
- Sharing of information
- Continue building on campuses
- Go to existing structures in communities to introduce and mobilise for SAFSC
- Education
- Development of educational materials
- Contribution of financial resources by some for campaign building and materials
- Advance agroecology as a practice
- It should also be noted that some have to consult further with their organisations for mandates before making commitments

2.3. Suggestions for Strengthening the SAFSC in 2016

- Increase the number of learning exchanges
- Allows individuals to be partners in the campaign rather than only organisations

- Create commissions within the campaign to work on particular issues, such as agroecology, policy work etc
- Find ways to target youth to get them interested in food and agriculture issues
- Strengthen the media strategy: increased social media, increased efforts to appear in TV, radio, and newspaper (national and local), increase use of art, such as graffiti, murals, develop short snappy messaging, etc
- Increase fundraising and the means of fund raising, such as crowd funding and donations
- Get into schools to promote gardening and agriculture to people from a young age
- Strengthen internal communication within the campaign and between organisations to keep up on local activities
- Focus on developing local seed banks
- Increase campaigning on GMOs and develop tools for this: educational materials (translated), events, community engagement, and media engagement.
- Specific input by Naude Malan from University of Johannesburg and Izindaba Zokudla Farmers School: bringing together small farmers, expertise and technology from the university to develop solutions with and for farmers. Important to bring big institutions like universities on board, as there is a significant amount of expertise and resources in them;
- Should focus strongly on developing organisational declarations so that we have concrete commitments to campaign building and so we can track campaign partners and activities;
- We should apply our minds to where we should take the campaign in 2016. Should we institutionalise the campaign, say as a cooperative, or Section 21? Do we develop formal membership?
- COPAC also affirmed that it is willing to be the organising secretariat for another year but also wants to ensure that the politics of food sovereignty survives beyond the next two years, so it is looking at establishing a national seed bank so support local seed banks, as well as an institute for food sovereignty that can do research and convene activist schools – we need infrastructure to take the campaign forward.

3. 2016 Campaign Planning

This session involved planning the campaign priorities and focus for 2016. First three inputs were made by organisations that are willing to lead on key issues that have arisen in the campaign for 2016, namely GMOs, food sovereignty and climate change, and support for small scale farmers.

African Center for Biodiversity (ACB) – GMO Campaigning

Haidee Swanby explained the campaigning that ACB has been doing on GMOs and the current status of the GMO issue in South Africa. Possible campaigns on this issue include:

- Boycott GM maize

- Join the global campaign for a ban on glyphosate (the key ingredient in herbicides used on GMO crops)
- Overturn the South African government's decision to allow Monsanto's new drought tolerant maize into the South African market
- Demand acknowledgement and support for agroecology and smallholder agriculture

Key activities that ACB wants to work on in 2016 and which can be done as part of the SAFSC include:

- Research and education
- Development of educational materials on GMOs and glyphosate
- Messaging (such as postcards with key messages)
- Bring together artists and activists to develop creative materials on GMOs

COPAC – Surviving Climate Change: A Food Sovereignty Response

Given the reality of climate change and that South Africa will be hit hard by it, and that false solutions are being advanced globally, food sovereignty should be part of the just transition. As such, on behalf of COPAC Vishwas Satgar proposed:

- To scale up and deepen the campaign through developing more community seed banks, learning exchanges, and activist schools, training of trainers in agroecology, build community markets, more worker cooperatives, water management, and awareness raising.
- To start working towards a Food Sovereignty Act through four steps: 1) Assess and critique existing regulatory framework through research and a dialogue event; 2) Clarify the content of what we want to advance in a food sovereignty law by research and dialogue with communities 3) Draft the Act, and dialogue it; 4) Hold a people's parliament to present the Act to government and civil society organisations (perhaps link it to the festival next year).

Nkuzi Development Association – Support to Small Scale Farmers

Brand Ntako from Nkuzi argued that the South African government has signed onto the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) which commits governments to spend at least 10% of their budgets on agriculture. However, the South African support for agriculture is nowhere near this, and is reflected in the poor support that small scale farmers receive. As such, Nkuzi proposed, and is willing to lead, on:

- To design a campaign in which we demand an increase in budgetary support for agriculture, and specifically small scale agriculture, to 10%
- Campaign on the Agriparks that the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development is establishing, to challenge the AgriParks for being run by corporations and not providing support to small farmers.

After discussion on these inputs, the Assembly then broke into commissions to discuss further campaign planning for 2016. Key outcomes include:

3.1. Key Focus of Campaigning for 2016

- GMOs and associated issues and tactics (including agroecology and seed banks as the alternative);
- Climate change and food sovereignty;
- Food Sovereignty Act – however, questions were raised as to what difference an Act would make. Responses included that it would involve a mobilisational process to develop the content of the Act, which is campaigning itself, and it would be a tool that is part of building power at different levels and would provide an instrument with which to contest the state and its approach to food and agriculture;
- Support to small scale farmers and AgriParks

3.2. Methods and Tactics

- Draft memorandum/charter for what it means to be part of the campaign
- Development of local forums
- Declarations
- Do strong research to inform campaigning and link to innovative media tactics
- Hold local tribunals
- Strengthen social media usage and impact
- Strengthen local media work: radio stations, newspapers etc
- Collect seeds from farmers to develop seed bank
- Develop art as a stronger part of campaigning in the SAFSC
- Continue and increase the number of exchange visits
- Pickets at specific targets of the campaign

3.3. Building Local Forums

Use local forums as key structures through which to build SAFSC locally:

- Use Forum Guidelines already developed to assist in setting up local forums
- Use exchange visits to assist in establishing local forums
- Develop local programmes of action and consolidate into a declaration
- Use for education and training
- Planning
- Engagement with actors such as government

3.4. Strengthening Social Media

- Capacity building in campaign to make use of social media – activist school?

- Develop applications to spread good news stories, and to use to connect producers to consumers
- Use social media to mobilise support and resources
- Investigate developing a mobi site

4. Campaign Coordination

After planning the campaign for 2016, the Assembly focused on national coordination. After discussion it was agreed that given it is a new campaign and generally people were happy with the role of the NCC, their mandate should be renewed for 2016, with some modifications, however. One NCC member had to step down, and proposals were made for adding new members which were accepted. The Assembly noted that Karen Read from Biowatch had to step down from the NCC and thanked her for her service. As such, the NCC for 2016 is as follows:

Vishwas Satgar (COPAC)
 Anique van Der Vlugt (Ethical Coop)
 Imraahn Mukkadam (Consumer Dialogues)
 Mandla Mndebele (ESSET)
 Davine Cloete (Community, Northern Cape)
 Thobeka Finca (Ntinga Ntaba Ka Ndoda)
 Nomsa Selebano (Randfontein Small Farmers)
 Pat Tshikane (United Front)
 Thammy Dlamini (Cooperative)
 Haidee Swanby (ACB)
 Brand Nthako (Nkuzi Development Association)
 Matthews Hlabane (SA Green Revolutionary Council)
 Inala Forum (delegate to be confirmed)
 Slow Food Youth Network (delegate to be confirmed)
 Tshintsha Amakhaya (delegate to be confirmed)
 Inyanda Rural National Movement (delegate to be confirmed)

5. Way Forward

In light of the discussions of the day, the way forward from the Assembly was proposed as follows:

1. **Campaign issues:** ACB has really helped us think about how we frame our demands against GMOs. We also want to demand a law on food sovereignty, while affirming the other things we are doing: an activist school coming up end November to be led by waste-pickers, on agroecology and food sovereignty; and training of trainers in January; as well as demanding more funding for small-scale farmers

2. **Learning materials** and other resources are available through the web site. We are developing a DVD on GMOs, and also planning one on climate change. Also posters, pamphlets, etc. and developing an app to link farmers and consumers.
3. On **tactics**, we should look into burning GMO seeds. Haitian farmers did it, when they had their seed banks in place and had strengthened indigenous knowledge. Also people's parliament, pickets, etc. Creativity will be guided from below.
4. **Solidarity** and working in communities. The SAFSC is the sum total of its parts. The essence of it is what you do in your local space, so use the resources and training to build leadership.
5. **Partnerships:** The SAFSC should work with climate groups like 350.org and legal groups. Exhaust the hunger tribunal tactic in local communities, it gives voice and face to the hungry and presents a way forward. COPAC will put out the report on this meeting and forward it to all organisations.
6. **Leadership:** It is proposed to have the next NCC meeting on 5-6 November.
7. **Structure:** NCC is in for another year, COPAC will be the secretariat for another year, but organisations need to think about the future of the food sovereignty campaign. Do we institutionalise? What form should it take? By mid-year next year it would be important to know the way forward on this issue.