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## Editorial

### Challenging the Climate Crisis From Below: The Need for a Just Transition

*Dr. Vishwas Satgar, Chairperson, COPAC Board*



In a surprising departure from the corporate-controlled narrative on climate change, on November 30 2015, during the build-up to the recent United Nations COP20 climate summit in Lima, the New York Times ran a front-page story in which climate experts warned that “it now may be impossible to prevent the temperature of the planet’s atmosphere from rising by 3.6 degrees F”.

“According to a large body of scientific research, that is the tipping point at which the world will be locked into a near-term future of drought, food and water shortages, melting ice sheets, shrinking glaciers, rising sea levels and widespread flooding – events that could harm the world’s population and economy.”

This surprising coverage went on to say a rising rate of emissions has left us with two future possibilities; an unpleasant world of climate crisis, chaos and disruption, or a world with a global deal that ensures the planet is habitable. Either way, the future we are facing is grim.

But for climate justice activists gathered in the people’s space and on the streets in Lima, two decades of failing to reach a global deal required a different approach; a bold rejection of the pro-market and false solutions of the UN COP process such as carbon trading, the Clean Development Mechanism, finance solutions that fail to acknowledge the climate debt of rich northern nations and the commodification

of forest land through the infamous REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) scheme.

Activists have called for urgent action to advance transformative alternatives for system change as part of the people-driven just transition. The position of “no to false solutions but system change now” has to be explained to appreciate why this is the necessary way forward to secure human and nonhuman life.

#### **The real geological force**

In 2000, Paul Crutzen, a Nobel prize-winning atmospheric chemist, introduced the term “the Anthropocene Age”. He theorised about an unprecedented human effect on our planet’s life systems, equal in force and impact to a great geological event.

But his notion of the human as a geological force fails to appreciate how power works in class-based capitalist societies. Put simply, Crutzen has failed to appreciate it is not humans in general but capital that is the real geological force destroying planetary life.

Driven by the need to make short-term profits, capital, through its organisation of production, distribution, consumption and social life, has overshot planetary limits, undermined natural cycles and now threatens human beings with extinction by means of climate change.

Capital, in this context, has become a geological force capable of ending human and nonhuman life. It is wired into a systemic logic of ecocide and is incapable of solving the climate crisis.

Moreover, over the past three decades of transnational techno-financial capitalism, our world has come to move at a dizzying speed. Social life, history and change have dramatically accelerated. This includes the superspeeds of nanotechnologies, fast food and hyper-mobile globalised financial flows.

At the heart of this is an addiction to growth, premised on the assumption of unlimited accumulation. Capitalist modernity, with its mastery of science and technology, has convinced capital that it is the conqueror of nature as well as its master. As a master, it seeks to reduce nature to being a commodity, while ending an alternative conception of nature: nature as a commons.

This commodifying illusion informs the market-based techno-fixes of capital, such as carbon trading, which operate with the idea of no limits to capital. But the world is facing finite resources, over-consumption by a few and widespread pollution of rivers, land, forests, oceans and the biosphere.

Hence, with capital prevailing over the UN climate process, we are heading for the fast death of our future.

## **The planet is heating up, fast**

Finally, with the current trajectory of an increasing rate of carbon emissions, carbon concentration (over 400 parts per million) and a rapidly heating planet, climate justice movements are thinking hard about securing our common future. In this regard, they seek to counter two possible futures we face.

First, in various Pentagon research reports, well documented by Christian Parenti in his book *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence*, the Pentagon envisages a world of climate-induced chaos. Thus it seeks to use its awesome military power to discipline the zones of chaos while protecting "lifeboat America". This is the ultimate fascist solution. Second, a view of our future argued by Rebecca Sonlit, in her book *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*, recognises a pattern of human purpose and civic virtue coming to the fore in the context of disasters such as the great San Francisco earthquake and Hurricane Katrina. Her book assumes the Manichean make-up of human nature, with its disposition for both evil and good, but she documents a pattern in which

altruism and mutual aid is manifest when disasters happen. Such a view celebrates the human spirit as a way to confront the adversity of the future and is generally a progressive response, but it tends to work with an implicit fatalism and falls short in terms of grappling with the agency required for system change now.

## **The rights-of-nature alternative**

Instead, I would argue, a system-change perspective is grounded in appreciating that the pattern of history informing our future derives from the 20th century. Essentially, it was marked by a contest between two sets of social forces championing contrary principles: on one side, social forces championing "competition", and on the other, social forces championing "solidarity".

It is this pattern of struggle and its understanding of human nature as socially determined that best equips us to confront and secure the future now. It is this perspective that also enables us to champion system change alternatives in the present. An important example in this regard is the rights-of-nature alternative. Its power as a transformative alternative was demonstrated in Lima in a sitting of the International Tribunal in Defence of the Rights of Nature. The tribunal brought forth great creativity on the part of activists to demonstrate the power of this alternative.

Factual testimony, rhetorical inventiveness, valorising culture and evoking lost histories became crucial activist strategies to expose how capital is destroying rain forests, ancestral lands, water systems and communities, as it scrambles for fossil fuels and minerals with predatory extractivism.

Fracking in the United States, now standing at 800 000 gas and oil wells, stood out as the source of "fraccidents" such as earthquakes, pollution of water resources, as well as a second wave of genocidal violence against native Americans. Besides testimony, activists also highlighted how the rights of nature are an effective transformative discourse, providing a recourse to challenge such destructive practices, if enshrined in national laws or sub-national regulations. In seven states in the US, fracking is now banned; In short, the rights-of-nature alternative places a limit on capital's avaricious pillaging.

In addition to the rights of nature, other alternatives such as food sovereignty, solidarity economy, rights-based carbon budgets, climate jobs, socially owned renewables and affordable public transport are all adding up to a paradigm counter to capitalist



modernity, redefining a relationship between humans and nature, and advancing a logic of systemic change. As part of a just transition, such alternatives seek a society based on solidarity to sustain all forms of life.

### **South Africa's just transition**

In South Africa, the time for the just transition has arrived so that we can all survive climate change. As a response to the climate crisis, it affords us an opportunity to address the failings of South Africa's transition to democracy: inequality, unemployment, hunger, white privilege, ecological destruction and dispossession. It affords us an opportunity to build a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it, black and white, such that the wealthy pay the price for this achievement and we realise Nelson Mandela's dream.

Although the ANC state has a declaratory commitment to green growth, green jobs and even a notion of the "just transition" in the National Development Plan, this is empty policyspeak and an add-on to carbon markets, renewed extractivism (including fracking), fossil-fuel and nuclear energy sources, corporate-controlled renewables, export-led agriculture and deindustrialisation of transport and renewables manufacturing. Essentially, the ANC state has surrendered to market-centred green neoliberalism and the logic of ecocide. It has shown itself incapable of leading transformative just transition. Instead, this has to be led from below by forces such as the United Front (led by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa), the emerging Food Sovereignty Alliance, the Solidarity Economy Movement, community-mining networks and rural movements. Such forces need to champion a "people's Codesa" (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) on the climate crisis and a just transition before it is too late.

***Dr Vishwas Satgar is an academic at the University of the Witwatersrand and an activist. This article draws on a talk he gave on systemic alternatives and power at a parallel event to the UN-COP20 summit.***



## National News

### 2014 SEM Assembly Consolidates and Charts the Course for the SEM

*Nomsa Madikane*

After a number of years of grassroots Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM) building, the first SEM Assembly took place in early December 2014 in Johannesburg. This will be an annual event, and its aim is to bring together the forces in the SEM in order to assess, plan and coordinate movement building, as well as to celebrate the solidarity economy. This SEM Assembly was aimed at consolidating the SEM as a 'movement of movements' – a movement that brings together a range of movements working on issues relating to the solidarity economy, like the Waste Pickers Movement, the Unemployed People's Movement, the Children's Movement, cooperatives, community based organisations and so on.

Campaign. These campaigns were deliberated on and adopted as the SEM's campaigns. The next exciting step is the holding of the Food Sovereignty Campaign Assembly in February 2015 to bring together broader forces to advance the campaign.

Those who attended the 2014 SEM Assembly left feeling energised and excited for the next phase of SEM building.

***Nomsa Madikane is a community activist with Abahlali Basemzansi Community Organisation (ABCO) in Katlehong.***



It was clear from the Assembly that continuing to build the movement means building it from grassroots level, using community-based forums to advance the solidarity economy and campaigns in communities, and strengthening such campaigns. Importantly, a key focus of the Assembly was to move towards the self-organisation of the SEM. COPAC will be a supporter, rather than an organiser, of the SEM, and so a convening committee was finalised that will meet to ensure national coordination of the movement. A broad strategy for movement building over the next two years was also adopted. This includes continued education and capacity-building work, dealing with issues of finance, relating to the state, communication, and so on. We need to continue to self-organise the movement, continue SEM educational events and training, and ensure horizontal learning.

Campaigns are a crucial ways of building and dynamising the SEM. As such, we also engaged on a proposed framework for the Create Work Through Worker Cooperatives Campaign and the proposed programme of action for the Food Sovereignty



## International News

### New CICOPA Report Finds that Cooperatives Directly Employ 250 Million People Worldwide

Presented for the first time at the International Summit of Cooperatives on 7 October, with the presence of ILO Deputy Director General Sandra Polaski, the study *Cooperatives and Employment: A Global Report* carried out by CICOPA, the International organization of industrial and service cooperatives, discusses the significance of cooperative employment in the global landscape. By piecing together incomplete statistics, CICOPA has been able to find out that cooperative employment directly concerns 250 million people in the world, without mentioning indirect and induced employment. In the G20 countries, cooperative employment makes up almost 12 % of the total employed population.

However important this estimate may be, it would not be so fundamental if this 12% found in the G20 had no specific characteristics compared to the remaining 88%. Without pretending that all the intrinsic characteristics of cooperative employment are unique to cooperatives, their combination is. Indeed, no other type of enterprise can claim to provide employment to so many people and, at the same time, show such resilience to crises and economic downturns and provide such high employment stability and be characterised by such a balanced distribution between urban and rural areas.

It is even more unique to find out that the above characteristics combined with a specific work experience, as it was explained to us by dozens of workers and producers in individual interviews in different regions scattered throughout the world. Such working experience includes a mix of participation, a family-like feeling, strong identification with one's enterprise, a sense of pride and reputation, a feeling of implementing values through one's work, while, at the same time, having a strong awareness of the economic demands of the enterprise. Of course, not all respondents expressed all these components of the working experience with the same strength, but they all proved to experience those aspects in different proportions, at least to some extent. Based on our fieldwork, we obtained some indications that these qualitative components of cooperative employment tends to reinforce the economic sustainability of cooperatives.

The study also shows that worker members, considered as the third category of cooperative

employment alongside employees and self-employed producers, are already a significant portion of the total (11 million) and exhibit characteristics that are particularly conducive to the economic sustainability of cooperatives.

This is particularly important for CICOPA because this third category worker ownership is the main one in the cooperatives of the CICOPA network. It also calls for the development of multi-stakeholder cooperatives, in which the staff are involved as one of the key stakeholders, like in the Mondragon group, in Italian social cooperatives, and in Quebec solidarity cooperatives, to mention a few emblematic cases.

*Cooperatives and Employment: A Global Report* ends with a series of recommendations to policy makers and the cooperative movement itself, aiming at better developing cooperatives around the world, and at helping cooperatives meet the serious challenges they are facing under globalised competition. Considering the worsening situation of employment in the world, especially for the youth, governments can ill-afford to look aside when the cooperative movement can offer a significant part of the solution.

***The full report can be downloaded at the CICOPA website:***

***<http://www.cicopa.coop/Cooperatives-and-Employment-a.html>***





## The Food Sovereignty Campaign

*The Food Sovereignty Campaign has reached an exciting phase. After a few years of grassroots work, including national dialogues on the right to food, we are ready to bring the campaign together on a national basis. The right to food dialogue process culminated in the National Dialogue on the Right to Food, discussed in the article below. Again the call was made for a national campaign platform to initiate action around the issues discussed in the dialogue process. At the end of February, a Food Sovereignty Campaign Assembly was hosted by the SEM and COPAC and the South African Food Sovereignty Alliance launched. The subsequent article is the Declaration of the Assembly and Campaign that was drafted and adopted at the historic Assembly.*

### National Dialogue on the Right to Food Calls for Action from Below

*Nomsa Madikane*



The National Dialogue on the Right to Food was held in Johannesburg in late November 2014. This event was the result of dialogues in all 9 provinces over the previous year that brought together small farmers, community organisations, faith groups and so on to discuss issues as experienced by these groups in relation to food, and ultimately to find a way forward for dealing with these issues.

The objectives of the National Dialogue on the Right to Food were therefore to draw out the meaning of the Right to Food, the relationship to food sovereignty and linkages with the food value chain, land, water, energy and mining struggles. It also aimed to be a platform to hear grassroots voices on the right to

food and contribute to a process of building a food sovereignty movement and national campaign.

The dialogue was about building solidarity and bringing different organisations and movements together from the grassroots, as well as supporting organisations, to understand challenges in relation to the right to food, and to share ideas and network.

A wide range of issues were covered, including the impacts of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) on our food system, high food prices illustrating the extent of commodification of our food supply, the problems with government policies that favour multinationals and large commercial farmers, the lack of land and agrarian reform, and the plight of farmworkers. Alternatives were also discussed, like agroecology, indigenous seed saving and preservation, the solidarity economy and food sovereignty, and so on.

The right to food dialogue was a great experience, where we learned a lot and formed important connections for advancing campaigning. We learned more about food sovereignty, as well as the difference between food sovereignty and food security. To end hunger, we need to advance the food sovereignty alternative to take back control of our food system as farmers, communities, and people. A small group of us even ended the dialogue by hanging a banner for food sovereignty on a bridge over Joe Slovo Drive in Johannesburg.

What was very clear from the participants at the dialogue is that while talking is important, it is critical to move towards action to actually challenge and address all the issues that were raised in the dialogue. It was therefore agreed that the next important step for the process will be the Food Sovereignty Campaign Assembly in February 2015, being hosted by COPAC and the SEM. It was agreed that we have to have a clear platform of action that connects all our struggles in the food system through a campaign process. So a proposed Programme of Action will be discussed at the Food Sovereignty Campaign Assembly.

Viva food sovereignty and the right to food! Viva!

***Nomsa Madikane is a community activist with Abahlali Basemzansi Community Organisation (ABCO) in Katlehong.***

## Declaration of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and Alliance



At a historic Food Sovereignty Assembly, from 28th February till 1st March 2015, over 50 organisations representing the hungry, the landless and the exploited of our country – involved in agrarian, water and land transformation, environmental justice, small scale farming, cooperatives, the solidarity economy movement, waste pickers, the unemployed and activists campaigning against increasing food prices – gathered in Johannesburg to plan the initiation of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and Alliance.

We came together at the Assembly through our shared understanding that we have a crisis-ridden corporate and globalised food system that is responsible for worsening social, health and climate challenges, and which is coinciding with increasing state failure in relation to regulating our food regime and ensuring much needed agrarian transformation.

Moreover, the climate crisis is worsening, without any genuine solutions coming to the fore from the South African state, the corporate-controlled food system and the United Nations. Climate shocks are already impacting negatively on our food system with volatile food prices, droughts, heavy rainfall and flooding. This necessitates advancing food sovereignty, to ensure our food and water needs are not compromised and ordinary citizens have the means to meet food production and consumption needs on their terms in the midst of the climate crisis.

South Africa is also experiencing food riots often times linked to 'service delivery protests', 14 million citizens experiencing hunger, malnutrition, obesity, desperation by aspirant small scale farmers, claims for justice by the landless, increasing precarity of farmworkers, and restricted marine rights for small scale fishers. The Food Sovereignty Assembly affirmed the need to

directly confront these challenges through a unifying national campaign. Such a struggle-driven national Food Sovereignty Campaign is unprecedented in the context of South Africa and has drawn inspiration from local food sovereignty practices and from the rising international movements and alliances championing food sovereignty in different parts of the world, in particular La Via Campesina and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa.

Our campaign seeks to unify struggles on the ground and progressive social forces to ensure food sovereignty is placed on the national agenda and is an alternative way forward for our food system. We are not simply calling for technical solutions for households to access food as encapsulated in the government's recently proposed Food Security and Nutrition Policy and Implementation Plan. We reject the latter and instead are calling for the deep transformation of our food system by breaking the control of food corporations, repositioning the state to realise the Constitutional right to food and as part of creating the conditions and space for the emergence of food sovereignty alternatives from below. In this context mass popular power is essential and hence we welcome the message of support from the NUMSA-led United Front.

### **Attack The Failing Corporate Controlled Food System and Agrarian Structure**

The campaign will challenge the current unjust, unsafe, and unsustainable food system that is dominant in South Africa. We will be guided by a programme of action consisting of phases of rolling action to confront the key contradictions of our food system, namely rising food prices and corporate control, declining nutrition, increasing use of GMOs and corporate control of seeds, lack of land, water, and agrarian reform, destructiveness of industrial agriculture, labour exploitation on farms, and lack of finance for small scale farmers and cooperatives.

To build food sovereignty we need to (1) challenge the country's unequal agrarian structure; (2) call for land audits at local, provincial and national levels; (3) secure land allocations for food sovereignty in villages, towns and cities; (4) win society over to the idea of one farmer-one farm; (5) end the conversion of agricultural land to game farms for the rich; (6) call on churches that own large amounts of land to make it available to the landless (7) struggle against chiefs that stand in the way of land usage, distribution and food sovereignty; and, linked to this, (8) push for and affirm the rights of women to land, the people who



produce most of the world's food.

We will address various demands to capital and the state and we will use our power in our communities, in our farming enterprises, cooperatives, in the streets, and through international solidarity.

We will:

- use symbolic tactics such as public tribunals to spotlight corruption and unfairness in providing finance for small scale farmers and cooperatives, expose greed-driven food price increases and unhealthy food;
- consider dumping rotten produce at government institutions to expose the rot and corruption in such institutions and the failure to address the needs of small scale farmers and community traders;
- march against bread corporations, boycott GMO foods, unhealthy foods and corporate food retailers that persist in selling these foods;
- promote occupation of idle and unused land for agroecological food production;
- demand that 10% of GDP is spent on food sovereignty development;
- demand that the media stop advertising unhealthy foods and show its commitment to healthy and nutritious food for South Africa;
- demand consistent inspections and penalties for labour violations to ensure decent working conditions for farmworkers.

## **Advance Food Sovereignty From Below**

In response to the contradictions of the food system, as manifested in our widespread hunger, we have answers! We believe that small scale farmers, cooperatives, community markets, as part of the solidarity economy, can feed our people, and through the campaign we will promote and highlight practical examples of this. We will highlight and promote the building of seed banks and the defence of local seed systems to ensure that we as farmers and communities control our seed, and therefore life. Through our experiences we will show that agroecology rather than industrial agriculture can feed our communities and country, and nourish our environment. We will highlight, promote and celebrate existing agroecology production that is happening in the country, and conduct learning exchanges to these sites.

We will experiment with and develop alternative forms of finance that are controlled by small scale farmers and cooperatives themselves, including solidarity economy funds and localised saving schemes for productive investment in food sovereignty alternatives. We will champion farmworker rights and models of worker cooperatives in production and consumption to develop worker control in agriculture and the food system. We will uncover, revive and highlight traditional, indigenous and healthy nutrition alternatives that are grounded in local ecologies, cultural tastes, and diversity. A recipe book will be developed to promote these nutritious alternatives.

We will map and link small scale farmers, cooperatives and communities to bring about agrarian transformation and build critical mass. Social media like a food sovereignty app and the Food Sovereignty Campaign webpage will be utilised in this regard to mobilise societal support.

By mobilising local networks we will engage in popular awareness-raising about food sovereignty and the need for organisations and communities to publicly declare their commitments to food sovereignty. We will capture these declarations in a national directory and as part of an ongoing campaigning thrust to build food sovereignty spaces. We will harness community media, online social media, popular education resources, and face-to-face meetings for commitments to food sovereignty.

We will hold food sovereignty festivals to celebrate our local practices of seed sovereignty and preservation, indigenous plant varieties, arts, crafts and culture, local foods and produce from cooperatives, solidarity economy enterprises and small scale farmers. Such festivals will also serve as socialised markets, learning spaces, and communication tools in our society.

To affirm the Constitutional right to food in our society and to shift state power in favour of food sovereignty and to regulate capital, we will champion a Food Sovereignty Act that can control food prices, provide protections to small scale farmers and cooperatives, ensure a socialised market space in the national economy (through, for example, labelling food sovereignty products and proper nutrition labelling of all food), create participatory mechanisms for food producers and consumers to shape the food sovereignty system, de-concentrate the agrarian structure of South Africa, ensure one farmer one farm, enforce nutrition standards, protect indigenous seeds, plant varieties and the free sharing of seed, and ensure South Africa becomes GMO free by banning GMOs. We will challenge the property clause

to ensure access to land. In addition to the Act, we will pursue the implementation of local government regulations and policies to promote the development of food sovereignty. To achieve this we will research international experiences, draft and champion these instruments from below.

We will champion disciplined and commonly agreed actions that coincide with:

- Human Rights Day: 21 March
- International Children's Day : 1 June
- Passing of the infamous 1913 Land Act: 19th June
- International Food Day: 16th October

## Coordinating Committee and Alliance

The FSA elected a representative coordinating committee from the various sectors championing food sovereignty. This committee will coordinate the campaign, facilitate grassroots-driven actions, build capacity and communicate the message of the campaign. The coordinating committee will work in accordance with the principles agreed to at the Assembly and in a manner that builds the Alliance across the country, in various sectors and in communities in a bottom up and democratic manner.

We give a mandate to the coordinating committee to develop and finalise the programme of actions for the priority campaign themes for 2015, namely high food prices and lack of land and agrarian reform, with input from grassroots Alliance partners.

## The Food Crisis and the Case of Bread: Who Benefits From High Food Prices

*Katherine Joynt*

### THE FOOD CRISIS

The high level of inequality between rich and poor in South Africa plays out in patterns of nutrition and hunger. There is enough food to feed the population of 53 million people. Yet shockingly, half of the population is either hungry or at risk of going hungry, while one third of our food goes to waste.

The situation is worsening with high food prices. Over the last year, the cost of a 'food plate' of five items that are most often eaten by poor consumers (maize, brown bread, white sugar, tea, milk) has increased by 12.4%. Brown bread increased massively by 22.8%, milk by 13.2% and tea by 14.3%.

Poor households spend up to 80% of their income on food, but still, cannot afford enough food, let alone healthy food. Poor people, particularly women and children, bear the burden of the food crisis.

### WHY IS THERE A FOOD CRISIS?

High food prices, accompanied by low wages in food production, are as a result of the way we produce, distribute and consume food in our neoliberal capitalist food system.

### Factors contributing to the food crisis include:

- Corporate concentration - a few highly profitable corporates dominate food production and distribution, and make it difficult for small businesses to enter the market.
- Poverty wages and unemployment mean that poor households cannot afford enough food.
- The impact of climate change, which makes it more difficult to grow food.
- The conversion of staple foods (maize and wheat) into biofuels.
- Unhealthy food which is contributing to health crises such as obesity and diabetes.
- A food system that relies on oil and chemicals (pesticides, fertilisers and herbicides) that continue to increase in price and damage the environment.

### BREAD IN SOUTH AFRICA

The case of bread is useful for understanding some of the problems in our food system. Here I refer to mass-produced, branded and packaged bread; Albany (Tiger Consumer Brands), Blue Ribbon (Premier Foods), Sasko and Duens (Pioneer Foods) and Sunbake (Foodcorp), that make up almost 60% of bread sales.





## Why bread?

Bread is a staple food for poor people. There is an increase in demand for bread with people moving from rural areas to cities where convenience foods that do not need cooking are popular. Every year about 62 loaves of bread are eaten per person. Daily in Gauteng alone, people eat almost a quarter of a loaf of bread each. After maize, bread is the second biggest staple food in terms of energy but consumers spend more money on bread than on maize.

## Is our bread healthy?

The African Centre for Biosafety revealed last year that there is unlabelled genetically modified (GM) soy in our white bread. GM soy is sprayed with herbicides that contain glyphosates that kill weeds but also end up in our food. Eating glyphosates is linked to kidney failure and spontaneous miscarriages.

In 2014 it was also revealed that some of our bread contained Azodicarbonamide (ADA), a chemical that is found in shoes to make them elastic (e.g. Sasko which has now removed ADA). If consumed, ADA is associated with problems with breathing.

Further, why does our bread not go stale? Bread that goes stale usually has high levels of healthy protein (enzymes). If bread does not go stale it is possible that healthy enzymes have been removed to make the bread last longer.

## Corporate concentration in bread

For 59 years the bread chain was heavily regulated to the point where the United Party and the apartheid government actively shut down small mills and bakeries in the name of efficiency. This benefitted a few large milling and baking corporates. After 1994 the ANC-led government deregulated the economy. Now these large bread corporates continue to benefit, beyond the regulatory reach of the government, without competition from smaller bakeries and mills.

We now have powerful concentration throughout the bread chain, with only two main wheat seed companies; 3800 wheat farms, many of whom are battling to compete globally; four large storage companies; four large millers that also own the four large bakeries; and four retailers that dominate the market.

Many of these corporates are making large profits while paying very low wages and charging high prices for food that poor consumers buy. To make matters worse, there is anti-competitive behaviour amongst many of these corporates.

For example, in 2007/08 the Competition Commission revealed that there was collusion between the four big bread mills and bakeries who were price-fixing. Corporates that illegally fix prices are profiting massively and unfairly at the expense of poor people.

## CONCLUSION

Poor consumers and workers are being squeezed for profits and are taking on the risks of this neoliberal capitalist food system. It is clear that this broken food system is not socially, environmentally or politically sustainable.

***Katherine Joynt is a PhD student in Sociology at Wits University, studying power in the wheat-to-bread value chain in South Africa. For the full version of the above article, including references, you can email Katherine at [kath.joynt@gmail.com](mailto:kath.joynt@gmail.com)***

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## Africa's Land and Seed Laws Under Attack

*Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa*



The lobby to industrialise food production in Africa is not only pouring money into plantation projects on the ground, it is changing African laws to serve foreign agribusiness as well. This is the main finding of a new report from the civil society organisations Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and GRAIN.

The report, "Land and seed laws under attack", documents who is pushing what changes in these two battlegrounds across Africa. Washington DC, home to the World Bank, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the US Agency for International Development, stands out the biggest source of pressure to privatise African farm resources right now. But Europe, through the European Union and various donor mechanisms, is also deeply involved,

providing funds and legal frameworks like the plant patenting scheme known as UPOV.

Privatising land and seeds is essential for the corporate model to flourish in Africa. With regard to agricultural land, this means pushing for the official demarcation, registration and titling of farms. It also means making it possible for foreign investors to lease or own land on a long-term basis. With regard to seeds, it means having governments require that seeds be registered in an official catalogue in order to circulate. It also means introducing intellectual property rights over plant varieties and criminalising farmers who disregard them. In all cases, the end goal is to turn what has long been a commons in Africa into a marketable commodity that the private sector can control and profit from at the expense of small farmers and rural communities.

“More than 80% of all seed in Africa is produced and disseminated through informal seed systems, that is, on-farm seed saving and exchange between farmers,” points out Bridget Mugambe of AFSA. “Marginalising and criminalising farmers’ seeds through UPOV and by introducing strict marketing regimes will be great for multinational seed companies but a disaster for our small family farmers,” she says.

The land privatisation agenda is also quite threatening. “In the name of land securitisation, which may sound great to vulnerable rural communities, donors and African governments are actually pushing to create Western-type land markets based on formal instruments like titles and leases that can be traded in one way or another,” explains Ange David Baïmey of GRAIN. “In fact, the explicit aim of many initiatives, such as the G8 New Alliance, is to secure investors’ rights to land.”

The thinking is to make Africa more attractive to business. But this will only erode the rights of rural communities prevent them from continuing to serve as the backbone of the region’s food and farming systems.

The report, “Land and seed laws under attack: Who is pushing changes in Africa?” is available at [grain.org/e/5121](http://grain.org/e/5121)

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**AFSA**, the Alliance For Food Sovereignty in Africa, is a Pan African platform comprising networks and farmer organisations working in Africa. AFSA members represent small holder farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, citizens and environmentalists from Africa who possess a strong voice that shapes policy on the continent in the area of community rights, family farming, promotion of traditional knowledge and the environment.

**GRAIN** is a small international non-profit organisation that works to support small farmers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems.

**Article Source:** <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/advocacy/93807>

## **P6: Enacting Cooperative Values and Constructing New Food Value Chains**

*Ruby Levine*



Principle Six (P6) provides a pathway for everyday people to use our cooperatively owned community institutions to move money into the hands of small, local, and cooperative businesses. We believe that small, local producers are the backbone of healthy and sustainable regional food systems everywhere. We believe cooperatives are a powerful model for creating economies based on equity, democracy, and community-based economic development here, nationally and internationally.

Through P6, we’re re-investing in the work grocery co-ops across the country have been doing for the last 30 years, which is building social justice and sustainability in the food system. Co-ops built the



natural and organic marketplace, but over time incredible consolidation has occurred in our food system. Large corporations now own, control, and profit from a vast percentage of the natural and organic food industry. P6 examines ownership and control and redirects profit to producers who create the kind of food system we want to support by focusing on small, local, cooperative producers.

Let's take a step back and think about what co-ops actually are. Co-ops exist in every sector, well beyond grocery alone. A cooperative is, at its most basic, a business that is owned and controlled by the people who use and/or provide its products and services. Those people can be its customers (as in most grocery co-ops), its workers (as in worker co-ops) or its producers (as in farmers producer co-ops). Any type of business can be a cooperative, from electric utilities to bike shops to bakeries and farms to natural food stores.

Cooperatives look very different in different places. While co-op law and regulation varies geographically, the International Cooperative Alliance, an international body that pre-dates the UN, upholds seven cooperative principles that guide co-op enterprises across the world:

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Members' economic participation
4. Autonomy and independence
5. Education, training, and information
6. Cooperation among cooperatives
7. Concern for community

At P6, we are putting the sixth cooperative principle, "cooperation among cooperatives", into action. At the core, we work to promote an economic system that operates according to the cooperative values: one where we are able to choose how to earn our livelihoods, where we have power over our financial lives, and where we are able to make decisions that allow others to do the same.

Co-ops are a key tool for community wealth-building because they are self-help organizations. People find places where a need is going unfilled in their community, whether it's a need for jobs with dignity, for electricity, for healthy food, or for a distribution network.

The electrification of rural America could not have taken place without the formation of rural electric

cooperatives, started by people who were meeting their own needs when big corporations said bringing them service wasn't worth it. Coffee growers across Latin America and Africa fight back against plantations and unfair wages by owning coffee farms and accessing markets cooperatively. In many communities across the country, people in the 1960s and 1970s bulk ordered foods like brown rice and whole wheat flour and sold them at cost to their neighbors off their back porches. Some of those bulk-buying groups turned into food cooperatives, filling a need in those communities for access to healthy food.

Since that time, many other grocery stores have followed the lead of food cooperatives and started providing organic, fair trade, and "natural" options. While there are unquestionably positives of the broadening appeal of these products, the terms also become weakened by being broadly applied, especially by the big corporate retailers who saw a market opportunity. P6 therefore emerged to fill a need felt among grocery co-ops to find a way to distinguish our cooperative values from others who are picking up the work co-ops started to promote natural foods. There is often a perception that sustainable and small, organic and local go hand in hand. But as food corporations have jumped on the organic bandwagon shows, buying organic doesn't necessarily build a more fair or, in reality, sustainable economy. Labels like "organic" or "fair trade" that function at a national or international level are extremely



Labels like “organic” or “fair trade” that function at a national or international level are extremely important. The federally regulated standards for “organic” ensure that your carrot was grown without synthetic pesticides whether you buy it at the corner store, at the superstore, or from your farmer. P6 adds something else: accountability for the economic impact of your purchase. Every product labelled P6 at your co-op is researched by the workers at that store who share your values for supporting small, local, and cooperative producers.

The P6 program provides a co-op peer network where grocery co-ops and cooperative producers share resources and ideas. Additionally, P6 co-ops are finding other ways to build on the value of cooperation among cooperatives. Equal Exchange is hosting a program called Grow Together to help a specific cashew farmers cooperative called APRAINORES Co-op. P6 members Seward and Eastside are both participating and dedicating \$0.50 per pound of cashews sold to help these farmers rebuild. In Indiana, P6 member Bloomingfoods is part of a cross-sector cooperative collaboration with the local cooperative electric utility and credit union.

There are many great examples of producers that get the P6 label. Rochdale Farms in Wisconsin is a cooperative of dairy processors making yogurt, butter, and cheese that sell together under one label and buy milk from small farmers. Equal Exchange, which founded the P6 program originally, is a worker cooperative that buys coffee, chocolate, and other international goods from cooperative farmers. P6 also includes the kind of local family farms co-op shoppers often seek to support, including new farms like Villines Family Farms in Arkansas and long-standing farmers like Bud Smith, who has been growing melons in Indiana for 80 years.

The cooperative tradition is a long and proud one. Cooperative grocery stores have worked to advance the natural foods movement while providing a day-to-day example of cooperative economics to communities around the country. P6 is a next step, bringing our cooperative values beyond our store structures and into our purchases. We’re raising awareness of food economics to the surface and helping stores set goals to do more sourcing from P6 producers, creating a real economic impact. For example, in 2014, 40% of total store sales at P6 member Seward Co-op went to P6 producers, meaning \$13.2 million in sales of small, local, cooperative products.

P6 is about more than changing spending patterns. P6 is about building relationships, re-creating networks, developing new supply chains, exploring

ingredient sourcing, opening deeper conversations, and searching out the untold stories in our food system. P6 is about participation and encouraging customers, producers, and co-op staff to consider how their daily decisions can change the food system we build together.

To learn more about P6, visit their website at [p6.coop](http://p6.coop).

**Article Source:** <http://www.geo.coop/story/p6-enacting-cooperative-values>





## **Worker Cooperative Alternative Campaign – Create Work Through Worker Cooperatives!**

# **Fight Unemployment ! Create Work Through Worker Cooperatives !**

The key proposal of the Worker Cooperative Alternative Campaign is to focus on public policy demands for a national Worker Cooperative Act, build the campaign from below, link the Worker Cooperative Campaign and Food Sovereignty Campaign and mobilise resources to support solidarity economy cooperative fund mechanisms. COPAC has developed a host of materials to support such demands and can be used to build activist capacity around such demands. Such demands can be targeted at national, provincial and local government.

The following are initial components of the campaign:

### **1. National Worker Cooperative Committee for public policy submission for a Worker Cooperative Act**

- a. Formulation of demands for legislation supporting worker cooperatives
- b. Organisations to make submissions to committee
- c. Case studies and research

### **2. Movements and SEM to Take Forward the Campaign**

All movements, community organisations and support organisations to take forward the various support tools developed in the SE schools to build local worker cooperatives and advance the campaign locally. In particular the forthcoming worker cooperative activist guide will be used extensively on the ground. In addition, other tools can also be pulled off the COPAC webpage:

- a. Groundwork training tools
- b. Aftercare training tools
- c. Self-management and governance tools
- d. Movement networking and building tools

### **3. Link the Worker Cooperative Campaign with Food Sovereignty Campaign**

SEM activists and forces need to link these two campaigns on the ground. The links include the fact that worker cooperatives provide an important alternative for constructing control over food production and food sovereignty. The advancement of the two campaigns thus have close linkages.

### **4. Resourcing and Fund Raising**

- a. Develop methodology for Solidarity Economy Fund.
- b. Submission of proposals to various state grant funding agencies to support and stream funding to the national solidarity economy fund
- c. Issue a call to unions and other progressive organisations to support the campaign and provide funds to the national solidarity economy fund
- d. Worker cooperatives need to contribute to the national fund in how they use loan finance from the fund. National fund budget and finance mechanism to be developed.
- e. Implementation strategy for financing pilot worker cooperatives nationally
- f. Use SEM-COPAC webpage to raise donor funds

## Activist School on Worker Cooperatives Builds Momentum for Campaign

At the beginning of December 2014 COPAC and the SEM hosted a national activist school on worker cooperatives. It brought together 60 activists from the SEM to achieve the following objectives:



- Develop capacity to build and support worker cooperatives
- Lay the basis for rolling out the worker cooperative campaign
- Test and refine the activist guide being developed on how to set up and consolidate a worker cooperative

For 3 days participants worked in groups to go through the steps of setting up a worker cooperative. They together decided what 'imaginary' (or real) worker cooperative they wanted to set up and worked through the groundwork of concept design,



feasibility assessment, business planning, strategy development, and constitutional arrangements. They also touched on the steps for start-up and consolidation.

Overall, the school was a magnetic space of commitment, excitement and learning, and feedback was generally that the school was an eye-opener and had significant impact on how activists and participants thought about cooperatives and how to establish them. Already activists have been reporting back on how they are using the skills obtained at the school in their daily work, such as with supporting worker cooperatives in their area.





## Activist Resources to Build the Solidarity Economy From Below

### Resource Website: [geo.coop](http://www.geo.coop)

Grassroots Ecomic Organising (GEO) is a website of resources devoted to worker cooperatives and the solidarity economy. It provides a range of news, analysis, and practical tools on worker cooperatives and the solidarity economy. It is based in the United States, but it also provides international news, plus the concept and practice of cooperatives and the solidarity economy have universal applicability! Explore the website to further understand the worker cooperative alternative and for tools that assist in establishing and strengthening worker cooperatives at [www.geo.coop](http://www.geo.coop).

### Movies

#### ***Own the Change: Building Economic Democracy One Worker Co-op at a Time***

This short movie looks at understanding what a worker cooperative is, its potential in creating a different economy and society, and what it takes to establish one. It covers the experiences of worker owners themselves in understanding how they established their cooperatives, why, the challenges they faced and the changes they see being created by their worker cooperative. It is a great film for understanding practically the worker cooperative alternative and its potential. You can watch the film at <http://www.geo.coop/story/own-change>.

#### ***Occupy, Resist, Produce: RiMaflow***

*A Film by Dario Azzellini and Oliver Ressler*

The Maflow plant in Trezzano sul Naviglio, located on the industrial periphery of Milan in Italy, was part of the Italian transnational car parts producer Maflow, one of the most important manufacturers of air conditioning tubes worldwide. Far from suffering consequences of the crisis and with enough clients to keep producing, Maflow closed in 2009 following fraudulent bankruptcy. The workers of the plant in Milan, Maflow's main production facility, began a struggle to reopen the plant and keep their jobs. They occupied the plant and held spectacular protests on the plant's roof. Because of their struggle Maflow was offered to new investors. In October 2010 the Maflow group was sold to the Polish investor Boryszew. Without ever restarting production the new owner closed the plant in Milan in December 2012, removing most of the machinery.

In February 2013 former Maflow workers occupied the plant, and together with precarious workers and workers from a nearby factory. The 20 workers participating full time in the project completely reinvented themselves and the factory. They started recycling computers and electronic household devices, opened a bar and cafeteria, organised a flea market and cultural activities with the community, and have built alliances with local organic agricultural producers and together they have created a group for solidarity shopping. They plan to transform the factory into a plant for industrial recycling. As former Maflow worker Mariarosa Missaglia explains, their aim is to "get the factory back on its feet without an employer; show that even without an employer this can be achieved".

At the same time the workers want to stay connected to other struggles. "We think our experience cannot be a happy island, where we get our income and organize ourselves," explains Gigi Malabarba, worker and participant in RiMaflow, "We can win if we are part of a larger struggle and increase tenfold and a hundredfold experiences such as these, to nurture the idea that another economy is possible. If the economy of the bosses is in crisis, we need to develop a different idea of economics".

"Occupy, Resist, Produce – RiMaflow" follows the workers in their day to day activities and discussions as well as in their political and strategic debates. Go and watch the film at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyhVdoK1g10>.

## contact us

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We invite organisations and activists to make contributions to the Newsletter by writing stories, contributing photographs or cultural contributions, such as poetry, art, songs etc.

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**All back issues of the Solidarity Economy News are available on our website.**