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Editorial

The Climate Emergency: Disruption and Rebellion Are Now a Matter of Life and Death

Vishwas Satgar

The taken-for-granted, business-as-usual world, is upside down. We now live in a world where the self-destruction of capitalism (a good thing) and all living life forms (a terrible thing) are integrally connected. The destruction of everything is becoming a realistic prospect as global climate heating and breakdown intensifies. To stop the destruction of everything, we have to go beyond capitalism.

Consider some of the recent facts.

The temperatures in July were the hottest ever recorded. Alaska's sea ice melted for the first time in recorded history. Hurricane Dorian, the strongest storm to make landfall in the Bahamas, left in its wake massive devastation, thus far 50 people dead and a big debt. Western Europe, with France mainly bearing the brunt of a recent heatwave, also broke historical records. A drought is spreading across big parts of France.

In Africa, water stress related to heating temperatures is affecting millions in the Sahel, Kenya, Somalia, Zimbabwe and parts of South Africa. According to some estimates 200 million people in Africa will be displaced by continued heating in the coming decades. Forced mass migration requires human solidarity, not xenophobia. It requires a climate justice understanding of how climate shocks will hit the poorest countries and communities the hardest, yet they did not create this problem.

Much of this crisis is driven by carbon dioxide emissions of big polluting countries and industries. A bit of background here will help you understand the crisis. In July 1958, Dr Charles Keeling started measuring the amount of carbon dioxide in Earth's atmosphere. His research confirmed that more and

more carbon is concentrating in the Earth's atmosphere, contributing to the "greenhouse" effect. The growing volume of carbon in the atmosphere traps more of the sunlight hitting planet Earth and this induces heating. More carbon in the atmosphere means more heating. Back in 1958, Keeling's initial measurement placed carbon concentration at 313 parts per million (ppm). Scientists consider 350 ppm a safe threshold to secure a stable climate. We are now at 415.70 ppm, the highest concentration of atmospheric CO₂ in human history. Because of US President Donald Trump's flagrant denialism, in 2018 we saw soaring carbon emission again – in the midst of the crisis. He is preparing the perfect storm for the world. But as we know, Trump has his fans and followers amongst the new right emerging in the world.

Again, in defiance of the science, the slash and burn modernising approach of President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil is destroying the equivalent of three football fields every minute in the Amazon. One of the world's most important green lungs, containing 120 billion tons of carbon locked into trees, is being incinerated to advance carbon-centric (oil, gas and coal) industrial farming, mining and logging.

For over two decades the world's leading climate scientists have warned about the dangers of climate change and breakdown through the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The [UN 1.5 Celsius report](#) released in October 2018, raised the alarm bells the loudest. It confirmed our world had changed fundamentally. There has been a 1°C increase of temperatures since before the industrial revolution. As a result, the report warned, extreme weather shocks will become our new normal. Increasingly the relatively stable climate we have had for about 11,000 years is being disrupted.



South Africa is becoming a frontline for the climate crisis

In South Africa, on 23 October 2018, the SA Food Sovereignty Campaign wrote an [open letter](#) that called on President Cyril Ramaphosa to convene an emergency sitting of Parliament to deliberate on the UN 1.5°C report and its implications for South Africa's climate policy and just transition. Ramaphosa didn't respond. Instead, he chose to feign concern and alarm when a ["rain bomb"](#) and consequent flooding killed about 70 people in April 2019 in Durban.

Events like this, as well as the drought that still ravages parts of South Africa, confirm we are living in a climate emergency which needs political leadership that understands the imperatives that come with this reality. The scientific observations about our planet's climate are now registering in everyday life.

Let me be clear, calling for recognition of the climate emergency by the government is about validating the science and affirming clear policy commitments to advance just transitions that will place the interests of workers, the poor, the vulnerable and eco-systems at the centre of socio-ecological transformation. It is about staying within an ambitious carbon budget. Thus far, South Africa's national plan seeks to reduce emissions from 500 million tons annually and which is meant to be limited in aggregate to 14 gigatons of carbon in total by 2050. This is likely to be undermined, given our addiction to fossil fuels. As the science of climate change warns us, this plan is not ambitious enough. We need to deepen people-driven leadership of such a challenge and our nationally determined carbon budget.

Moreover, such a state has to be driven by democratising logics from below in households,

communities and workplaces that are advancing just transitions. Embracing climate justice domestically is also about advancing such commitments at the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and the United Nations. It is about recognising the common cause to stop the risk of extinction of all life on planet Earth.

Put differently, recognition of a climate emergency should not be about suspending the Constitution, rights and democratic accountability. Such an approach to the climate emergency ignores the history of "states of emergency" in South Africa that used the logic and argument of a state of exception to further brutalise and oppress the majority. In the shift towards authoritarian neo-liberalism and neo-fascism in the world, calls for climate emergencies that deny people-led democratic politics are extremely dangerous.

Moreover, in crisis-ridden market democracies, the state is already weak. According to respected academics like Jane Duncan, intelligence-led policing in South Africa is failing, and leading to abuses of power. The Marikana massacre was a tragic example in this regard.

Right to Know activists, like Dale McKinley, remind us that despite the repeal of many apartheid laws, significant coercive pieces of legislation from the old order, such as the *Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956*, *National Key Points Act of 1980*, the *Protection of Information Act of 1982* and the *Intimidation Act of 1982* are still utilised by the post-apartheid state.

Married to corruption in South Africa, the ANC state cannot be trusted to lead the just transition and address the worsening climate crisis. We need to build pressure from below to shift society to address our climate crisis. We need serious political will, but it seems to be missing. So, for example, when



children marched to Parliament and the Union Buildings recently, inspired by Greta Thunberg and [#FridaysForFuture](#), Ramaphosa's response was normalisation. He paid lip service to the demands of our youth but maintained a business as usual narrative including focusing on preventing the death spiral of Eskom.

A cruel irony.

Accepting that we face a worsening climate crisis but then normalising it as part of business as usual practice and routinising it within everyday forms of rule has also become commonplace with other governments in the world, including those that have adopted climate emergency resolutions. This way the climate crisis becomes one among many issues that governments are concerned about, despite the threat it poses to everything and the growing urgency through climate shocks including droughts, cyclones, heatwaves, wildfires and rising sea levels. Managed normalcy, maintaining certainties and assumptions, is manipulative and will not prepare our societies for the challenges ahead.

In South Africa an alternative to either "normalcy" or the risks of draconian measures associated with a state of emergency is the Climate Justice Charter process, that has been convened by the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (Copac), a vibrant alliance partner of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign. Our aim is to demand that Parliament adopt a Climate Justice Charter under [s234](#) of the Constitution which says that: "In order to deepen the culture of democracy established by the Constitution, Parliament may adopt Charters of Rights consistent with the provisions of the Constitution."

And then that it acts continually and consistently to address the climate crisis.

No choice but to disrupt

We are far from the recognition of the climate emergency, which is why climate justice politics has to advance societal scale disruption on three fronts. First, the disruption of "managed normalcy" from above through the media and political narratives that are disseminated into our public spheres by our politicians. The real stakes about climate crisis urgency and systemic alternatives have to be heard and understood by millions of people.

This requires an effective symbolic politics.

A crucial example is Greta Turnberg's [#FridaysForFuture](#) movement and the [Extinction Rebellion](#) now spreading across the world. These movements are calling for decisive action from governments and elites on the climate crisis. So far, they have successfully made the breakthrough into the media mainstream and are shifting discourses about climate crisis urgency, extinction and the importance for democratic citizens' action. Second, strategic disruption against carbon capital and its fractions (extraction, production, consumption, transport and public sector). This means disrupting and more importantly gridlocking fossil fuel corporations, financiers, airlines, shipping industries, cement-making, industrial farming and other carbon-centric economic circuits. Central to this intervention will be naming, shaming and criminalising practices destroying human and non-human life – what we call ecocide – by placing profits before concern with saving and sustaining our planetary commons. In this regard, the struggles of the Indigenous are crucial.

Indigenous peoples in the Amazon, about one million, facing ecocide from the Bolsonaro government are continuing to advance their struggle to defend their ecosystems since the first colonial encounter 500 years ago. Their intimate and deep connection with the web of life is up against industrial food corporations, logging, mining



and financial interests that stand behind the destruction of the Amazon.

In this context, powerful allies of the Indigenous are calling for consumer boycotts of corporations such as Walmart, Subway, McDonald's and others that have interests in slash and burn industrial agriculture. Such a boycott will strategically disrupt the continued destruction of the Amazon and hit corporations hard where it matters.

Third, disruption through finding systemic exits from ecocidal capitalism is crucial. This means building from below, now, the systems that can sustain life and aggregating these practices into a political project. This includes the "common-ing" of life-giving resources; establishing [food sovereignty pathways](#) in communities, villages, towns and cities; socially owned renewable energy through co-operatives and municipalisation; democratic planning in communities; clean energy; effective public transport systems; and decarbonising big institutions like universities, schools and more.

All of this is about shifting society towards a deep, just transition, led from below. This is beyond lobbying but about taking the fight to those endangering our life world and breaking with the ecocidal logic of capitalism.

US Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders, has recently provided an inspiring example in this regard. His detailed [proposals](#) for a \$16.3-trillion "Green New Deal" (GND), supported by various movements, advances the most hopeful political project of our time. This GND is not about the classical class compromise between labour and capital. Instead, it is about uniting the precarious 99% in US society against the voracious 1%. It is about ambitiously reducing US emissions by 71% by 2030, through transforming energy, transport, infrastructure and agriculture; through democratic systemic reforms

that bring the people into the transition process and create 20 million jobs (unemployment is currently at six million in the US).

Sanders also recognised developed countries' complicity in the crisis facing developing countries and therefore proposes to provide \$200-billion to the [Global Climate Fund](#) and wants to assist developing countries to reduce emissions by 36% by 2030. In short, Sanders' GND is about a political project anchored in systemic transformation led from below, geopolitics of climate justice and an exit from ecocidal global capitalism.

The Global Climate Strike

In this context, the call by Greta Thunberg and the #FridaysForFuture movement for a global [climatestrike](#) on 20 September is a crucial opportunity to deepen convergences and display mass power against carbon capital. In this context, #ClimatestrikeSA and #ClimateJusticeSA will be marked by numerous actions across South Africa on 20 September from Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and other local communities. Coming out of planning with children's organisations in South Africa, the Climate Justice Charter process will be targeting Sasol's headquarters in Sandton on 20 September 20 at a national level. Sasol is the 45th highest carbon emitter in the world. One of our core demands is for Sasol to put forward a just transition plan that meets the needs of workers, affected communities, the country, the continent and the world. Sasol owes us all a climate debt as it assists us to achieve net-zero emissions. There is a growing realisation that we need a movement more powerful than the anti-apartheid movement. Such a movement also has to be networked into an alliance, locally embedded and nationally coordinated in struggle. Moreover, such a movement has to have a clear vision, principles and systemic alternatives it champions in society. In this context, we would argue, the Climate



Justice Charter being developed through grassroots input is crucial.

There are many organisations that have a history of standing up for environmental justice in South Africa by marrying the needs of working-class communities to the struggle for better ecological conditions. This includes environmental justice organisations (such as Earthlife Africa, GroundWork, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance); anti-mining organisations (WOMIN, MACUA); food sovereignty (SAFSC, Copac); social justice (Equal Education, the Treatment Action Campaign, Unemployed People's Movements, Children's Resources Centre, student organisations); labour (most trade union federations) agrarian sector organisations, community organisations, progressive media and faith-based organisations.

But whether you consider yourself an activist or not, whether you are part of an organisation or not, this is a crucial moment to unite and lay the basis for ongoing climate justice struggle.

See you on the streets. We are running out of time.

International News

Co-op Movement Sets Out Plans at the General Assembly

Anca Voinea

Global cooperative movement pledges to promote positive peace

The ICA General Assembly has adopted a declaration in which it reiterates its commitment to "peace, wellbeing and prosperity for all". The resolution explains the concept of positive peace, which, according to peace scholar Johan Galtung, is

related to the good contributions in the community, particularly cooperation and integration, reconciliation and equality. Positive peace needs to be differentiated from negative peace, which relates to the absence of violence. Submitted by the ICA board, the resolution calls on the movement to uphold and deepen its commitment to positive peace and call on all of their members to strengthen their action to build positive peace based on the ICA's Agenda of Cooperative Action for Positive Peace.

The ICA has been committed to peace from its inception and has expressed its position through a number of resolutions, beginning with the 1901 ICA Resolution on Peace adopted at the Manchester Congress. "The cooperative movement, with its cooperatives, cooperators, support and representative organizations, beyond creeds and political traditions, has sustained since its origins its commitment to positive peace, as the goal and means to build a society founded on the values of democracy, equality, solidarity, participation and concern for the community," says the resolution. "Conflicts derive from unmet human needs and aspirations, whereas cooperatives have the mission to respond to human needs and aspirations, including aspirations for a better future, more inclusive, more sustainable, more participative and more prosperous for all."

ICA looks at developing accounting standards for cooperatives

The ICA General Assembly adopted a motion to develop accounting standards for cooperatives. Submitted by Co-operatives UK and seconded by Kooperationen in Denmark, the motion calls upon the ICA to engage with members and experts to explore the case, costs and benefits, for the potential development over time of a cooperative statement of recommended practices. Such a standard would permit cooperatives to focus their



reporting on their performance in line with cooperative values and principles. Ed Mayo, Secretary-General of Cooperatives UK said: “There has been a race towards global accounting standards in recent years, but with a single-minded focus on shareholder firms and the needs of their investors. “Two challenges co-operatives increasingly face in the process are around accounting for member capital and co-op dividend. The first risks making co-ops appear far more fragile than they are, as member equity may be treated as a liability. The second treats member dividends as an expense, i.e. a reduction in sales rather than a distribution of profit.” The motion recognises the importance of the ongoing work of the Audit and Risk Committee of the ICA (IARAC), and of The Centre of Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Cooperatives at the University of St Mary’s in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Mr Mayo added: “While this is a technical field, the resolution is a permission slip to explore the case for appropriate guidelines or possibly even a new framework for co-operatives (a Statement of Recommended Practice, or SORP) at the international level. This work owes a huge debt to the efforts of Professor Daphne Rixon of the University of St Mary’s in Canada and Dr Maureen McCulloch, of Oxford Brookes University and an Associate of Co-operatives UK. “It will take time and consultation to explore this further and any work will need to take into account the needs of co-operatives and mutuals across countries and in all their diversity. Most accounting, such as the valuation of assets, is perfectly appropriate. We need to focus on the specific areas of accounting where the member-owned model needs a different interpretation.

“We need a financial language that allows us to express our performance as co-operatives.

Otherwise it is like being asked to write poetry in a language that you do not speak.”

ICA GA approves guidelines for a new strategic document

With the Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade coming to an end in 2020, the global cooperative movement adopted the guidelines for a new strategic document to lead cooperatives into the next decade. The strategic plan examines ICA’s Purpose and Mission in the face of the challenges facing the world, while looking at how to strengthen the Cooperative Identity in this new decade. It also acknowledges the 2020 vision as set out in the Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade and proposes to extend it to 2030. The strategy focuses on four key themes: promotion of cooperative identity, growth of the cooperative movement, cooperation among cooperatives and contribution to sustainable development, all of which expand on the five pillars of the Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade. Members of the Assembly also made suggestions on how to enhance the document, which is currently being finalized.

Reports from President and Director General

2019 has been a year full of activity for the ICA. President Ariel Guarco reported visiting 100 members in 40 countries from all over the world since he assumed the Presidency while also engaging with international organisations such as UN bodies. Over the course of the year the ICA has worked on coordinating with regions and sectors and established a working group among members to better coordinate with regions and sectors. Other events included signing the ICA-ILO MoU and celebrating the International Day of Cooperatives at the United Nations. In a major win, the movement was able to ensure the ILO’s Centenary Declaration on the future of work included a reference to cooperatives. Through the ICA the movement was also represented at the EU Policy Forum on



Development. Mr Guarco said: “The complexity of the social, economic and political conflicts asks us to express our view and show publicly to governments as well as communities that the cooperative model offers real answers generates job and contributes to social peace.”

Youth resolution adopted in Kigali

At its General Assembly, the International Co-operative Alliance adopted a resolution from its Youth Network, asking the ICA board to review the bylaws, articles and budget regarding youth. The resolution calls for the inclusion, with voting rights, of a youth representative on the boards of the ICA regions. The Africa and Americas regions already have youth representation on their boards. It also suggests including the youth action plan in the ICA global strategy, with an allocated budget. “Young people are ready for action and looking for support and guidance to best channel their energies,” reads the resolution. The network also recommends support for youth representatives so they can attend international ICA events, as well as a yearly in-person meetings of the youth committee. Technology can also make the Youth Network more accessible, adds the resolution, which calls for more inclusive tools and bylaws to foster the wider youth participation. The Youth Network was set up in 2003 to help young co-operators from different countries to share experiences and engage with the rest of the movement.

Originally published in:
<https://www.thenews.coop/143449/topic/development/coop-movement-sets-out-plans-at-the-general-assembly/>

How Can Agri Co-ops Deal with Climate Change, Tough Markets and Brexit

Miles Hadfield

The co-op movement is committed to the UN's sustainable development goals – the second of which is “zero hunger”, calling for the world to be fed – in a sustainable manner. It's ambitious goal, balancing a fair and reliable food supply with the need to tackle climate change and protect forestry and other delicate ecosystems.

This adds to pressure on an global industry which faces environmental changes, price volatility, technological advances, fierce market competition and – in the UK and Ireland – Brexit. Here, we look at how agri co-ops are prepared for some of the key issues of the day ...

Environment and sustainability

Severe weather incidents – linked by many to climate change – are affecting farmers around the world; [last year European dairy co-op Arla announced it was giving all its profits to farmers hit by drought](#) and in the US, farm co-ops are taking measures to help members affected by floods. In Thailand last month, the ministry of agriculture and co-operatives announced a programme of assistance for drought-stricken farmers, after declaring the affected area a disaster zone. Deputy minister Thammanat Prompao, said this would mean filling reservoirs through rain-making aircraft, and using army technicians to drill for groundwater. The government will also offer compensation and debt relief to farmers, with funding, career development and water resource programmes being drawn up for members of the 734 co-ops which have registered interest in the scheme.



Meanwhile, in India's Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Goa regions, farmers are being given help after severe floods. Alongside mitigation comes prevention, stubble burning has been a major factor in severe air pollution affecting cities like Delhi – but farmers' co-ops in Haryana, Punjab, UP and NCR have worked together to reduce the practice.

Trilochan Mohapatra, director general of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, says the coordinated effort by the co-ops saw a huge reduction in crop residue burning last year – with nearly 3,500 co-ops in the state of Punjab along working to check stubble burning in 8,000 paddy growing villages. Addressing media in New Delhi, Mohapatra said the paddy residue burning events have reduced by 15% and 41% in 2018 as compared to that in 2017 and 2016. And more than 4500 villages in Punjab and Haryana have been declared Zero Stubble Burning Villages during 2018, with not a single crop burning incident reported. Awareness campaigns have been conducted through thousands of demonstrations, putting up hoardings, banners and wall paintings all across the states, and mass awareness programmes in village in schools. In other agri sectors, livestock farming is a particular area of concern, with the UN estimating that it accounts for 18% of the greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. As reported in Co-op News, agri co-op organisations like the [Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society](#) (SAOS) are working with researchers to develop more sustainable animal feed which will lower emissions. But co-ops elsewhere have been accused of being too slow to take up the baton – for instance in Ireland, where farm co-ops have been urged to promote the use of protected urea and low-protein meal. Denis Drennan, chair of the [Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association](#) (ICMSA), has told the Irish trade press: "We're beginning to become a little concerned about the disconnect between co-

ops' stated position on the need for more climate-efficient farming and the reality.

"Increased use of lime and protected urea on farms alongside using meals with lower crude protein contents at grass are areas we should focus on to lower greenhouse gas emissions on farms. "We do not consider any of those changes to be controversial among farmers – but we need co-op support, particularly at the 'sales' end, to encourage their uptake." He added that, while there has been "noisy agreement" from co-ops on changes that are needed, "at store level we're just not seeing the sales staff actively offering the environmentally safer products and giving the farmers the positive choices that they should be offered". He added: "There is a perception of a conflict of interest among co-ops where – on one hand they want to see milk produced more sustainably, but on the other hand strive to make easy sales. "It is only to be expected that individual salespeople are more concentrated on reaching their targets rather than offering their customers the best options that we all know must be actively promoted." Mr Drennan said that while the ICMSA supports other climate-friendly measures such as solar panels and variable speed pumps, it is still important to get the basics right. "We need to see the co-ops really pushing and actively promoting feeds with less crude protein while at grass, and the spreading of protected urea. And that message has to go down to the sales staff," he added.

In New Zealand, leading dairy co-op [Fonterra](#) has pledged action. The government has introduced a Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill which aims for a 10% reduction in biological methane by 2030, and 47% by 2050. Fonterra said it was 'committed to doing its bit' in New Zealand's transition to a low-carbon future but warned about the challenges this would bring to the farming industry. CEO Miles Hurrell said: "Kiwi



farmers are already some of the most emission efficient producers of milk in the world, but the fact is that nearly half of New Zealand's greenhouse gases come from the wider agriculture sector.

"Our actions today will keep New Zealand at the forefront of sustainable food production. We know this means some of the ways we farm will need to change. Fonterra farmers are adaptable and resourceful people. Once set a clear science-based target, they will want to get on with the job and the co-op will be there to support them. "It's not going to be easy. It will require farmers, industry, government and researchers to all pitch-in and jointly develop innovative, yet practical solutions for New Zealand's emissions reduction challenges. The increased investment in research and development signalled by the government and industry is key to bringing new innovations to life." Fonterra argues the 2050 target should be based on official scientific advice and set at the lower end of the proposed range – and wants it regularly reviewed against the science and options available to farmers.

In the UK, sector body Co-operatives UK has been working with the [Esmee Fairbairn Foundation](#) – which makes grants to socially beneficial organisations – to try to put more support in place for agri co-ops. Richard Self, agriculture manager at [Co-operatives UK](#), says Esmee Fairbairn has been focused on sustainability and wants to carry out research on how co-ops can help. "I think it's something we've got to look at more," he says. "Co-ops need to give leadership to their members. Members don't always know what's in their best interest – professional leaders should look at the market, look at what's happening and say this is where you need to be, this where you should be going. Part of that is sustainable production and what better way to do that than through co-operatives?"

Co-operation vs competition

The threat of large-scale factory farmers is a real one for traditional farmers; recently, Eamon Corley of Ireland's Beef Plan Movement – a farmer-led campaign to restructure the industry – told broadcasters the country's "family farms will be replaced by factory farms similar to what is in South America ... Beef farmers are being driven off the land and we see the problem has been created by corporate greed." Mr Self says strong multinational competitors are also a concern in the UK – which lags behind Europe when it comes to the size of its agri co-op sector. "We've been working with Esmee Fairbairn on a project to help farmers with co-operation," he says. "In terms of market share for co-ops we're way out of step with the rest of Europe, and the rest of the world as well. We don't make use of co-operatives like our colleagues do in Europe. "Our low market share gives the multi nationals who dominate the market the power to put prices up or down – and they've got no real competition. "I argued for some support from Esmee Fairbairn to help with that, and they have asked for research to show how we're not making use of the co-op model, to demonstrate that it has benefits, and to show how we can go about improving it."

To that end, Co-operatives UK has commissioned independent research, due in October, from the Royal Agricultural University, to support its case for more support for new and existing agri co-ops. "There's evidence that co-ops help farmers reduce volatility in price and improve returns," says Mr Self. "What we don't want to do is set up loads of new co-ops that are in competition with existing ones – but where we identify a need, we can help develop new businesses. "From a cost effectiveness point of view, if you want to grow the co-op market share the best way is to help existing ones develop. A lot of them are very risk averse and tend to settle into a situation where they provide a reasonable



service to members and aren't interested in growth – which is fine if that's the right thing to do. Mr Self is also keen to improve perception of co-operatives, with the agri sector hit by some high profile failures. "Some people are being negative about co-operatives because of a few bad examples," he says, "but statistically co-ops have a much better survival rate than an ordinary businesses so we need to show them all the positives case studies as well. If we can get some more support funding we can do that." Governance is key to improving this reputation, he argues. "We want to help co-ops review their governance on a systematic basis and not get complacent." He adds: "Some farmers don't want to get involved because it's too much hassle, too much risk ... but co-ops, unlike individual farmers, have more power in the supply chain and can negotiate better deals; a farmer working alone has to take the price he can get.

"In France, grain co-ops do better because they often own their whole supply chain, and have their own mills; if you are going to wave goodbye to your crop at the door you get the bottom price but if you control your marketing through a co-op you're in a stronger position." Ruth Edge, chief food chain adviser at the National Farmers Union, says the industry faces "hugely challenging times – there's been huge uncertainty in the market and obviously that will affect some sectors more than others". And farmers are "under more scrutiny than ever". she adds, with pressure on issues such as the environment, animal welfare, traceability and productivity.

Collaboration "definitely plays a part" in helping farmers cope with these challenges, she says, allowing them to work together to pool resources and establish benchmarking of standards. "We wouldn't necessarily stipulate a co-op over another format for collaboration, such as a producer organisation or informal buying group, but co-ops

would definitely be a part of this process". she adds. Asked why the UK lags behind Europe when it comes to co-operative organisation, she says: "Certainly, if you look at what's been achieved on the continent we haven't seen that same take-up within the UK – there are some cultural differences there. "And there are some challenges; we are articulating the benefits of those different collaborative set-ups to producers but the process can seem a bit big and bureaucratic and scary. There are some loops to go through to set up a co-op, so you might question why you'd want to do it – but there are benefits."

To help farmers form co-ops, Ms Edge says "some kind of support would help" but it's also important to demonstrate "concrete reasons" for them to make the move – whether this is to access funding, deliver efficiency savings, or offer a route to a new supply chain.

Brexit and the Defra fund

Another consequence of Brexit is that that agriculture ministry Defra has had to delay a £10m fund to support farmer collaboration, announced three years ago, to put civil servants onto Brexit planning. "We've been very positive about that fund," says Ms Edge. "We're frustrated it still hasn't come to fruition; we still have not had that money come through." Mr Self is also keen to see the collaboration fund move into action. "They're starting to pick up on it a bit," he says. "This is something I've been arguing for since the referendum, is to say that post Brexit we're going to need better stronger co-operatives and we need some support to make it happen. "In Scotland co-operation is stronger because they have the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society; it shows if you support co-operation for a long time, it will thrive – and this is what we want Defra to do." He hopes the fund will open in spring or summer next year, "which would fit nicely with the Esmee



project”, adding: “In five years time I’d like to see a scheme to support farm co-ops in all their forms, an increased market share – and an agriculture industry that is surviving.” This a concern post-Brexit, says Mr Self. “If they go for zero tariffs on incoming products it will be very significant for the sector; a lot of farmers will not survive that – but also we won’t be a member of the Common Agricultural Policy and the direct payments farmers are getting could go away to nothing by 2025.

“If you take away those payments, something like 80% of farmers could be losing money. We’ll be paying high tariffs on exports, we’ll have zero tariffs on imports to reduce food inflation in the supermarket, plus the removal of payments.”

This situation could stimulate farm co-ops, he adds. “One reason why we haven’t co-operated so much is because we haven’t needed to. Now farmers are talking about the need to co-operate more after Brexit. We need to try to use Brexit as an opportunity – we’ve got a lot of workshops as part of research project, to get farmers to think about how they can work together and have a bigger impact.” Cecilia Pryce, head of compliance, shipping and research at grain marketing and arable inputs co-op [Openfield](#), says there are serious concerns around Brexit but sounds an optimistic note. “EU and UK cereals have been trading as an international commodity for a number of years. If somebody’s hungry, they’ll pay for grain if it’s the correct price. If something’s cheaper elsewhere they’ll go somewhere else. But we in the UK have full traceability, a fully assured product, fantastic varieties and can provide most of the things international buyers want. As much as Europe is currently and historically has been, our major export destination, there are other global alternatives.”

But there are still hurdles: if Openfield ships to more distant markets, economies of scale mean the ships’ sizes are likely to get bigger – which could involve switching logistics to deep sea grain ports away from smaller facilities currently used for nearby EU shipping. “There will be a logistics change but I don’t believe it will be a disaster,” she says. “Yes, there will be a bigger haulage cost for some, but the doors aren’t going to close on trade.” What farmers want, she says, is more certainty as to what and where their markets will be next year – they have only a few weeks to decide what to plant for harvest 2020. “It’s a tough time being a farmer,” she adds, “but if they are willing to engage we can give them all the information we have.”

Cereal producers could also have to face the ‘unintended consequences’ that may happen to other sectors of UK agriculture after Brexit. If a trade deal with the US brings an influx of cheap chicken, driving UK producers to the wall, grain farmers will lose a huge market for feed. Conversely, a trade deal with China could spark a demand for UK pork exports, stimulating demand for animal feed. Knowledge is key to handling this volatile environment, says Ms Pryce. “There are so many variables when it comes to pricing commodities but they have always been there, we just have to make sure we have the best produce, priced correctly. We all have to perform to the best of our ability, and I believe we can do it – we just have to be a bit more streetwise, and be more aware of what’s going on with global prices and how they impact our markets.” And against this backdrop, the co-op model offers farmers an element of security and solidarity, she says. “I’d like to think it gives them the security of knowing we look after them. They’re individuals, they’re not just numbers. We know who our members are and we will do our best for them – global buyers like dealing with first hand grain and we are here to market their grain the best we can.”



Originally posted at:
<https://www.thenews.coop/141457/sector/agriculture/meeting-sdg-no-2-can-agri-co-ops-beat-climate-change-tough-markets-and-brexit/>

National News

‘I’m Scared,’ says Founder of Philippi Horticultural Campaign on eve of Court Battle

Tessa Knight

After years of campaigning, the Philippi Horticultural Area Food and Farming Campaign will finally go up against the city, the province and a number of developers in court to fight for the protection and preservation of the most productive horticulture area by hectare in South Africa.

Tuesday’s court case will see the PHA Campaign arguing that city decisions to rezone pieces of the PHA from horticulture use to urban development should be reviewed and set aside. The proposed developments for the land include a private school, a private prison, shopping malls and thousands of housing units. In their responding affidavits, the city and the province have argued that the PHA is a loosely defined term that does not refer to an officially demarcated area. Much of the argument to develop the land revolved around a need for housing to be built on available land. Sondag makes his living off of a piece of land that, although not scheduled for development, will be directly impacted by planned developments in the area that will pollute the Cape Flats aquifer and disturb the delicate ecosystem that protected the PHA from Cape Town’s drought.

When Sondag speaks about the area, it is clear how important it is to not only his family but the families

of other farmers and land claimants in the area. Sondag worries that if the PHA is destroyed, the people who live and work on it will not move into the proposed housing units, but into nearby townships. “And then what?” Sondag asked. “All I can imagine is we will have more military in our townships to police our despair.”

The primary difference between the PHA and other farmland is its location above the Cape Flats Aquifer (CFA). According to Sondag, the Cape Flats aquifer, which spans hundreds of square kilometres from False Bay to Tygerberg Hills to Milnerton, is the reason farms exist inside the city limits. “We keep the aquifer alive and it keeps us and our farms alive. But they want to kill it, and they’ll kill us,” said Sondag. Over the years the development of houses and industry on top of the aquifer have left it increasingly polluted. Sondag is right in his declaration that the PHA keeps the aquifer alive: it acts as a natural recharge zone and maintains the integrity of the entire aquifer. “The aquifer is the reason we survived the drought. We weren’t impacted by the drought at all. In fact, when everyone else struggled to grow we were producing more than ever,” said Sondag.

Much of the city’s vegetables and flowers come from Philippi, although Sondag and farmers like him are not allowed to brand their produce, so many people do not know the carrots and celery they buy from up-market stores comes from just down the road. “People don’t know that we exist here, that we’ve been here for years providing them with food. They just don’t know.”

But over the years the PHA Food and Farming Campaign have raised awareness and garnered support from all walks of life, “from Constantia to Khayelitsha”.

Sondag wants people to know that, when the city



says new developments need to be built on large tracts of land in the ever-shrinking PHA, it will make thousands of people food insecure, destroy thousands of jobs as well as ruin the area's largest surviving aquifer. "Developers want to build a city here, and the irony of this development is it will destroy six thousand lives. Thirty thousand livelihoods depend on these farms, including mine. Ten years ago 201ha of land were removed from the PHA – the Weltevreden Wedge – to be used for low-income housing. "They haven't built one house," said Sunday.

When *Daily Maverick* travelled to Sunday's farm for an interview, the workers watering the field and shovelling organic fertiliser were all women, but that does not make his farm unique: many of the people working on farms in the PHA are unskilled women. One of Sunday's workers, 47-year-old Linda Matthews, told *Daily Maverick* that she loves working with plants, and is worried she won't have a job next week.

Over the years the PHA Campaign has won small victories here and there, primarily heritage and rezoning appeals, but this will be their first time appearing in court. Sunday told *Daily Maverick* he has to have faith and believe the PHA Campaign will win the case, because there is no other option for him and thousands of people like him.

"I'm scared. A lot is at stake for me. If we lose the court case costs will be held against me, and this is the only thing I have in my life, this property and this land. I will lose it. And I will be removed from this area once again. The first time our family was removed in 1973 under the Group Areas Act. So this will be the second time I'll be removed, only now it's a democratic South Africa," Sunday told *Daily Maverick*.

In a passionate letter to Cape Town Mayor Dan Plato, published in the Cape Argus, Sunday reminds

Plato that there are many other available pieces of land ready for development.

Although city officials have cautioned the impact developing the PHA will have on the surrounding environment, the housing department has argued that gap and subsidised housing should be at the top of the city's priority list. The current housing backlog is extreme, with many people in areas around the PHA struggling to find appropriate housing.

"The PHA doesn't have any infrastructure. When they build here they will have to build sewer lines, everything. And the city has a policy of densification, but they want to build here. It just doesn't make logical sense, none of it makes sense." On Tuesday, Judge Kate Savage will have to make sense of thousands of pages of affidavits over two consecutive days in court.

SIDEBAR: It all goes back to 2009

In 2009 a full council meeting opted to protect and conserve the PHA. In 2012, then mayor Patricia de Lille and her council members met to decide if they should excise 281ha from the PHA. They were faced with reports, conducted by city officials, stressing that should the PHA be developed the CFA would suffer. In the meeting, De Lille called for further investigation into how the PHA could impact the city's food security.

During *Daily Maverick*'s previous investigation, it was discovered that just six months after De Lille called for more information, a seven-page report found its way to the executive mayor. It called for development to proceed as soon as possible to mitigate housing needs.

In January 2014, then minister of the Provincial Department of Environmental and Development Planning, Anton Bredell, stopped the development.



Despite provincial intervention, the ball was in the city's court due to land planning laws. They excised the area, but development has not taken place due to rezoning issues. As for the other piece of land, Bredell chose to excise that land despite then minister of Agriculture Lulama Xingwana refusing a request to rezone.

Watch this informative video:
<https://youtu.be/nZtEfl18jOs>

Originally posted at:
<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-10-14-im-scared-says-founder-of-philippi-horticultural-campaign-on-eve-of-court-case/>

Agriculture Minister says No to Monsanto's "drought tolerant" maize seed

Sheree Bega

Agriculture Minister Thoko Didiza has upheld a decision to reject agriculture chemical company Monsanto's application for the commercial cultivation of its triple stacked 'drought-tolerant' maize seed. The maize is genetically modified (GM) to be tolerant to drought as well as resistant to certain insects.

Didiza made a final decision on an appeal lodged by Monsanto SA against the decision taken by the executive council regarding the general release application of a GM maize event, MON87460 x MON89034 x NK603. Its refusal was based on the fact "that kernel count per row and kernel count per ear showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the MON87460 x MON89034 x NK603 maize event and conventional maize in water limited conditions.

"The yield benefits associated with the MON87460 x MON89034 x NK603 maize event were inconsistent and in some trials the MON87460 x MON89034 x NK603 maize event had lower yields than the conventional maize. "The insect resistance data presented was insufficient since it was only collected from one trial site for two planting seasons," her department said in a statement issued today.

Monsanto lodged an appeal in November against the refusal of its general release application by the executive council. The appeal board upheld the decision to refuse the application and recommended more sites and seasons were needed to demonstrate efficacy of the drought tolerance gene.

On August 28, Didiza made the final decision, upholding the appeal board's decision "and as such the refusal of a general release application for the MON87460 x MON89034 x NK603 maize event is sustained". The African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) welcomed the "landmark decision", after more than a decade of "battling Monsanto's bogus drought tolerant maize project".

The decision, it said, was a "triumphant win" for the ACB and other civil society organisations on the continent that had "tirelessly resisted the introduction of these GM varieties in SA, Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

"The Minister's decision was made following the abject failure of the GM varieties to increase yield under drought conditions during repeated field trials in SA.

"The Minister concluded what the ACB and independent biosafety experts have been saying for the last decade - that the drought tolerance gene in the MON87460 x MON89034 x NK603 maize event



did not provide yield protection in water-limited conditions.

"The stacked event, MON87460 x MON89034 x NK603, combines Monsanto's so-called drought tolerance trait, with their older and increasingly futile herbicide tolerance and insecticidal traits."

Contrary to promises made by Monsanto, yield benefits were inconsistent and in some trials even showed lower yields than conventional maize," it said.

The decision revealed that insect resistance data was insufficient since it came from only one trial site for only two planting seasons.

"Significantly, the Minister and the appeal body rejected attempts by Monsanto to claim that their drought tolerant trait was effective based merely on differences in maize kernel characteristics, despite lack of yield benefits, which in itself is not indicative of efficacy of a trait.

"The data exposes the twisting and manipulation of science by Monsanto to promote sales of their ineffective GM products for complex environmental, political and socio-economic challenges, such as climate change and poverty."

The ACB said it had been exposing the lack of evidence of drought-tolerance since 2008, calling on Monsanto to prove the efficacy of this trait.

"But, as confirmed by the South African-decision making bodies, Monsanto completely failed to provide scientific data to substantiate their claims," said ACB director Mariam Mayet.

Backed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, traits such as drought-tolerance are being "peddled as the latest Western biotechnology solution to

climate change and hunger eradication under the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) project, being implemented in South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique.

"This purports to offer the GM drought tolerant maize to smallholder farmers in Africa as a "climate smart" solution to abiotic stresses such as drought." The ACB said it was appealing the government's decision to approve the single drought tolerant trait MON87460.

"It remains to be seen if Monsanto will withdraw from the appeal case now that it is project has been dealt such a severe death-blow," it said.

Originally posted at:

<https://www.iol.co.za/saturday-star/news/agriculture-minister-says-no-to-monsantos-drought-tolerant-maize-seed-34072840>

Conference Celebrates COPAC's 20 Years and Reflects on Left Politics Today

Andrew Bennie

The year 2019 marked 20 years since the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) was established. Its founders, Vishwas Satgar and Langa Zita, were driven by the imperative of supporting a transformational, grassroots development process in the post-apartheid period, bucking the turn to neoliberal approaches to development that were congealing at the time. They believed that genuine cooperatives, through which people from working class communities could own and manage the means of production, had potential to help realise the democratisation of the economy that was so crucial to any meaningful post-apartheid transformation.



The focus of COPAC's work over its twenty years has continually shifted and evolved, but always within the framework of a progressive left project grounded in advancing systemic alternatives. In late October COPAC hosted a conference to celebrate and reflect on its 20 years of work of advancing systemic alternatives and on the fate of the Left, a political force so badly needed in South Africa and globally in the context of our multiple, converging crises.

The range of topics, speakers and discussions over the two days of the conference reflected COPAC's commitment in its years of work to engage with social questions and activism from holistic and multiple perspectives that highlight the connections between issues and attempts to advance transformational alternatives.

On the first afternoon the conference was opened by a panel of left thinkers who reflected on the crisis of South African and global capitalism. This was followed by an input from Christopher Chase Dunn, who helped further illuminate the connections between the multiple crises we face and the functioning of the world system, thus further placing COPAC's and left activists' work in South Africa in the context of the workings of this global capitalist system. The scope of COPAC's activism was further illustrated as an activist guide on land in South Africa was also launched, the practical considerations in the publication informed by a combination of deep thinking on the implications of the current social and ecological situation on how we envision and use land, and from existing practices and activism.

The following one-and-a-half days contained multiple sessions that reflected on various aspects of left politics today, including on understanding and building a radical feminist perspective and praxis in our current conditions, what it means to

move beyond a vanguardist politics and advance a deeply democratic politics as the radical and necessary approach for the left today, and what it means to be an activist in this context.

For the past few years COPAC has focused on advancing food sovereignty pathways from below in South Africa, and so one of the highlights of the day was the visit to the Wits Food Sovereignty Centre, from where participants browsed the Wits Food Market and visited agroecology gardens that have been established in students' residences. These were just some of the elements being constructed as part of building a food sovereignty pathway to end student hunger at Wits and shift the institution to taking a lead in making the necessary interventions to become an ecocentric university in the context of the just transition.

The visit ended off with a viewing of the murals painted all over the walls of Centre by the incredible radical Bolivian muralist, Knorke Leaf, and a brief input by her on the meaning and significance of the paintings. Once participants had returned to the conference, she gave an inspiring presentation of her work, and work she had done with other artist-activists, which had conference participants visibly energised and inspired, illustrating the critical role of art and creativity in activism and systemic transformation.

The conference also engaged further with practical components of activism for systemic alternatives, like learning from activists' experiences on advancing various aspects of food sovereignty, popular education and movement building. The variety and breadth of topics, debates and perspectives that were on display at the conference were a testament to COPAC's historical record and commitment to left pluralism, democracy and continually re-thinking radical politics that aim at bringing together human creativity, thought and action



into an emancipatory project for earth and humanity.

Climate Justice News

Climate Crisis and Intergenerational Justice

Samantha Ramwell

In April of 1896, Swedish physicist and chemist Svante Arrhenius published a paper in which he predicted that anthropogenic carbon emissions would lead to a warming of the earth.¹ Every generation since then has ignored this problem, allowing their carbon emissions to increase unchecked. It has since escalated into perhaps the greatest existential threat mankind has ever faced. It is then a great injustice that the great burden of facing this crisis falls upon the shoulders of today's youth: the so-called "millennials" and "gen-z", as well as all the unnamed generations yet to come. It is profoundly unjust in that we have been given 10 years to mitigate 150 years of pollution with technology that barely exists. Yet we have been given no choice: either we act now, or we watch as the world burns, starves and dries up. The generations who have come before us, those who knew of the impending crisis and failed to act, will be dead before we see the worst effects of this crisis. To avert this catastrophe will require a mobilization of people and resources that is unprecedented in scale, greater even than that required for World War II. And it is left to children to do it, because the alternative is unthinkable.

Not only will such a crisis rob future generations of their ability to choose the course of their lives by forcing their hands, it will also work to deprive them of their human rights.² Though there is much debate as to how the rights of those yet to exist can be violated, it is clear that the exhaustion of our

planet's resources and the destruction of the means of life will impact the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Even in the best-case scenario of 1.5 °C warming, water will become scarcer, particularly in the global South, crops will become less nutritious, food systems will collapse, tropical diseases will spread, and natural disasters will become more frequent.³ We have been told all our lives that we have it better than any generation before us, that fewer people are going hungry than ever before — and yet very soon, the same economic system that promised us unending growth and abundance will create unbearable suffering and privation for an extraordinary number of people.

To avert catastrophe for both ourselves and future generations, it falls upon today's youth to face these challenges. We have no choice but to take action ourselves, since we cannot rely on our parents or political leaders to make the necessary, radical changes to our societies and economies. We as the youth must partner with others who will be most affected by the crisis — rural and indigenous communities, as well as the poor and working class — to take to the streets and demand action. Additionally, given that some degree of warming is inevitable, we must mobilize ourselves to create societies, food systems and economies that are more resilient to the ravages of climate change, and which can protect the most vulnerable among us from the worst effects of the crisis.

This think piece is part of a series of pieces by various activists, professionals and community members put together by COPAC as part of the Climate Justice Charter. They are all available on SAFSC's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/safoodsovereignty/>



Drought and the Rural Socio-Economy: A Case Study of Jekezi Livestock Producers

Felix Kwabena Donkor, Nosintu Mcimeli, Asive Mcimeli and Qaba Sinalo

Making our communities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable is a core theme of the National Development Plan (Vision 2030) and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG 11. However, climate induced extreme events are some of the key challenges to the thriving of vulnerable communities mostly found in the rural areas of the global south. One of such extreme events is the phenomenon of droughts. Generally, drought refers to a period of prolonged water shortage and has become a recurrent feature of the climate [globally](#). Over the last century, southern Africa has been suffering from dramatic changes in climate conditions resulting in severe droughts. This has translated into particularly detrimental impacts on rural subsistence farmers; the health of rural communities and the sustainable management of environmental [resources](#). These challenges were made vivid during a visit to the Jekezi community in Namakwa (Eastern Cape).

Jekezi is one of the 12 villages that make up the Xilinxha community in the Namakwa District Municipality. The severe drought is such that the community folk are no longer growing crops and vegetables to help feed their households (See Plate A). This has led to a situation where grannies are forced to rely on the child grant (of their grandchildren) to supplement the entire households' nutritional needs. However, several studies have pointed to the importance of child grant as critical for the children's health and wellbeing. Moreover, it is the most important form of assistance for children in poor families with implications for the improved human resources development of the nation. It comes with positive

impacts on addressing the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the country (HSRC, 2018). Helping the community with a pilot community garden will be essential to alleviating the grave household food insecurity in the village.



Gardens in the community have all been abandoned due to the severe drought conditions. This comes with consequences on transfer of indigenous knowledge practices to the younger generation.

In addition, the communal grazing field is virtually dry such that livestock struggle to find grass to graze on. Furthermore, the local river is totally dry leading to a situation where livestock die of thirst and exhaustion. See images below showing exhibits from field work:





Comrades Nosintu, Asive and Qaba who have been vocal activists defending the interest of rural communities in the Eastern Cape, explained that because subsistence farmers in the community cannot afford the price of a bale of grass, they buy little of amounts of Lucerne from commercial farmers which are of low quality for their livestock. This further reduces the value of their livestock. Developing a communal grazing field where vital plants like Lucerne which easily grows in that area will be grown by the community will help feed their livestock.

A tank of water costs about 1500.00 rands which is exorbitant for the rural households.

The drought has had grave sequence on the entire agricultural value chain and household economy. For example, livestock producers are not able to get quality wool anymore as they indicate that the wool from their sheep are exceptionally dirty due to lack of rain and the poor nutrition manifests in absence

of grease in the wool which leads to them getting poor sales for their wool. The exceptionally dirty nature of the wool is also a matter of health concern. This because the sorters (mostly women) now need to wear masks to avoid chest infections and other health implications due to exposure to particulate matter. At the time of the visit some had already been diagnosed with chest complications due to exposure to particulate matter emanating from the dirt. This compromises their health conditions and further drains the little wages they earn. The World Health Organisation (WHO)



indicates that such exposure affects lung development in children, including reversible deficits in lung function as well as chronically reduced lung growth rate and a deficit in long-term lung [function](#)

The farmers expressed their wish for government and donors to assist them with mechanical sorters and packaging equipment to enhance their production. They lamented the lack of response from the local government in supplying them with water and extension services to enhance their livestock production. They indicated that the dilapidated communal borehole if repaired can go a long way to alleviate the poor access to water in the community.



The Food Sovereignty Campaign

Wits Communal Kitchen

Sophia Sideras-Haddad and Claire Tsumane



Although the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) provides financial support to many disadvantaged students, there remains a significant amount of students who are left destitute or without food or accommodation. Most of these students are the first in their families to attend university, and many of them are found sleeping in libraries and 24hour facilities. It is simply unrealistic to expect students to excel academically whilst wondering where their next nutritious meal will come from.



The Communal Kitchen which is housed at the Sanctuary Building, aims to tackle this student issue by providing students with a daily evening meal. The kitchen forms part of the Food Sovereignty Centre at the university of Witwatersrand and daily slots from 16:30 to 18:00 are run and facilitated by members and volunteers of Amnesty International's Wits chapter. It is a space for students to prepare their own meals in groups using the ingredients and facilities at the kitchen and from the surrounding gardens. The kitchen is equipped with a gas stove, fridge, freezer, a sink, as well as pots and pans and other cooking utensils.



The kitchen is fully stocked with donated non-perishable food as well as organic vegetables from the gardens around the campus. The kitchen is up and running with regular students who use it every day, as well as other students who use the kitchen occasionally. It has become a space beyond just cooking, but has now evolved into a space of learning where cooking demos by various chefs take place, mutual learning between students as well community building. In 2020, we hope to see the kitchen grow from strength to strength.



Wits Community Gardens Update

Felix Donkor

Food insecurity is still a great concern for many households in South Africa. COPAC and the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign have been working with other organisations to address this challenge.



One of the approaches it has adopted is the use of food gardens as a means of enhancing access to good nutrition in the wider framework of food sovereignty. Some of these gardens can be found at the University of the Witwatersrand, where they are making a difference in the lives of students.

Currently there are about four operating gardens on campus namely the West Campus garden, International House, Sanctuary and Sunny Side gardens. These are managed in collaboration with the WCCO (Wits Community and Citizenship Outreach), Inala and Engineers without borders. These food gardens host a variety of plants and serve as a direct and effective way to enhance food availability and access amongst the student

community. The community gardens include plants such as beans, spinach, morogo, tomatoes, eggplants and beetroot, and enable the university community to collaborate in fighting food insecurity.

Harvesting has been on an ad hoc basis depending on which plants are ready for harvesting to be fed to the Wits food bank, allocated to students and used in the Wits Communal Kitchen.

The use of the gardens continues to evolve and are not merely a garden; but also serve as a platform for other activities that enrich students' holistic academic experience as well as community engagement such as:

- Exposing the student community to a diverse range of good and nutritious food;
- Avenues for research that can contribute to relevant policy and strategies;
- Dialogue and training between emerging farmers and students in the area of food gardens and sustainable livelihoods;
- Engagement in advocacy and networking activities

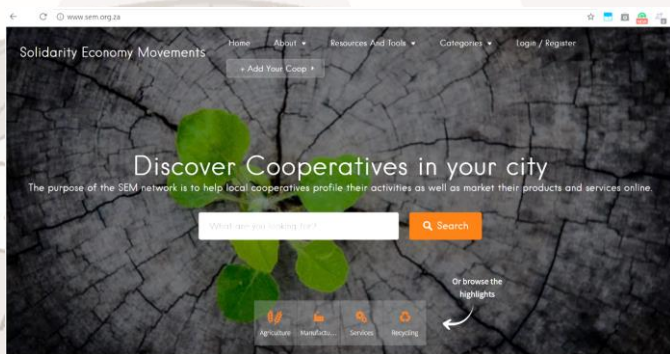




The gardens are becoming an integral part of student life and providing an invaluable opportunity for urban interactions with agroecology/permaculture principles which have become urgent in an era of climate change.

The Worker Cooperative Campaign

Call to Co-operatives: Join the Solidarity Economy Movements Website



The Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre has launched a Solidarity Economy Movements website to serve as a marketing platform for co-operatives in South Africa. The website is a useful tool for all cooperatives as they can register and create a profile of their cooperative, describe their activities and market their products and services online at no charge.

The aim of this website is to promote the Solidarity Economy by providing citizens who want to support cooperatives with a portal that allows them to search for cooperatives near them.

Based on the idea of the Solidarity Economy the aim is to transform production, consumption, savings

and ways of living to sustain life and advance transformative values in their practices.

We invite all cooperatives to register on the website by following these simple steps:

1. Type the following address into your internet browser: www.sem.org.za
2. Click on the block in the top right corner '+ add your coop'
3. You will then be asked to register so type in your email address and choose a password
4. Fill out all your coop details and press 'submit'

Share this link with co-operatives you know so that we can strengthen this platform for building the solidarity economy in South Africa.

Activist Resources to Advance the Solidarity Economy from Below

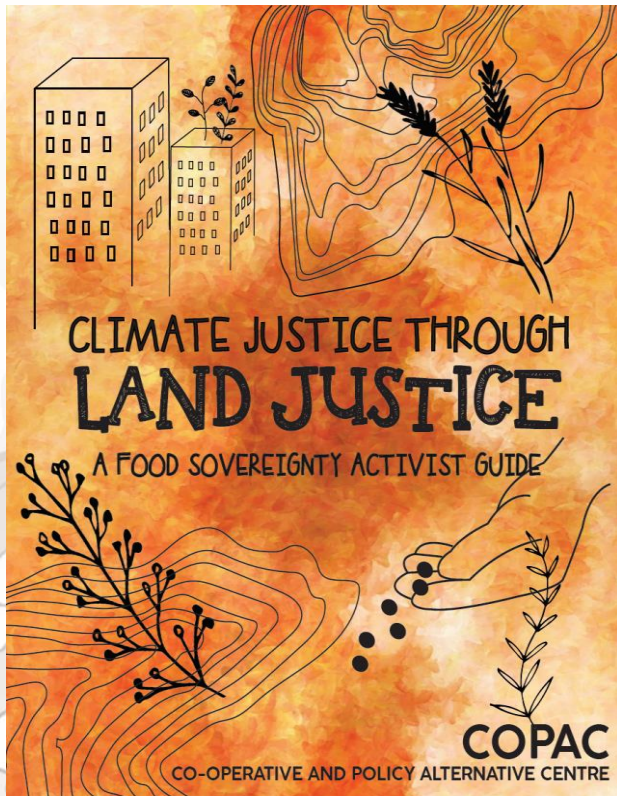
Climate Justice through Land Justice: A Food Sovereignty Activist Guide

COPAC recently launched its land guide! This guide is a popular education tool for communities and grassroots activists. It serves to:

- empower people to understand the land crisis and the power relations involved in controlling and destroying land;
- equip people with the basic knowledge and understanding of land as a source of life;
- empower communities to organise and respond to policies on land;
- provide user friendly and practical techniques to use land in an eco-centric way to sustain it as the basis of eco-systems;



- protect, value and celebrate local and indigenous knowledge on land use;
- empower communities to strive towards systemic change through food, seed, and water sovereignty, land justice and a deep just transition.



Download the guide at this link:
<https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Land-Justice-Guide-2019-Final-compressed.pdf>

**Seminars and Workshops
 Available for Viewing on
 YouTube**

COPAC conference recordings:

During September 2019, COPAC celebrated their 20 year anniversary. Together with various organisations, partners and community activists we spent 3 days together, discussing various issues

facing South Africa and reflecting on 20 years of activism.

Opening and welcome: reflecting on 20 years of COPAC- <https://youtu.be/7lE7Z6u2HqE>

The South African and Global Crisis of Capitalism- <https://youtu.be/XDfYND-w1ow>

The Climate Crisis is worsening: what next for climate justice activism and internationalism?- <https://youtu.be/IJiXqVWSQg8>

Bolivian muralist on art and activism: <https://youtu.be/CbWa1mMGreE>

Beyond Liberal Feminism- the Challenge of Women's Grassroots Power for Transformation- <https://youtu.be/GqOG9WARIHo>

Book Launch: Cooperatives in South Africa: Advancing Solidarity Economy Alternatives from Below- <https://youtu.be/z0wyDLDF3c>

Where to for the Left in South Africa and Globally? - <https://youtu.be/7RmxxWmzHAQ>

Closure and collective reflection- https://youtu.be/Dx1rMAL_zo8

Expanding Your Activism on Social Media

Tips for posting:

- Always stick to the science about climate change. There are a number of websites and organisations who do good research on climate change, and have facts you can tweet. Use these facts and stats in your tweets. But make sure to move away from



jargon and technical language, make the science accessible

- Look at existing narratives on social media, and link this to climate change. For example, any climate shock happening such as cyclone Idai, link that to climate science and climate shocks. Follow existing trends on social media. Also use current affairs to bring light to climate change alternatives. For example, use load shedding to promote socially owned renewables.
- Create FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) for your events. When there is protest action or events, always create hype around the event and make people feel like they are missing out. Live stream on Facebook, and do live stories on Instagram to create in the moment FOMO.
- In addition to science, also post first person experiences of climate shocks, these are powerful and will gain a lot of retweets.
- Always link climate change issues to bread and butter issues. So when there is a hike in food prices, link this to drought (as an example).
- Ride on other hashtags, like political events. If there are indabas and manifesto launches, tweet about them and link to climate change.
- When dealing with trolls, don't waste energy. You can usually tell if they can be swayed, or if they are just trolling. If they seem to be able to be swayed, refer them to websites and other links that are helpful.

Technical tips:

- Use social media curating sites, to make your activism easier. For example, sites like *Creator Studio*, *Content Creator* which will allow you to schedule posts ahead of time

- When making posters, always use organisational colours to create unity on your feeds

Challenges:

- With limited resources, social media can become a big job for 1 person to do
- To make a big impact on social media, some budget is required, and for some organisations that is difficult to put together. There are prices attached to boosting posts and promoting tweets.
- There is a prevailing narrative that climate change is an elite, white concern, as climate justice activists we must constantly fight this narrative and always work to gain interest in our own causes. We must reclaim and decolonise the struggle for climate justice.

n-person meetings of the youth committee. Technology can also make the Youth Network more accessible, adds the resolution, which calls for more inclusive tools and bylaws to foster the wider youth participation. The Youth Network was set up in 2003 to help young co-operators from different countries to share experiences and engage with the rest of the movement.

Originally published in:
<https://www.thenews.coop/143449/topic/development/coop-movement-sets-out-plans-at-the-general-assembly/>



contact us

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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