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Editorial

The Climate Crisis is Upon Us and South Africans need to act urgently

by Vishwas Satgar

Victory in the Rugby World Cup made us all proud to be a winning nation. We are also a frontrunner in the world through advancing the first Climate Justice Charter. Informing this is our experience of being a climate change hot spot in Southern Africa. This is beyond climate science and academic debate. Cyclones, floods, heatwaves, mud slides, tornadoes and our drought are the incontrovertible signals of climate crisis in our everyday lives. These emergencies have given birth to the Climate Justice Charter, including 5 years of campaigning during our drought by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign. Various constituency-based dialogues involving drought affected communities, unions, faith-based communities, social and environmental justice organisations, youth and children, and the media have all shaped the draft charter, which is now travelling at the grassroots of the country.

In the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany (all major carbon emitters) there is a sea change in public opinion regarding the urgency of addressing the climate crisis. Such social tipping points challenge over 20 years of failed UN-climate negotiations. A combination of factors from climate shocks in everyday life, climate justice activism, the rise of the children's #FridaysForFuture and media mainstreaming of climate news are all coming together. As a result, there has been a surge of support for green politics in this year's European parliamentary elections and both this weeks UK national elections and the US elections next year would be the first climate elections in Western democracies. Contending parties will have to define their positions on 'Green New Deals' to ensure

rapid decarbonization and socio- ecological transformation of life supporting systems in a heating world.

The proposed Green New Deal (\$16.3 trillion) by US Senator Bernie Sanders is the most far sighted in global climate politics. His plan tackles decaying infrastructure, decarbonization through a rapid phase out of fossil fuels (emissions cuts to 71% by 2030 and net zero by 2050), promotion of public utilities and community owned renewables, new small scale agro-ecological farming systems, decarbonizing the US military (one of the highest carbon emitters in the world) and generous support for developing countries to fast track the deep just transition. The ambition of the Sander's plan is reinforcing the green shift in US politics, while recognizing we face an unprecedented challenge in human history requiring citizens mobilisation in the process of system change.

In South Africa the social tipping point on climate crisis awareness has not been realized. This makes us extremely unprepared. The looting rampage unleashed by Zuma and the ANC has left us all questioning our assumptions about leadership, parties, the role of the state and economic management. We are a country in a state of trauma, trying to make sense of the theft of our democracy. The policy narratives and performances from our government continue to keep us bewildered and uninspired. A President who believes foreign direct investment is the 'game changer' to save us, is only re-affirming globalization dogma directly implicated in high structural unemployment,



widening inequality and the creation of an unviable society. Our Environmental Minister is obsessed with technocratic calculation and is busy bagging 'low hanging fruit' while the government she serves continues with a coal heavy (60% till 2030) national energy mix worsening the climate crisis. Then there is the proposed National Health Insurance, keeping us all in a nightmarish condition because we all know the ruling ANC has run public health care into the ground. The recently issued strategic plan for water management would cost the taxpayer a whopping R900 billion, over the next ten years. If the brakes were put on the looting machine, by the ANC, such spend could have happened since 1994.

Those involved in the Climate Justice Charter process refuse to surrender to the fatalism of this reality, particularly a criminal state at odds with acting on the climate emergency. Hence there is a strong commitment to incite a national conversation, from below, to address historical social injustice together with new climate related race, class and gender injustices.

The climate emergency gives us the opportunity to break with the crisis of political leadership. Our children and youth, rising under the banner of #FridayForFuture, understand this. Through the Climate Justice Charter process, they are making a clarion call for decisive action now. They understand an overshoot of 1.5C, which the world is fast approaching over the next decade, means major climate tipping points kicking in. Moreover, they appreciate that if feedback loops, like release of Arctic methane trapped in permafrost, accelerates then warming will increase and climate breakdown will likely lock into the earth system. At 4 degrees Celsius life becomes almost impossible and mass die offs of human populations and non-human life are likely. For our children this is a ghastly and horrific future. Yet some climate discourses place

our species outside of history and argue an abstract 'we' is responsible. Such perspectives tend to veer off in an anti-human direction, condemning present and future generations. Instead, the Climate Justice Charter is about the living hope of the many, while reinforcing the agency of the young.

Climate justice is about a struggle to ensure the most vulnerable and least responsible for the climate crisis do not pay the price for climate harms. The wealthy can buy their way out of water shortages, food crises, heat waves and other climate calamities. But such privileged behavior is not workable when the world's financial or food systems collapse.

The United Nations has warned, in its 2019 report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, that world hunger is on the increase due to climate change. Globalised and carbon-based industrial food systems, including South Africa's, are extremely vulnerable and will be challenged under increased heating. However, grassroots systemic alternatives such as food sovereignty, based on the science of agroecology, are crucial for South Africa's deep just transition to ensure a more carbon free, resilient and localized food system. The Climate Justice Charter anticipates the collapse of crucial life supporting systems and promotes societal preparedness by affirming existing system change alternatives.

Next year [2020] the Charter will be finalized and taken to parliament for adoption in accordance with section 234 of the South African constitution, which provides for charters to be adopted. The struggle to secure a future for all of us has begun. It will not be a few activists or movements making the difference, but the stand all of us take now.



International News

Uruguayan Chamber of Senators approves a law on the social and solidarity economy

by Anca Voinea

In December 2019, the Uruguayan Chamber of Senators approved the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Law that aims to recognize and promote SSE organizations in Uruguay.

The first step was holding of discussions around the general Law on Cooperatives approved in 2008 and the ensuing establishment of the National Institute of Cooperativism (INACOOOP). Since 2011, the National Coordinator of Solidarity Economy (CNES) has organized meetings on the SSE law with different stakeholders including policy makers, researchers and practitioners from the SSE organizations and other stakeholders. This process culminated in the creation of the first SSE bill in 2013 in a commission that brought together ministerial representatives, the University Solidarity Economy Network, and INACOOOP. Conducting of additional research on SSE legislation in other countries (e.g. Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic) and a consultative process culminated in the first draft of the parliamentary law in 2017.

The new Law defines the purpose and principles of the SSE and lists different types of SSE entities (i.e. cooperatives, self-managed companies, rural development societies, artisanal networks, civil associations, foundations, and other legal figures in accordance with the principles). Among the other key elements of the law are:

- INACOOOP is designated as a driving force for public policies related to the promotion, training, accompaniment and financing of SSE projects;

- The National Internal Audit Office (AIN) is designated as the supervisory body of SSE organizations;

- The National Registry of the SSE organizations will be created and operated by INACOOOP for the promotion of these organizations and as well as for statistical purposes;

- The SSE Consultative Council (CESyS) will be created including representatives from relevant Ministries, the Congress of Mayors, INACOOOP, SSE organizations, fair trade networks, and the University of the Republic, among others; and

- SSE organizations that meet specified requirements could be included in the Public Procurement Programme for Development and obtain tax exemptions or exceptions.

INACOOOP will support the establishment and operation of the CESyS, including the organization of annual National Conferences on SSE as a space for discussion of any relevant topics and proposals towards strengthening the SSE.

Originally posted at:

https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/news/WCMS_734050/lang--en/index.htm

Countdown to 33rd World Co-operative congress begins

By Rebecca Harvey

On 11-17 December 2020, 2,000 co-operators will gather in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, for the 33rd World Cooperative Congress.

Preparations officially kicked-off this week with a launch event in the city, featuring representatives from all International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)



member co-ops in Korea, officials from local governments and several civil society organisations.

The main theme of the 2020 Congress, which will be hosted at the COEX complex in the heart of the city, will be 'Deepening our Co-operative Identity'. According to the ICA, it will be "an opportunity to celebrate the movement's history while launching a debate to generate a more multi-faceted understanding of the role of co-operative identity in co-operatives".

World Co-operative Congresses are large gatherings of ICA members as well as co-operators in general. They are convened only on very special occasions, such as for the approval of the Statement on the Co-operative Identity (31st Congress, 1995, Manchester) or the UN International Year of Co-operatives (32nd Congress, 2012, Manchester).

The 2020 event aims to be useful for co-operatives' positioning at a national and international level, and will also be an opportunity for co-ops to learn how to better use the co-operative identity to their advantage. A number of papers and studies will be prepared and presented, while prior to the Congress, Seoul will host an International Co-operative Research Conference (10-12 December) and an International Co-operative Law Forum (12-13 December), which will discuss themes related to the Congress.

2020 marks both the 125th anniversary of the ICA, which was founded in 1885 at its 1st Congress in London (UK), and the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the ICA Statement on the Cooperative Identity. The Statement sets out the definition of a co-operative as a special form of organisation, the values of co-operatives, and the co-op principles that direct their behavior and operation.

Martin Lowery, the ICA Director who chairs the Congress Task Force and presides over the ICA Board Committee on Cooperative Identity, spoke at the launch event about the importance of co-operative values and how they form the "essence of the co-operative difference".

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Mr Lowery also shared the three main thematic pillars of the Congress: Deeping our Cooperative Identity; Innovation and Entrepreneurship; and Cooperatives' Global Responsibility in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). During the launch event trip, he conducted meetings with the organisers, ICA member organisations and the Seoul Metropolitan government.

Also in attendance was Balu Iyer, regional director for the International Cooperative Alliance Asia-Pacific (ICAAP), and ICA director general, Bruno Roelants, who recalled the meeting between the Seoul city Mayor and ICA President at an event on Social Economy in Bilbao, Spain, where the idea of having the World Cooperative Congress in Seoul emerged.

"There is a big expectation from the international co-operative movement to come to Korea and learn about your experience," said Mr Roelants. This is only the second time an ICA Congress has been organised outside Europe; the first was the 30th Congress in Tokyo in 1992.



Co-ops in South Korea

by Anca Voinea

According to ICAAP, co-operatives play a vital role in driving community-based initiatives to strengthen the rural and urban economy in Korea. The country has 5,100 active co-operatives with 313,000 members and 22,000 employees (2016 figures). Nearly 24% of co-ops operate in wholesale and retail, 14% in education, 10% in agriculture in forestry, 9% in manufacturing, 9% in arts and sports, 5% in health and social welfare, and the remainder in other sectors. The average turnover is just under US\$250,000 (£193,000).

Korea has two different legal frameworks for co-ops: the Special Law Regime (eight laws which are closely related to specific economic sectors and enterprise types) and the Framework Act on Co-operatives (a general co-op law formulated in 2012 to provide legal recognition to self-help organisations excluded from the jurisdiction of existing eight special cooperative laws).

The government and established co-ops both actively promote the model across the world by showcasing successful co-operatives and by supporting sustainable co-op development, taking into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Two sectors seeing recent growth are school co-operatives (where students set up their own enterprises within a school) and freelance co-operatives (being established by lecturers, coaches, consultants, IT developers, scientists, researchers, civic landscapers, artists, craftsmen, theater freelancers, reporters, storytellers, photo reporters, movie staff, and writers).

The country has a long-standing relationship with the ICA; Korean co-ops hosted the ICA-AP Regional Assembly in 1998 and the ICA Global

Assembly in 2001. Korea is the Secretariat of the International Co-operative Agricultural Organization (ICAO) and the International Cooperative Fisheries Organization (ICFO) – and Mr Lee Jong-Koo, the former President of the Korean National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives was the Rochdale Pioneers Award winner in 2011. The ICA has seven members from Korea; the first to affiliate was the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF), in 1963.



National News

Unemployed People's Movement ready for a fight as a Makana to appeal against service delivery ruling

By Estelle Ellis

The Makana municipality has indicated that it will appeal against a ruling by the Makhanda High Court to have the municipal council dissolved because it was violating the Constitution through its ongoing lack of service delivery.

In a statement released by the municipality, the executive mayor, Mzukisi Mpahlwa, said he believed that the council had made strides in improving service delivery since the legal action against them commenced.

But the chairperson for the Unemployed People's Movement, Sikhumbuzo Soxujwa, said the municipality was not respecting the will of the people by appealing. "Also he isn't the mayor anymore. There is a court order that he must be removed," Soxujwa said.

Mpahlwa claimed that the municipality was on its way to financial recovery and can now pay current creditors on time and can also stick to repayment plans for other creditors.

He added that new revenue management measures included that water and electricity meters are read on time, customer care is being improved and credit control mechanisms, like disconnecting electricity, are implemented. He added that the national and provincial treasury has commended the municipality for improving its financial governance and budget management after the municipality tabled its first funded adjustment budget on 8 November 2019.

"Progress was made with water supply in difficult circumstances during the current drought and providing clean drinking water. A project to upgrade the James Kleynhans Water Treatment Works is currently underway and is expected to be finished in 2021. This project will allow us to produce about 20 megalitres per day, which would then be sufficient to supply the entire Makhanda from that sustainable water source. Difficulties currently being experienced with water supply is as a result of the drought that prevents us from pumping water from the rain-fed dams," the mayor's statement read.

Mpahlwa added that this includes implementing sewerage projects of R21-million and the bulk upgrade of wastewater treatment works totaling R390-million. He further claimed that roads and electricity infrastructure will also be updated. He added that the municipality has a new waste management plan.

"As this council, we have committed ourselves to turn Makana municipality's state of affairs around. This will be possible with the assistance from the interventions of the provincial and national government. For all of these to be achieved, we need to strengthen our relations with our residents, business sector and other stakeholders as they also have an obligation of paying their services, which will ensure that the municipality is able to render services that are unhindered. The municipality thanks all those who have been loyal in paying their accounts," Mpahlwa stated.

"The Eastern Cape is considering appealing the judgment," said premier Oscar Mabuyane's spokesperson, Mvusi Sicwetsha. "The judgment has far-reaching implications," he said. Sicwetsha said the judgment will be suspended, "until a final decision is taken", but the law allows for an application to have the order implemented while an



appeal is pending if the case is urgent.

Soxujwa said it was a blatant lie that the municipality “has turned a corner”.

“He makes our suffering into a little thing. Nothing is good here. It will never be good if you have to drink contaminated water. Makhanda is a mess. We need to save our city from these politicians. Things are not fine. By appealing, they are showing us that they have no humanity and no love for the city. They have collapsed the infrastructure of Makhanda – they have run the town into the ground. Nothing has been improving in this town. It is time for them to step aside. They don’t respect the way we feel about them. We elected them and they are not working for us. We don’t see the point of them carrying on. They are just buying time. In less than 18 months, we are having a local government election. They are just buying time,” he said.

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<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-01-28-unemployed-peoples-movement-ready-for-a-fight-as-makana-to-appeal-against-service-delivery-ruling/>

Impact of drought in Karoo

By Thahn-dee Matthews

The increase in climate variability and climatic extremes are impacting both water quality and availability through changes in rainfall patterns, with more intense storms, floods and droughts, changes in soil moisture and runoff. The Karoo is experiencing the worst drought in a thousand years. Several towns in the karoo area in the Eastern Cape have run out of water. Boreholes and dams have dried up.

A climate change induced drought has wrought devastating economic, social and political

consequences. Agriculture is collapsing, and both emerging and commercial farmers are abandoning their farms. Climate zones across the country are already shifting, ecosystems and landscapes are being degraded and field fires are becoming more frequent.

The youth had a lot to say about the water shortages here in the Karoo. Last year we mainly focused on farmers to tell us their stories and share their experiences with the Karoo water crisis. As much as we need a solution now, we need a viable plan for the next few years and the future. I have asked a few of my friends and youth in different areas in the Karoo how they are coping with the drought and here are some responses:

Cherman said: “the drought here in the Karoo is very bad for our farmers as their lands are now extremely dry. It was horrible to see animals having nothing to eat and drink. Animals are suffering and dying as a result of the drought”.

The youth are concerned that it will be worse for us in the future if we don’t make some changes immediately. Robyn Fisher said: “the drought affects the atmosphere that we live in, the taps have been dry for a long time and there has been no water to flush the toilets. Women can develop infections; this is one of the most common illnesses women can get. Plants are dying and that leads to death of animals and livestock.”

“In small towns like this, having a smaller population than in the cities, struggling with water caused a lot of frustration to workers, school kids and farmers, leaving businesses seeking alternatives. Without water, how can we stay clean? Women have it worse. Toilets and drainage become dry and produce a bad smell. Humans are now experiencing this, what about the diseases they are most likely to get.” - DJ



Shoes

People are fed up with the municipality as they do not deliver services on time to the people that need it. We have seen some improvement. Water would now only be switched off for three days and then switched on again for three to four days before being switched off again. Sometime last year they would switch the water off for weeks without switching it back on again, and sometimes the water trucks failed to make their rounds. While we wait for rain to fill the dam, the pleas from the community to the municipality are for improved communication, a timetable for water trucks, control of the distribution from water trucks to protect the dignity of the community and regulate the quality of the drinking water, and enforcement of water restrictions to conserve the limited resources available.





Climate Justice News

South African student embarks on #FridaysForFuture climate strike

Raesah Noor-Mahomed is an ordinary 17-year-old schoolgirl. She's worked hard throughout her school life, done well in her exams, and has dreams and ambitions for her life. But last week, she deliberately steered her life into uncharted territory. For six long hours, hours that she described as "lonely and hard", she sat outside her school, Parktown High School for Girls in Johannesburg, and began an indefinite Friday boycott of her classes.

That's five classes of 55 mins every Friday, potentially a lot of learning.

From the pavement, she read out her manifesto (see below), which she put on Instagram, as young activists are wont to do.

"It was a long day," she says, admitting, "I almost gave up and went back to class."

I asked Raesah what is motivating her stand? She says, while schools "touch on climate change, they don't discuss it seriously". "I first heard about it in geography in grade 8 or 9.

Then I started to learn more through social media. As I did, I wondered why, if people know so much, we are doing so little."

"Then I discovered Greta. She's super super cool."

Raesah's stand is at this point very much a one girl stand.

"Half my teachers think I'm stupid and the other half are supportive. But I'm lucky because the supportive ones are willing to help me catch up one-on-one."

"I met my headmistress last week, but she doesn't think I'm going to make an impact."

Some of her friends admire her stand, but she's not putting them under pressure to join her because she knows "school's too demanding", especially in her matric year.

So far, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Affairs, to whom she has written, has ignored her. She says she would like to meet Barbara Creecy, the minister.

I ask about her family. Her answer is that while they have followed and been influenced by her changing what she eats, they are ambivalent and "not completely supportive" about boycotting classes. "They are very worried, considering it's matric year".

So, it really is a brave stand and I wonder aloud whether she'll be able to sustain it? She responds thoughtfully. She knows there are many obstacles ahead "mainly in the form of people". She's also worried that missing lessons could be classified as bunking and she could face disciplinary action. But she has mentors and close friends. Her former history teacher told her that "it's hard when you are presented with a choice between two rights (going to school or boycotting), but then you must do what's right for you". She also mentions the support of Candice Chirwa, a young menstrual health activist, who will join her protest on Friday.

"I don't know how I'm going to manage. But I do know I'm stubborn and persistent." Perhaps that's why the message on her WhatsApp number says "The truth is a blood that, once unleashed, cannot be put back in the bottle."



After 10 minutes, our quick call is up. The school bell is ringing and I can hear the sound of learners in the background.

I wish her well, because on the issue of climate change, you're either with the activists or against them. As the call ends, I think to myself that it is often by such individual stands that movements are born and society reforms.

This is her statement:

"My name is Raeesah Noor-Mahomed and I am 17 years old. I have a message for the Department of Environmental Affairs and the rest of the South African government.

The climate emergency is getting worse and worse. People and animals are dying. Infrastructure is being destroyed. The fires in Australia are just one of many results of climate change that we are seeing and are continuing to see. It will get worse.

We need to act fast. And we need to act now.

South Africa is already feeling the effects of climate change. The heat and droughts we are experiencing is a result of global warming and the situation will get more intense. Over the next few years, the weather conditions will get more extreme. We need to do everything we can to combat and lessen the effects of climate change.

We need to.

But we aren't.

This is a call for you to listen to the youth. I have a list of demands for you that need to be listened to and discussed.

The list consists of:

-The total banning of single-use plastics with a month's grace period for organisations to organise a way to recycle it and become more sustainable.

-Start to transition away from using brand new paper and only use recycled paper, or digital platforms.

-Start using solar power in government-owned buildings and public places.

-Place recycling bins in public spaces.

-Make climate change a compulsory part of the curriculum.

-Make recycling mandatory in government schools.

-Start using eco bricks in the development of structures.

These are the small things you need to do. It's something. But not enough. What we really need from you is to admit that there is a climate emergency and discuss and debate it in Parliament. Treat it like it is. An emergency. Not a minor threat.

We need to start transitioning away from mining, especially coal mining. You cannot say that this can't be done because people will lose their jobs if your excuse for not implementing sustainable methods is a lack of funding and human capital. There is always a way. It can be done.

We need to reduce our carbon footprint drastically and fast. We need to completely transition to renewable energy.

We need to implement much more sustainability in the agricultural sector.



My demand is that you declare a climate emergency and listen to what the scientists and activists, and youth have been saying for years about the changes that need to be made.

I am in matric this year. It's a crucial year. But what's the point of investing all my effort into a future that I will never have because of climate change?

So I have decided that if you refuse to listen to my message and deny that there is a climate emergency, I will boycott school every Friday until a climate emergency is declared and you are open to discussions about becoming more sustainable. I will sit outside my school building every Friday protesting against your denial of the climate crisis.

I am putting my education on hold to fight for the future you are stealing from us.

I demand that you listen."

Originally posted at:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-01-22-south-african-student-embarks-on-fridaysforfuture-climate-strike/>

Parktown Pupil to boycott class every Friday until government declares climate emergency
Kayleen Morgan

A video was also released about the strike and can be viewed at:

<https://youtu.be/uMMGCVaUswE>





In drought-ravaged Northern Cape, government assistance may be too little, too late

By Rebecca Davis

“We are facing a tragedy. This is far beyond a disaster.” Sutherland resident Sybil Visagie doesn’t mince her words. She can’t afford to.

“Where I stand now, if I look out of my window, it is black, black, black. No green. There’s nothing.”

You can only truly understand the effects of the Northern Cape’s eight-year drought by seeing the landscape for yourself. When Daily Maverick drove through the province, we found just one river in over 1,000km, which maintained a trickle of water. The environmental palette contains only dull greys, browns and reds.

Where vanishingly rare patches of green grass are to be found, animals cluster, ribs protruding through emaciated bellies. From the road, one sees the bones of beasts who have succumbed to thirst, or hunger picked dry.

This is what eight years of drought looks like.

When it rained for a few hours during the first week of January 2020, there were reports that some young children of the Northern Cape experienced raindrops for the first time in their lives.

With the ANC’s top brass gathered in Kimberley for the party’s 108th birthday celebration a few days later, the province was finally declared a disaster area. Around R300-million was promised in emergency funds from the Department of Water and Sanitation, with the funding destined for interventions, which include digging boreholes and providing drinking water. Further assistance has

been pledged from other government ministries, including the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

But throughout the province, resentment towards the government for doing too little, too late is widespread. Gratitude is reserved mainly for the teams from Gift of the Givers, the aid organisation which has been providing relief in the form of drinking water and boreholes to drought-stricken areas all over the country.

“It seems as if [government] has no comprehension of the scale of the crisis,” Agri-Northern Cape deputy president Willem Symington told Daily Maverick.

But the government’s own researchers and officials have been aware of the worsening situation in the province for at least seven months. An Early Warning Committee report on the drought, issued by the provincial department of agriculture in July 2019, estimated that more than 15,500 farms covering more than 20-million hectares were “severely affected”, with a normal production value of R2,53-billion per year. Almost 14,000 jobs are at stake.

“With the backwards and forward linkages to the rest of the economy, [Northern Cape agriculture] is responsible for 22,437 equivalent jobs throughout the economy,” the report noted.

Agriculture, it also warned, is “one of the few sectors that can absorb a relatively large part of unskilled and lower-skilled labour”.

The worst-hit part of the province is the southern area, which encompasses towns like Calvinia, Williston, Fraserburg and Sutherland. Since 2014, this area has experienced almost no rainfall.

It is not just farmers and farmworkers taking the hit.



The knock-on effects of the drought on the dorpiess of the Northern Cape has been devastating, with some reduced to virtual ghost towns: Abandoned shops on the main street of places like Fraserburg tell another story about the drought's impact on this province.

The Merino restaurant in Victoria West stood completely empty at lunchtime recently, with a waitress sitting on a chair, waiting for customers who now rarely arrive.

"It's the drought," she responded in Afrikaans when asked by Daily Maverick why things were so quiet.

"Nobody has money. The drought has ruined our whole economy."

A bed and breakfast owner in Sutherland, who also runs a restaurant, had a similar account. "Previously, at least the farmers' wives would stop in for a coffee. Now, nobody has money to spend here," she said.

As a result of this hollowing-out of the local economy, employment has been shed in sectors like hospitality and tourism as well as agriculture.

But it is within farming that jobs are most precarious. Visagie, who is active in a number of drought relief activities, carried out a survey in 2019, which found that between 40% and 90% of farmworkers had lost their jobs in certain areas.

"The financial impact is twofold," explains Symington.

"[Livestock] herds have been drastically reduced to about 50% of normal [size]. This has resulted in at least 50% loss in income. Secondly, lack of natural grazing makes it necessary to buy fodder and feed for animals at great cost. Given the high price of these products, coupled with a fall of 30% in the farm price of red meat in 2019, it is an unsustainable

situation."

In the area around Sutherland, Daily Maverick heard stories of farmers simply abandoning their farms. Some, it was said, had gone overseas to try their luck at farming elsewhere.

"Farmers are packing up," confirmed Visagie.

"In our prayer group, we already lost three farmers in a very short time. People are getting to a point where they say: Listen, it's not working any more. But the average age of farmers in this area is 60 or more. Most farmers don't have any option [but to continue]."

Those who stick it out have taken tremendous strain. Some farmers' associations have organised "resilience workshops" for farmers and farmworkers in order to teach mental coping strategies.

One thin silver lining has been found in the open-hearted responses from South Africans all over the country, who have contributed money, animal feed and aid parcels to those in need in the Northern Cape.

"You see these big, strong farmers just crying as they receive their parcels," one Sutherland local told Daily Maverick.

A range of initiatives has been born from the need to generate funds for drought relief. Visagie's brainchild was Save the Sheep, which has seen the women of Sutherland's farming community come together to crochet sheep to sell to raise both money and awareness. Revenue from the project also goes towards supporting farmworkers' families.

"In Sutherland, it has brought the people together," says Visagie.



“There is no colour in drought. I can see that people are really trying to take care of each other.”

But neither the kindness of ordinary people nor the interventions of government can ultimately solve the Northern Cape’s problem.

“Drought can only end with rain,” says Symington.

“Enough rain to reach the long-term average rainfall. Then, a long period of trying to recover. Herds will have to be built up. Debts have to be paid back.” For now, it is not uncommon for Northern Cape locals to part ways not with “goodbye”, but with “sterkte” (strength).

Originally posted at:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2019-12-05-its-business-as-usual-as-sasol-brushes-off-climate-activist-shareholders/>





Climate crisis could reverse progress in achieving gender equality

By Nitya Rao

People who directly depend on the natural world for their livelihoods, like farmers and fishers, will be among the greatest victims of the climate crisis. In vulnerable hotspots, such as the arid lands of Kenya and Ethiopia, farming communities are already struggling with droughts and water scarcity that kill their cattle and threaten their very survival. The glacial-fed river basins of the Himalayan mountains, or the deltas of Bangladesh, India and Ghana, are increasingly prone to floods, landslides and powerful cyclones.

As a result, men are often migrating further to keep their families going, looking for casual work in neighbouring towns or villages for a few days or weeks at a time, or to cities further away. Many try to return home when they can, with whatever they have earned. But during their absence, the entire burden of maintaining the family is on women.

Researchers are in a race against time to predict how climate change will affect these communities and help them adapt, with drought and flood resistant crops and cattle breeds for example. But it's often overlooked that climate change will affect one half of humanity significantly more than the other. Longstanding gender inequality means that within regions of the world that are particularly vulnerable to climate change, women are likely to suffer more than men.

Isolated and overburdened

In a recent study, we found that extreme weather and unpredictable seasons disproportionately weaken the agency of women to find well paid work and rise above rigid gender roles, even when these appear to be bending after decades of reform and activism. Without support in the form of assured drinking water, energy, childcare or credit, women end up working harder and in poorer conditions for lower wages.

Women already in poverty are increasingly finding themselves in a vicious cycle of low productivity,

indebtedness and food insecurity as crops and livestock fail, as we found particularly in semi-arid parts of Africa and India. Women in northern Kenya complained that they could no longer afford meat, so ate rice and potatoes instead, even when this wasn't enough to satisfy their hunger.

As environmental stresses accumulate, community support networks break down. When people are displaced and have to settle elsewhere, men search for work and women are left behind at home, often in unfamiliar surroundings and lacking support from friends and relatives. But even if they do know people, with all the challenges of running the household in a strange environment, there is little time to help others.

With full responsibility for household chores, farming and caring for the children and elderly, women have less time to socialise or take part in community events, including meetings of the elected village government. If the state or charities can help, there's often competition for securing those benefits. In Namibia, people tend to stick with their ethnic groups to guarantee access through collective effort, but this means that ethnic minorities in the region are often excluded.

In Mali, heavier burdens are placed on women who are young and less educated. In India or Pakistan, women belonging to a lower social class or marginal caste suffer the most. Gender relations differ in each place and according to each situation – they're often too variable to emerge in broad national and global assessments. We tried to find a way to generalise our findings across 25 very diverse locations, in Asia and Africa, without losing the nuance of each woman's experiences.

The bare necessities

If much of the problem is structural, then short-term solutions like cyclone shelters or drought relief won't address the underlying causes of poverty and precariousness. Social safety nets that can ensure the basic necessities of food and shelter are needed, like the public distribution system for cereals in India, or the pensions and social grants available in Namibia.



To ensure that the health of people in these places doesn't irreversibly decline, women need to be supported with child and healthcare services, but also drinking water and cooking fuel. The role of community support is crucial during crises, but there's little that women can do to help themselves without resources and skills.

Competitive labour markets are also undervaluing the labour of poor women. Ensuring minimum wages and fair working conditions would help, but these are hard to implement across borders. As climate change causes traditional livelihoods to collapse, migrant men are similarly exploited by new employers. Deprived of adequate food and rest, many end up sick and spend their earnings on medical treatment.

Tackling the climate emergency and making sure these women and men live meaningful lives will take more than overcoming gender stereotypes. If given support, they can find creative solutions to the disruption that climate change has brought. But this support must mean the guarantee of universal access to food, shelter and basic services. At COP25 in Madrid, world leaders should help vulnerable communities to adapt to climate change with resources and solidarity, not warm words and rhetoric.

Originally posted at:

<https://theconversation.com/climate-crisis-could-reverse-progress-in-achieving-gender-equality-127787>

Climate Justice Charter

The climate justice charter is a set of principles to lead the country into a climate just future. This draft was written with contributions from various activists around the country, from various sectors. After a year of round table discussions in 2019 with stakeholders from media, drought affected communities, youth activists, environmental and social justice activists, faith based organisations and labour.

But we need more contributions, we want this to be a people's charter, and for this to happen- we need you all to read it, critique it, edit it, and contribute to it. Share it with your friends and make sure your voice is heard. It is now a google document to

make it easier for you to access and leave a comment!

The climate justice charter can be accessed at :
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uh3s7B-8minK9a1oQ4hT8YO8GOzALlovH92BwGP-wVRQw/edit?usp=sharing>

All comments must be in by May 1st, 2020.



The Food Sovereignty Campaign

Climate and food inequality: The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign response

Vishwas Satgar and Jane Cherry

The climate crisis is one of the major issues facing humanity in the 21st century. As greenhouse gas emissions cause planetary changes and rising temperatures, extreme weather events and climate shocks proliferate, including heatwaves, drought and flooding.

While many of these indiscriminately affect entire communities or regions, the consequences are not distributed uniformly in communities. Individual and social factors such as gender, age, education, ethnicity, geography and language lead to differential vulnerability and capacity to adapt to the effects of climate change.

The most vulnerable are typically poor people who live in the least developed countries that are prone to more than one type of weather disaster, i.e. floods, drought and storms as well as gradual environmental degradation such as sea-level rise or desertification.

Inequality is further evident when looking at responsibility for climate change. The climate crisis is one of neoliberal capitalism, a system which allows climate criminals to run rampant in a globalised world, pursuing profit at any cost, degrading the environment and spewing out increasing pollution and fossil fuels with no consequence. Large corporations which have been profiting from historical carbon extraction are not held responsible for their role in the climate crisis. The consequence is instead borne by those least responsible for

climate change.

The global picture of climate inequality is also reflected at a national level.

In South Africa, vulnerability to climate change and variability is intrinsically linked with social and economic development. When looking at the farming sectors, farmers in the Western Cape will be confronted with high exposure to extreme events and climate change/variability; however, their adaptive capacity (particularly of commercial farmers) is high due to its greater wealth, infrastructure development and good access to resources.

According to researchers, in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape it will only take moderate climate changes to disrupt the livelihoods and well-being of the rural inhabitants, who are largely subsistence farmers. Thus climate change will increase the burden of those who are already poor and vulnerable.

The link between climate and food inequality

Alongside but linked to the climate crisis is a growing global food crisis. This is a systemic crisis built on a profit-driven, globalised and carbon-based food regime which contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, undermines the food needs of a billion hungry people, has contributed to widespread food inequality and has caught at least two billion people in a transition to diets that are based on cheap and fast food, resulting in obesity and a host of attendant diseases such as sugar diabetes and heart disease. These crises are set to get worse.

The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report is explicit in the trajectories that it maps out. A planet heating at



1.5°C and increasing to 2°C will experience major stresses, risks and even the collapse of most food sources. Climate shocks will exacerbate inequalities, particularly food inequality.

This has been evident in South Africa's recent El Niño-induced drought which affected the national economy, led to increased unemployment and rising food prices. In particular, it was the low-income houses which were hardest hit by this climate/food shock as staple food prices increased by 25% between September 2015 and September 2016, while maize alone increased by 32% year on year.

The food sovereignty alternative

In response to the multiple crises facing societies, including climate and food inequality, there has been a surge in alternatives.

One notable movement of resistance originating from Latin America, and now an international peasant organisation, is La Via Campesina (The way of the peasants). Via Campesina promotes food sovereignty and defends small-scale farmers and agroecology. The organisation is made up of more than 200 million family farmers, peasants, landless people, rural workers, indigenous people, rural youth and rural women. In 1996 they declared the need for an alternative to food security approaches to end hunger.

Food sovereignty is this alternative. It affirms the importance of a political economy critique of current approaches to food systems; it highlights the importance of transformative alternatives that are controlled by small-scale producers and consumers to ensure healthy and culturally appropriate food, such as agroecology (a farming practice that works with nature to feed people and cool the planet); and it is about aggregating power from below to build

movements.

The food sovereignty response in South Africa has found variegated roots since La Via Campesina's championing of this idea. An agrarian sector, food justice, climate justice, and solidarity economy actors have all championed a food sovereignty thrust. This is evident in the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC), a coalition of over 50 organisations who came together in 2015 out of the need for a national platform to unify grassroots struggles for food sovereignty. An important element of its struggle is also climate justice.

The SAFSC epitomises a new mode of politics that is beyond reform (managing the system) or revolution (violently destroying the system). It represents an attempt to build a new popular imagination, activist capacity and actual pathways for an alternative: a food sovereignty system. This is fundamentally about systemic change led from below by small-scale food producers, consumers and citizens.

In the South African context, food sovereignty has been about:

- Viewing the food crisis as a systemic crisis rather than merely a technocratic food problem that reinforces the existing food system or a narrow agrarian challenge;
- Developing political economy critiques of the corporate-controlled food system as a whole and at the level of production, consumption, finance and ecology while also being alive to the need to imagine and work with systemic alternatives that could build the logic of food sovereignty;
- Capacity building for transformative activism and developing actual food sovereignty practices and pathways that meet people's needs.



These pathways are about laying the basis for a food sovereignty system that tackles food inequality at its roots and deepen the just transition (beyond just an energy transition, also a transition to more just food, water, transport and social systems) to sustain life in a climate-driven world.

There are many challenges to overcome on this journey, such as a lack of political will, partly as a result of the capture of the South African post-apartheid state by corporate interests including agrarian capital. Another challenge is to widen, deepen and strengthen local food sovereignty pathways in communities, villages, towns and cities. But the food sovereignty alternative is without a doubt necessary for a climate-driven world and South Africa.

A Climate Justice Charter process which is currently being led by the Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) and SAFSC is going to be crucial to shift relations of force and power towards food sovereignty. It will place food sovereignty centrally into narratives and discourses to advance the deep just transition.

Low disease and frost resistance for EU crops due to hot weather

By Elizabeth Schroeder

Near-record high temperatures in areas of western and central Europe early in the season have resulted in an increased risk of pests and diseases in the region's already delayed grains crops.

This was according to the European Commission's crop monitoring agency, Monitoring Agriculture with Remote Sensing (MARS).

While heavy rain disrupted sowing during autumn in countries in Western Europe, dry conditions in

some eastern regions resulted in crops, such as wheat, growing more slowly than usual.

"[In addition,] thermal conditions have been much milder than usual in Central, Eastern, and South-eastern Europe," MARS said in a monthly report.

This mild weather prevented grains from developing sufficient tolerance to low temperatures, a process known as hardening, making these crops more vulnerable to frost damage, according to the MARS report.

While no further frost damage was expected during January, MARS said crops could suffer later in the season.

"The current situation is delicate, because winter crops in many of these regions are underdeveloped due to delayed sowing and inadequate soil moisture conditions, which, combined with reduced cold tolerance, makes them particularly vulnerable to frost damage."

At the same time, however, lower temperatures in north-Eastern Europe have had a positive effect by accelerating the hardening process in the Baltic states, the report said.

Soil moisture levels in Spain, Portugal and Romania had returned to more normal levels, after experiencing drought-like conditions earlier in the season, the report said, adding that excess precipitation had continued in northwest Italy, southwest France, Scotland and Greece.

"The overall balance of positive and negative effects will depend on how the season evolves."

Despite these challenges, a report in Successful Farming magazine indicated that grain volumes in the EU was expected to recover from the significant



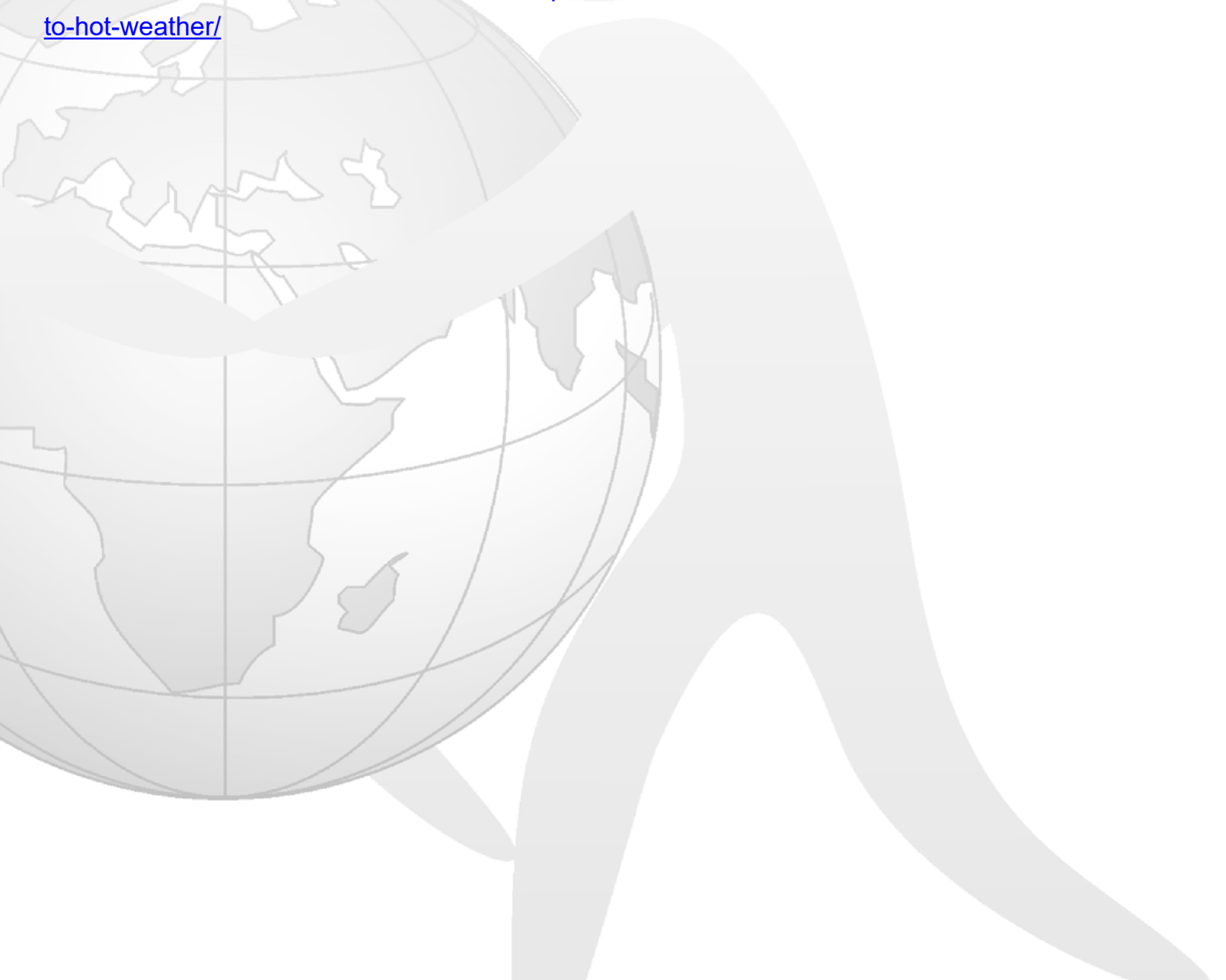
drop experienced in the previous season to reach 312 million tons in the 2019/2020 season.

Only the EU maize crop, for which a 4% decline was forecast, was expected to be negatively affected by drought, while wheat and barley outputs were significantly higher across the EU. This should strengthen domestic consumption and exports.

In contrast, EU oilseed production was significantly lower due to a downturn in canola production. Imports were expected to increase to compensate for the lower volumes, the report said.

Originally posted at:

<https://www.farmersweekly.co.za/agri-news/world/low-disease-and-frost-resistance-for-eu-crops-due-to-hot-weather/>





The Worker Cooperative Campaign

Call to Cooperatives: Join the Solidarity Economy Movements Website

Food sovereignty and food justice are issues that are important to many nonprofits. For native communities, the return of traditional foods and management of food systems is something that is increasingly recognized as a central element of sovereignty. Last week, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez spoke at an annual food summit, Diné Bich'iiya' Summit at Diné College in Tsaile, Arizona, and focused in part on the importance of establishing food policy and a food regulatory office with the goal strengthening the local food economy on the Navajo Nation. For nonprofits working on food justice, the elements of food sovereignty are critical to understand, especially for nonprofits working with native communities.

As part of his comments, President Nez stated the importance of having locally produced food for Navajo families by increasing their capacity to farm, and lessening their dependence on outside food sources. The summit, whose theme was "Food Is Medicine," featured workshops and discussions on a wide range of topics including backyard gardening, traditional four foods, farm-to-school efforts, and other areas of interest. This theme reflects similar programs by other native nations, some of which were featured in the 2015 WK Kellogg Foundation report, Intertribal Food Systems, a National Intertribal Survey and Report. This report explores ways tribal communities are reclaiming their food sovereignty to create healthier choices and highlights 40 tribal-led projects focused on food systems. The vision put forth by President Nez echoes many of the survey's themes, which are:

1. Food as Medicine
2. Youth Development
3. Market Access
4. A Response to Health and Hunger
5. A Return to Roots

This latest food summit is part of a growing interest in healthy foods. Other efforts in the region have included a recognized farm to school program, a demonstration ranch dedicated to offering hands on training, traditional food workshops, and a community derived and managed development group called Hasbidito. These and other efforts point to the importance of establishing local control and development of food systems in native communities. As native communities look to strengthen their local food systems and increase their food sovereignty and security, several relevant issues need to be addressed and considered. As NPQ reported last year, there is a need for increased investment and financial capital to be available for native owned agricultural businesses. While native CDFIs are filling the financing gap for agricultural lending for businesses, there is still room for growth, and with good reason. According to the US Census of Agriculture's 2012 census for American Indian Reservations, there is a gap between the number of farms located on reservation lands and the number of farms on reservation lands owned by native entrepreneurs. This means outside owners use farmlands to profit while food grown on native lands leaves for outside markets.

In addition to financing needs, there are several examples of discrimination at play that inhibit native farmers and agripreneurs from succeeding. Perhaps most notably, as NPQ reported last August, the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) was established as a result of a lawsuit, the Keepseagle v. Vilsack case, where claimants alleged that the US Department of Agriculture "discriminated against



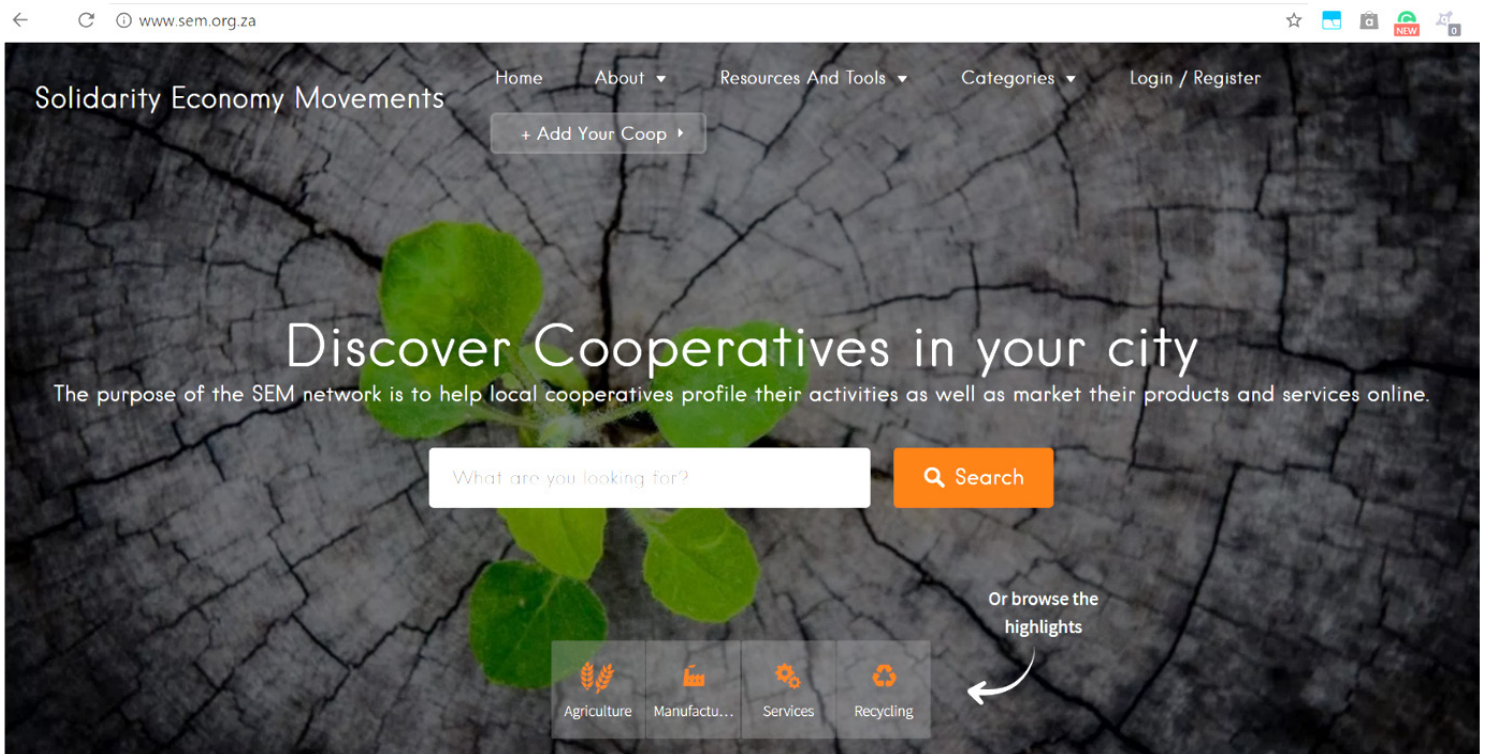
Native Americans in its farm loan and farm loan servicing programs." The resulting \$266 million fund will begin making grants in 2019.

In addition to the *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* case, other efforts have been undertaken to ensure that Native communities are included in federal programs, such as efforts last year to ensure Native inclusion in the Farm Bill. The Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas, which was a partner in the Intertribal Survey in 2015, authored a report called *Regaining Our Future: An Assessment of Risks and Opportunities for Native Communities in the 2018 Farm Bill*. The report discusses how the Farm Bill is organized, explores the importance of 638 authority for the USDA as a tool for tribes to engage more effectively with USDA programs, and looks at a range of Farm Bill components such as commodities, nutrition, rural development, and crop insurance.

Ultimately, food sovereignty reflects unique cultural values and histories, while returning control of food systems to local actors. Efforts that emphasize local policy and regulation, such as the ones recommended recently at the food summit in the Navajo Nation, can be effective tools for facilitating increased capacity and bolstering efforts. At the same time, considerations about structural discrimination and addressing federal policy constraints are essential to the long-term efficacy of locally controlled food systems. For nonprofits working on food justice and sovereignty, these considerations and certainly others are worth noting and integrating into their efforts.

Originally posted at:

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/the-growth-of-the-native-food-sovereignty-movement/>



The Worker Cooperative Campaign

Call to Cooperatives: 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:

-Type the following address into your internet browser: www.sem.org.za

-Click on the block in the top right corner '+ add your coop'

-You will then be asked to register so type in your email address and choose a password

-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.



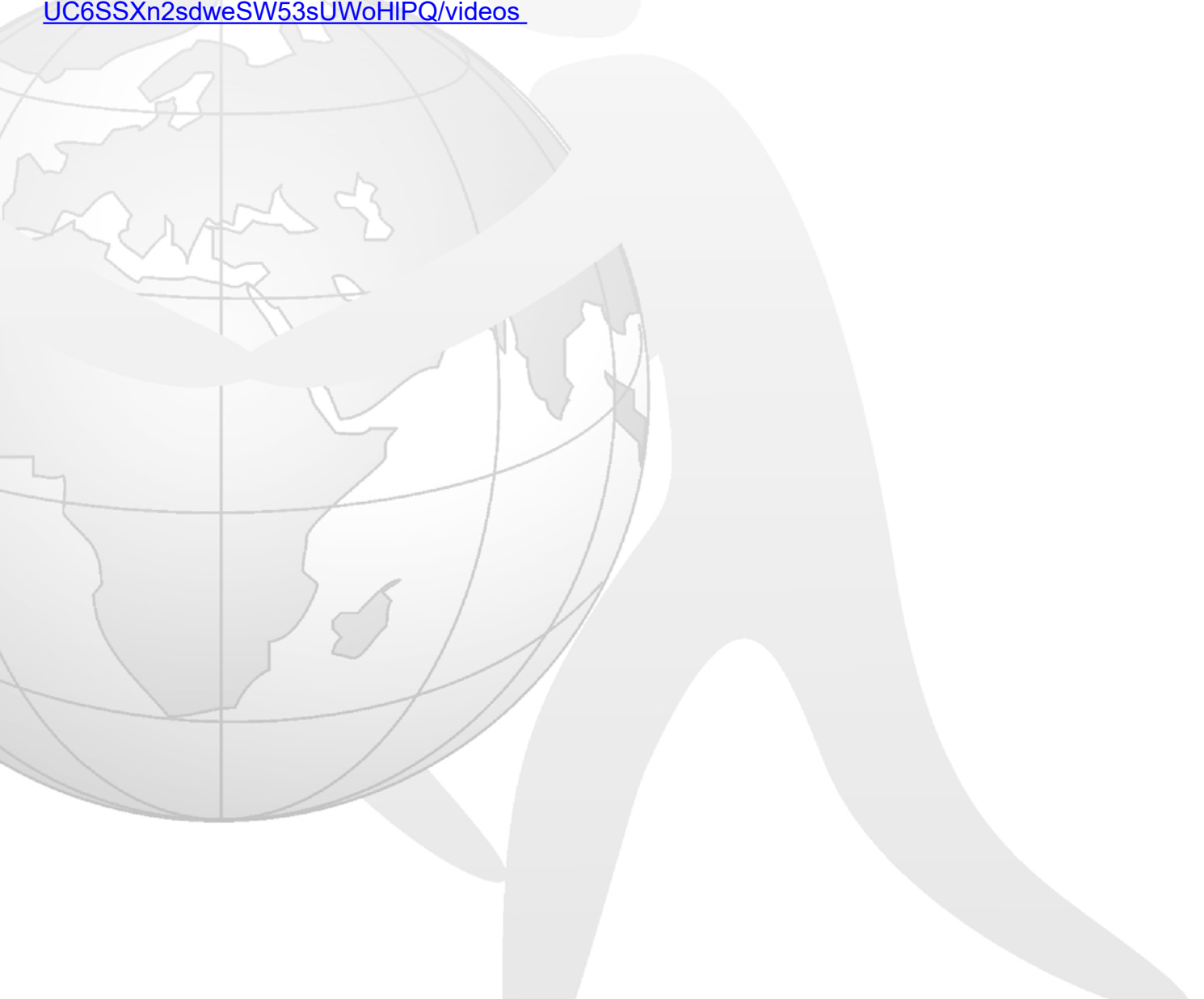
Activist Resources to Advance the Solidarity Economy from Below

Climate Justice through Land Justice: A food Sovereignty activist guide

Seminars and workshops available for viewing on Youtube

All of our events are uploaded on the COPAC youtube channel. Click on this link to view the latest videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6SSXn2sdweSW53sUWoHIPQ/videos>





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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