



# food ethics

The magazine of the Food Ethics Council

## Food: human rights, human wrongs

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ETHICS  
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Food Ethics, the magazine of the Food Ethics Council, seeks to challenge accepted opinion and spark fruitful debate about key issues and developments in food and farming. Distributed quarterly to subscribers, each issue features independent comment and analysis.

The Food Ethics Council challenges government, business and the public to tackle ethical issues in food and farming, providing research, analysis and tools to help. The views of contributors to this magazine are not necessarily those of the Food Ethics Council or its members.

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# The right to food

## Addressing injustice, accepting responsibility



I am extremely fortunate never to have experienced genuine hunger. It is easy for me to take adequate, available and accessible food for granted. Yet there are many millions for whom the right to food is a distant dream.

What does the right to food mean for individuals and communities around the world? How can we ensure the right to food is met? Are there signs of hope amid our apparently failing food system? What obligations do businesses have to support access to affordable, decent food? In this issue, we explore some of these important questions.

Our interest is quite simple. At its heart, everything the Food Ethics Council does is about the right to food. Every day in every country around the world, people are struggling to secure the right to food; businesses are – whether they realise it or not – coming up against the issue; and governments are making policy decisions that affect it.

The Food Ethics Council wants food justice for everyone. We address injustices in our food systems, whether it is through our research on domestic food poverty in the UK, our work on fairness in global supply chains (for example through our Food and Fairness Inquiry), or our challenges to government on innovations in the food system. Just as we all have rights, so we should accept our responsibilities to uphold them. We all have a responsibility for doing more to promote fairness and social justice – as we concluded in our ‘Food Justice’ report: “We can each do much more before we run up against the limits to our responsibilities.”

The human right to food means that states are required to respect, protect and fulfil food rights: they should not impede access to adequate food; they should prevent individuals or enterprises depriving people of access; and they should strengthen people’s access to resources to ensure their means to a livelihood and food security (levels of income etc). These are *obligations*, not suggestions, recommendations or ‘nice-to-haves’.

In many countries around the world, the ‘state’ is clearly failing to fulfil this obligation. And even where governments do uphold the right to food, the onus is not, and should not, be on them alone. Non-state actors – including food businesses – have responsibilities too.

Power imbalances are at the heart of many of these issues. Gooch [p13] describes how disproportionate purchasing power causes risks to be passed to the weakest part of a supply chain, resulting in human rights abuses in India’s cashew nut

industry. De Schutter [p4] notes that the majority of those who are hungry in the world today are part of the food system – whether they are small food producers or waged agricultural workers. He goes on to argue for different kinds of relationships between actors in the food chain other than those based solely on relative bargaining strength.

Bloomer [p9] argues that food businesses play a crucial role. He points out that as well as being responsible for human rights violations, they also “hold the keys to many of the solutions”. He notes that there are “progressive and far-sighted businesses who are already taking substantial voluntary action to address the food crisis. We now need many more to follow suit.”

It is easy to paint a depressing picture of millions of fragile, vulnerable, helpless people around the world suffering from desperate hunger. But as Hossain highlights [p6], many individuals and communities do not sit back and passively accept that they are being failed by the food system. Powerful movements born out of the suffering caused by rising food prices are sending shockwaves around the world. Hossain argues that “many people have a powerful sense of their entitlement to affordable food, and will protest if their government fails to protect that.” Hossain talks about the ‘moral economy’ – a set of “unspoken shared principles that the right to profit defers to the right to eat in moments of crisis, and that the authorities are mandated to act accordingly.”

I hope that we never live to see the day when the right to profit is pitted against the right to eat – although some might argue we are pretty close to that now. But if it ever comes, surely even the most hardened capitalist would agree that the latter must take precedent over the former. Mulvany [p11] writes of the need to go beyond the current industrial paradigm and what is conventionally thought of food security. He argues for a food sovereignty framework – which is fundamentally about people’s right to define their own food systems.

The right to food is a serious matter and affects people in communities no matter where they live around the world. That is why we have devoted a whole issue to it, and why more needs to be done – both to secure the right to food and to hold those responsible for delivering it to account. In the words of Salmon [p18] – with her powerful call to reframe the campaign for food policy reform – “let’s shift the focus firmly onto the most fundamental human entitlement: the human right to adequate food.”

## Food businesses and the right to food



Commodity buyers, food processors and retailers play a key role in connecting producers to consumers, writes **Olivier de Schutter**. Their contribution to the right to food is essential, and it is important that these actors benefit from a regulatory and economic environment that allows them to play this role.

It is striking that the majority of those who are hungry in the world today are also part of the food system. Small, independent food producers and waged agricultural workers represent an important percentage of people who appear in statistics on undernutrition or malnutrition. They probably represent around half of the world's undernourished. It is therefore essential to consider how the sourcing, pricing, and wage policies of commodity buyers, food processors and retailers are aligned with the requirements of the right to food. Food systems are currently undergoing deep transformations, opening up major opportunities and major risks for all involved. Without state regulation, and without corporate responsibility, it is unlikely that the benefits will reach the millions of smallholders living close to or below the poverty line.

### A transforming sector

Direct foreign investment in agriculture rose from an average of US\$ 600 million annually in the 1990s, to an average of US\$ 3 billion in 2005–2007, and has continued to expand in the wake of the 2008 food price spikes. This influx of capital is part of a larger transformation of the global supply chain in the agrifood sector. Commodity buyers are larger and more concentrated than ever before. They too are facing new challenges: they must respond to the requirements of their food industry clients for tighter control over suppliers. Meanwhile the processing industry is also rapidly consolidating and becoming increasingly globalized.

The resulting market structure gives buyers considerable bargaining strength over their suppliers, with major implications for the welfare both of producers and consumers. Due to the deeply unequal bargaining positions of food producers and consumers on the one hand, and buyers and retailers on the other, the latter can continue to pay relatively low prices for crops even when the prices increase on regional or international markets, and they can continue to charge high prices to consumers even though prices fall on these markets. While measures have been taken to encourage companies to act responsibly, they have not been commensurate with the magnitude of change in the sector.

### Right to food

The implications for the right to food are multiple. The right to food constitutes the right of all to have access at all times to adequate and culturally acceptable food, either by producing it, or by procuring it from the market. For poor consumers, a powerful corporate agribusiness sector can pose a threat by pulling supply away from low-value markets, by failing to provide food at the right price – particularly in situations of monopoly or quasi-monopoly, in certain more remote areas – or by undercutting the local supply chain and reducing consumer choice. But even more directly impacted by the consolidation of the food systems are those involved in the production of food. As agricultural labour is

increasingly casualized, as contract farming develops (resulting in long-term relationships being established between farmers and commodity buyers, who decide what and how to grow and set prices), and as small farmers increasingly work on farms or plantations to supplement their basic incomes, the distinction between waged workers and farmers is breaking down. The blurring of the distinctions between these different categories often leads to situations in which the legal framework applicable to the relationship between the food producer and the food buyer is difficult to determine, and in which the rights and obligations of the parties are unclear. Despite this, two broad categories of challenges can be distinguished.

Consider first the situation of farm workers employed on plantations. There are more than 450 million waged agricultural workers globally, representing a growing proportion of the agricultural workforce, perhaps 40% today. Fundamental rights at work are frequently violated in the agricultural sector. Less than 20% of agricultural workers have access to basic social protection. And, due to the lack of childcare services in rural areas in many countries or to wages being paid on a piece-rate basis (which is a strong incentive for women farm workers in particular, to bring their children to work with them on the field as “helpers”), about 70% of child labour in the world is in agriculture. 132 million children between five and 14 years of age work on plantations. This is a sector in which bonded labour practices are perpetuated from one generation to the next. Since much of waged employment is in the informal sector, national labour legislation is unable to ensure the right to a minimum wage or to protect women from discrimination.



Photo: Jerry Dohnal

Consider, second, the situation of smallholders in this rapidly changing environment, in which global supply chains develop. In a sector that is increasingly globalized and concentrated, the imbalance of bargaining power between producers and buyers is becoming a source of concern. Often regulation is unfit or unable to prevent this unequal relationship degenerating into manipulative practices that disempower farmers and force them into what some have called “self-exploitation” – a way of describing the situation of those who are paid too little for the product of their work, even though they are not in a waged relationship, and therefore make sacrifices simply to stay in business.

### **Bridging the gap**

Therefore, it falls to corporations to take proactive steps to avert these risks. Employers have a responsibility to go beyond the baseline. Where laws are insufficiently protective of agricultural workers or where the existing labour legislation is inadequately monitored, employers must bridge the gap through their own good practice. To do so requires not merely an interest in decent working conditions, but an understanding of what constitutes the right to food, and how their activities can contribute to it – or undermine it – on various levels.

For example, the responsibility to respect the right to food implies that a company must not contribute to the downward pressure on wages and working conditions, whatever the competitive pressures they face. Agribusiness corporations should use their weight to ensure that wages and working conditions improve as a result of their suppliers joining global value chains. They could make unilateral undertakings to monitor compliance with certain social standards in the supply chain. And they could also conclude international framework agreements with global unions. Indeed, agribusiness companies often adopt codes of conduct to ensure that their suppliers comply with certain requirements related to freedom of association, to health and safety at work, and to the prohibition of child labour. The problem with unilateral codes of conduct is that their coverage varies greatly. Their value lies in going beyond the regulatory baseline and taking an interest in the many dimensions of the right to food. A code that does not move beyond those minimum requirements is a source of confusion, not progress.

Meanwhile, there may also be a tendency to shift the burden of compliance onto the supplier. Instead, it is crucial for the buyer to support compliance by meeting part or whole of the investment cost required, by providing technical capacity, and by funding the monitoring procedures. A further risk is that supply contracts are outsourced and codes of conduct no longer apply. It is therefore essential to ensure that the whole supply chain is covered. The greatest challenge is in fact to ensure that these codes are implemented. If not, they are merely false advertising. Furthermore, it must still be ensured that these do not become a substitute for negotiation and bargaining, nor an excuse not to sign up to international framework agreements, or multi-stakeholder initiatives.

### **Enabling compliance**

Meanwhile, there are specific things that can be done to improve the situation of smallholder farmers, itself an essential step in realizing the right to food. During the past decade, the shift from supply-driven to buyer-driven chains typically led to an increased exclusion of smallholders: consumers demand compliance with high food safety and hygiene standards, as well as with environmental standards, that are more difficult for smallholders to adapt to. Though this is gradually changing (consumers are now also concerned about equity in the sourcing policies of the large agribusiness dealers), this risk remains high.

It is therefore essential for corporations to reach out to these producers and help them to achieve compliance. Third-party certification schemes have not worked in favour of smallholders. Compliance has often required higher levels of capitalization than many smallholders could afford, and the high costs of monitoring compliance over a large number of units have been an incentive for export companies to switch from smallholders to larger commercial farms. This consequence can only be avoided through the payment of a premium by the wholesalers to reward compliance, at least during the first years of implementation, and through the provision of technical assistance to facilitate compliance with standards. Currently, a number of certified smallholders are only able to remain within the system thanks to donor support. This is not sustainable.

The agribusiness sector could take proactive steps to change this. As a first step, the sector could carefully assess the impact of private standards on the right to food. This is true for the standards it has adopted in the past and for those it is planning to adopt in the future. Such assessments should be carried out with the participation of smallholders themselves, who are better placed to identify the obstacles they may be facing in seeking to comply. Second, the sector should recognize the limitations of and move beyond the inspection/audit approach. Indeed, this approach does not assist smallholders in overcoming compliance problems, nor does it help buyers understand the obstacles that their suppliers face. Indeed, the participation of smallholders in the elaboration of, and compliance with, standards is crucial.

### **Contract farming**

While corporations must be aware of rights implications across their activities, there are particular considerations to take into account when it comes to the ‘contract farming’ model. Recent years have seen an upsurge in large-scale land purchases by foreign investors – so-called ‘land-grabbing’ – but less attention has been paid to the parallel rise in contract farming arrangements, whereby farmers commit their output to processing or marketing firms at predetermined prices. These arrangements can be beneficial for smallholders and for the right to food, but only under certain conditions. Indeed, a fair contract must include a series of provisions: minimum price guarantees, visual demonstration of quality standards, the provision of inputs at or below commercial rates, tailored dispute settlement mechanisms, and the possibility to set aside a portion of land for food crops to meet the needs of the family and the community.

Without these checks and balances, the door is left open for produce to be summarily rejected, for farm debt to spiral, for labour to be sub-contracted without regulatory oversight, and for a region’s food security to be undermined by the production of export-oriented cash crops at the expense of all else. These are private contractual arrangements that vary from case to case, and ultimately it is up to governments to scrutinize these details. However, agribusiness can go a long way to ensuring a positive contribution to the right to food by drawing up contracts that empower smallholders and are therefore made to last. Here again, corporations must take a conscious decision not to abuse their strong negotiating power. Relationships between buyers and producers can no longer be based solely on their relative bargaining strength. Instead, they must be collaborative, and based on other modes of communication than price signals. Ultimately they must involve proactive steps from agribusiness that mitigate the risks of power imbalances, empower producers, and help to realize the right to food. ■

Olivier De Schutter is the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food. He has submitted official reports to the UN on Agribusiness and the right to food (2010), and contract farming (2011).

# Food riots and food prices

## A moral economy in a global era



Two lessons should have been learned from the 2008 world food crisis, argues **Naomi Hossain**. First, that it is unsafe to bet on global markets for national food security; and second, that many people have a powerful sense of their entitlement to affordable food, and will protest if their government fails to protect that.

The 2008 price spike was triggered by a complex mix of new incentives to invest in biofuels, rapid rises in demand, weather-related harvest shortfalls, and, contentiously, food commodity speculation. Food riots and massive popular discontent around the world encouraged governments to close trade borders, panic buy or punish food traders. With hindsight, many believe that the 2008 food crisis had a relatively muted – in some cases even positive – impact on how well people were eating. However, the event itself was plainly a crisis of subsistence, dramatising the fragility of people's access to affordable food within globally integrated food markets.

Social historians of 17th and 18th century Europe no doubt saw parallels in this sense of entitlement to food and in the suspicion towards food trade. They echo the 'moral economy' ideas popularised by the English social historian EP Thompson in his work on 18th century English food riots. At their most basic, these ideas involved a set of unspoken shared principles that the right to profit defers to the right to eat in moments of crisis, and that the authorities are mandated to act accordingly.

Moral economic ideas tend to be heard mainly when the food system ruptures, at moments when a crisis exposes the fatal limitations of having to rely on what you can buy for your nourishment. In the past, these ideas about how the food system should work were framed as part of culture and custom, a paternalistic notion of obligations to ensure food was affordable and available. Elites were obliged to act, and could be forcibly held to account if they failed to do so.

Global food markets continue to fail and many people still believe governments should act in such circumstances. However, today's global elites who make present day global food policy have not learned their lessons from history. Global initiatives since the 2008 price spike – such as the G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa, the World Bank-run Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) 'movement' – all rely more, not less, on the assumption that food markets work well. And crucially,

they mostly say less, not more, about the fact that people have rights to food regardless of their ability to buy it in a market. The reason lessons about the misfit between global food markets and national food politics remain unlearned may be the profound deafness to the rumblings of the domestic moral economy among those who design global food policy.

The motivations and sociological dimensions of global food policymaking tend to go unexamined, but they clearly deserve a look. The technocrats who dream up such schemes – rootless cosmopolitan elites that they are – will not necessarily know the histories of famine or disaster or hardship through which national political histories and social contracts are forged. They may not have much of a handle on the cultural and social significance of food in country X. They are unlikely to hear firsthand what ordinary people on low incomes say about how hard it is to buy good food these days. Unlike their national counterparts, they will be insulated against the kinds of political pressure this puts on national politicians.

Their intellectual leanings and disciplinary training means they probably dismiss concerns about hoarding and speculation and unfair market practices as ignorant suspicion. Even if they can 'read' these elements of moral economy thinking, such anecdotes and trivialities are unlikely to derail the project of opening national food economies to global markets, the best and surest way of getting efficient and effective food systems.

Closer to home, in the countries they govern, national food policymakers are often better-tuned to radio trottoir or popular opinion. This is because in many countries, a food crisis is a political crisis, and one that makes-or-breaks political careers. In Bangladesh, a country overcoming a tragic history of famine, the Minister for Food reportedly sends his senior officials to the market every so often. He does not do so to collect data – they already have high quality price data and sophisticated food monitoring systems to which they respond. He sends his officials to the market to listen to what people are saying. Presumably this is because he is aware of the political power of the moral economy.



So what does the moral economy look like in the present day? If the Minister's officials had been in a northern Dhaka market in 2011, when rice prices were at their peak, this is what they might have heard: "The government should make sure that the businessmen are not storing food items in their store-houses, [but] selling them in the market. The problem is, when the businessmen raise the price, the government does not tell them anything [because] the government takes bribes from the businessmen. The money taken from them through bribes is very important for the ruling party as they will spend this money in the next election to come back [to] power again. There is only one way to keep the price of food items under control and that is to hold demonstrations against price hikes. The fact is, in Bangladesh you cannot achieve anything without a show-down, without a demonstration. If the people go to the street and vandalize 20 or 30 cars, only then will effective steps be taken, the price will come down and the poor will be able to live a happy life."

This was the angry statement of a young rickshaw-puller who, like other low wage urban workers, found himself at the sharp edge of the food price hike. His critique of the failures of food markets, his demands that public authorities should act, and the desperate faith in the power of direct action have many of the hallmarks of the moral economy as found in European history.

Food riots in the past typically occurred at crisis moments of economic adjustment, at times when free trade was in the ideological ascendant and its virtues were being aggressively pushed in public policy. The moral economy provided the popular mandate for public authorities to protect people against food-related shocks, as well as the theory for food rioters in well-documented cases. It seems that the same is true today.

Popular mobilisation around food often has a particularly visceral quality, as protestors dramatise the sense that the very basis of their very lives is threatened and they will adopt any means necessary to push back. The historian John Bohstedt cites English women rioters in 1740 who said they would prevent corn exports at all costs, and would 'rather be hanged than starved'. The 'food-or-death' motif was echoed in the series of Kenyan food protests in 2011 known as the 'Unga (maize flour) Revolution', in which protestors chanted 'unga is life'. The slogans used by Dhaka garments workers in 2008 were 'bring prices down, let us live', with which message they closed factories in the flagship export industry and fought battles with the police that left two dozen seriously injured. It was this worldwide surge of popular mobilisation around food in 2008 and 2010-11 which reminded a group of researchers at the Institute of Development Studies of the significance of the moral economy in the politics of food in the European past. With colleagues in Bangladesh, India, Kenya and Mozambique, we started wondering what people at the sharp end of the present day food crisis might be thinking and saying about rights to food and the responsibilities for protecting them.

We wanted to understand the 'politics of provisions' as John Bohstedt has put it – the political economic interests shaping the all-important food systems, as well as the reasons and means people had for mobilising in countries where hunger was still a real concern. But we also wanted to understand how present day food crises might differ from those of the historical past: how much can national governments do to protect their citizens against spikes that come from global price volatilities? What difference does global market integration make to the political and moral economy of food? We have been studying these issues in Bangladesh, India, Kenya and Mozambique, over the period

2007-12, talking to activists and protestors, policymakers and politicians and studying the patterns of these events against the food price and policy changes of the period.

Our research on these issues is ongoing, but we have learned a great deal. For one thing, ideas about how food markets should work seem to share some basic principles: consumers tend to distrust the entire food trade, while food traders themselves point to reasons to mistrust others higher up the chain, and most people hold national governments to account when food systems fail to deliver. Put another way, a basic set of moral economy principles does appear to be shared. But whether and how those actually result in protests or political action and policy change depends on the political opportunities and the scope for organising that are available.

Whether the point of contention is too much or too little in the way of export/import, regulation, subsidy or tax varies greatly. So too does the form of popular mobilisation that emerges to argue the point. But while people do not believe that markets work well when they are visibly failing to supply affordable food, this does not mean that governments should take over all food marketing functions wholesale. It is just as often government failures to regulate markets properly and in the public interest which is at stake, and protests may be about public sector corruption as much as about private sector speculation or collusion.

This is just as well. Yang Jisheng's Tombstone, the door-stopping (and jaw-dropping) account of the Great Chinese Famine that killed 36 million people only a generation ago, is a timely reminder of the dangers of state efforts to engineer food systems by banning market actors. The message seems to be not that markets are necessarily bad, but that the test of a well-functioning market is whether it works for the public (not just private) benefit.

One big difference between moral economies past and present is that food markets are now more global than in the past. The opening of grain trade borders was famously at issue in the 19th century Corn Laws, and present day food-exporters face

popular pressure to close their borders during price spikes, as India notoriously did in 2008. But when present-day protestors demand action to keep prices down, national governments may find their hands are tied. In these days of government-to-government grain purchase agreements, regional treaties, and World Trade Organisation regulations there is a strong overall pressure to conform to open market norms, particularly for small countries and food importers. Food politics may be domestic, but food prices can be set globally.

Globalisation does not push moral economy thinking off the political agenda, however: the international human rights movement has created new political possibilities around which to mobilise. The past decade has seen a rapid rise in Right to Food movements such as Brazil's Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) programme, and India's Right to Food Act, both of which involve massive programmes to guarantee access to basic food.

Since this year, some two-thirds of the Indian population is now guaranteed 5 kgs of cheap food grains each month – a historical shift in the legal basis for the right to food. This more constitutionalist basis for the moral economy, firmly set within national political systems, reflects a major difference in the politics of provisions in the European past compared to the present day developing world. Custom and culture – the paternalistic obligations that once governed the behaviour of the landed elites – have been replaced by the electoral logics of multi-party politics. The moral economy is now the political calculus of the voter who spends half her income on food: as we know in Asia, it is the price of rice that wins – or loses – elections.

Naomi Hossain, a political sociologist with nearly twenty years of development research and advisory experience, is a research fellow at the Institute of Development Studies.

More information is available about the Food Riots and Food Rights project at the Institute of Development Studies at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/project/food-riots-and-food-rights>. This article draws on an article to be published in the Journal of Peasant Studies in 2013 (with Devangana Kalita). John Bohstedt's The Politics of Provisions was published by Ashgate in 2010. EP Thompson's work on the moral economy can be found in *Customs in Common*, published by Penguin in 1991.



Photo: World Development Movement

# Global business and the right to food

## Securing human dignity and freedom



Although there is more than enough food in the world to feed everyone, something radical shifted in the middle of the last decade, says **Phil Bloomer**, and we're still waking up to the 'Perfect Storm'<sup>1</sup> in our food system.

Over the past ten years we have witnessed the end of three decades of decline in relative food prices and three food price crises in five years, each associated with a steep rise in the number of hungry people. Current and future trends include climate change, which applies acute pressure on global food supply, and declining productivity gains through under-investment in agriculture. Meanwhile demand from emerging economies is expanding rapidly, and biofuels are diverting crops from food markets to fuel tanks. Global business dominates the global food system from the production of food by agribusiness for richer markets, to the international trade in grain; from the financiers who invest and speculate in the food system, to the food processors and supermarket retailers. These players are part of a global food system that currently leaves around 870,000 poor people going to bed hungry each night, most of them agricultural workers or small-holders, and a further billion poor people chronically malnourished.

There are few more fundamental violations of human rights than the denial of the right to food. And companies have a direct responsibility to respect the right to food in the way they do business. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted by global consensus in 2011, are clear, and reinforced by Olivier de Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food who stated "in order to meet their responsibility to respect [human rights], companies must undertake an ongoing process of human rights due diligence whereby they become aware of, prevent, and mitigate adverse human rights impacts: companies should not only ensure compliance with national laws but also manage the risk of human rights harm with a view to avoiding it."<sup>2</sup>

The website of the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre catalogues the many ways, positive and negative, that companies are responding to this obligation. We have a section on Right to Food which provides all the major international standards, and cases of progress and abuse from around the world. Below are a few iconic snapshots which illustrate some of the wider trends.

### Delivering progress?

Many of the major food companies recognise they cannot ignore their obligations to protect the right to food. They have begun to put in place policies that seek to mitigate damage to poor people and contribute to reducing hunger. The last ten years have seen some significant progress, but starting from a very low base. Most companies are so far failing to deliver comprehensive policies that

ensure their commitment to respect the right to food. Oxfam tested the policies of the ten largest companies (who should be the most aware and have the resources to act) across seven key areas, including their treatment of workers, smallholders and women; climate change action; and the care they take not to provoke land and water grabs that dispossess poor people without consent or compensation.<sup>3</sup> Only two companies, Nestle and Unilever, scored over five out of ten overall, with each of these scoring six or seven in four of the seven areas of concern. Associated British Foods, Kellogg's, and General Mills could not achieve three out of ten. And these scores are just for advances in policy commitments which still need to be translated into company practice in order to deliver right to food for the poor in practice.

### Government responsibility

But before we look at the response of companies to the emerging food crisis, it is important to also look at the responsibility of governments regarding the right to food right now. Generally, people go hungry because they are poor and live in countries where there is profound inequality. Put simply, they suffer because they do not have enough money to buy the food they need.

A few governments have taken radical steps to end this scandal: Former President Lula's Zero Hunger Campaign in Brazil, coupled with the introduction of basic social protection for the poorest (bolsa familia), and a major hike in the minimum wage brought substantial progress. Between 2000–2 and 2005–7, the proportion of people living in hunger was reduced by one-third in Brazil. Between 2003 and 2009, the number of people living in poverty decreased by 20 million.<sup>4</sup> The Vietnamese government has achieved the Millennium Development Goal on hunger five years early by investing and creating economic growth in small-holder communities, and has made special efforts to reach poor women. These examples illustrate what can be done where there is the will to end hunger.

### A living wage

Companies must be equally decisive. For instance, they have a clear obligation to pay their workers a living wage so they can buy a healthy diet for their families, and to allow them to organise for a more equal negotiation of their terms and conditions. This is true in the oil palm and sugar cane plantations of Indonesia and Cambodia. It is also true for Mondelez<sup>5</sup> (previously Kraft Foods) who are accused by the International Union of Foodworkers of refusing to recognise a union in their factory in Alexandria, Egypt, and who have a major dispute with their workers in Tunisia.

Walmart is another company that is accused of paying poverty wages and appears to have serious problems with their workers organising.<sup>6</sup> But this obligation goes beyond food companies to any company not paying a living wage. In November 2013, garment factory workers in Bangladesh and Cambodia protested for a living wage and clashed heavily with police in the streets, as manufacturers in Bangladesh sought to block a rise in the minimum wage already approved by parliament.

Even in richer countries the right to food is becoming more pertinent to business. In the UK last year the number of people who received food parcels from food banks tripled to 355,000. Many of these people earn low pay that leaves them choosing between heating their home and feeding their families.

The social protection schemes that are delivering major improvements in childhood nutrition in poor families across countries as diverse as Brazil, India, and Ecuador rely on fair and prompt tax revenues from business and citizens. The wave of recent revelations regarding tax evasion and avoidance illustrates that so much more might be done by committed governments on the right to food if companies paid their dues.

The Africa Progress Panel has, in 2013, highlighted the massive loss of revenue from the Democratic Republic of Congo alone, one of the poorest countries on Earth, through the systematic undervaluation of state-owned assets and sale to offshore companies. In five deals with just one company, DRC lost “at least US\$1.36 billion, an amount equal to almost twice the DRC’s combined annual budget for health and education in 2012.”<sup>7</sup> While conflict and corruption are the main sources of hunger in DRC, until tax revenues are transparent and fair there is little hope for the investment in small-holders and social protection that would transform the right to food.

### Land grabs

Rising global food prices over the last five years have created new business opportunities. Companies and the market have responded by delivering a welcome increase in the amount of food grown and available, with record cereal production predicted for 2013.<sup>8</sup> However, rising food prices are linked to increasing land values from the Paris basin to Central Africa. This has led to rising concerns about large scale land acquisitions, especially in places where the poor have only ‘customary’ land titles, and are vulnerable to dispossession without consent or compensation. This is particularly true for women who often have no recognised right to the land they till for their families’ food and income. Figures for the total area of land ‘grabbed’ are disputed, but certainly many millions of hectares have changed hands, too often in shady deals that leave poor people landless and their right to food denied.

Allegations and concern tend to come from countries with poor records of governance and legal apparatus such as parts of West Africa. In 2009, Liberia leased 771,000 acres of land to the Malaysian oil company, Sime Darby for 63 years. Golden Veroleum received 865,000 acres for 65 years. Many people who have lived and worked this land feel they have been neither consulted nor heard, and Sime Darby has acknowledged that they made mistakes early on.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, in November 2013, Coca Cola took a bold step forward in response to a global campaign, and announced ‘zero tolerance’ of land grabs in its supply chain<sup>10</sup> – it will eliminate sourcing sugar from plantations created from land grabs, a move that distinguishes Coca Cola from its peers, who will hopefully feel the need to follow suit. This is due recognition of the Voluntary Guidelines on land tenure of the Committee on Global Food Security.



Photo: Perpetual Tourist

### Commodity speculation

Another area of opportunity and challenge is the role of the finance industry in either helping to smooth food price rises, or imperilling poor people’s right to food by fuelling food price inflation and volatility. For poor people, who spend around 70% of their income on food, any price rise can push them into hunger. As Mo Ibrahim’s Foundation has pointed out: “A growing number of experts now link the rising volatility of agricultural commodities since 2006 to financial intermediation and speculation by banks and hedge funds on futures markets. Between 2003 and 2008, there was 250 times more investment in commodity index funds, which rose from \$13 billion to \$317 billion. The World Bank now recognises the role played by the ‘financialisation of commodities’ in price surges and declines and notes that price variability has overwhelmed price trends for important commodities.”<sup>11</sup>

Finally, if we do not manage to avert the worst of climate change, then all bets are off for the right to food for much of the world’s population. Every company needs to take urgent action to lower their carbon emissions. Poor people in Africa, Latin America, and Asia are already reporting major changes to their weather patterns that undermine their farming systems and food security. This is set to worsen drastically in the next twenty years leading to substantial price rises. Many companies, including Nestle, Unilever, and Coca Cola, are already systematically taking carbon out of their supply chain. Kofi Annan has said that failure to tackle climate change will lead to “worldwide hunger, social unrest, and political turmoil.”<sup>12</sup>

The Business and Human Rights Resource Centre exists to promote transparency in businesses record on human rights; we also help the vulnerable to eradicate abuse. Our own work highlights how fundamental the right to food is to human dignity and freedom. It is also a right which is increasingly under threat from rising inequality and the ecological crisis we have created. Companies hold the keys to many of the solutions. There are progressive and far-sighted businesses who are already taking substantial voluntary action to address the food crisis. We now need many more to follow suit.

Phil Bloomer is the Executive Director of the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, and formerly Director of Campaigns and Policy at Oxfam GB. The Business and Human Rights Resource Centre’s website, with sections on the right to food and tax avoidance, among many other issues, can be found at <http://www.business-humanrights.org>.

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## Who will feed us?

### How small-scale food providers help realise the Right to Adequate Food<sup>1</sup> for the world's peoples



**Patrick Mulvany** argues that to secure the right to food, we must challenge the industrial paradigm and put food sovereignty first.

Despite the tireless efforts of negotiators since World War 2 to change the food system and agree a legal code and requirement to fulfil people's Human Rights in relation to food, the Right to Food for many hundreds of millions of people has been and continues to be undermined. In the last half of the past century, governments increasingly forgot the primary purpose of agriculture, including livestock production and fisheries – to feed their peoples adequately. This purpose was suborned to satisfy the avarice of those controlling industrial agriculture and the transformation, trading and sale of its products, seeking increasingly concentrated profit. The result: a dysfunctional food system with nearly a billion hungry; almost two billion obese and a reckless erosion of the resources and ecosystems upon which food production depend. Food security – the mantra of those concerned with the food dimensions of national security – effectively became a slogan in support of agribusinesses delivering edible commodities.<sup>2</sup>

Belatedly, in the 21st century, many assessments, forums and initiatives now formally recognise the inadequacy of this approach in terms of the provision of nutritious food as well as its sustainability.<sup>3,4,5</sup> But the measures policy makers propose – to re-engineer industrial production in collaboration with agribusiness corporations<sup>6,7</sup> – will do little to improve the adequacy of food provision. This requires tackling the root causes of the unsustainable industrial system – the corporate power of agribusinesses. It is left to those who currently provide food for most people in the world – small-scale food providers – to provide the solution: food sovereignty.<sup>8</sup>

#### A food sovereignty framework

Food sovereignty provides a framework for policy, practice and the governance of food that is effective, efficient and equitable. It was conceived by La Via Campesina twenty years ago and launched at the World Food Summit in 1996. Food sovereignty puts food and small-scale food providers at the centre of policy and practice. It is based on their wisdom, experience and skills in providing nutritious food and sustaining the ecosystems that produce food sustainably. Its proponents have identified the main causes of food insecurity and the processes and technologies which undermine small-scale food producers.

Food sovereignty provides the basis for highly productive, smaller-scale food production – using methods that are ecological, biodiverse and resilient to shocks. In realising food sovereignty, the Right to Food can be fulfilled through the provision, as locally as possible, of adequate nutritious food.

#### What is food sovereignty<sup>9</sup>?

Food sovereignty is the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It:

1. Focuses on food for people and the Right to Food, rather than export commodities
2. Values food providers and respects their Rights, rather than squeezing them off the land
3. Localises food systems, rather than promoting unfair global trade
4. Puts control locally, rather than having power vested in remote TransNational Corporations
5. Builds knowledge and skills, rather than depending on alien technologies such as GM and compliant agrochemicals
6. Works with nature, rather than using methods such as energy intensive monocultures and industrial livestock factories that harm beneficial ecosystem functions

#### Complex food webs

Food sovereignty supports small-scale food providers who produce the food eaten by most people in the world, largely using biodiverse and ecological methods. An estimated 70% of the global population (nearly 5 billion) are fed with food provided locally, mostly by small-scale farming, gardening, fishing or herding. It is estimated that there are around 2 - 3 billion people in rural, coastal and urban areas who are engaged in food provision to some degree. Predominantly, it is women who provide and process food from their gardens or smallholdings, looking after livestock and preparing fish.

A further 1.7 - 2.7 billion people are engaged in local food webs, including markets and trade. Small-scale food providers operate within complex food webs, where food is provided to households from many sources both locally and from other locations, including through formal and informal markets. It is estimated that of the 70% of the food provided through these food webs, some 35-50% comes from farms; 15-20% from urban agriculture and gardens; 10-15% from hunting and gathering; and 5-10% from fishing.<sup>10</sup>

The importance of small-scale food provision in securing the world's food is under-recognised by those whose interests lie in defending industrial food chains, except when so-called 'smallholders' can be captured into those chains as consumers of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides) and providers of food grown with cheap labour. Yet it is increasingly acknowledged, most recently reiterated by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the UN Committee on World Food Security, that these 'smallholders' have an important role, in their own right, in the food system:

"Smallholder agriculture is the foundation of food security in many countries and an important part of the socio/economic/ecological landscape in all countries... Smallholders contribute to world food security and nutrition while performing other related roles in their territories. Historical evidence shows that smallholder agriculture, adequately supported by policy and public investments, has the capacity to contribute effectively to food security, food sovereignty, and substantially and significantly to economic growth, the generation of employment, poverty reduction, the emancipation of neglected and marginalized groups, and the reduction of spatial and socio-economic inequalities. Within an enabling political and institutional environment, it can contribute to sustainable management of biodiversity and other natural resources while preserving cultural heritage."<sup>11</sup>

### Building on the innovations of African Family Farmers<sup>13</sup>

- Genuinely participatory research programmes that value existing knowledge and skills, including participatory plant breeding, should be integrated into publicly funded national research strategies, so long as small-scale food producers have decisive control, in order to reframe overall research priorities.
- Researchers should be accountable to the organisations of small-scale food providers and not subject to corporations' control of research agendas.
- Farmer to farmer extension and knowledge sharing programmes and skill sharing.
- Processes between small-scale food providers should be strengthened and training provided for young farmers, fishers and pastoralists in developing resilient food production systems, that also include enterprise and technical skills.
- The innovations of family farmers and other small-scale food providers should be promoted through media and outreach programmes for training, education and information dissemination.

### Family farming – providing local food

In Africa, 'smallholders' prefer to be called 'family farmers'. A recent publication based on reports by the African farmers' regional networks from West, Central and Eastern Africa concluded that innovative family farming, backed by appropriate research, supportive investments and adequate protection, can out-perform industrial commodity production. It provides the basis for the food sovereignty of communities, countries and sub-regions of Africa.

To achieve this, a priority is the development of participatory research in support of, and determined by, family farmers and small-scale food producers. This is required to enhance the adaptive capacity and resilience of food provision. Cooperation with formal science can be helpful if this develops innovations that can be controlled and used by small-scale food providers. Push-pull technology for controlling pests and weeds in maize,



participatory plant breeding (PPB) and the system for rice intensification (SRI) are good examples of useful contributions to food provision developed through participatory methods.

### Challenging the industrial paradigm

The international community recognises the challenges for improving productivity and realising the Right to Food. Yet, despite the accumulated evidence of the failures and unsustainability of the industrial system and the contrasting positive contributions of the innovations and practices of small-scale food providers, much effort is concentrated on supporting industrial commodity production, processing, trade and distribution. Institutions and governments continue to invest in and roll out industrialised approaches, promoting the proprietary technologies and research they depend on. The scientific challenge is therefore to move away from the reductionist approach of industrial production and towards resilient, biodiverse and ecological food provision. This requires a people-centred, ecosystem approach to producing food. This approach embraces complexity and diversity, sustainably using technologies, seeds, livestock breeds and resources that can be controlled by small-scale food providers.

The political challenge is for citizens to require governments to regulate and reduce the negative impacts of, and remove direct and indirect subsidies for, industrial production systems, and progressively dismantle them. In parallel it is essential to have in place measures that will prevent the commodification of, and corporate control over people's collective rights to the commons that are required to improve productivity using more resilient, biodiverse and ecological methods. To realise the Right to adequate Food requires defence, support and promotion of ecological food provision.<sup>14</sup> Small-scale food providers working in the framework of food sovereignty have the knowledge, skills and capacity to achieve this, if their food production systems are protected.

Patrick Mulvany is Chair of the UK Food Group, a member of the Food Ethics Council and an adviser to Practical Action. He is an active participant in Civil Society lobbies at the FAO and CBD on agricultural biodiversity, food and technology issues and in the food sovereignty movement.

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# The cashew supply chain

## Abusive purchasing practices



India's cashew nut industry is a compelling example of how disproportionate purchasing power causes risks to be passed to the weakest part of a supply chain, resulting in human rights abuses including poor working conditions, health issues and economic hardship for workers. Traidcraft's **Fiona Gooch** reports.

Traidcraft, the UK's leading independent fair trade company and development charity, recently conducted research into the cashew nut supply chain. We explored issues relating to cashew nut workers, factory owners, traders, wholesalers and retailers in India and Europe. What we found highlighted some very real problems associated with three issues: companies having too much buying power; a lack of tools for dealing with abusive purchasing practices; and the serious limitations of voluntary initiatives. The research found that current policy and enforcement frameworks are not equipped to deal with the reality of the way risks are passed into globalised supply chains. This means that human rights abuses, will continue, with vulnerable workers suffering exploitation on precarious and short term contracts, working excessive hours for un-liveable wages, in unsafe conditions and undermined if they try to organise.

### Supermarkets' role in the supply chain

Research by IIED in 2006 revealed that terms of business in cashew value chains into Europe are governed by supermarkets. Many have signed up to voluntary codes of conduct to improve working conditions but Traidcraft's research in India found that poor working conditions persist in supply chains. Supermarkets dominate the European retail market. They control suppliers' access to consumers, which enables them to pass on excessive risks and unexpected costs" to others along the supply chain. In the cashew supply chain Traidcraft found a fragmented trading relationship characterised by low trust. Supermarkets' poor practices lead to insecurity among their cashew suppliers. Cashew processing workers have nowhere to pass risks, bearing the brunt of supermarkets' practices through low paid and irregular work, insufficient social protection and unsafe conditions.

### India's role in the cashew supply chain

India is the world's largest producer, processor and consumer of cashews. The southern state of Kerala is the hub of an international chain involving an estimated two million people. Of about 500,000 people working in cashew processing in India, 90% are female. As well as supplying a large and growing domestic Indian market, these workers process African-grown cashew nuts for export. Indian processors ship cashews to several EU countries where EU processors package cashews for consumers. Although

the labour intensive stages of the supply chain occur before the cashews reach Europe, more than 50% of the final retail value is made in Europe. The retailers make gross margins of 30-35% or more. Clearly, the key transformative stages of the cashew supply chain are under-remunerated, and this distribution of value gives an indication of where power lies in the supply chain.

### Disproportionate risks borne by workers

Cashew processing is highly labour-intensive, with most of the work done by women by hand. Traidcraft's investigation found that working conditions for the labour intensive stages were of major concern. Pay is below the living wage and structured so that workers bear inappropriate risks. Workers are mainly paid on a piece rate per kilogram of complete cashew kernels produced, which means they are penalised for poorly dried cashews, from which it is difficult to extract whole kernels. And if factory machinery breaks down causing delays to cashews being available for processing, workers are not paid for their time. Piece rates are low and not enough to live on, a situation that drives some workers, particularly migrants from other Indian states to work excessive hours. Health and safety is poor. Workers do not have sufficient protection to stop their fingers being burnt by the acidic cashew nut oil. In addition, acidic particles may be eaten, breathed or may cause urinary and reproductive health issues, due to the working position.

### Feeling the squeeze

On average, 80% of the cashew processing cost is labour-related, comprising wages and social security. When processors are under relentless pressure to reduce prices and maintain their own profit, the squeeze is felt by workers. This has led to insufficient wages in factories, and a significant amount of the labour intensive processing stages being sub-contracted, either to Indian states with lower wages, or to smaller units that evade paying social security and do not provide good working conditions. Traidcraft found that these small processing units often sub-contracted out work to home workers. Whilst the work provides valuable employment to home workers and employees in small-scale factories, the lack of regulation and oversight means they are often exploited.



Photo: acdz2000

### Hypocritical purchasing practices

Supermarket members of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) promised more than ten years ago that working conditions in their own-brand supply chains would conform to ETI minimum labour standards. Yet despite this, Traidcraft found low awareness of labour standards codes of conduct at cashew processing factories. It appears that the 2006 IIED report on the hazardous nature of cashew processing has resulted in factory managers and some supermarkets withholding information rather than being transparent about the challenges faced in improving conditions. Conversations with processors about their experiences of buyers revealed that European buyers were regarded as the most price-sensitive and aggressive. They are reported to demand high quality whilst being unwilling to pay for it, and turning a blind eye to the working conditions when cashews are purchased below cost price.

Most EU supermarkets pay their suppliers (packers) 90 days or more after the invoice arrives. This is a problem for EU packers since most Indian cashew processors want prompt payment (within two weeks). The largest European packer (mainly for own-label supermarket products) pays its direct suppliers more than four weeks later than the industry average. This results in a large proportion of cashews being sold to EU processors indirectly through traders who provide a financing function to bridge cash flow issues.

Processors also complained that retailers change the order volume at short notice. This, alongside other unfair trading practices means that retailers frequently do not pay their suppliers' invoices in full. This instability drives mistrust and charges of hypocrisy, when European buyers squeeze on price, whilst forcing suppliers to incur costs to meet higher standards.

Traidcraft's investigation found that issues of labour rights and good health and safety for workers (which supermarkets theoretically support through their membership of ETI) were not a priority. In fact, better working conditions are actively

undermined by purchasing practices that relentlessly pursue the cheapest product price and pass unexpected risks and costs along the supply chain. The ensuing result was sub-contracting, illegal evasion of social security payments, H&S hazards, and poverty wages for workers.

### Structure of the market

Theoretically, trade works efficiently when there is a willing buyer and willing seller and each has alternative buyers or sellers to trade with. This means traders can walk away from a deal if the terms are not fair, and are free to do business with another company. However this is not currently the case. Some businesses have high market shares and are vertically integrated in the supply chain which gives them high levels of buyer (sometimes supplier) power.

The cashew sector has several large companies which dominate the supply chain. Mondelez (previously Kraft) for the US market, and Intersnack for the EU are two companies dominating the processing-into-consumer packs. Raj Kumar, VLC group of companies and Olam dominate processing of raw cashews into cashew kernels. Olam is also a global trader of raw cashews. For each of these companies, pressure applied by their downstream customers limits their power and to some extent the profits which packing and processing companies can make, even though they may be very large.

By contrast, retailers face no such countervailing power from their millions of disparate consumers. Over time retailers have gained increasing levels of power as their market shares have increased and because they play both a buyer & competitor role in the supply chain. For suppliers to be able to access European consumers, their product needs to be approved by just a handful of European supermarkets which control access to the majority of European consumers. This enables supermarkets to bully their suppliers and dictate terms into the supply chain. The application of these abusive or unfair trading practices is an indication that these supermarkets have buyer power relative to their suppliers.

## Policy framework gaps

The situation in the cashew supply chain means that risks are passed to the weakest part. Labour-related costs are regarded as variable and so the worst working conditions are frequently imposed on people who work and farm. Traidcraft's investigation into the cashew supply chain highlights the ineffectiveness of voluntary approaches. The policy and enforcement framework must modernise to tackle the way risks are passed into globalised supply chains and the ensuing exploitation of its workers. Policy makers should begin to hold companies to account for their human rights violations and update competition policy. Currently, purchasing companies are able to place orders with impunity into certain countries or with suppliers where there is a poor track record of human rights enforcement, including labour rights. These companies profit from the systematic exploitation of workers and penalise suppliers who comply with human rights and minimum labour standards by not placing orders with them.

This situation drives a race to the bottom. The UK government, which is the first government to publish a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, needs to provide overseas victims with access to UK courts so that business decision-makers operating in the UK can be held to account. British companies faced with a possible expensive payout for their human rights violations might choose to place orders with better suppliers, genuinely supporting them to improve their labour conditions. Competition law, which traditionally deals with imbalances of power within markets also needs updating. Although comfortable with challenging supplier power, competition authorities have been cautious in addressing buyer power, under the assumption that buyer power equates to consumer benefit. In practice – as seen in the cashew industry – buyer power enables the company with high levels of power within a supply chain to maximise their own profits, whilst squeezing the upstream, weaker parts of the supply chain.

## Improving supply chains

Traidcraft plc, a social enterprise, was set up more than 30 years ago to benefit workers and farmers in its supply chains. The way Traidcraft plc sources its products has evolved as Traidcraft seeks to pioneer new fair trade standards, build expertise and demonstrate that it is possible for business to have a positive

impact. Traidcraft Exchange, the sister charity, is working towards the same mission of 'fighting poverty through trade' and seeks to influence mainstream business practices (which constitute the majority of trade). Offices in East Africa and South Asia work with farmers and workers to improve supply chains in those countries. Traidcraft's policy unit looks at the policies which systematically keep workers and farmers poor and undermine their development opportunities.

Traidcraft was involved in establishing the recently appointed UK Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA), who has the power to initiate investigations and fine retailers breaching the Groceries Supply Code of Practice. The GCA was set up following the Competition Commission's two year investigation into the retail sector, which found that retailers passed on "excessive risks and unexpected costs" to their suppliers. The GCA is finalising its statutory guidance, after which it will hopefully start undertaking investigations into abusive purchasing practices. Since the Competition Commission made its recommendation to set up an enforcement body in 2008, the retail sector has consolidated further. Wal-Mart, Tesco, and other global retailers are now purchasing products centrally to sell in their shops in several countries. This gives the retailer's central buying teams significantly more buyer power than when they were just purchasing for one national market.

## Showing support

European Commission policymakers are exploring ways to stop abusive purchasing practices (a symptom of buyer power) within food supply chains. Traidcraft welcomes this work and is advocating an independent, tough enforcement mechanism, which could complement the UK GCA, as well as the other existing or embryonic enforcement bodies that exist in different member states. EU action to put in a minimum floor on abusive purchasing practices and to stop companies evading enforcement would be welcome. We would also encourage action to enable enforcement bodies to coordinate enforcement when abusive practices are found occurring within supply chains where the product will be on sale in several EU member states.

Fiona Gooch is Private Sector Policy Advisor for Traidcraft. Please go to [www.traidcraft.co.uk/supermarkets](http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/supermarkets) to see how you can show your support for a credible, independent and tough enforcement mechanism which will stop these abusive, sometimes illegal purchasing practices.

## Creating effective systems



**Ana Maria Saurez-Franco** is Country Group Coordinator/Justiciability Program Coordinator at FIAN International. **Laura Michéle** works for FIAN International on extraterritorial obligations of States and nutrition.

States are the primary duty bearers in respecting, protecting and promoting human rights, including the right to adequate food and nutrition. To ensure that businesses do not infringe human rights, States must implement regulatory systems that prevent corporate abuses along the supply chain, hold corporations accountable, and provide monitoring mechanisms and effective remedies for victims.

The food system - from production to consumption - is increasingly controlled by a few powerful food and agro-industrial corporations, vertically integrated and operating transnationally. Their mode of operation and immense influence in national and international decision making requires a strong regulatory response, at national, regional and international level, beyond current voluntary initiatives, which have proved ineffective.

The Maastricht Principles on the Extraterritorial Obligations of States in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), adopted by international law experts in 2011, clarify the obligations States have under international law with regard to protecting the economic, social and cultural rights of persons living outside their territories. Principles 24 and 25 state that States must take administrative, legislative, investigative, adjudicatory, and other measures to ensure that transnational and other business enterprises which they are in a position to regulate do not infringe ESCR extraterritorially. Even where they are not in a position to regulate, States must exercise their influence to protect ESCR. Moreover, according to Principle 29, States have the obligation to create individually or jointly, an enabling international environment for human rights. This also applies for the business sector.

# Action on land grabs

## Supporting women

**act:onaid**

Poor women around the world are standing up against land grabs and claiming their land rights for food security, livelihoods, and personal empowerment.

**Kysseleine Chérestal** and **Catherine Gatundu** of ActionAid report.

That land is important to grow food, as a place to build a home and a source of identity, is not up for debate. For poor women and men in rural communities around the world, land is an essential asset as a source of security and livelihoods. Yet, recent data shows that more than 33 million hectares (about 2.5 times the size of England) have been taken away from millions of rural people living in poverty, to make way for biofuels, mining, tourism, and dubious 'public interest' projects, threatening their food security, their livelihoods and sometimes their lives.

Women are particularly vulnerable. Although they produce more than half of the food consumed in their countries, they are much less likely to own the land they till, which hinders their ability to participate in decision-making and exercise their rights. Women rarely have control over land, and even in areas where land is owned individually, it is estimated that less than 2% is female-owned. This puts women and their dependents at a higher risk of losing their land rights through land grabs, resulting in hunger, poverty, and lack of access to basic human rights such as food, education and health.

Land grabs pre-empt land reforms that secure the legitimate land and resource rights of women and other marginalized communities. At ActionAid, we have long supported women in their fight to access and control land. By defending their rights, they (and the communities they belong to) gain the value of the land not only as a productive resource, but as a source of status, political mobilisation, and security for themselves and their descendants.

ActionAid defines land grabs according to the Tirana declaration, characterised by human rights violations, a lack of transparency and a lack of consent by the host community. The impacts are almost always negative and irreversible and include displacement, loss of livelihoods and culture, increased food insecurity for communities, and increased workload for women. Promises of food, jobs, schools, and other benefits are often left unfulfilled. Instead, communities find themselves going to bed hungry at night, facing competition for an insufficient number of jobs that do not even provide living wages, and living in a degraded environment, where there is increased concentration of land in the hands of a wealthy and powerful minority.

There are many drivers of land grabs around the world, including initiatives touted as green solutions to the energy needs of northern countries. Demand for biofuels in the EU and the US

has stimulated a rush for land that is pushing communities aside to make way for biofuel plantations. Serious human rights violations, lack of transparency, and absence of consultation and consent of the communities, have been the hallmark of these transactions. With no land to grow their own food, women and their communities are forced to depend on the market, as increased demand and reduced supply drives up local food prices, pushing even more people into hunger.

Multinational corporations are key players in land grabbing, often acting in conjunction with governments that create the policies and broker the deals that undermine land rights. Donor governments and international financial institutions play a critical role in land grabs by crafting the policies, financial incentives, and development programmes that place business interests ahead of the interests of local communities. Among the top governments engaged in large scale land deals are the UK, the USA, and many northern investors. From Tanzania to Guatemala, ActionAid is supporting communities of women and smallholder farmers to assert their land rights, helping them stand a better chance to resist land grabs. Similar experiences abound in places like Kenya and Haiti, where the tangible benefits of empowered women and communities claiming their rights to land are clear. And we are making progress.

In Haiti, ActionAid works with the Je Nan Je movement ('Eye to Eye' in Creole) to resist land grabs affecting nearly one third of the country, where more than 67% of the population rely on local agriculture for food and livelihoods, but the overwhelming majority of the population faces land tenure insecurity. The Je Nan Je platform engages with decision-makers in the US and in Haiti to inform their post-earthquake reconstruction policies and programmes, and has helped introduce legislation in the US and sensitize policy-makers in Haiti to address the land and food security rights of Haitian communities. In Kenya, ActionAid supported the 20,000-member Dakatcha Woodland community when they were threatened with eviction from their land. The community won the fight when the investor was refused permission to acquire the land.

A number of opportunities also exist at the international level to support women and communities in their fight against land grabs, and for secured access and control over their land and its resources. For instance, we have made progress on biofuels. In October 2012, the European Union announced a proposal to limit the percentage of food crops used towards renewable energy



targets. And legislation has been introduced in the US that would reduce the mandates for some crop-based biofuels. Also crucial is the implementation of the African Union Framework and Guidelines for Land Policy adopted by Africa Heads of States in 2009. The framework offers guidance to guarantee and protect women's rights to land. The ongoing process of developing principles to guide large scale land based investment must strengthen women's ability to defend their land rights.

It is vitally important to push donor and host governments, as well as multilateral institutions and corporations, to fully implement the United Nations Committee on World Food Security's (CFS) Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (Tenure Guidelines), which were adopted in 2012 and endorsed by representatives of donor and host governments, civil society organizations, private sector representatives, international organizations and academics.

The Tenure Guidelines establish internationally accepted standards for responsible governance of tenure to improve food security, and are an important tool to support communities so they can assert and defend their land rights against land grabs. The Guidelines recognise that securing land rights is a precondition for sustainable development and food security and that investment in smallholder farmers and by smallholder farmers is preferable to large scale land acquisitions. They recommend that safeguards be put in place to protect the tenure rights of local people from large-scale land transactions.

The CFS has also embarked on the development of principles for responsible agricultural investment. The process was launched in 2012 and is due to conclude in 2014 with endorsement of the principles. The CFS represents the most appropriate place to conduct

this process, as the most important multi-stakeholder platform for food security where civil society has a seat at the negotiating table, and those most affected by irresponsible investment can have a voice. The outcome of this process should include protections for smallholder farmers – most of whom are women – and their land rights that address the specific drivers of land grabs and promote policies that protect communities, particularly women, against them. Responsible investment must follow clear parameters, so that private sector activities are in line with international human rights principles, including the right to food.

All of us must do what we can to influence decision-makers at home and inside multilateral institutions such as the World Bank that play a crucial role in land grabs. We can take action, and advocate alongside communities facing land grabs, campaigning for policies that prioritise land rights and food security and discourage discrimination against women. We can push governments and businesses to ensure that investment in land does not threaten women's rights. We can insist that governments prioritise land reforms and investment in rural communities aimed at creating a vibrant and prosperous small scale farming sector, whilst ensuring that women are fully supported with rural support services, tenure security and land rights. In doing so, we stand shoulder to shoulder with the women who represent 70% of the world's poor, and the 870 million on our fertile planet who are food insecure, to ensure their fair and effective participation in a land governance framework that puts them first.

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## Feeding the people and feeding them well A Human Rights Challenge for the 21st Century



The privileged UK consumer might think that the green revolution and globalisation have served us unrestricted food on a plate, but, as **Naomi Salmon** points out, the cracks in our food system are beginning to show.

In the UK we are members of a fortunate minority. For us, the notion of seasonality is old hat. The only constraint on our consumption is imposed by our wallets. We are accustomed to eating whatever we want, whenever we want it: strawberries in December, apples in May, and junk food all the year round. However, the façade of plenty that characterises the UK food market is beginning to crack under the increasing pressure of some alarming realities. Our food system is beginning to fail us – from farm to table, and from cradle to grave.

The pressures on our food system are varied and complex. Climate change, population growth and the unavoidable fact of finite natural resources are all part of the picture. But there is also the issue of how we eat. Although there is no single, universally applicable definition of a 'sustainable diet', there is certainly a strong correlation between what is bad for us and what is bad for the planet. Over the course of the last thirty years or so, the way we eat in Britain has become increasingly unsustainable, in every sense of the term. The typical western diet, high in processed foods and animal products, is making us fat and sick, and making a disproportionate contribution to global GHG emissions and the general slide towards ecological crisis.

All things considered, shifting domestic food supply chains onto a sustainable and healthy footing must be a priority for the UK government. However, despite a rapidly expanding body of literature addressing the short-comings of the modern food system there has, thus far, been a marked reluctance on the part of government to move from talk to action. There are various reasons for this lack of progress. The road to a sustainable food future is littered with practical, political and legal barriers.

Regional and international trade law are premised on an unerring faith in perpetual economic growth as an unchallengeable 'good.' The myopic world view that informs enforcement of these rules ensures that where tensions arise, the regulatory scales will tend to tip in favour of the shorter term interests of the Market. Less quantifiable concerns over longer-term ecological and human well-being are too easily relegated to second place in the face of the trade liberalisation imperative that guides the policy and practice of EU and international trade law.

The situation is further exacerbated by the rise of consumerism. Reining in and reconfiguring the nation's dietary expectations will not be easy. For over half a century, governments and

corporate actors have energetically nurtured our pre-disposition to over-consume – regardless of the longer-term costs that must ultimately be paid by people and planet. Indeed, here in the UK, like the rest of the developed world, we have been led to believe that the most important right enjoyed by the 21st century western consumer is the right to consume.

That is not to say that there has not been any movement in the right direction in recent years. Statutory nutrient-based standards for school meals and snacks, and sustainability guidelines for public sector food procurement have been introduced, for example. Overall, however, the rhetoric of sustainable food policy far out-strips the practice. Talk is cheap. Action is politically and economically costly and risky for those in power. Successive governments have adopted a 'play-it-safe' approach to sustainability. At the production end of the supply chain, this has led to a heavy reliance on soft law measures and voluntary codes such as those encouraging industry to produce, process, package and transport food in a more sustainable manner.

On the consumer end of the (super)market, better nutritional labelling, combined with public education and health initiatives designed to facilitate 'good' decision-making have become central pillars of the policy mix. This approach avoids rocking the free-trade boat upon which this nation has built its political and economic stability. It also allows governments to earn valuable 'brownie points' in the sustainability debate without any risk of a (politically and economically) costly backlash from key trading partners, industry players or, indeed, burger-strapped voters incensed at the imposition of heavy (green) taxes on junk food.

Clearly, the political and legal road to a sustainable and food secure food future is far from smooth. Could shifting the focus of debate away from questions of (free) market governance to questions of human rights compliance reduce the bumpy ride? Such an approach has both moral and legal currency. Importantly, the language of human rights naturally and unambiguously prioritises material human needs over political, industry and consumer interests.

In the context of the 'food futures' debate, it pushes sustainability, in the broadest sense of the term, firmly to the very top of the policy agenda. This is important, for the 'sustainability imperative' must now be the primary driver for all domestic policies that directly, or indirectly, impact upon the

nation's medium to long-term food security. A strong rights-based approach to sustainability issues from farm to table firmly directs public and government attention towards what really matters: long-term planetary and human health and well-being. This, in turn, strengthens the case for – and legitimises – the prompt implementation of wide-ranging and radical reforms that, within the context of the current 'food futures' debate, remain beyond the pale. Indeed, as will become clear, where trade law falls short, human rights law demands positive change, today.

What does the UK's performance on sustainable food and dietary health policies look like when we view them through the lens of human rights law? In light of the Chief Medical Officer's recent report bemoaning the shocking state of children's dietary health in this country, let's look first at the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. Article 6(2) of Convention provides that: "States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child." Bearing in mind the centrality of diet to the survival and development of the child, the duty to ensure that children (and their families) have access to an adequate, healthy and sustainable diet is certainly implicit within this obligation. The close correlation between nutrition and children's physical and cognitive development, and between diet and life-chances, means that Article 6(2) must be read as requiring states to address proactively and effectively, the *full range* of cross-cutting issues that undermine children's access to an adequate, healthy and sustainable diet.

It is not only children whose interests are at stake here. However one looks at it, food is undeniably a human rights issue that affects us all. Access to adequate food, from before the point of conception through to old-age is a pre-requisite for the enjoyment of just about every fundamental human right that one can think

of – civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

The human right to food has been explicitly provided for under international human rights law since its very inception in the immediate aftermath of WW2. The fundamental right first appeared as one element of the broader umbrella right to an adequate standard of living set down in Article 25 of the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights 1948. Subsequently, it was incorporated into the authoritative and legally binding *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* 1966 (CESCR). Article 11(1) of this latter treaty, which has now been ratified by more than 150 states around the world, including the UK, provides that: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing."

What does this rather general obligation mean? What must states do in order to fulfil their Article 11 obligations? And, on a practical level, what does the human right to adequate food mean for us, for you and for me, and our dependents?

Much has been written about the character and normative content of the human right to food. For current purposes we can refer to a single source: General Comment No.12 on the Right to Food. This document was published in 1999 by the UN committee responsible for over-seeing the implementation of the CESCR, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Although it is now almost fifteen years old, the authoritative account of the rights and obligations implied by Article 11 has stood the test of time. The Committee makes it clear that *all* states parties, as an absolute bare minimum, must ensure that their population has access to *least* enough food to stave off hunger. This duty persists through

Photo: Northern Ireland Executive



times of plenty and times of scarcity. Even in the midst of crisis and disaster, the state is obliged to ensure that its people are, at the very least, fed.

But the obligations flowing from Article 11(1) do not begin and end at this subsistence level, for the right to adequate food is a rich and textured entitlement. Beyond the base-line obligation to provide for our most basic nutritional needs, states parties are duty-bound to move progressively, and *as expeditiously as possible*, towards the full realisation of a culturally embedded, socially just and durable human right to *adequate food, for all*. It is worth unpacking this concept of 'adequacy' a little here. Importantly, the Committee treats 'adequacy' as a responsive, balancing measure of entitlement that is intrinsically aligned to both 'food security' and 'sustainability.' Thus, Article 11 accommodates the realities that consumerism ignores: that in the longer term, access to an adequate diet is wholly dependent upon the sustainability of the system within which our food is produced and distributed. The strong moral underpinnings of human rights law also raise the bar in relation to social justice, across the whole of the food supply chain, from farm worker to diner.

Beyond the broader sweep of 'big picture' sustainability, the Committee also has something to say about 'adequacy' from the perspective of individuals' dietary needs: "The core content of the right to adequate food implies: The availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture..." It goes on to explain that: "...Dietary needs implies that the diet as a whole contains a mix of nutrients for physical and mental growth, development and maintenance, and physical activity that are in compliance with human physiological needs at all stages throughout the life cycle ... Measures may therefore need to be taken to maintain, adapt or strengthen dietary diversity and appropriate consumption and feeding patterns..."

Now, in light of the rather brief overview of food rights provided above, let us consider how the performance of the UK government measures up. There are 3.5 million children living in poverty in the UK today: This equates to 27% of our children, or more than one in four. Moreover, it is anticipated that this figure will hit 4.7 million by 2020. Poverty and poor diet are closely related social ills and so it is unsurprising that childhood obesity is also on the rise. In England, at present, around 30% of children aged 2-15 years are overweight, with 14-20% falling into the 'obese' category. The picture is even worse in Wales, where recent Welsh Assembly figures indicate that 35% of Welsh children have an unhealthy body-weight, with around 19% being classified as obese. It is shocking to consider that the UK has the highest rate of childhood obesity across the whole of Europe. We know that dietary habits are established young and, good or bad, will tend to persist into adulthood. There is ample evidence now that the long-term health and life-chances of a growing minority of children in Britain are being severely compromised as a result of their over-consumption of processed junk food and sugary drinks.

Aside from the human and environmental costs associated with the western diet, the economic costs associated with obesity and diet-related ill-health provide a strong incentive for action. In light of this, government has at least made some attempt to address the spiralling crisis in childhood nutrition. Improvements to school meals, Ofcom's partial ban on the advertising of junk food, and government initiatives such as the *Change for Life* Programme and the *Public Health Responsibility Deal* are all to be welcomed. However, as the figures cited above testify, current policies are proving somewhat ineffective.

The bottom line is that in its efforts to placate the food industry and minimise the negative impact of 'healthy eating' policies on

trade, government continually sidelines the rights of children. Any serious attempt to deal with key challenges such as the damaging impacts of junk food advertising for example, would see *all* such advertising banned, across the board, on both television and social networking sites. The regulatory status quo on this issue amounts to little more than a disingenuous exercise in political point-scoring; it certainly falls well short of the action required to ensure compliance with Article 6(2) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

If government is serious about building a sustainable, healthy and food-secure future for our children and their children, then there needs to be a firm shift from free-market politics, to human rights compliance. Nothing less will suffice. This will not happen unless we make it happen. So, let's shift the debate from the ground up. Let's reframe our campaign for food policy reform. Let's shift the focus firmly onto the most fundamental human entitlement: the human right to adequate food.

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## Campaigning for a living wage



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Food poverty doesn't have to be an inevitable consequence of economic poverty, but it usually is. Therefore whilst informing and educating consumers about healthy eating is essential, it is surely even more important that everyone can afford to make the right choices. But food costs have risen faster than general inflation while incomes have fallen in real terms – leading to 29% of households struggling to feed themselves, according to a recent Which? report.

Everyone has the right to food – it's enshrined in the UN declaration of human rights. One way to secure this right for people in the UK suffering food poverty could be through raising the National Minimum Wage (£6.31 per hour) to the level of the Living Wage (£7.65 or £8.80 in London) so that those on the very lowest incomes can buy fresh, nutritious food.

My union, GMB, represents many of the lowest paid sectors in the economy and we've been overwhelmed with reports of families in work but unable to eat properly, relying on food banks and sending children to school with inadequate packed lunches. That's why at the start of this year we launched a campaign for every local authority to become Living Wage champions in their communities, introducing it for their own staff, then their suppliers and service providers, then throughout local businesses. This is now supported by all the main political parties and over 100 councils.

However, there are risks. For example, it is crucial to avoid the substitution effect of improving low pay leading to more spending on high salt/sugar/bad fat foods as 'treats' and that is why food education remains so necessary – it should be part of the standard curriculum alongside free healthy school meals. But I'm convinced a Living Wage would help.

# Alleviating household food insecurity

## Public policy and the right to food



Almost 3.9 million Canadians were affected by some level of food insecurity in 2011,<sup>1</sup> and this number appears to be on the rise. **Valerie Tarasuk** argues that the Canadian government is not doing enough to ensure its citizens' right to food.

The experience of food insecurity monitored in Canada ranges from anxiety about running out of food; to compromises in food quality; and – ultimately – to compromises over the amount of food consumed, all because of a lack of money for food. The scale of food insecurity in Canada indicates our failure to ensure citizens' right to food. Our only direct response to this problem is food charity, delivered through an ad hoc, extra-governmental voluntary network of community agencies and organizations. The food assistance provided is contingent on donations, and needs far exceed supplies, despite the continued expansion of food charity efforts. The ineffectiveness of food charity as a strategy to manage problems of food insecurity in Canada has been well documented,<sup>2</sup> but there remains no public policy response to ensure that basic food needs are met.

### Data collection

Our understanding of the magnitude and nature of food insecurity in Canada derives from the inclusion of questions about the issue on national surveys. Such measurement activities date back to 1994, and since 2005 a standardised, validated, multi-item scale of severity has been used to monitor food insecurity nationally.

With such an abundance of population survey data, the social epidemiology of food insecurity has been extensively documented. It is clear that this problem denotes extreme material deprivation and that it occurs on a scale several times greater than the numbers of people served by food banks. The social policy underpinnings of food insecurity and the inextricable link between food insecurity and poor health are also evident. We even have longitudinal data on the indelible mark that severe food insecurity is leaving on Canadian children's physical and mental health.<sup>3,4</sup> None of this evidence has been sufficient to galvanize government action.

Addressing food insecurity requires addressing the problems of financial insecurity that underpin it. Canada has historically provided support to those in financial need through a variety of universal and targeted programmes, but the strength of this 'social safety net' has been steadily eroded over time. In recent years, various federal and provincial/territorial poverty reduction strategies have been introduced to address identified gaps, but none of these strategies has been designed to reduce food insecurity and only two have had a palpable impact on the problem.

### Insufficient protection

Interventions to reduce poverty among older people have ensured food security for most of them. Protection is afforded to Canadian pensioners through old-age pensions, guaranteed

annual income supplements, prescription drug benefits, and a myriad of cost discounts delivered independently by the private sector. However, strategies to alleviate poverty for working age people in Canada have been patchy. A poverty reduction strategy implemented by Newfoundland and Labrador in 2006 precipitated a marked drop in household food insecurity in that province, an achievement that reflects the aggressive and comprehensive nature of the interventions mounted. But elsewhere, interventions implemented in the name of poverty reduction appear to have had too little impact on household finances to reduce household food insecurity, and significant weaknesses in our 'social safety net' persist.

Social assistance is the income support programme of 'last resort' for working-aged adults, yet most households reliant on this programme are food insecure. The delivery of social assistance programmes falls under provincial/territorial jurisdictions, with no national standards and no legislated requirement that recipients be provided with sufficient means to meet their basic needs for food and shelter. Fixing this problem requires the establishment of national standards and a system of third-party oversight to ensure that benefit levels cover basic needs. Canadians reliant on Employment Insurance are also at elevated risk of food insecurity. Recent programme changes mean that ever fewer workers are eligible for this federal programme should they lose their jobs, and recipients risk being funnelled back into the workforce into lower paying jobs. The benefits provided by Employment Insurance are only a fraction of earned incomes and last for no more than 45 weeks. Resolving the vulnerability of households reliant on Employment Insurance means ensuring that these households also have sufficient funds to cover basic needs.

Reforms to social assistance and Employment Insurance programmes are only part of the solution to food insecurity, however; almost two-thirds of food-insecure households in Canada depend on employment. This problem reflects the net effect of work that is low waged, part-time and/or short-term, plus the failure of tax benefits and other income transfers to offset the resultant financial hardship.

### Additional measures

Increasing minimum wages, or better still, implementing a living wage, is part of the solution, but additional measures are needed to ensure food security for those without full-time work. An overhaul of the complex system of income transfers, tax exemptions and credits available to families and individuals

in the workforce is required so that these public programmes augment low earnings enough to enable people to meet their food needs. The implementation of a guaranteed annual income may be a more efficient mechanism to deliver such benefits. Broad consensus is required for any such reform, however, because this problem traverses federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions and has ramifications for the private sector.

Given the link between work and food insecurity, the private sector has a critical role to play in addressing this problem. To date, the business community's engagement has been primarily through their participation in food charity initiatives. Many food corporations donate unsaleable products to food banks and provide ongoing financial support to Food Banks Canada. Food industry saves on disposal costs by donating food they cannot sell, and the business sector more broadly garners corporate goodwill through their public support of community efforts to 'feed the hungry'.

Federal tax credits have been proposed by Food Banks Canada as a means to stimulate more food industry donations,<sup>5</sup> but the focus of this stimulus is misplaced. Businesses can make a much more significant contribution by ensuring that their labour practices enable workers to realise the right to food. Companies that parcel work into part-time, minimum-waged jobs and provide no other benefits to their employees contribute to the problem of food insecurity. In implementing measures to ensure Canadians' right to food, incentives for corporations should be designed not to stimulate more charitable gestures, but foster better labour practices. The policy reforms suggested here derive from an examination of the circumstances that currently render such a large number of Canadians food insecure and the policy interventions that function effectively to protect others from this hardship. The changes required are not trivial, but nor is the problem. ■

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Photo: Michael Ignatieff

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**The Ethics and Economics of Agrifood Competition**

Harvey S. James, Jr., ed | 2013 | Springer  
ISBN 978-94-007-6273-2

The 24 authors of the 13 chapters consider a wide range of issues including whether or not agri-food competition is fair, with different authors drawing on economics and ethics to examine the issue in the first part of the book. In the second part are chapters examining competition in specific agricultural contexts – from poultry to pork and beans, from contracting to local food and food cooperatives. Differing views emerge about whether or not there is adequate competition in the food industry. GT

**Inherit the Earth? Millennium Development Goals – So Near and Yet So Far**

Barbara Butler | 2013 | Churches Together in Britain and Ireland | ISBN 978-0-85169-381-1

Writing from her own but drawing on other faith perspectives, the author draws on many individual stories to illustrate the challenges in struggling, and probably failing, to meet the eight interconnected Millennium Development Goals – of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combatting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development – and looking beyond 2015 to complete what has been begun. GT

**The World We Made**

Jonathan Porritt | 2013 | Phaidon Press  
ISBN 978-0714863610

A refreshing change from the usual doom-laden forecasts of the future, this is Porritt’s vision for what the world could look like in 2050, includes chapters on food and agriculture. Telling the story through the eyes of fictional character Alex McKay brings this future possible world to life. However, this isn’t just a fictional creation of Porritt’s imagination – it is based on extensive factual research (and largely on technology available today), which is why this upbeat vision of the future is so compelling. DC

**The Ecological Hoofprint: A Political Ecology of Global Livestock Production**

Tony Weis | 2013 | Zed books | ISBN 978-1780320960

A must read if you want to understand the scale, inefficiency and wide-ranging impact of the rapid meatification of diets since the mid-20th century. The number of slaughtered animals, the author notes, has rocketed from 8 billion to 64 billion in 50 years. The dynamic driving this ecologically damaging change, rightly argues Tony Weis, is an industrial grain-oilseed-livestock complex driven by the demands of capitalism to seek new means of increasing returns, which involves totally reorganising nature. GT

**Soil Soul Society: A New Trinity for Our Time**

Satish Kumar | 2013 | Ivy Press  
ISBN 978-1782400448

All good things come in threes, so the saying goes. Kumar points out that whilst political or social movements often summarise their philosophies in threes (e.g liberty, equality, fraternity), they most often only focus on what’s right for the individual. Here he calls for a new philosophical ‘best of three’ with which to face up to the challenges of the modern world, and which embrace the communal, the spiritual and our environment. An inspiring book by an inspirational man. EB

**The Handbook of Food Research**

Anne Murcott, Warren Belasco and Peter Jackson eds.

This compendium provides well researched articles on diverse topics from the field of food studies including food history, technology, waste, food security and famine, obesity and food politics. It amasses evidence and theory from many disciplines needed for a coherent and relevant understanding of issues, illustrating the debates, concepts and analytic approaches of this widely diverse and dynamic field. This volume will be essential reading for anyone involved in, and actively concerned about research on the social, political, economic, psychological, geographic and historical aspects of food. JL

## Forthcoming events

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 16th January '14    | Investing in agriculture for food sovereignty   UK Food Group<br><a href="http://www.ukfg.org.uk/2013investinginag">http://www.ukfg.org.uk/2013investinginag</a>   London, UK   |
| 18th January '14    | Just Food – an ecocell Workshop on Food   Christian Ecology Link<br><a href="http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/archives/5751">http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/archives/5751</a>   London, UK  |
| 22-23rd January '14 | 8th Organic Producers Conference   Organic Farmers and Growers<br><a href="http://www.organicfarmers.org.uk/news-events/events-calendar/8th-organic-producers-conference">http://www.organicfarmers.org.uk/news-events/events-calendar/8th-organic-producers-conference</a>   Birmingham, UK  |
| 22-24th January '14 | Joint 2014 Symposium with the Biochemical Society and Society for Experimental Biology: Impacts of Pesticides on Bee Health   British Ecological Society   <a href="http://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/events/current_future_meetings/2014-joint-symposium">http://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/events/current_future_meetings/2014-joint-symposium</a>   London, UK |
| 3rd February '14    | The Groceries Code Adjudicator and next steps for the food supply chain<br>Westminster Forum Projects<br><a href="http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=712">http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=712</a><br>London, UK  |
| 5th February '14    | The Sentry Conference 2014   Agrovista<br><a href="http://www.agrovista.co.uk/news/news.aspx?pname=Latest-News-The-Sentry-Conference-2014&amp;newsid=598">http://www.agrovista.co.uk/news/news.aspx?pname=Latest-News-The-Sentry-Conference-2014&amp;newsid=598</a>   Suffolk, UK   |
| 8th February '14    | Food for a greener future   Cambridge Carbon Footprint<br><a href="http://www.foodforagreenerfuture.org">http://www.foodforagreenerfuture.org</a>   Cambridge, UK   |
| 11th February '14   | Organic 3.0 Conference @ Biofach 2014   IFOAM<br><a href="http://www.ifoam.org/en/events/organic-30-conference-biofach-2014">http://www.ifoam.org/en/events/organic-30-conference-biofach-2014</a><br>Nuremburg, Germany  |
| 12th February '14   | Tackling obesity – latest on commissioning, engaging business and encouraging healthy choices   Westminster Forum Projects<br><a href="http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=710">http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=710</a><br>London, UK   |
| 12th February '14   | AHDB Outlook Conference 2014   Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board   <a href="http://www.eblex.org.uk/news-releases/diary-date-for-ahdb-outlook-conference-2014/">http://www.eblex.org.uk/news-releases/diary-date-for-ahdb-outlook-conference-2014/</a>   London, UK  |
| 20th February '14   | Norfolk Farming Conference   Anglia Farmers LTD<br><a href="http://www.norfolkfarmingconference.co.uk/#top">http://www.norfolkfarmingconference.co.uk/#top</a>   Norwich, UK  |
| 11th March '14      | Fighting Food Fraud – from Hassall to Horsemeat   SOCI   <a href="https://www.soci.org/Events/Display-Event.aspx?EventCode=SLON110314">https://www.soci.org/Events/Display-Event.aspx?EventCode=SLON110314</a>   London, UK   |
| 14th March '14      | Faith and Ecology: A literary lunch with Rowan Williams   Resurgence and Ecologist   <a href="http://www.resurgence.org/take-part/resurgence-events/faith-and-ecology-2014.html">http://www.resurgence.org/take-part/resurgence-events/faith-and-ecology-2014.html</a>   London, UK   |
| 22nd March '14      | World Water Day   UNEP   <a href="http://www.unwater.org/wwd2014.html">http://www.unwater.org/wwd2014.html</a>  |
| 25th March '14      | Agri-Innovation 2014: Emerging Science and technologies in crop research<br>SOCI   <a href="https://www.soci.org/Events/Display-Event.aspx?EventCode=PEST413">https://www.soci.org/Events/Display-Event.aspx?EventCode=PEST413</a><br>London, UK  |
| 3rd April '14       | Food security: Global priorities and the UK's role   Westminster Forum Projects<br><a href="http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=742">http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=742</a><br>London, UK  |
| 29th April '14      | Challenges and opportunities for growth in UK food and farming – skills, exports and enterprise   Westminster Forum Projects<br><a href="http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=753">http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=753</a><br>London, UK   |



*The Food Ethics Council works towards a food system that is fair and healthy for people and the environment.*

*Our independent research, and advice to business, government and civil society helps find a way through controversial issues and supports better choices in food and farming.*

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