

Concept Note 4

Food Sovereignty and Job Creation

GOAL

This session will explore the relationship between food sovereignty and rural job creation, demonstrating how the construction of localized, sustainable food systems can generate dignified employment opportunities—particularly for youth and women—while strengthening food security and territorial resilience. It will also highlight ORU Fogar’s broad commitment to advancing food sovereignty through regional government action.

CONCEPTUALISATION

Food sovereignty upholds the right of communities to define and control their own food systems—including production, distribution, and consumption—based on local needs, ecological sustainability, and social justice. This approach challenges conventional industrial food security models that prioritize efficiency and profit, and instead positions food systems as key drivers of inclusive rural development and environmental stewardship. At its Fifth Zero Hunger Summit (Barcelona, October 2024), ORU Fogar reaffirmed a strong institutional commitment to food sovereignty as foundational to territorial development and local economic empowerment.

Rural areas, despite their central role in food production, often face significant challenges such as high unemployment, especially among youth and women, poverty, and outmigration. The dominance of large-scale industrial agriculture has displaced smallholder farmers, weakened local food chains, and contributed to environmental degradation.

In contrast, food sovereignty emphasizes support for small-scale producers, agroecological practices, and localized markets. These systems promote sustainability while generating labor-intensive and skilled employment opportunities across the food value chain—from production and processing to distribution and marketing.

Realizing food sovereignty requires enabling policies that protect land rights, strengthen farmer cooperatives, and ensure equitable access to resources. Investments in rural infrastructure (including storage, transport, and irrigation), extension services, and vocational training are essential to make rural food economies viable and appealing



to youth. Public procurement policies prioritizing local producers for schools, hospitals, and other institutions also serve as important mechanisms for job creation.

At the Barcelona Summit, the ORU Fogar-endorsed Catalunya Manifesto gave special prominence to agricultural vocational training as a key strategy to achieving Zero Hunger. Regional leaders—especially from Africa—urged that strengthening, creating and financing agricultural vocational training schools is central to curbing rural unemployment, empowering youth, and retaining talent within rural territories.

Regional governments play a crucial role by developing participatory food strategies, coordinating actors along the food chain, and institutionalizing inclusive governance mechanisms. Integrating food system planning into territorial development reduces dependence on external markets, strengthens local economies, and revitalizes rural livelihoods.

This session will showcase innovative policies, territorial food strategies, and successful local initiatives that illustrate how food sovereignty can be a pathway to dignified, green, and inclusive employment creation. It will draw on ORU Fogar's ongoing work and recommendations from the V Summit and its Barcelona Manifesto as examples of regional leadership.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

How can regional governments operationalize food sovereignty through inclusive territorial food strategies?

What policy tools are most effective in protecting land rights and supporting small-scale producers?

How can rural food economies be made more attractive to youth and women through investment and training, particularly via agricultural vocational training institutions?

How can public procurement be leveraged to strengthen local food systems and create decent rural employment?