



HAMBRE CERO

BARCELONA, 2-4 OCTUBRE 2024

V CUMBRE MUNDIAL DE LAS REGIONES
SOBRE SEGURIDAD Y SOBERANÍA ALIMENTARIA

ORU FOGAR

Generalitat
de Catalunya

CATALUÑA, DONDE LA COMIDA ES CULTURA

Concept note 1

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

The role of farmers, industry, consumers and governments

GOAL

At the IV Zero Hunger World Regions Summit held in Araucanía, Chile, in 2022, the term “Food Sovereignty” was chosen as an improvement on the concept “Food Security”. Since then, global instability has undermined the global food trade, confirming the need to guarantee supplies and ensure local food production. Meanwhile, paradoxically, European farmers, who have been mobilising in recent months, are pointing out how the international food trade is threatening their livelihood. We are looking at a fundamental paradigm shift and all the players need to reposition themselves.

CONCEPTUALISATION

The concept “Food Security” focuses on the availability and sufficiency of food. It emerged from the 1974 World Food Conference when, after the oil crisis of 1973, there were fears of product shortages. According to the FAO, it is possible to speak of having food security when all people have access to food to satisfy their nutritional needs, in order to lead an active and healthy life. This approach recognises access to food as a central problem and affirms the need to promote redistributive public policies, coordinate food production with nutritional needs and implement social protection proposals to tackle temporary crises.

When talking about food security, the origin of the food is not taken into account at all. Therefore, this approach, which assumes that food can end up being purchased in the most far-off destinations, ends up having perverse effects, putting countries in debt and making them totally dependent. Faced with these perverse effects of globalisation, the concept of “Food Sovereignty” began to be used from 1996.

When referring to “Food Sovereignty”, a commitment is being made not only to the availability of food, but also to the fact that this food can strengthen the local economy, generate income for local farmers and contribute to maintaining local biodiversity. The concept of food sovereignty is not opposed to food security, but rather complements it. This is because it does not focus exclusively on food policies, but on the entire food system as a whole. Accordingly, attention is placed on the food production system itself, on the way food is grown, distributed and consumed, well beyond the demands of markets and companies.

Food sovereignty prioritises local economies, empowering farmers and family farming, and placing food production, distribution and consumption on top of a structural basis



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made up of environmental, social and economic sustainability. Thus it seeks to guarantee that the rights of access to land, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity can be placed in the hands of those who are producing the food. This approach has been interpreted as the best way to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 Zero Hunger.

This approach should not be incompatible with the fact that the global food market allows Europe to buy certain types of fruit and vegetables from North Africa, that the United States buys them from South America or that the entire global north buys bananas from Ecuador, as well as coffee and cocoa from so many countries in Africa or the Americas. These purchases are essential in the supply of the northern markets, as well as being essential for the southern economies. This should not prevent the scope of sovereignty from increasing, both in the north and in the south, because no one can entrust this support to international trade when it is increasingly vulnerable to any eventuality.

This paradigm shift requires modifying many policies, but also economic and social approaches. To begin with, it means placing the farmer at the very heart of the food system. Now, they are the ones responsible for filling our plates, in a period in which food - as in the past - will once again acquire a nature that is close to being sacred, because it places us in concert with the earth and with nature.

The agri-food industry, essential for delivering healthy and nutritious food to consumers, will have to adapt to the new circumstances. Greater social responsibility will be demanded, from the use of water to its role in strengthening the local economy. Respect for environmental standards will be crucial. It will need to have a much closer relationship with farmers.

The consumer is a key element in this transition. In specific social sectors there is a growing food awareness, which means that high-quality, fully guaranteed and nutritious products are being demanded. This awareness is also increasing in relation to local food sourcing. The locally-sourced product presents an appealing image. This awareness, however, does not always reach broad layers of the population, especially the most vulnerable sectors.

Regional governments have a key role in strengthening food sovereignty in a coordinated manner with national and local players, developing initiatives within their territories. In this way, their public policies can influence many aspects, ranging from raising consumer awareness, to playing an important role in preventing food losses and food waste.

Above all, regional governments need to serve as a fundamental pillar for the primary sector. At ORU Fogar it has always been argued that the development of the rural areas is intrinsically linked to the progress of the agricultural sector. This means that, in order to strengthen agriculture, it is essential to provide the rural areas with infrastructure and public services.

At this time when water security is fundamental for the agricultural sector, regions must assume responsibilities in this regard. The centralisation of water management, particularly irrigation water, is, in many countries, a major challenge for the primary sector.

If our aim is to strengthen food sovereignty within regions, it is essential to shorten the food chain, bringing the producer closer to the consumer. Regional governments, working jointly with local governments, must promote the existence of distribution



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channels and market networks in which food from local agriculture can be sold. Creating inclusive markets can help bridge the gap between producers and consumers, promoting mutual recognition, well-being, employment and the provision of affordable goods and services. Initiatives such as Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC) promoted by FAO can be an alternative for facilitating access to food grown and raised sustainably, by means of direct exchanges between producers and consumers. Many southern countries, with peasant-run markets and stores, can contribute with their experience to those developed countries that have forgotten how to support peasant economies.

To conclude, it is important to promote regional gastronomy through events, festivals and meetings that share knowledge and promote the consumption of local foods, thus contributing to the cultural protection of the territories. Regional governments must also promote and protect designations of origin.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- How is food sovereignty achieved in Europe with an agricultural sector facing numerous challenges?
- How is northern food sovereignty compatible with the purchase of products from the south?
- What is the area in which your regional government can contribute the most to food sovereignty?
- How can the food supply chain be shortened?
- Can the current food industry, with its global companies, contribute to strenght food sovereignty within the territories?
- What actions can regional and local governments carry out to move towards food sovereignty, within the framework of global free trade?
- What actions are being taken by regional and local governments to promote short food supply chains?