

Michel Pimbert

Towards Food Sovereignty: Reclaiming Autonomous Food Systems

Throughout the world, there is increasing attention given to the concept of “Food Sovereignty” and its alternative policy framework for food, agriculture, and land use. As a newly emerging paradigm, Food Sovereignty has much to contribute to environmental ethics, politics, and movements for social and environmental justice. However, many actors working for food sovereignty in a variety of rural and urban contexts recognize that more debate is needed to clarify the concept of food sovereignty at a time when many organizations make references to it without understanding its deeply political character, which is radically different from the dominant neo-liberal economic system. Moreover, several actors use the term food sovereignty in a restrictive manner, emphasizing self-sufficiency and isolationist proposals that reject exchanges and complementarities between regions.

I hope to contribute to this debate by producing a critically reflective book—*Towards Food Sovereignty: Reclaiming Autonomous Food Systems*. This volume will draw on available literature and unpublished findings from ongoing participatory action research with country partners in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Iran, Peru, Benin, Mali, Senegal, and selected European countries (France, Italy, United Kingdom) as well as international peasant organizations and social movements (e.g., *La Via Campesina*, indigenous peoples federations).

The book first gives specific examples and case study material to highlight some of the many practical ways in which local, autonomous organizations manage and oversee different links in the food chain from seed to plate. The roles of local organizations in sustaining diverse food systems, livelihoods, and environments, in producing knowledge and innovations, and in designing regulatory institutions is then briefly analyzed. Next, the book identifies reversals and social actions needed to support locally determined food systems and autonomous organizations. The final part of this book will assess the potential of the newly emerging food sovereignty movement to bring about transformative change. Critical reflections will be offered on the strengths and limitations of a new politics in the making that increasingly affirms the values of “citizenship,” “confederalism,” “dual power,” “inclusion,” “rights to land and territory,” “transformed knowledge and practice,” “agroecology and ecological literacy,” and “deepening democracy.”

Towards Food Sovereignty will be published as an online volume. It will make full use of the possibilities of multimedia to reach several different audiences, including younger generations of undergraduate and postgraduate students in universities and centers of learning. This e-book will combine academic text with full color photo illustrations and linked video and audio files. The photos, video clips, and audio recordings show farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, food workers, and consumers all working to promote food sovereignty—highlighting their *own* perspectives on the importance of locally controlled and diverse food systems that sustain both people and nature.