
Food Security Governance: empowering communities, regulating corporations

Nora McKeon – Rome 3 University and Terra Nuova/Concord
Power

- Who wields it?
- To whose benefit?
- Who frames the food agenda?
- What actors decide?
- What prospects to address imbalances of power?
- To defend collective goods and public interests?
Food is more than a commodity...
Corporate Concentration in Agriculture
Percentage controlled by four largest companies in each industry

- Beef: 83.5%
- Pork: 66%
- Chicken: 58.5%
- Turkey: 55%
- Soybeans*: 93%
- Corn*: 80%

Anything above 45% is highly concentrated & abuses are likely

* Grown from Monsanto-patented seeds
Financial speculation and financialization

• Separate food and land from their productive or use value.

• Transformed into highly complex «derivatives».

• Accountability difficult to establish.

• Contribute to land grabbing and food price volatility.
Global market rules that reward corporations – from TRIPS (1994) to trade facilitation (2014)

- Structural adjustment and trade agreements have opened markets of the global South to unfair competition from artificially cheap food products from abroad...

- ...while OECD countries have increased subsidies to agriculture in real terms and protected their markets.
Corporate regulatory and discursive power

Food Must Move to Feed a Hungry World

Cargill
What impact on small-scale producers and food production?

An industrial agricultural production model....
Peasants expelled........or.....................inserted into corporate-controlled value

Share in the sales of an average chocolate bar (100g, 0.79 €)

- Intermediaries: 7%
- Retailers: 17%
- Cocoa and Chocolate companies: 70%
- Cocoa farmers: 6%

(1980: 16%)
What do those directly concerned have to say...?

Rural social movements have organized progressively...
An occasion to «go global»: the World Food Summits and civil society forums of 1996 & 2002
Food sovereignty: an alternative paradigm to modernization and liberalism

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

- Small-scale agroecological food production for domestic and local markets
- Peoples’ access to and control over productive resources
- Remunerative prices for farmers through regulated and protected markets.
- Public policies/investment in support of small-scale producers/local food systems.
- Rooted in local practice and values diversity.
The IPC for Food Sovereignty

• Autonomous, self-managed global network.

• Rooted in regions and peoples movements: peasant farmers, fisher folk, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, agricultural workers, landless, urban poor, consumers....

• Negotiates political space for peoples’ movements and helps them occupy it effectively.
The conflict isn’t between North and South, but between 2 different models...

- Family-based farming/local food webs...
- Industrial agriculture/global food chains
Local food webs

Peasants Feed at Least 70% of the World’s Population

- Share of world’s food that comes from hunting/gathering: 12.5%
- Share of world’s food that comes from the industrial food chain: 30%
- Share of world’s cultivated food produced by peasants: 50%
- Share of urban food produced by city-dwelling peasants: 7.5%

Yet they receive little or no public support.
Building blocks of peoples’ vs corporate food systems:

*access to and control over natural resources: land, water, biodiversity....
"Today a window was opened in what for 50 years has been the Cathedral of the Green Revolution"

*Agroecological production models*
*Deconstructing the idea of The Market....
Whose knowledge?
Toronto Food Policy Council

Bristol good FOOD

Community foodfund

CORK FOOD POLICY COUNCIL
Pure Cork - real food for all

oakland FOOD POLICY COUNCIL
promoting an equitable & sustainable food system

FOME ZERO
O BRASIL QUE COME Ajudando O BRASIL QUE TEM FOME
Which system wins out? Corporate food regime impacts on biodiversity, human health, climate change......

The industrial food system is responsible for 44-57% of all global GHG emissions.
How can we feed 9 billion people?
Who decides? The food price crisis and the reform of the Committee on World Food Security.

«Agriculture is often left to undergo great transformations that are adverse for smallholders and food security. These transformations are not inevitable but are the result of explicit or implicit political choices. Appropriate choices and policies can only result from transparently determined political processes that involve smallholder organizations.»

(HLPE 2013, p. 14)
On what basis? Evidence-based policy-making?

Evidence is framed by paradigms adopted and assumptions made...

“Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge.”

Truman’s «Four Points» Inaugural Address, 1949.

“Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa”

“Our vision cannot be realized without science and technology that serves the needs of Africa’s millions of smallholder farmers.”

Dr. Adesina, AGRA, June 2009
Productivism...

- Associated with «modernization» + idea of linear progress: rural agrarian to urban industrialized societies.

- Highlights (Western) technology and science.

- Adopts measures that glorify technology + external inputs (yield per plant) vs ones that emphasize various environmental + social benefits (total yield per field).
Evidence shaped also by questions asked, data looked for and available, indicators adopted.

«Objective» evidence....

- Can «naturalize» phenomena that are not «natural» at all.
- Acts against political accountability and value-based political debate.
- Whose evidence is listened to? Who analyses the evidence and serves it up to policy-makers?
The food price crisis and the reform of the Committee on World Food Security
Food price crisis 2007/2008: a moment of political opportunity for change
Decision-making by default...
The 2009 reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS): what social movements fought for and won:

• **Foremost** inclusive global forum promoting *policy coherence*.

• **Human rights-based** - defending the right to food.

• **Civil society actors** – small food producers especially – are full participants. Not confounded with private sector.

• **Year-round process**: deciding agenda and rules of the game, framing draft decisions and discussion documents...

• Decision-making inclusive and transparent. **Governments can be held accountable**.

• **High Level Panel of Experts** acknowledges expertise of farmers and practioners.

• **Links between** multistakeholder policy spaces at ***global, regional, national*** levels.
Autonomous, self-organized Civil Society Mechanism

“Priority will be given to ensuring that the voices of smallholder producers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, indigenous, urban poor, migrants, agricultural workers etc. are heard. The CSM will make special efforts to support the capacity of the marginalized to follow and participate in the CFS process.” (CFS:2010/9)
What difference does it make when local food producers and consumers are sitting at the global food governance table?
Two opposing international community responses: the «Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment” (PRAI)....

- Formulated by WB/IFAD/UNCTAD/FAO at G8 request, without any consultation.
- No reference to human rights and State obligations.
- Welcome large-scale land acquisitions as an «opportunity».
- Assume investors will “self-regulate”.
- Ignore weak/corrupt governance in countries to which investments directed.
- Focus on technical issues and ignore conflicting interests and power imbalances.
... or «Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, Forests in the context of National Food Security»


Reformed CFS 2010 agreed:
- To negotiate Tenure Guidelines in CFS.
- Not to rubber-stamp PRAI.
Tenure Guideline negotiation outcome - May 2012

• First ever global tenure guidelines.
• Based on principles of human rights.
• Strong on issues like customary tenure, gender, community consultation, states’ obligations to regulate their corporations.
• Provide important safeguards against land grabbing.

“The CFS has shown it can bring social actors to the debate and seek solutions to one of the most difficult and delicate issues we face today, that of access to natural resources for food provision.”
Changing the terms of the debate in the CFS

Small-scale producers responsible for most investment in agriculture + most food produced.

Need to:

• prioritize public investments and policies that defend + support smallholders’ investments;
• promote markets that benefit smallholders and local food systems;
• defend their rights to their seeds;
• recognize utility of agroecology...

(CFS 2013)
7 years later...

The CFS DOES make a difference in framing the discourse and obtaining more progressive normative guidance.

But there are challenges....
Need to build better links between...

...the global forum.........and.........social/political mobilization from below.
Making the TGs work for peoples’ struggles.

Argentina

Mali

Italy
*Acknowledge that there are issues of power.

“Power in food chains has long constituted a taboo. Indeed, the need to improve the governance of food systems in order to avoid instances of excessive domination by a small number of major agrifood companies is hardly ever referred to in international summits that seek to provide answers to the challenges of hunger and malnutrition.”

Olivier De Schutter
* Demand accountable governments vs vaporous multistakeholderism

- Who’s around the table? National actors only or also bilaterals and multilaterals, multinational corporations?

- Confusion of different actors and their roles and responsibilities.
- Blurring of decision-making and accountability.
- Power imbalances.
Privilege public regulation vs corporate social responsibility.

«We don’t want ‘responsible investors’. We want legal frameworks that protect us effectively and investors who are obliged to respect the law.»

Mamadou Cissokho
West African family farmer leader
A human rights framework...

International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
* Build governance and regulation from the bottom up
* Oppose measure like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

DG TRADE: meetings held with external stakeholders on TTIP

* 154 meetings: Industry (113) Public Interest (19) Other (19) Unknown (3)
What to do when “what must be done for the sake of sustainability and survival exceeds what is possible politically”?

Richard Falk
SUSTAINABLE FOOD IS
ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE FAIR AND ACCESSIBLE
LOCAL HEALTHY NO WASTE