



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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CHANGING FOOD SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

CONFERENCE
2016

AGROECOLOGY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND THEIR ROLE IN NUTRITION AND HEALTH

In our last newsletter we announced plans by Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), IFOAM – Organics International, Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative for Africa (EOA-I), and AfroNet to hold a conference on the changing food systems in Africa. The conference comes at a time when African states are beginning to question food systems. Plans for holding the conference are now at an advanced stage and the planning committee has revealed final dates and venue for the conference. See below for more details.

Venue – The Mosaic Hotel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Date – November 24 – 26, 2016.

Organizers – AFSA, EOAI, IFOAM, AUC, AfroNet, Mekelle University

Supporters – GIZ, SDC and Swift Foundation

The conference will be a three-day event on the changing trends in food systems in Africa in the context of agroecology and nutrition. Presentations, plenary discussions and group work sessions and seed/food fairs by farmers' groups will be key components of the conference. The purpose of holding the conference is to provide a compelling narrative to industrial food system in order to get stakeholders, including government actors, support alternative food systems for better health and nutrition.

News Digest

'Substantial Gains Made at the Expert Review on the Draft ARIPO Regulations' – Civil Society Representatives

The expert review meeting on the Draft ARIPO (African Regional Intellectual Property Organization) Regulations for the Implementation of the Arusha Protocol held from 14 to 17 June was concluded with substantial gains for farmers' rights. Yet again, many questions by civil society were disregarded by the designated chairperson of the meeting. The meeting also shunned media.

Attended by some 60 government officials from the 19 ARIPO Member States, the African Seed Trade Association, foreign entities such as the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), the European Union's Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) and the French Association for Seed and Seedlings (GNIS), the meeting, for the first time, included three members of the African civil society - the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM-Zimbabwe).

A report by these three African civil society representatives observed that 'the four day discussions on the draft regulations were marred by impartiality towards contributions by civil society on the part of the designated chairperson of the meeting and lacked consensus on several contentious new substantive provisions in the draft regulations that lacked consistence with the Arusha Plant Variety Protection (PVP) Protocol'.

Article 24 of the Arusha protocol dealing with the right of Member States to object to a grant, the intrusion of ARIPO Secretariat in the issuance



of compulsory licenses by Contracting States, misinterpretations on the scope of breeders' rights exemptions and hostile provisions for smallholder commercial farmers regarding payment of remuneration to right holders of Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) through use of farm saved seed of protected varieties were the key areas of concern overlooked by the expert review meeting.

The Director General of ARIPO indicated that only five countries have signed the Protocol and



none had ratified. Civil society representatives also observed that member states did not see the relationship between the International Treaties in particular the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) which incorporates farmers' rights and the PVP systems such as the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) and Arusha Protocol.

It is to be remembered that African civil societies have raised so many concerns regarding the Arusha Protocol on New Varieties of Plants. However, through a flawed process that ignored and shunned civil societies, Member States adopted the Protocol on the 6th of July 2015 in Arusha, Tanzania. In a press statement released on the opening day of the expert review meeting, AFSA denounced the regulations as being 'designed to intimidate and force seed processors, seed suppliers, government certification officers and even farmers'

organizations to police and spy on farmers who use farm-saved protected seed'. AFSA also demanded the regulations to be scrapped entirely. During the expert review meeting AFSA called upon the Member States not to adopt the regulations as it would have been too premature at this stage and that there were so many issues that needed more clarification.

The four key concerns raised by AFSA at the review meeting include the draft regulations impingement on national sovereignty in particular the right of States to object grant of PBR, inclusion of draconian provisions against farmers' rights and seed systems, lack of the draft regulation to safeguard against biopiracy, compromising of the implementation of the ITPGRFA, the Convention on Biodiversity, Nagoya Protocol, and human rights instruments) and the draft regulations being based on the European Union (EU) regulations which makes it invalid for ARIPO region.

Despite these challenges representatives of African civil societies regarded the removal of draconian sub-rules for regulation 12 and the right of member states to object applications grant of compulsory licenses as substantial gains for a fairer seed system. Unfortunately, members did not consider the aspects of biopiracy and disclosure of origin. It is also very problematic that the definitions on 'act done privately and for non-commercial purposes' were left to be explained at the national level. This could be impossible for countries which lack PVP legislation at the national level.

On the last day of the meeting ARIPO proposed the sub-committee to refine the text including the recommendations from the member states. Once they are finalized, they will be sent to the members to input their comments in a period of one week and then sent back to ARIPO. The draft regulations will then be sent to the ARIPO PVP technical committee in August this year for consideration. Countries that are members of this technical committee include Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana and Zambia and will also include the host country. ARIPO mentioned that they would send letters to Member States to request them to submit their list on agricultural crops and vegetables that have a historical common practice of saving seed and also recommendations for competent authorities that will enter into contract with ARIPO to conduct the Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) tests.

Credits go to Gertrude Pswarayi of PELUM-Zimbabwe, Bright Phiri of GMO-Free Malawi and Sabrina Nafisa of the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).



Leaders in Agroecology Convene in Uganda, Outline Strategies to Amplify Voice for Food Sovereignty

The AgroEcology Fund (AEF) and Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) organized an international learning exchange workshop on Agroecology in Masaka, Uganda from May 10 to 13, 2016. The learning exchange brought farmers, social movements, scientists and funders together at the beautiful farm of St. Jude Family Projects and Rural Training Centre to dialogue on amplifying

agroecological solutions. About 90 people from 20 countries participated in this event.

The exchange was initiated by the AgroEcology Fund, a progressive consortium of trusts and foundations aiming to increase the volume and long-term effectiveness of agroecological solutions which mitigate the negative effects of climate

change through research, advocacy, and movement building. Over the past three years, the Fund has provided over \$2.7 million in grants to alliances supporting viable food systems, the economic well-being of small farmers and their communities, and the mitigation of climate change through low-input agriculture.

The learning exchange was organized to encourage alternatives to a largely corporate-controlled, globalized food system that contributes to malnutrition, inadequate farmer income, fossil fuel dependence and massive migration. Designed by AEF and AFSA as a stimulating and participatory process and facilitated by ILEIA the convening was a success that helped each participant to learn about others' works in amplifying agroecology and explore synergies to strengthen agroecology as a science, movement and practice. It also helped participants to deepen understanding of the current and future contribution of the AEF to amplifying agroecology.

Space was given for participants to define discussion topics, reflect in small groups and plenary sessions, participate, debate, and learn from each other. Interactive sessions such as poster making enabled participants to communicate their





story diagrammatically, and a theatrical session made for a hilarious and bonding exchange of ‘Theories of Change’. Days were full – from the early morning mysticas to the intense focus discussions, onto the farm visits, and ending in late night conversations. Participants generated various topics for discussion. To mention but a few - ‘Agroecology schools,’ strengthening grassroots farmer organizations,’ ‘policy advocacy for agroecology’ and ‘funding agroecology’.

For each of the topics discussed, the key ideas and conclusions on what ‘works well and when’ are summarized in here – [Download PDF](#).

The gathering recognized the vital role of farmer movements to amplify agroecological solutions

and the power of local wisdom and women farmers to promote ecological and just food systems. The participants also declared that small-scale farmers, not GMOs, have the capacity to feed their families, local and international markets on organic food.

Regarding the threats on Uganda’s small-scale farmers and biodiversity that are paused by Uganda’s National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill, AFSA’s Policy Advocate, Bridget Mugambe was quoted by The Observer, a local newspaper in Uganda, as saying, ‘Uganda has good soils, ample rainfall and rendering genetic engineering unnecessary.’ Similarly, Mr. Bernard Guri, the Chairperson of AFSA was quoted by the same paper as saying, “It is only Africa that can solve African food shortage problems and Uganda should take the lead; the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill is simply seeking to give rights of food production to foreign countries.” Uganda’s

National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill is now before the parliamentary Committee in Science and Technology. If it gets passed into an Act, it will pave way for the introduction of GMOs in the country. Jennifer Aston, Executive Director of the Swift Foundation also said, “we are greatly concerned about the current biotechnology and biosafety bill being proposed here in Uganda. We find it troubling if a country which is fourth in the production of organic food in the world and Africa opts for the unknown.”

For AFSA the convening was an excellent opportunity to strengthen its relationships with member organization PELUM and its constituency St. Jude. St. Jude Rural Training Centre is an internationally-recognized centre where techniques of organic farming, soil conservation and biodiverse gardening are taught. By producing enough food for household consumption and local market, St. Jude demonstrated that agroecology can feed the world as witnessed by participants from across the six continents.

The AFSA Secretariat sincerely thanks the AgroEcology Fund, PELUM, ILEIA, St. Jude Family Projects and all participants for adding strength and solidarity to a growing agroecology movement.

Sharing Missing Stories of Food Sovereignty

During the Agroecology Learning Exchange in Masaka, Uganda, the International Development Exchange (recently renamed Thousand Currents) and Voice of Witness announced to partner on a launching of a collaborative book and outreach project to highlight the urgent, inspiring stories of

women, youth, and indigenous farmers and leaders in South Africa and Zimbabwe who are going against the grain to supply and demand healthy and sustainably-grown food. These stories of individuals are hoped to offer readers 'an engaging, humanizing understanding of farmers' role in building food sovereignty in their communities.' To read the full press release click here – [Voice of Witness and IDEX Partner to Share Missing Stories of Food Sovereignty](#)



Farmers Visited by the Group during the Convening



Jennifer Astone of Swift Foundation makes a statement at a press conference for Ugandan journalists



Nelson Mudzingwa of Zimbabwe shares lessons from small-scale farmers organization in Via Campesina chapters in Africa

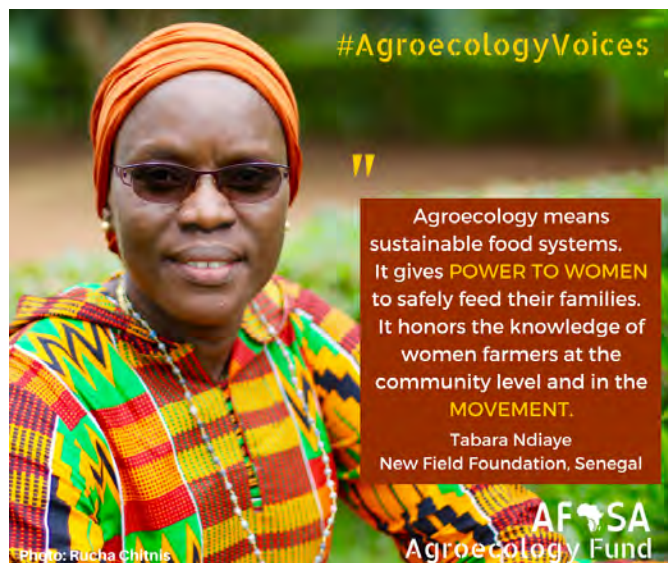
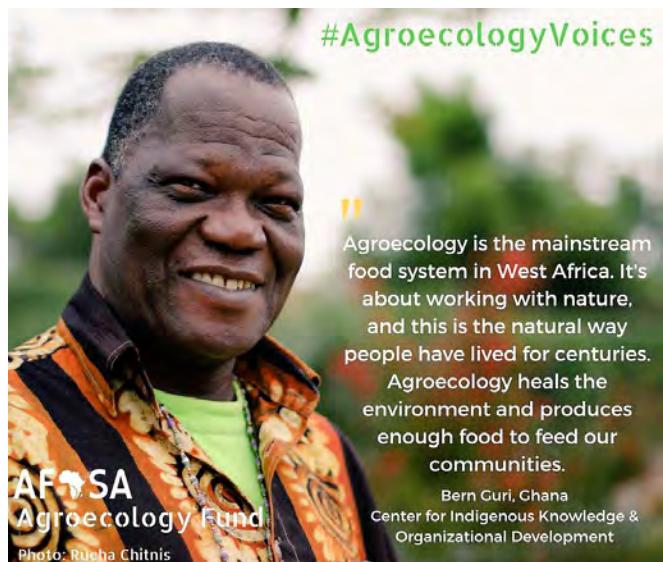


Participants of the Agroecology Learning Exchange Convening in Masaka, Uganda

AGROECOLOGY VOICES

By Rucha Chitnis

The Agroecology Learning Exchange, initiated and organized by AEF and AFSA brought together leaders in Agroecology from across the globe. They declared that humanity can only be fed sustainably when farming is in harmony with nature.



Seed Notes from the Spice Island

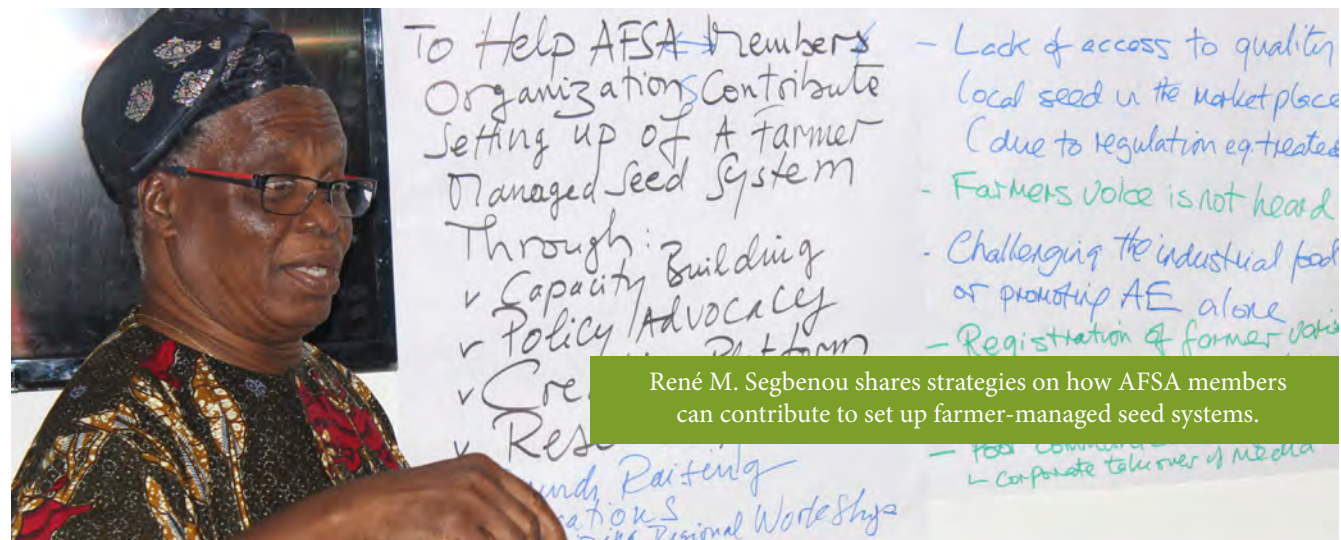
It has been some six years since the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) was launched in Durban by African smallholder farmers, indigenous people, faith-based groups, young people, consumers and civil societies for a better food system that places the millions of farmers at the center of it. Over the years a number of meetings have been held among these members of the alliance and the working groups.

In April 2016 the Seed Working Group gathered at the beautiful island of Unguja, Zanzibar, known for its variety of spices and thus named as 'The Spice Island'. The workshop took place at Bluebay Hotel, Kiwengwa, Zanzibar, Tanzania from 26th -28th of April 2016. Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) on behalf of AFSA organized the meeting and welcomed the group to Zanzibar.

The workshop aimed to deepen common understanding on the key contextual issues in relation to promoting seed sovereignty. Group members also agreed on the broad way forward in terms of countering the corporate takeover of seed and strengthening farmer-managed seed systems. AFSA's specific role in this bigger picture was spelled out on the way forward. An immediate action plan was developed to give momentum to AFSA's seed-related work. The group revisited its achievements and challenges and strategized based on its successful experiences.

The seed lives. It lives even when it appears otherwise. But it needs to be planted and watered, to transform into stem, branch and leaves and to produce many of the likes of its own.

We follow that same pattern in strengthening the emerging quest for a just food system in the African continent. We come together; we discuss and strategize on how we can keep the movement growing.

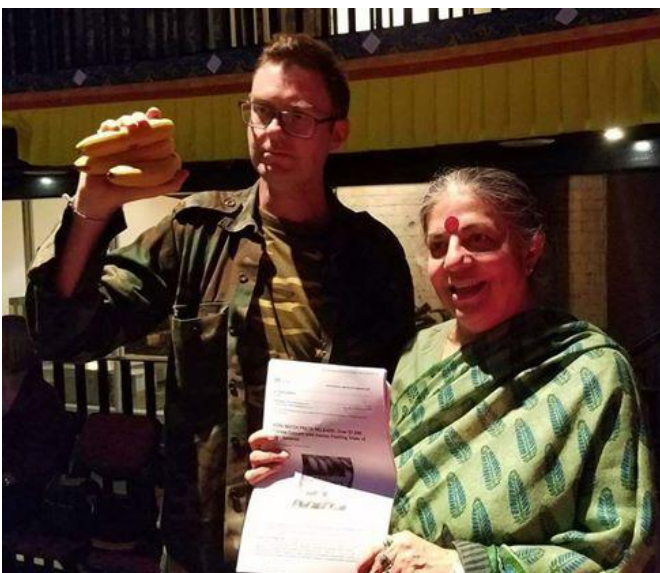


Dr. Shiva Submits AFSA Open Letter on BMGF Funded GMO Bananas

By Adam Breasley

Vandana Shiva delivers Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) [Open Letter on Gates Foundation funded GMO bananas](#) developed at QUT as well as 57,000 signature petition on the human trials being carried out on female students at Iowa State University in the United States.

The GMO bananas developed at QUT in Queensland by Dr James Dale with Gates Foundation funding are based on biopiracy from indigenous pacific cultures' banana cultivars and their traditional knowledge taken without



acknowledgement or permission. The GMO bananas are a propaganda exercise designed to open up Africa to patented GMO seed companies and chemical and fertiliser companies, by making the GMO push out to be a humanitarian project and are earmarked for Uganda and India.

Reductionist and wasteful expenditure on promoting the GMO industry takes place at the expense of proven agroecological approaches to nutrition based on biodiverse diets. Africans are told they will go blind if they don't accept GMOs. Previous human trials of so-called 'golden rice' carried out by Tufts university in Boston have been scandalised by failures to comply with human ethics review board requirements and the lead Chinese researcher suspended.

The 57,000 signature petition delivered to lead researcher on the GM banana trials Wendy White in Iowa and to Gates Foundation ask for similar clarification and transparency on the GM banana trials, which QUT who developed the bananas and shipped to Iowa have also been celebrating with putting out press releases, yet the ethical review board process at QUT for the GMO banana human trials has been circumvented.



'Uniformity to Diversity' – IPES-Food

An interview with Dr. Million Belay on the IPES-Food Report 'From Uniformity to Diversity: A paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems'.

What makes this report different from other reports released over the years?

The report provides unbiased view of industrial agriculture and agroecological systems. It reviews the latest evidence on the outcomes of the industrial and agroecological production models and identifies eight political lock-ins which made it difficult to change the system and shows how it can be changed if there is a will. It uses a political economy lens to look at industrial agriculture and exposes how the interests of few actors is keeping the system as it is.

How do you explain the significance of the report particularly for civil societies advocating food sovereignty?

The report has been researched and written by people who not only have scientific background but also have a deep understanding of the capitalist system. It is well referenced. The panel members also have an understanding of agroecology and its possible impact on diverse social and ecological contexts. In that light, the report has a huge potential to support policy advocacy by civil societies across the globe. Civil society is commonly accused of basing its advocacy on ill researched agenda and coming with shallow arguments for issues that it relies on, including agroecology. It is viewed as anti-science. Therefore, reports like this, coming from an independent body, can serve as

a great armor to counter against the narrative of industrial agriculture. It is also a very timely report. Agroecology is starting to be accepted by key international platforms as the norm instead of just a marginal idea or approach. This report will help strengthen that movement and contribute to speed up the transition to a more sustainable food system.

What was your role in the production and development of the report?

IPES-Food is an independent panel that does not entertain anyone's interest, be it government, civil society or companies. It is open for its members to suggest topics of interest that need to be explored. The panel members will examine and comment on the suggested topics for further research. If the topic is accepted by the panel members, IPES-Food will put its resources to further investigate the topic. Then the panel members will review the draft report of the researcher and give comment. My role in the panel has been suggesting topics of interest and commenting on the reports as well as making sure that what is written speaks to African context or concerns. I work with farmers and I interact with them regularly. If what the report says and what I see at the grassroots is in disparity, it is my job to suggest what I think is right to the panel.

What's your expectation about the report's impact on the food systems in Africa?



Dr. Million Belay is founder and director of the Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action (MELCA-Ethiopia), co-founder and coordinator of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and member of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food).

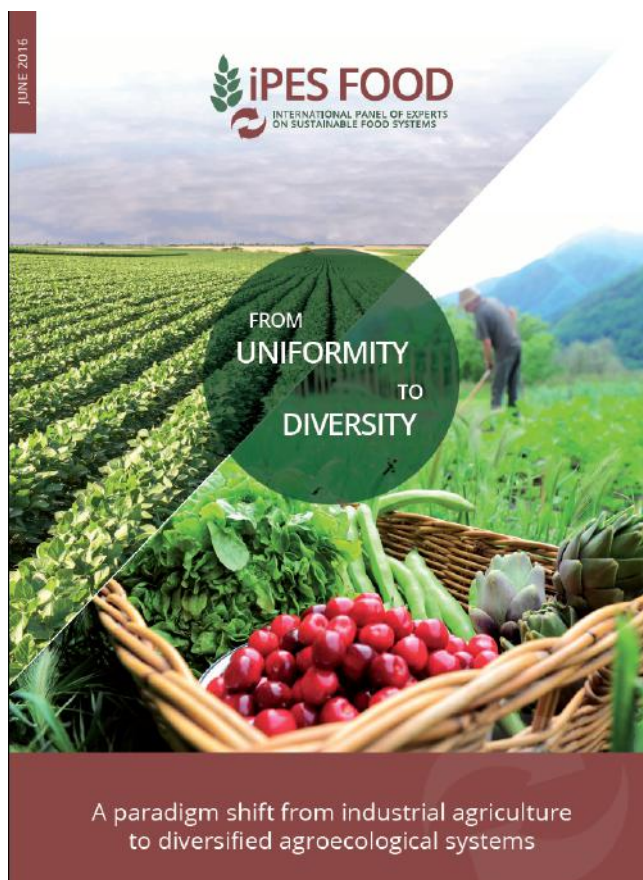
There are two ways reports often end up. They may be cherished and celebrated for a while and then die out or forgotten only to be picked up when one wants to write about the issues raised in the report. Or they may be used to contribute to the changes that we want to see. The responsibility of making the most of this report falls on every one of us working for a shift toward diversified agroecological systems. If we use it properly, the report's impact will be very important for this transition. After the release of the report, the panel has started discussing what steps we should take to further speed the transition to diversified agroecological systems. There is a plan to present the report at key events in Africa and approach key actors to look at the findings and the recommendations of the report. The Panel may also work with Regional civil society groups like AFSA to spread the message as well as make critical interventions in key events. For example, the Panel will participate in the Food Systems meeting that we will be having in November this year.

The report is calling for a fundamentally different model of agriculture/a paradigm shift. How should Africa respond to this call?

I can say that we Africans are lucky because, unlike some continents and countries, we have not moved far away from the agroecological farming systems. Except for South Africa, it is only a small percentage of our farms that have turned into industrial agriculture. However, we are fast moving toward the industrial food systems. This is what concerns us most. Instead of strengthening our diversified agroecological systems, we are following a path that's failed in many nations. The good news is that Africa can easily shift to diversified agroecological systems. That is why it is paramount to actors like AFSA to understand the content of the report, contextualize its findings and recommendations and work hard to educate our decision makers and consumers. There is a growing and cutting edge science that is supporting agroecology and there are a number of practices elsewhere that Africa can use to improve its agroecological practices. So we have an opportunity from growing evidence and practice but we have a threat from initiatives like the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa which are trying to lead African nations on the road to industrial agriculture and to the destruction of the social, cultural, economic and environmental destruction of our continent.

How is AFSA planning to use the report to further strengthen the food sovereignty movement in Africa?

Within AFSA we need to use this report to support our case for agroecology. We must use the evidence generated in this research to make our case well-founded. For that to happen, we need to strengthen the capacity of our member networks and we need to spread the key messages of the report to our constituencies. As a platform, AFSA is in a position to spread the key messages to African decision makers and citizens. In November, we'll be hosting



a food systems conference (Changing Food Systems in Africa: agroecology and food sovereignty and their role in health and nutrition) in Addis Ababa. The report is directly related to that conference.

Members of the IPES-Food will be making key note speeches which will help us shape the outcomes of the conference.

What would your message be for African decision makers regarding the report?

I would like to encourage African leaders and policy makers to read the report and see for themselves that there is a better way of feeding the growing population in Africa without harming the environment and the people. This is a report produced with a rigorous research and is peer reviewed. It is a credible document that can help policy makers to make the right decisions.

The report has summarized its key messages in one page. How would you summarize the report's key messages in your own words?

For me the main thing from the report is that the industrial system is not working. It is raking havoc in every area of human and other forms of life. It is working for those who benefit from it but it is malfunctioning both for the environment and the people. It keeps on going due to the political lock-ins but there are leverages that we can use to change the status quo. The report clearly puts agroecology as a better system for both people and the environment. Agroecology can both feed us as well as keep our environment and us healthy. Therefore, there is a need to change and this change has to come soon. We have to work to make agroecology the main system, not the fringe that it is now. For this, we have to mobilize farmers, consumers, business and decision makers.

THE INTERVIEW

Insights into the critical issues of seed, land and agroecology in Africa.



Sabrina Nafisa Masinjila is researcher at the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) based in Tanzania.

Report Title: Changing Seed and Plant Variety Protection Laws in Tanzania— Implications for Farmer-Managed Seed Systems and Smallholder Farmers

What's your report about?

The report talks about the recent changes to Tanzania's seed legislation and these include the Seed Act of 2003, the Seed Regulations of 2007 and the newly adopted Plant Breeders' Rights of 2012 and how these may have an impact on smallholder farmers and their seed systems. It highlights the background of the Tanzania seed sector, the players and actors behind the push for the change in seed legislation and their motives.

What was the process of developing your report? What were the challenges?

The paper involved several months of research. The first thing was to have a clear picture on the seed sector in Tanzania. This involved lots of literature review, one on one interviews with key officials at the Ministry of Agriculture and other important stakeholders from the seed sector and participation in important seed meetings such as the review of both the Seed Act and its regulations. Some of the text in this paper on the seed legislation is focused on what has been proposed as changes in the seed laws but not what has been adopted. The seed legislation review is still an ongoing process and there is no available final text. Thus, there will be an update on the paper. Otherwise the whole process was very interesting and a huge learning experience.

How do you explain the situation in Tanzania regarding seed laws?

Generally, seed laws are mainly focused on regulating the formal seed sector including the whole processes of variety release, seed certification and quality control and finally the distribution of seed. This is the same case in Tanzania. As you know, the formal seed sector does not involve smallholder farmers and their seed systems and thus only private companies can take part in these processes. Just like many other sub-Saharan African countries, 80-90% of the seed comes from the farmer-managed seed systems also known as the informal seed sector. The seed laws do not recognize the farmer-managed seed systems and its contributions to the seed sector, and thus no support can be made to smallholder farmers involved in seed production. Although there is a small provision in the seed law of a semi-formal engagement of smallholder farmer through the Quality declared seed system, this also has its own disadvantages and not all farmers can take part in the process.

In 2014, there were a few amendments to the Seed Act, but one of the provisions prevented any person from the sale of seed that is uncertified. Not only that, only persons that have been registered as seed dealers should engage in the seed business; this includes, production, distribution, sale, importation and exportation among others). Although the government says that this is for quality control, it can be very problematic when the law decides to

regulate what farmers are doing in their own seed systems. This year, a ground breaking report from (Mcguire and Sperling, 2016) further confirmed that farmers do fully engage in the seed sector, especially when it comes to seed exchanges and the occasional sale of local varieties or farm-saved seed to kin, neighbours or friends, community-based seed groups and to local markets. CSO's have constantly asked the government in numerous occasions to make exemptions on smallholder farmers and farmer saved seeds in order to exclude them from these restrictions but the government is not willing to do so. The reason the government gives is that first, they still consider farmers' local seed as sub-standard and secondly, they still want to protect the private seed sector's engagement in the seed business. This will eventually have an impact on smallholder farmers' seed systems.

How would you summarize the implications of plant variety protection laws on farmer-managed seed systems in Tanzania?

When it comes to plant variety protection, our PBR Act is based on the UPOV 1991 system which is a very restrictive and inflexible regime. It grants extremely strong rights to breeder and severely limits farmers' rights to recycle, exchange and trade the farm-saved seed of protected varieties; it has been the norm for farmers over centuries and they should have the right to continue these practices with all seed that comes into their systems, included protected varieties. Farmers can only do this with the permission from the breeder and are even required to pay royalties on the use of farm save seeds of protected varieties and only use these

on their own plots. These restrictions are quite undesirable for countries such as Tanzania where farmer-managed seed systems are dominant. It is no doubt that when any type of seed enters, the farmer's seed system, farmers experiment and select these seeds and exchange with their fellow farmers. However, farmers' acts are heavily impinged by the PBR law.

What would the implications of the plant variety protection laws on Tanzania's food systems be?

Seed exchange is very important component among rural farmers. Restricting seed exchange can have a huge negative impact to farmers' seed systems in accessing seed and this does affect their food production. Furthermore, with plant variety protection, there is a DUS criteria which requires the production of uniform plants that are suitable for a monoculture type of agriculture, and where only a few varieties that are market viable are developed. This is a threat to crop and agricultural diversity as farmers will eventually be forced to depend only on limited improved varieties. Furthermore, our agricultural systems are reshaped into industrial agriculture where power lies in the hands of private companies which are often foreign while deskilling smallholder farmers. With this shift to industrial agriculture, there will be changes in our food habits and nutrition.

What do you think is the most important finding from your report?

This would be the marginalization of farmer-managed seed systems and the lack of recognition

and support of these and their lack of recognition in the seed legislation and policies. For decades, farmer-managed seed systems and their seeds have been and continue to be neglected by policy makers. The seed legislation further continues to create a restrictive environment for the farmer-managed seed systems.

What do you suggest about how African civil societies use your report in their advocacy works?

The main issue for African civil societies is to lobby policy makers to recognise farmer-managed seed systems as this is the biggest source of seed supply for African farmers. Furthermore, they should also continue raising awareness to smallholder farmers and together challenge extreme plant variety protection rights that restrict farmers' rights to save, sell, exchange farm saved seeds of protected varieties.

How do you think Tanzania's farmers continue to stay in control of their seeds in the face of the challenges from plant variety protection laws?

When it comes to own seed, the PVP law does not affect farmers. It only affects them when it comes to the use of farm saved seed of protected varieties acquired by farmers. However, for farmers to maintain control of their seeds, they should demand protection of their own seed from misappropriation by breeders who in turn sell them protected varieties emanating from their seed.



The African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) is committed to dismantling inequalities in the food and agriculture systems in Africa and believes in peoples' right to healthy and culturally appropriate food, produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.

Industrial Agriculture and Malnutrition - Two Faces of One Coin

By Yonas A. Yimer

Early in June the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) released a ground-breaking report titled, 'From Uniformity to Diversity: A paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems.' About two weeks later The Global Nutrition Report 2016 was released. Not so surprisingly, these two reports agree on the scale of the global malnutrition challenge, which according to the latter directly affects one in three people.

Malnutrition is a broad term commonly used as an alternative to 'under nutrition', but which technically also refers to over nutrition. People are malnourished if their diet does not provide adequate nutrients for growth and maintenance

or if they are unable to fully utilize the food they eat due to illness (under nutrition). They are also malnourished if they consume too many calories (over nutrition).

The Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) study which informs policy makers on how economic growth is affected by undernutrition reported in 2014 that stunted children as having a higher risk of repeating grades in school and dropping out of school. Grade repetitions are costly to the education system and to families. For instance, undernutrition costs Ethiopia about USD 4.7 billion which is estimated to be 16.5 percent of its GDP, Egypt USD 3.7 billion and Uganda USD 899 million. Within the five years prior to 2014 the number of deaths associated

with child undernutrition in Ethiopia was 378,591 while the total child mortalities associated with undernutrition amounted 28 percent. Unfortunately, malnutrition is inter-generational. Babies born to underweight or stunted women are likely to be underweight or stunted. In this way, malnutrition passes from one generation to another as a grim inheritance.

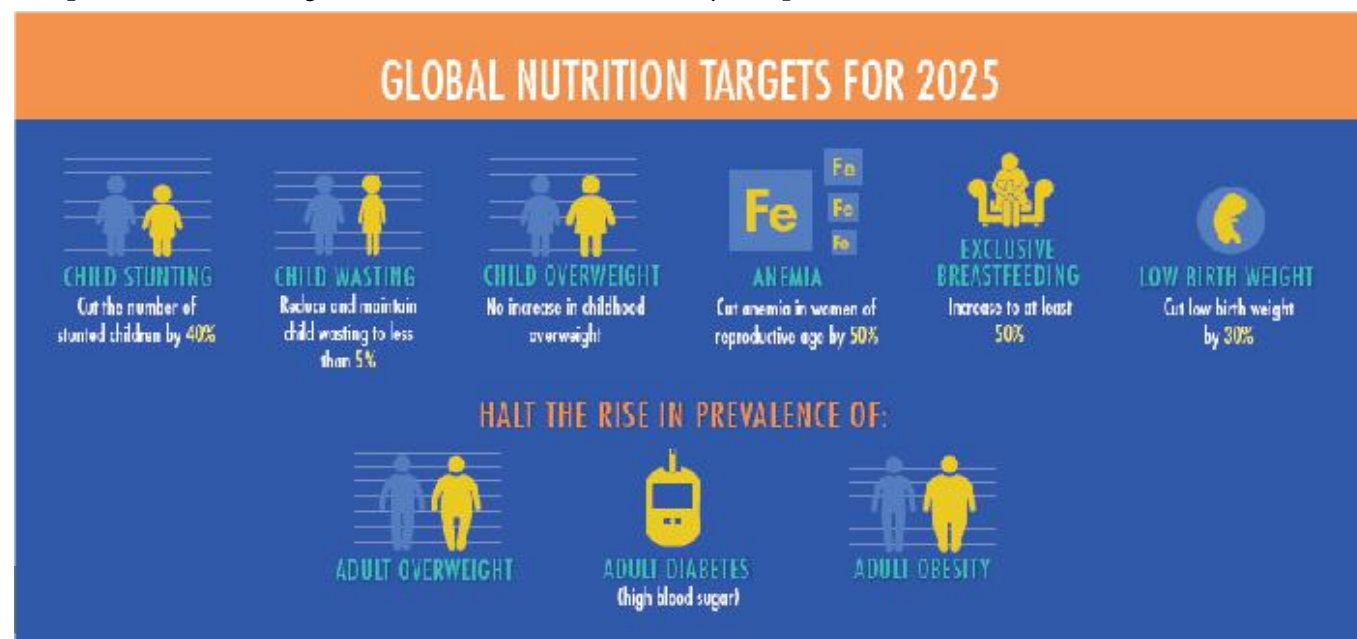
The Global Nutrition Report says that in the year 2016 out of the world population of seven billion about two billion people suffer from micronutrient malnutrition, nearly 800 million people suffer from calorie deficiency. Similarly, the IPES-Food, quoting FAO and WHO, reports 795 million people as hungry, two billion people as micronutrient deficient, nearly two billion people as obese and overweight. Of course, there are some overlaps between those suffering from hunger, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity, but the fact remains that the problem is of a massive extent.

What needs to be done?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enshrined the objective of ending all forms of malnutrition by 2030. But how can that be achieved?

Change course.

When it comes to the real question of what it will take to end malnutrition in all its forms



Source - Global Nutrition Report

IPES-Food is bold and unapologetic. It states, ‘tweaking practices can improve some of the specific outcomes of industrial agriculture, but will not provide long-term solutions to the multiple problems it generates.’ Citing studies by noted scholars, the report recognizes the rise of industrial agriculture having impacts on the nutrient content of foods. The excessive emphasis on promoting energy-rich staple cereals resulted a decline in consumption of pulses and other minor crops with high nutritional value. With excellent evidence the IPES-Food report warns that if we do not entirely shift our food systems from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems it is impossible to achieve our goals of realizing a world of healthy people.



It is common knowledge that we only reap what we sow. And malnutrition is at least partly caused by the limited varieties of foods the global industrial food system provides humanity. Few crops have dominated the production of food. For instance, maize, wheat and rice account for 50 percent of plant-based food intake despite the fact that 7,000 plants are used by humans as food. This, undoubtedly, reduces our diet choice and ultimately exposes us to malnutrition.

Industrial agriculture keeps a vicious cycle that can now only be broken by shifting our food systems toward diversified agroecological systems. IPES-Food elaborates on how a diverse and balanced diet can ensure exposure to a broader set of nutrients and non-nutrients which have antioxidant, anti-cancer and other beneficial properties. ‘To completely end malnutrition in all its forms’ it is necessary that we shift our farming

systems toward diversified agroecological systems which can provide diversified food items and thus balanced diet. The first key message of the IPES-Food report reads, ‘today’s food and farming systems have succeeded in supplying large volumes of foods to global markets, but are generating negative outcomes on multiple fronts: widespread degradation of land, water and ecosystems; high GHG emissions; biodiversity losses; persistent hunger and micro-nutrient deficiencies alongside the rapid rise of obesity and diet-related diseases; and livelihood stresses for farmers around the world.’

Similarly, the Global Nutrition Report points out that ‘diet is now the number-one risk factor for the global burden of disease. The diet choices available to us are shaped by our food systems, which are not sufficiently well geared toward enabling us to consume high-quality, healthy, and nutritious

diets. Plausible ideas exist on how to make food systems work harder for nutrition while enhancing sustainability’. That plausible idea can only be agroecology as José Graziano da Silva, FAO’s Director-General said in 2014 at the International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition, ‘Agroecology continues to grow, both in science and in policies. It is an approach that will help to address the challenge of ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, in the context of the climate change adaptation needed.’

Unlike industrial agriculture which focuses on maximization of yield/economic returns from a single product or limited number of products, agroecology maximizes multiple outputs which enhance diversity on the farm and thus at the table enabling us to realize a world free of malnourished people.

PRESS STATEMENTS

ARIPO PVP Regulations: Ferocious Campaign against Seed Saving Farmers in Africa and State Sovereignty

13 June 2016

Representatives of 19 African countries who are members of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (ARIPO) will meet in Harare, Zimbabwe 14-17th June 2016, to adopt draft Regulations intended to implement the Arusha Protocol for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (Arusha Protocol).

According to the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), these Regulations are designed to intimidate and force seed processors, seed suppliers, government certification officers and even farmers' organisations to police and spy on farmers who use farm-saved protected seed. According to Dr Million Belay, AFSA co-ordinator "these Regulations are undoubtedly, rural surveillance of farmers at its very worst."

AFSA has consistently and vehemently resisted the development and adoption of the Arusha Protocol. AFSA has repeatedly pointed out that the Protocol represents a centralised harmonised regime that undermines the sovereign rights of member states; severely undermines farmers' rights in that small-scale farmers are not allowed to freely reuse, exchange and sell all farm saved seeds within their seed systems; facilitates biopiracy; and is inconsistent with various obligations of international biodiversity treaties and human rights' instruments.

Serious concerns have also been raised about the secret and flawed process by which the Protocol was developed and the deliberate locking out of African civil society from the deliberations when the Protocol was adopted on the 6th July 2015. The Arusha Protocol was heavily influenced by foreign entities such as the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), the European Union's Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), the Netherlands Government, the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WTO) and the French Seed industry, the National Inter-Professional Grouping of Seed and Plants (GNIS).

The draft Regulations make a bad situation much worse. Not only are these Regulations taken almost verbatim from European Union Regulations and are entirely unsuitable for the 19 poor African countries that make up the ARIPO region, 13 of whom are least developed countries. Astonishingly, these Regulations nullify several provisions of the Protocol aimed at protecting the sovereignty of ARIPO Member States. A major point of controversy during the Protocol negotiations was the extent to which the decision-making powers of the ARIPO Office given were usurping the sovereignty of member states. Consequently, after long hours of negotiation, changes were made that now give Contracting States an explicit right to object to any Plant Breeders' Right (PBR)—as granted by the ARIPO Office, regionally—in which event the PBR will not be awarded national protection. The draft Regulations completely ignore both this critical issue entirely and fail to provide appropriate mechanisms to operationalize the right of Member States to object to the grant as contemplated in Article 4(1) of the Protocol.

Furthermore, what stands out are the draconian provisions made against farmers' rights and seed systems. The Regulations require small-scale farmers to pay remuneration for the propagation of farm saved seed of the protected variety on his or her own holding. This is incredulous as even in the EU farmers are free to reuse farm saved seed of protected varieties without payment of remuneration for a specific list of crops. In an attempt to protect the profit-making interests of the breeder, the Regulations have, contrary to public policy, given the breeder monitoring and enforcement powers. According to Mariam Mayet of the African Centre for Biodiversity, an AFSA member, "there is nothing in the Arusha Protocol that legitimizes the inclusion of these provisions in the Draft ARIPO Regulations. These Regulations have created civil liability and a reverse onus of guilt on the part of Africa's farmers without there being any due process. This is totally unacceptable."

According to Dr. Million Belay, "AFSA is demanding that these Regulations be scrapped in their entirety. AFSA remains vehemently opposed to the Arusha PVP Protocol, whose underlying imperatives are to increase corporate seed imports, reduce public breeding activity, and facilitate the monopoly by foreign companies of local seed systems and the disruption of traditional farming systems. AFSA is committed to ensuring that farmers, as breeders themselves as well as users, remain at the centre of localised seed production systems and continue to exercise their rights freely to save, use, exchange, replant, improve, distribute and sell all the seed in their seed systems."

International Learning Exchange in Uganda Proposes Agroecological Solutions

May 13, 2016

The AgroEcology Fund and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa has hosted a four-day learning exchange among farmers and farmer advocates here in Masaka to propose agroecological solutions to world hunger, rural poverty and environmental degradation. Participants gathered from over 20 countries to strengthen the agroecology movement around the globe.

We chose to hold the learning exchange here at the St. Jude Rural Training Centre because it is an internationally-recognized center where farmers from Uganda and around the world learn techniques such as organic farming, soil conservation, and biodiverse gardening.

We organized the learning exchange to encourage alternatives to an increasingly corporate-controlled and globalized food system that contributes to malnutrition, inadequate farmer income, fossil fuel dependency and massive migration from the countryside to cities. Leaders from a global agroecology movement have gathered to share knowledge and experiences and debate strategies to feed the world through healthy and sustainable food systems based in agroecology.

The AgroEcology Fund is a multi-donor fund from the US, Europe and Asia supporting agroecological practices and policies. We have extended over \$2.7 million in grants to alliances supporting viable food systems, the economic rights of small farmers

and their communities, and the mitigation of climate change through low-input and ecological agriculture. We help link organizations and movements that advance agroecological solutions locally, regionally and globally.

We have partnered with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) to co-host this learning exchange. AFSA is a Pan-African platform composed of food producers, youth, women, consumer and faith based organizations to co-host this learning exchange. AFSA influences policy for community rights, family farming, promotion of traditional knowledge, environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management. AFSA advocates for family farming based on agroecological and indigenous approaches and opposes land grabs and destruction of indigenous biodiversity, livelihoods and cultures. We are proud to support AFSA in their work for African-driven solutions based on the richness of biological and cultural diversity across the continent.

The Agroecology Learning Exchange occurs during an unprecedented moment globally. A broad social movement has moved agroecology onto the international stage in forums such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, providing evidence of how it can solve the world's hunger crisis and reverse climate change.

This vibrant movement rejects the introduction of

genetically modified seeds and food, finding them both dangerous and unnecessary. We are gravely concerned about the current Bio-technology and Bio-safety bill being proposed here in Uganda. We find it troubling that a country which is fourth in the production of organic foods in the world and first in Africa opts for the unknown. Instead of opening Uganda to GMOs, we urge policy makers to support small farmers, such as the families we have had the privilege of visiting here in the Masaka district, to produce food for their families, local markets and international organic markets. From our experience in the AgroEcology Fund, we have seen that with support, these farmers can feed the world and live in dignity and prosperity. Around the world, we have seen how grassroots organizations, NGOs, consumers, universities, and public agencies work hand-in-hand with farmers to construct sustainable and nutritious food systems. This gathering is an example of that collaboration. It is our sincere hope that this exchange will deepen the public's growing interest and commitment to work with small farmers to build healthy and just food systems based on agroecology. Thank you.

End.

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March Against Monsanto in Africa - In Picture

March Against Monsanto (MAM) is an international grassroots movement against Monsanto corporation protesting the company's negative influence on the outcomes of legislations, regulations, research findings and media narratives to its own profit. This year, the international MAM was held on the 21st of May, 2016.



Demonstrations during the March Against Monsanto in Ghana

Theory of Change

The time for Agroecology and Food Sovereignty is Now. The growing emphasis on the need for sustainability, for resilience to climate change, for a return to nutritious eating, for agricultural biodiversity in farming systems, and for farmers not to be dependent on outside inputs and interests, all these factors call out for a transition to Agroecology. Food sovereignty brings consumers into this equation. There is a growing momentum globally and within Africa towards Agroecology and Food Sovereignty. AFSA was formed to intensify and 'grow' this momentum in a more cohesive way.

We need to transition from Industrial Agriculture to Agroecology. AFSA Members deliberated on how to drive that transition fast.

[Download our 'Theory of Change'](#)

The theory of change can be understood as outcomes-based approach that applies critical thinking to the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives and programmes intended to support change. It describes a sequence of events that is expected to lead a particular desired outcome. It is an on-going process of reflection to explore change and how it happens - and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector/or group of people.



A PAGE FOR PULSES

The 68th UN General Assembly declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses (IYP).

The IYP 2016 aims to heighten public awareness of the nutritional benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production aimed towards food security and nutrition. The Year will create a unique opportunity to encourage connections throughout the food chain that would better utilize pulse-based proteins, further global production of pulses, better utilize crop rotations and address the challenges in the trade of pulses.



Pulses are part of the legume family, but the term “pulse” refers only to the dried seed. Dried peas, edible beans, lentils and chickpeas are the most common varieties of pulses. Pulses are very high in protein and fibre, and are low in fat. Like their cousins in the legume family, pulses are nitrogen-fixing crops that improve the environmental sustainability of annual cropping systems.

KEY MESSAGES

Pulses are highly nutritious.

Pulses are economically accessible and contribute to food security at all levels.

Pulses have important health benefits.

Pulses foster sustainable agriculture and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Pulses promote biodiversity.





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2016
INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF PULSES