



SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY CAMPAIGN

Special Edition: Where to for the SAFSC?

This special edition of SAFSC news highlights some responses from campaign partners to the discussion document on the way forward for SAFSC.

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1. Way forward for SAFSC: COPAC perspective document

The objectives of this document are to:

- Open up debate within the SAFSC on its way forward
- Take stock of strengths and weaknesses of SAFSC
- Surface options for the way forward
- Prompt a deliberation on pros and cons of the options

1. SAFSC achievements and challenges

1.1 Achievements

- **Tribunal on Food Prices, Landlessness and Hunger** – which placed food corporations and the ANC state on trial for perpetrating a crime against humanity; the hunger suffered by 14 million South Africans.
- **Food Sovereignty Activist Schools** – built capacity amongst campaign partners to strengthen the campaign through sharing education tools on food sovereignty, agro-ecology, solidarity economy, worker cooperatives and seed saving. Through food sovereignty activism we have married various anti-systemic alternatives and are evolving a South African approach to food sovereignty and more.
- **Learning exchanges** – encouraged sharing of skills, experiences and practice between campaign partners.
- **Food Sovereignty Festival** – showcased and celebrated food sovereignty alternatives, practices and knowledge.
- **Drought speak out** – provided a platform for small-scale farmers and affected communities to speak on the drought, and to highlight the inadequate response of government during the drought. It brought together farmers from affected provinces, from the region, movements and community organisations. It also enabled solidarity links with mining affected communities and resistance to coal as a fossil fuel. Ultimately food sovereignty was championed as response to the drought.
- **Bread march** – Mobilised over 2000 people to march against rising bread and food prices. The government was called to prioritise the plight of the poor by promoting a food commons with an emphasis of developing urban food gardens and farms that are cultivated on the principle of agroecology, food sovereignty and the solidarity economy. Called out corporations profiteering from food and bread prices. This has gained support on social media, in the national media and has raised the profile of the SAFSC. The Human Rights Commission is keen to take these issues forward and WITS University is also keen for a dialogue with SAFSC to take forward the memorandum.
- **Built solidarity and networks** – between 50+ campaign partners, potential to contribute to building the climate justice movement and potential for numerous community based forums to take root and lead food sovereignty processes. Moreover, there is immense potential to build a Southern Africa food sovereignty Alliance or network.
- **Forum building** – campaign partners have initiated or strengthened existing forums for sharing knowledge, discussing challenges and promoting the alternative.
- **Developed a knowledge commons:** Activist guides and seed saving guides to promote the Food Sovereignty and the Solidarity Economy. Launched a SAFSC webpage and social media accounts to profile SAFSC partners, promote networking and disseminate knowledge.

1.2 Challenges:

- **Resource constraints (especially funding)** – funding has been brought into the campaign by partner organisations advancing a priority they want to champion on the campaign platform and

which is then commonly agreed, through the annual Assembly. As a result, the campaign has not raised resources directly as the campaign but through the credibility and links of partner organisations willing to support the campaign. A good example is COPAC. COPAC has its funders for its programs and it has been keen to champion a food sovereignty approach to the climate crisis. It raised its own funds for this and secured support from SAFSC for this to be a priority for campaigning in 2016. SAFSC's resource constraints can be overcome if it believes it has its own credible record and can leverage funds directly. This is also related to how it chooses to operate going forward.

- **Mobilising grassroots** – partner organisations are uneven in their commitments to the SAFSC. Some are more committed than others and have gone further to deepen SAFSC alliances, build local food sovereignty forums, mobilise their communities, draw on local resources, and have actively utilised activist training received to advance the food sovereignty campaign and its priorities. Others have not done this despite receiving intensive activist training over the past two years. Why is this? Why are some activists able to mobilise their organisations and communities and others not? Answering these questions are also crucial to determine whether the SAFSC has a future or not. If activists from partner organisations do not mobilise their organisations and communities, then the SAFSC is merely a national platform and has no rootedness. Without building community based food sovereignty forums as the backbone of the campaign SAFSC cannot go forward as a grassroots campaign. Put differently, SAFSC will not have a grassroots presence and will not be championed from below.

2. Options for SAFSC

2.1. Dissolve the campaign: The campaign draws to a close, affirming it has placed food sovereignty on the national and local agenda in many communities. Resources have been developed and activist capacities built for things to move forward from below. Partner organisations continue to function outside the campaign, and within the networks that have been developed.

2.2. Institutionalise SAFSC: As a movement or as a cooperative with members and structures of activity with various decision making powers (e.g. annual national assembly, board, forums, organisations and organisers) and categories of membership (e.g. Organisational member, forum member, individual member, finance member, worker owner, and volunteer member). The institution will operate through various sources of funding, e.g. donor funding, organisational contributions, membership fees and decentralised organisational funding.

2.3. Keep it as a loose alliance: SAFSC remains as it is, but the secretariat rotates. See attached guidelines for how decisions are made, funding managed and roles defined. These guidelines have been developed in previous NCC meetings and need to be formally adopted after further deliberation. (See Annexure A)

2.4. Decentralised and virtual driven alliance: The SAFSC disbands as a loose national alliance. This means there is not NCC, secretariat or annual assembly. Instead it maintains a virtual national network through its social media platform (google list, Webpage, Facebook page, twitter presence etc.) and operates as a decentralised, loose alliance. Interested partners promote food sovereignty initiatives, share information and call for solidarity through the virtual platform. The virtual platform coordinates us all. For example, if organisation X decides it wants help with setting up a seedbank it then draws on the virtual network for assistance. Or if organisation Y hosts activist training on food sovereignty it can invite others on the virtual network to assist.

3. Assessing options

Interrogate each option with the following questions:

- 1) What does this option achieve?
- 2) what are the positives of this option?
- 3) what are the negatives or downsides of this option?
- 4) What is missing from this option?
- 5) What is required for this to happen?
- 6) What option does your organisation prefer?

2. Rural Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil: What lessons for SAFSC?

Andrew Bennie

As the SAFSC embarks on a discussion to clarify its future, it is worth reflecting on other experiences of forces from below that have built power and the ability to pose significant challenges to the existing social, land and agricultural order. This article was thus written as a response to the perspectives document on the way forward for the SAFSC drafted by COPAC.

The Rural Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil is the world's largest land movement that has made tremendous gains in its 30-year history. As a movement of the landless, it has fought for comprehensive land and agrarian reform in a country with one of the most concentrated patterns of land ownership in the world, together with one of the highest levels of social inequality. Through its movement struggles and tactics of occupying land, it has resettled over 400 000 families. While intense inequality in land ownership remains, it has therefore made significant progress in challenging existing power relations in Brazil, and it continues to mobilise and practice land occupations as its key tactic in reclaiming land for the social good.

In June of this year I had the privilege of spending some time with the MST in Brazil for research purposes. While the context of Brazil and the MST itself is very different to South Africa, its experiences, achievements and challenges offer some lessons and insights that can be useful for thinking about movement and campaign building towards food sovereignty in South Africa. As we discuss in the SAFSC what strategic direction and form it should be taking in the near future, learning from how the MST has organised itself and built such an influential and powerful movement can enrich how we think about this task. Due to limited space, I will only focus on three aspects: the organisational structure of the MST, popular education better known as 'formation', and practical building of alternatives.

The MST grew out of the suffering and hardships of the rural landless themselves, who through cooperative relationships with support organisations built their consciousness and confidence to act as agents for emancipation, and undertook the bold act of occupying a *latifundi* (large estate) in 1984. In short, this occupation sparked the Rural Landless Workers' Movement of Brazil, which reproduced this tactic of occupation as its foremost mode of directly confronting the powerful forces that undermine the wellbeing of the rural poor in Brazil.

However, the MST did not build itself into the large and powerful movement that it is today by this tactic alone. It also deliberately and conscientiously built a coherent movement. Today, it describes the structure of the movement through what it calls 'organicity'. Organicity essentially refers to how the MST is structured in a way that ensures that every aspect of life of the people in the movement is integrated into and addressed in how the movement functions. At the base of the MST are the people living in the encampments and settlements. Encampments are where people have occupied land and

are still fighting to win the land. People could find themselves living in such camps for up to eight years before they win the land; such is the commitment of those who stay for this length of time. Settlements are where the land has been won and families have been officially moved onto the land and have legal status there.

Every encampment and settlement is divided into what the movement calls 'sectors', which are responsible for organising all the aspects of social life in the settlement or camp: education, health, political training ('formation'), gender, infrastructure, and so on. Encampments and settlements are also organised at the local level by what the MST calls 'militants', organisers who are so politically committed to the struggle for land and social transformation in Brazil that they spend all their time as activists mobilising and organising the landless in encampments and settlements on a daily basis.

To ensure linkages and coordination between all encampments and settlements, representatives from sectors meet at regional level and elect representatives from each sector to attend state-level coordination meetings. The representatives of each sector must always be one female and one male. From state level, representatives from the sectors (again, equal female and male) and militants are represented at the National Coordination. This national coordination has linked to it a reading group, which is comprised of twelve people and whose role it is to keep studying the agrarian and political economy situation in order to provide the National Coordination with up-to-date and relevant information to inform its decision making processes. The national secretariat, which is based in Sao Paulo City and undertakes overall national coordination work, reports to this National Coordination. The National Coordination meets every forty to fifty days. There are then a few further successive levels of MST structure that culminates in the National Congress, where the overall strategic direction of the movement for the next five years is discussed and decided. At its last congress in 2014, 15 000 people attended! This illustrates the infrastructure and capacity that the movement has, but it is also aided by its overall structure of 'organicity' and relative decentralisation: the organisation of the congress is made easier by the fact that each state coordinates itself, including the representatives that attend the congress, each state brings its own tents for accommodation, own kitchen infrastructure and food, and coordinates its own catering all through the congress. It is thus the actual struggles of the landless that drive the MST, but these struggles are in turn integrated into an organic whole that ensures local struggles for land are organically part of a broader struggle that is able to shift power on a national scale.

A second important feature of the movement is that its high level of coordination and coherence is aided by the MST's deep process of constant political training, or what they call 'formation'. In the MST, learning and deepening intellectual capacity is a constant and central practice. The movement is not guided purely by ideology and political outlook, but is informed also by constant intellectual analysis as a basis for guiding strategy and decisions. In the MST everyone has the capacity to be an intellectual, rather than a small layer of leaders with perceived superior intellectual and strategic capacities, as in the vanguardist tradition. The MST refers to this education as 'formation'. Formation is an on-going process and begins in preparation for the land occupation and continues through the occupation. Formation is not just about politically educating participants in the MST, it is about inculcating a person and a world view – a socialist world view, if you will. The result of this formation and the collective struggle is that the MST is strengthened by the fact that most participants in the movement see a clear connection between their own struggle for land and the social transformation of Brazil, which adds further significance to their own struggles. Linked to this point is that, although it is an on-going challenge to entrench in practice, gender equality is officially taken very seriously in the MST and efforts are made in the camps to practically enact this principle. I would thus suggest

that one of the reasons for the strong sense of identification of people with the movement itself is a result of the personal and social liberation that they experience within the MST.

This first and second feature I have discussed combine to essentially mean that, firstly, the MST is a highly democratic organisation whose direction and action is driven by its base (organicity). Secondly, this base, and the entire structure of the MST, is constantly involved in a process of education and intellectual training so that the operations of the MST is based on sound analysis and firm commitment to radical social transformation.

Thus a third important feature of the MST is that it does not only focus on resistance struggles in terms of the struggle for land. It links the land struggle with the immediate and longer-term struggle to actively construct alternative relations of production and social life. Linked to the point about formation and political education, daily practice is thus guided by building visions of an alternative society, and enacting structures aimed at making this possible, like agroecology, cooperatives, and so on. Of course, challenges exist in this regard and progress is very uneven, but developing visions of an alternative society are important in reproducing the sense of purpose and coherence in the movement.

The MST is not perfect and faces challenges, as any movement would, and operates in a different context to South Africa, but I suggest from the above points that in considering the way forward for the SAFSC, attention should be given to, firstly, what the optimal structure for the SAFSC will be to provide a way to practically link local needs, challenges and efforts into a broader struggle that links the local practices in a way that organically integrates them and builds power to confront the broader social injustice of the food system in South Africa. In turn, is there enough commitment and capacity in the SAFSC to continue to build on this basis? Secondly, ensuring that the workings of the SAFSC continues to be grounded in knowledge and consciousness-building that links local and direct issues to issues of broader social transformation. This work should aim at not just advancing a consciousness rooted in emancipation, but daily emancipatory *practice* as well. Thirdly, attention should be given to continuing to advance, coordinate and link people's alternatives that actively build and show that another, just, and emancipatory food system is possible.

3. Patrick Tshikana (NCC member) response on the way forward for SAFSC

1. Introduction

The SAFSC has achieved a lot since its launch in February 2015 and has made a name for its self. The current state of the food value chain in our country calls for an even stronger and vibrant campaign. That is why it is very important that we do not drop the ball regardless of the changes we make for the campaign. We have as a campaign, through the work we have done and continue to do, reached a point where the working class and the poor in our country will depend on SAFSC for mobilisation and challenging the greed and profiteering of the big monopoly capital in the food sector. We must continue to raise our voice and talk about those things many will think about. We must capacitate our people to be self-sufficient and be active participants in the production, distribution and consumption of our produce. We should and cannot rest until a dream of a democratic food system is reached in this country. As the SAFSC we believe that the plague of hunger can be defeated. Failure for the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign is not an option.

2. COPAC as the Secretariat

It would be ignorance of the highest order if we fail to acknowledge the pivotal role played by COPAC as the secretariat of the campaign. It is through the work done by COPAC that we managed to achieve everything we have achieved in such a small space of time. I must however state that we must avoid moving from one secretariat to another. It is important that SAFSC becomes independent as a campaign and I don't think it is correct that we should continue looking for other organisations to be secretariats of the campaign. It is my view that we should take the campaign to a place where it is self-sufficient and has its own stuff and office. I want to persuade comrades to be open to this possibility.

3. Option for SAFSC

I suggest that we opt for option 2.2 of the perspective document, with the addition that the campaign continues as it is doing now until such time that it is able to run on its own. The responsibility of the NCC will be to draw up a roadmap with clear deliverables that will get the campaign to a position of self-reliance. As I mentioned above, we need not look for another secretariat during this period but rely on the proven diligence of COPAC.

Patrick Tshikana is a member of the SAFSC National Coordinating Committee (NCC) and Eastern Cape Provincial Secretary of the United Front. He can be contacted at ubuhletrading@yahoo.com.

4. Mzimasi Ndongeni: response on the way forward for SAFSC

1. Introduction

Let me sincerely pay a special tribute to those down to earth SAFSC foot soldiers who have, under harsh socioeconomic condition, left their families and travel days and nights to attend SAFSC programs with the hope that one day the lives of their poverty stricken families and communities will change for the better. To these activists for change I say "Phambili nge Chimurenga, Phambili nge Hondo!!!". Also of paramount important is the giant partner of SAFSC, COPAC that has put its credibility at stake by championing the food sovereignty campaign. COPAC has devoted its own resources, financial and human through its dedicated staff to support SAFSC administratively.

2. Option for SAFSC

Premised on the COPAC's sober perspective document, point 2.1, bullet point one, " the campaign has not raised resources directly as the campaign but through the credibility and links of partner organisations willing to support the campaign.", it is imperative to call for the campaign to seriously consider building its own credibility and capacity to stand on its own as an entity, of course in partnership with other like-minded actors in food sovereignty and related factors of climate change and broader ecosystem. The two options, option 2.2 and 2.4 speak to the way forward that will ensure the campaign meets its primary objective of food sovereignty. Institutionalizing the campaign will translate to an organization's vision, mission, policies and strategic plans put into action through guidelines that are applicable to the daily activities of its committees and structures.

The success of SAFSC in achieving its objectives depends on its systems approach that should provide the NCC and its structures with a unified focus with regard to the direction towards which SAFSC should strive.

We definitely need a structured configuration where members of SAFSC work as a combined unite to achieved shared goals and objectives. This option requires that SAFSC provides a plan of action with

members of the NCC having a clearly defined responsibilities that overlap and interlock to free the NCC of routine detailed bureaucracy.

Linked to this approach is option 2.4. This option will ensure that decisions to be more relevant to the diverse interests of members and partners of SAFSC, responsibility and resources are distributed among different levels of the organization. The aim is to broaden participation and increase sensitivity to local conditions and needs of a clearly recognized democratic space.

Ultimately this will lead to a more creative, innovative and responsive campaign that allow and promote local experience.

Mzimasi "cde Mzie" Ndongeni is the Chairperson of the Mount Frere Food Sovereignty Forum and the Cofounder and Chairperson of the Regional Education for Alternative Development Institute (READI).

5. Thammy Dlamini (NCC member) Resolutions on meeting held in response on the way forward

Resolutions on meeting held

COPAC pulling out

On this issue it was suggested that COPAC should not just pull out like that but there must be an exit plan of about at least a year or so and there must be another system that should be introduced as a secretariat whether is the executive or management body of some sort.

Partnership

On the issue of partnership we proposed that each and every member organization or partner should contribute financially to run the administration of the campaign however donations and other forms of assistance could still be welcomed.

Formalisation

On this one we proposed that the campaign should be registered as an NGO so that it allows the umbrellaship to other organizations as it stands. We have looked at the issue of a co-operative and discover that in terms of the South African model a co-op is expected to be an income generating entity so the campaign cannot do business as expected by the registrar and be liable of taxes.

At the same time an NPO is limited to be a stand-alone organization that is not expected to be an umbrella to other organization. It is also restricted to some extend in terms of financial management.

Thammy Dlamini is an NCC member and member of Asikhutulisani Chicken Cooperative.

6. Xolisa Bangani: response from Slow Food Youth Network

Slow Food Youth Network chose the following two options for the SAFSC:

2.3 Keep it as a loose alliance; and

2.4 Decentralised and virtual driven alliance:

It is important that SAFSC continue to include youth, it is a glaring reality that young people need access to these spaces of knowledge and experience to be able to inspire our own interests and how we can affect within our own communities and networks.

This space does not exist in South Africa easily and we believe it should continue but perhaps this next phase should allow us to focus on our localities.

On behalf of Slow Food You Network, thank you for the privilege to make an input on the way forward of SAFSC.

Xolisa Bangani is an NCC member and Member of Slow Food Youth Network

How to Get Involved in the SAFSC: Guidelines for Involvement and Campaigning

The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) is an alliance of grassroots movements, organisations, NGOs, community-based organisations, small farmers and cooperatives that aims to end hunger by advancing the food sovereignty alternative in South Africa. We do this by campaigning against injustices in the food system and advancing alternatives to the corporate controlled food system that is unjust, unsafe and unsustainable.

Objectives of the SAFSC

The SAFSC and the partners in the alliance are committed to the following:

- Ending hunger in South Africa
- To an understanding that hunger is grounded in a food system that is unjust and controlled by a few corporations who profit from hunger. Therefore, to truly end hunger we need a radical restructuring of the food system where the power of a handful of corporations is dismantled, extensive land and agrarian reform takes place, and people and communities are supported in building people-centered food systems.
- Ensuring grassroots organising, whereby the key site of building the campaign is in communities suffering from hunger and that are committed to building the food sovereignty alternative
- A food system that is based on collective and democratic control by communities and people, and which is built outside of capitalism and as an alternative to it
- Demanding that the state stop supporting corporate power and the further commodification and commercialisation of seed, agricultural and food systems, and instead undertake extensive land and agrarian reform and provide proper support to small scale farmers and communities as the basis of fair, people-centred food systems
- Fully participating in campaign priorities by engaging in campaigning, building the campaign in their organisations and communities, and sharing resources
- Decentralised campaign building in which organisations build the campaign in their spheres of work, and share information, resources, capacity and finance if possible in the campaign in an open and democratic manner, in the interests of building the campaign

Ways to get involved in the SAFSC:

Organisations:

- Sign up as a SAFSC Partner
- Sign up as a SAFSC Supporter

Individuals:

- Sign up as a Friend of the SAFSC

To be a partner involves the following:

- Subscribe to the charter and principles
- Is not a corporation or receives corporate support
- Takes forward campaign activities and priorities in organisational and movement building work
- Contributes resources, in various forms, to building the campaign, which can involve:

funding own activities in the campaign, research, time, organising/mobilizing, skills and training, finances, information, materials and other forms of contribution that can be made

- Inclusion in national campaign activities, such as activist schools
- Inclusion on social media communications, such as the SAFSC Google Group
- Profile on the SAFSC website showing your organisation's logo, a brief description and its declaration of support to the SAFSC

To be a Supporter involves the following:

- Organisation signing up as supporter, that is not able to provide consistent activity in building the campaign, but supports the objectives and principles of the campaign
- May be able to participate in and provide support to specific activities and projects based on circumstances
- Organisation's logo will be shown on the website under 'Supporters of the SAFSC'

To be a Friend of the SAFSC can involve the following:

- Volunteering personal time to supporting the campaign in various ways
- This can involve openly associating with the campaign
- Donations to the campaign

Benefits to partners

Since SAFSC is not a well-resourced campaign, our main offering to partners is towards capacity building in the area Food Sovereignty and campaigning. This includes:

- Access to information, knowledge tools and organising resources on our website.
- Activist schools and learning exchange opportunities for activists
- Regular and up to date newsletters and information on our campaigning priorities
- Networking opportunities
- Invitations to assemblies and festivals, to take part in sharing grassroots experience, learning and celebrating food sovereignty and solidarity economy alternatives.

Essentially, since we are undertaking grassroots driven organising, we encourage organisations to utilise the above offerings, to strengthen, build and self-organise from below, by both drawing from resources and networks to promote the SAFSC and food sovereignty, and further by building the campaign in their own unique ways. Since the SAFSC is made up of a broad base of representation, we also offer a broad base of support, which also does not inhibit our ability to hone in and support more focussed campaigns, and by doing so, we offer partners access to potential allies in their struggles.

Drafting a Declaration:

- If you subscribe to the above principles and activities of the SAFSC and would like to sign up as a partner in the campaign, please draft a short declaration stating your support to the campaign and the activities you commit to undertaking as a campaign partner.
- The declaration can be drafted on behalf of an organisation, movement or community, thus declaring its commitment to building the SAFSC and the activities that will be undertaken in doing so.
- Please email this declaration to info@safsc.org.za, after which it will be posted to the website (www.safsc.org.za) together with your organisation's profile on the 'Partners' page.

Forums:

- Forums are the crucial mechanisms for rooting and build the campaign in local spaces.

- Forums provide a space for bringing together different actors and organisations in a community/town/city in order to determine their priorities for local campaigning, plan and take forward the national campaign priorities, conduct education and awareness raising, share information, and coordination and planning of campaigning activities.
- When a forum is formed, one of the first acts it can undertake is the drafting of a declaration, which asserts its actions and commitment to advancing the campaign (see above).

Campaign Finance:

- Organisations who want to participate in the SAFSC as partners are empowered to raise funds to finance the contributions they want to make to the SAFSC.
- Where partner organisations wish to raise funds for contributions they want to make to the campaign, this will also be subject to informing the annual Assembly (see below) where it will be noted and endorsed.
- All partner organisations must contribute resources to the SAFSC to ensure its collective nature, whether in terms of organising time, financial resources, physical resources, knowledge etc.

Annual Assembly:

The SAFSC Assembly is held once a year and is a space where the campaign participants come together to collectively:

- Assess the previous year's campaigning
- Plan for the coming year
- Clarify commitments and contributions to campaigning in the coming year

Role of the National Coordinating Committee (NCC):

The NCC is elected/renewed at each Assembly. Its role is to:

- Ensure the overall coordination of the campaign
- Coordinate the development of materials and other infrastructure required for campaigning
- Meet at least four times per year
- Be accountable to the campaign through circulation of meeting agendas beforehand and through the circulation of minutes of NCC meetings.
-

Role of the Secretariat:

The Secretariat is elected/renewed at each Assembly. This can be any partner organisation willing to play such a role. Its role is to:

- Coordinate NCC meetings and assemblies
- Coordinate campaigning priorities under the guidance of the NCC

For further queries, please contact Jane at info@safsc.org.za.