



## **South African Food Sovereignty Campaign**

### **Press release**

### **Meeting Government Ministries to get Responses on Peoples Food Sovereignty Act 11 October 2017**

In response to the hunger crisis in South Africa, the South African Food Sovereignty campaign has embarked on a participatory process to develop a People's Food Sovereignty Act.

This Act<sup>1</sup> is one way in which we as farmers, communities, hungry and landless can make our voices heard in South Africa and to our government that we want a food sovereignty pathway and how we can achieve this.

#### **Demanding a response from Government**

On Thursday, 12 October, a delegation of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign will approach national government departments demanding a response to our Act. The following departments will be approached:

- Department of Water and Sanitation at 10:00
- Department of Social Development at 10:50
- Department of Health at 11:40
- Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries at 12:20
- Department of Human Settlements at 13:00
- Department of Environmental Affairs at 13:50

**What will the Act mean for South Africa if it is taken seriously by government and advanced from below by citizens:**

#### **SEED**

The current seed system in South Africa supports large seed corporations like Monsanto, and encourages sale and distribution of their genetically modified and hybrid seed varieties. In addition, certain laws have the potential to criminalise saving and sharing seeds by small-scale farmers and farming communities that have been doing this for centuries. Agricultural pesticides linked to industrial seed systems have been linked to a widespread biodiversity loss. In a 2013 study on the influence of pesticides on our ecosystem, researchers found that 42% less species were found in contaminated rivers in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

**The People's Food Sovereignty Act calls for** the banning of GM seeds based on the precautionary principle and the right of all persons, food producers, households and communities to propagate, renew, grow and share seeds.

**If we implement this Act, this will mean** that farmers' rights and agency will be protected, their traditional knowledge, African cultural practices and skills which ensure agricultural diversity will be preserved and less

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the Act is available at <http://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Peoples-Food-Sovereignty-Act-2016.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Beketov M et al. 2013 in *Pesticides spark broad biodiversity loss* by Sharon Oosthoek 2013.  
<https://www.nature.com/news/pesticides-spark-broad-biodiversity-loss-1.13214>

pesticides will be used. Communities of different animal and plant species are vital within our ecosystem and the resulting diversity is what can ultimately ensure long-term food sovereignty.<sup>3</sup>“Farmer-managed seed systems” are able to adapt to changing environmental, economic and social challenges with diversity not only being a consequence but a necessity. Finally, diversity enables farmers to deal with unpredictable subsistence conditions and meet consumption, marketing as well as social and cultural needs.<sup>4</sup>

## LAND

The policies and programmes for land reform enacted by the the South African government after 1994 have mostly been a failure. There has been a large-scale collapse of farm infrastructure and agricultural projects which preserve the existing agrarian situation. Small-scale farmers don’t get access to land and the government provides little support.

**The People’s Food Sovereignty Act calls for** all small-scale food producers to be entitled to a minimum of 2 hectares of land and for all persons to have a right to claim and use land to advance food sovereignty. We are calling on the government to ensure fast track redistribution to small-scale food producers, deconcentrate all large farms and pass ownership to small-scale food producers.

**If we implement this Act, this will mean** that small farmers can play a bigger role in our food systems, ensuring a more sustainable, diverse and fair food production. We can have at least 400 000 small scale black farmers, making a massive dent on high unemployment

## WATER

Currently 62% of allocated water in South Africa is channelled to industrial farming. This is inefficient and ignores the fact that South Africa is a water scarce country where the majority of the people don’t have direct access to clean water. 65% of the wetland ecosystems are currently identified as threatened and 48% of these critically endangered due to human activities and climate change. Half of the country’s waste water treatment facilities are in poor conditions<sup>5</sup> and an estimated 37% of potable water is being lost through poor infrastructure. The increasing privatisation of water resources in South Africa, including through private control of dams on farms, further threatens the protection and equal distribution of our water resources.

**The People’s Food Sovereignty Act calls for** water to be recognised as a public good, and prioritised for communal land use and maintaining biodiversity. To ensure this we are calling for the democratisation of all water sources.

**If we implement this Act, this will mean** that small scale farmers and communities will be in a position to make decisions about how water in their communities is utilised. The implementation of this Act is essential to ensure that our water resources are protected and all citizens have access to clean water. We will have a sustainable and protected water commons.

## PRODUCTION

South Africa’s food production relies heavily on industrial agriculture, which harms the environment with pesticides and benefits the multinational corporations through seed and chemical sales. The food production system is therefore largely unsustainable, produces a vast amount of waste and poisons our water and environment.

**The People’s Food Sovereignty Act calls for** the rights of small scale food producers to be considered an integral part of the food sovereignty system and existing corporate food systems to have the responsibility to promote ecological sustainability. Small scale food producers must have a right to decent work with worker-

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<sup>3</sup> Biodiversity and Pesticides, Pesticide Action Network Europe 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Against the odds: Smallholder farmers and agricultural biodiversity in South Africa, ACB Field Report 2017.

<sup>5</sup> South Africa tackles water issues, Brand South Africa 2015.

owned cooperatives and the right to be educated in agroecology. To ensure that, it is also the role of the government to promote sustainable food production and prohibit highly industrial and chemical agriculture.

**If we implement this Act, this will mean** that the farmers are in control of agricultural resources, protecting indigenous knowledge and using natural processes to ensure fertility of the soil and productivity. In Malawi for example, following agroecological techniques such as intercropping both improved the soil and resulted in better diets.<sup>6</sup> Another example in Malawi is the average net income from farming maize in an agroforestry system which was 64% higher than the average income from farming maize using chemical fertilizers.<sup>7</sup> Small-scale farmers already produce 80% of food consumed in Africa on less than 15% of land.<sup>8</sup> Agroecology can feed the world and tackle social injustice.

## CONSUMPTION AND INDIGENOUS FOOD

The consumption of less nutritious foods is an increasing problem in our food system. This is largely due to corporate interests, which get people to consume their junk food by making it available, cheap and acceptable. (Child) malnutrition and obesity numbers are very high in South Africa (during 2008, 21,0% of the male population and 41,0% of the female population were obese<sup>9</sup>) and access to healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate foods are made difficult by big food companies.

**The People's Sovereignty Act calls for** the right for all persons to have access to and to consume nutritious and culturally appropriate food and the right to implement and share indigenous knowledge about food. It calls for banning of junk food advertisement. We calling for transparent labelling to inform consumer choice. We are calling on the government to increase taxes on all unhealthy foods such as sugar and junk foods.

**If we implement this Act, this will mean** that our population, especially children, will be less likely to be malnourished and food insecure. A 2015 study on the impact of taxing sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) shows that a 20% tax on SSBs would lead to an overall decrease of Type 2 Diabetes (T2DM) cases by 160 000 over 20 years in South Africa. The implementation of this Act will benefit the people and not the multinationals.

## FINANCE

In the past few years, rising food prices and their increasing instability have had significant economic and social impacts on South Africa. Small-scale farmers experience increasing challenges accessing finance for production, the national and provincial government is largely entangled in corruption resulting in poor management of financing programmes.

**The People's Sovereignty Act calls for** the rights of small-scale food producers to have access to finance for investments in sustainable farm production methods, equipment and practices. A community and small scale producer cooperative bank to be established with government support. The government is to ensure that government developmental finance is biased towards small-scale food producers and in particular in supporting worker cooperatives.

**If we implement this Act, this will mean** that a supportive economic environment is created in which farmers are enabled to succeed to feed the 14.1 million that go to bed hungry. It will mean that our local food system

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<sup>6</sup> Bezner-Kerr et al. 2016 in *Who will feed Africans? Small-scale farmers and agroecology not corporations*, ACB 2017, p.11.

<sup>7</sup> Watts and Williamson 2015 in *Who will feed Africans? Small-scale farmers and agroecology not corporations*, ACB 2017, p.11.

<sup>8</sup> HLPE 2013 in *Who will feed Africans? Small-scale farmers and agroecology not corporations*, ACB 2017, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organisation 2015. Available at [http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/zaf\\_en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/zaf_en.pdf?ua=1)

is strengthened, preventing global dominance in local markets and instead promoting fresh, indigenous and local produce which results in a more nutrient-dense intake and less diseases linked to malnutrition.<sup>10</sup>

### **DISTRIBUTION, MARKETS AND TRADE**

Market competition, distribution and trade is largely corporate centered, marginalising small-scale food producers and communities. Although South Africa is one of the 23 countries worldwide to have the Right to Food in its Constitution, half the population is food insecure and these numbers are increasing. This is despite there being sufficient food in South Africa to feed all citizens. One reason for this is because food insecurity is caused not only by availability problems, but by access to food markets and the spatial configuration of the city.<sup>11</sup>

**The People's Food Sovereignty Act calls for** the right to community-based and collectively owned food markets, regional and international trade agreements which respect the needs of small-scale food producers and the government to develop infrastructure for small-scale food producers.

**If we implement this Act, this will mean** that food systems will be localised, carbon emissions from food miles will be reduced and communities (rural and urban communities) will have access to local markets, and thus affordable and nutritious food. Our communities, villages, towns and cities will be food sovereign.

### **PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT THE FOOD SOVEREIGN SYSTEM**

The current food system is controlled by 33 000 commercialised farmers, fishing corporations and four big retail chains. Government supports this. They have globalised our food system and make massive profits for a few. The food they produce is also toxic. They manage a food system that is unjust, unsafe and unsustainable.

**The People's Food Sovereignty Act calls for** a national food sovereignty fund, a national food sovereignty council and a national democratic planning commission including local communal councils to ensure that the food system is democratically planned and managed.

**If we implement this act it will mean** that producers and consumers control the food system.

#### **Contact for more information:**

Vishwas Satgar 082 775 3420

Itumeleng Mogatusi 073 601 7078

Jane Cherry 084 236 3649

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<sup>10</sup> IAASTD 2008 in *Who will feed Africans? Small-scale farmers and agroecology not corporations*, ACB 2017, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Battersby n.d. *Urban food security and the urban food policy gap*. P6