



# SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY CAMPAIGN

## Climate Justice Charter launch and conference

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## I. EDITORIAL

### Open Letter: Call for a UN treaty to end fossil fuels

*Vishwas Satgar*

*This is an open letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, General Antonio Guterres.*

General Antonio Guterres,

The recent UN Climate Action Summit which you convened in New York has been a disappointment. Major carbon-emitting countries are not rising to the challenge. These governments do not have excuses given that for more than 20 years they have been informed by the UN International Panel on Climate Change about climate science and growing urgency. On the streets, climate justice movements have been doing the same.

The problems with UN Climate multilateralism have to be engaged with openly and honestly. In this regard, it is important to share with you a demand made to the UN by the children, youth and climate justice forces that took to the streets for #GlobalClimateStrike on 20 September in South Africa.

However, before I get there it is important for you to understand my orientation to the climate crisis. I am writing to you from a society in which youth unemployment (aged between 15-24) stands at 55%. Hope for many young people has been stolen by Nelson Mandela's party, the African National Congress (ANC). Widespread looting of state resources by many in the ANC has deprived large parts of the post-apartheid generation a place in democratic South Africa. When I was 11 years old in 1980, my family home was surrounded by apartheid police who detained my elder brother for his anti-apartheid activism. As a child, I was terrified for what would happen to my elder brother given that many were being killed in detention. I was moved by this injustice and attempted a school boycott the next day. The boycott did not last long but it sparked an uncompromising commitment to social justice and emancipation which has stayed with me for almost four decades as an activist. I continue to feel a deep sense of inter-generational solidarity, given my politicisation at a young age. Hence, I am deeply concerned about the bleak economic future faced by our youth and these concerns are exacerbated when I think about the intersection with a worsening climate crisis. In this regard, Greta Thunberg's powerful call for urgent action at your recent summit cannot be ignored.

Let me also be open about my ideological approach to the climate crisis. I have a climate justice perspective which has largely been excluded from the mainstream discourse in the UN system. It has had its strongest expression among movements struggling against extractivism, for climate jobs, food sovereignty, transition towns, solidarity economies, rights of nature, zero waste, socially owned renewable energy and generally, system change. My climate justice orientation goes back 20 years when I worked on an eco-village in a township community and contributed to the Green-House project in the inner city of Johannesburg. I

brought my ecological consciousness into my academic work and designed a postgraduate course on Empire and the Crisis of Civilisation, almost a decade ago. This has enabled me to expose my students to the various socio-ecological crises plaguing our world, including the climate crisis. In 2011, I took 120 of my students to the Conference of the Parties (COP) 17 Summit in Durban. We marched for a climate justice future and handed out pamphlets to delegates going into the conference, appealing to them to ensure they take the fate of human and non-human life seriously. I also participated in the Peoples Space at the COP20 Summit in 2014 in Lima, Peru. I spent time with some of the leading climate justice activists from the Global South grappling with systemic alternatives which were not being considered inside the UN negotiations. We knew that after the Copenhagen COP (2009) we were defeated by the fossil fuel lobbies and pro-business agendas of most governments. The high point of the first cycle of climate justice activism was the Cochabamba Peoples Summit (2010) in Peru, which the UN also disregarded.

One cannot help but wonder: if the UN listened to climate justice movements over the past two decades, where would the world be today in terms of the climate crisis?

So, ecological politics and more specifically climate crisis and justice are not new to me. On Friday, 20 September, one of our main #SAClimateStrike targets was a protest outside the corporate offices of Sasol, the 45th highest carbon emitter in the world. I was proud of the children and youth gathered at this event and about 18 other such events across South Africa. This was historic for South Africa. Besides affirming the scientific urgency of the climate crisis, these mobilisations affirmed the democracy deficit in climate policy-making, both in South Africa and at a UN level. One of the demands made to Sasol was for a just transition plan to be developed so that the country knows how Sasol is going to ensure we achieve a net-zero emissions target while ensuring workers and affected communities benefit in this process. The South African government has failed in this regard and neither has the UN Paris Agreement compelled the likes of Sasol to put forward such a plan.

Despite South Africa being committed to the Paris Climate Agreement since 2015, according to Afro-Barometer, 54% of South Africans have not heard of climate change. This includes rural residents (63%), women (58%) and citizens without formal education (65%). The failure of the Paris Climate Agreement to engender urgency in South Africa is patently clear. Climate negotiations are elite negotiations, despite the climate crisis affecting all life forms on planet Earth. This disconnect between the UN system and local civil societies is an expression of the democracy deficit in climate negotiations and is certainly going to engender further conflict with increased planetary heating.

In South Africa, climate crisis governance is performative and made routine. South Africa has a few policies on climate change, including work being done on an adaptation strategy. These policies are not mainstreamed into governance. Moreover, the failure of the South African government's climate policy commitments is also expressed through a failed response to our current drought (2014 to the present). The El Niño (intensified through climate change) induced drought in South Africa has been the worst in the history of the country. The ANC government only declared the drought a national emergency in early 2018, after our food system nearly collapsed.

According to climate scientists in South Africa, the entire water system that the country relies on, including the Katse Dam in the Lesotho highlands, can handle a five-year drought. We are now in the fifth year of drought, and the Katse Dam, one of the main feeders into the industrial heartland of South Africa, has levels sitting at 16.9%. This is a serious crisis with “day zero” a looming possibility for the densely populated province of Gauteng (over 12 million). Yet the ANC government is maintaining a carbon-based development path, including building one of the largest coal-fired power stations in the world, promoting fracking, offshore gas extraction and the importation of gas from Mozambique. South Africa continues to also have oil interests in Saudi Arabia, Angola and even in conflict-ridden South Sudan. The Paris Climate Agreement is not stopping any of this.

Actually, despite the excellent science from the International Panel on Climate Change, particularly the 1.5C report of 2018 and more recent work done on the risks, costs, benefits and consequences of addressing 1.5C, the ruling elites in South Africa are afflicted with cognitive dissonance. This is more than climate denialism but actually plain insanity. From the standpoint of the urgency raised by children across South Africa, we have an irrational and irresponsible ruling elite that has not comprehended the implications of IPCC science. Despite the diplomatic narratives, self-congratulatory discourses and sensational headlines, after the Paris Agreement was put in place, the UN process to tackle the climate crisis is not efficacious and is facing a legitimacy crisis. Least of all in relation to climate justice forces on the planet.

In my view, there are three reasons for this.

First, the Paris Climate Agreement is not legally compelling for signatory countries. The principle of voluntary co-operation has completely undermined the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. There is no regulated push for nationally determined targets to be achieved, which would have tackled immediately the major carbon-based industrial powerhouses on the planet. This is the triumph of neoliberal international relations, in which states are even understood as competitive market actors and therefore have the freedom to choose whether to act on the problem or not. Ironically, this is happening at a time when the eco-fascist Donald Trump is deepening the crisis of the liberal intellectual project, including in its neoliberal incarnation.

Second, the entire UN system is founded on the primacy of nation-states. The nation-state is a product of the emergence of capitalist modernity, secular nationalism and the imposition of Western colonialism. Sovereignty has a chequered and dubious history which I do not want to get into, but just to say, the consensus among many critical international relations scholars is that the marketised neoliberal state has a functionality shaped by the sovereignty capital and is extremely weak to deal with democratic pressures arising from deep inequality.

The third wave of democratisation in the 20th century has also stalled in this context. African states that are fossil fuel (oil and gas) producers, are some of the most illiberal on the African continent and they will certainly not empower their citizens to understand, let alone shape, the climate policies and just transitions required in their countries. These countries are trapped; “resource curse” on one side, and worsening climate crisis on the other.

Mozambique, Nigeria, Angola are all examples. The Paris Climate agreement with its present approach is not providing a way out for these countries.

Third, the carbon budget approach central to the COP process, while useful, merely expects countries to manage emissions through setting targets and implementing mitigation and adaptation measures. There is a huge gap in this logic. This has to do with holding nefarious fossil fuel corporations (gas, oil and coal) accountable. While divestment campaigns have attempted to put pressure on shareholder-based fossil fuel corporations, this has not gone far enough, and as long as there are profits to be made, as expressed in the global energy mix, in which coal still dominates, with gas also beginning to be included, fossil fuels will not disappear any time soon. In the Global South where about 77% of fossil fuel reserves are controlled by state corporations from Petrobras, China's state-owned companies, as well as the fleet of India's state corporations, divestment of shareholders will not work.

The COP negotiations have not locked in fossil fuel corporations (state and non-state) in terms of their just transition plans. Pinning down fossil fuel corporations is crucial to give momentum to decarbonisation of all other sectors in the national and global economy. This is a civilisational and intergenerational necessity. There is an urgent need for an "End Fossil Fuel Treaty" that can be added to the Paris Climate Agreement, under Article 6 of the agreement, dealing with mitigation, and particularly Article 6.9 which seeks to elaborate a framework for non-market approaches. Such a treaty has to be based on the principle of climate debt owed by fossil fuel corporations to all of us. This will go a long way to addressing the weaknesses I have identified above, the failure of the UN process to hold fossil fuel corporations accountable, for more than 20 years, and it will ensure we move with greater haste to a peaceful resolution of the climate crisis.

Of course, this might be ignored by the UN, but this is how we framed the challenge in our memorandum handed over to Sasol:

A National and Global Call to #GridlockCarbon on May 1st, 2020 – 1.5C is Not Negotiable

We will be back next year to assess progress on Sasol's just transition plan but also to confront all other carbon corporations, investors and government institutions. Today is the start of ongoing and rolling action to #GridlockCarbon.

Hence we call on South Africa and the World to stand with us on 1 May 2020, to #GridlockCarbon corporations everywhere.

On 1 May 2020, we will stand together with workers in South Africa and the world to demand:

Ambitious just transition plans from all carbon corporations and polluters so we accelerate the realisation of net-zero emissions and prevent a 1.5C overshoot;

No new investments in oil, gas and coal;

All governments to withdraw subsidies from fossil fuel industries and redirect this money to socially owned renewable energy transitions;

The UN establish an “End Fossil Fuel Treaty” which ensures fossil fuel corporations pay the world a carbon debt for the harm they have caused, poor countries are compensated for a problem they did not create, including poor countries with fossil fuel reserves, and the oil, coal and gas industries are shut down in the next 10 years or sooner.

1.5°C is not negotiable. Our common future is in jeopardy and we are ready to fight for it. People and planet before profits.

Together with the children, youth, workers and citizens in the climate justice struggle in South Africa, we look forward to your response.

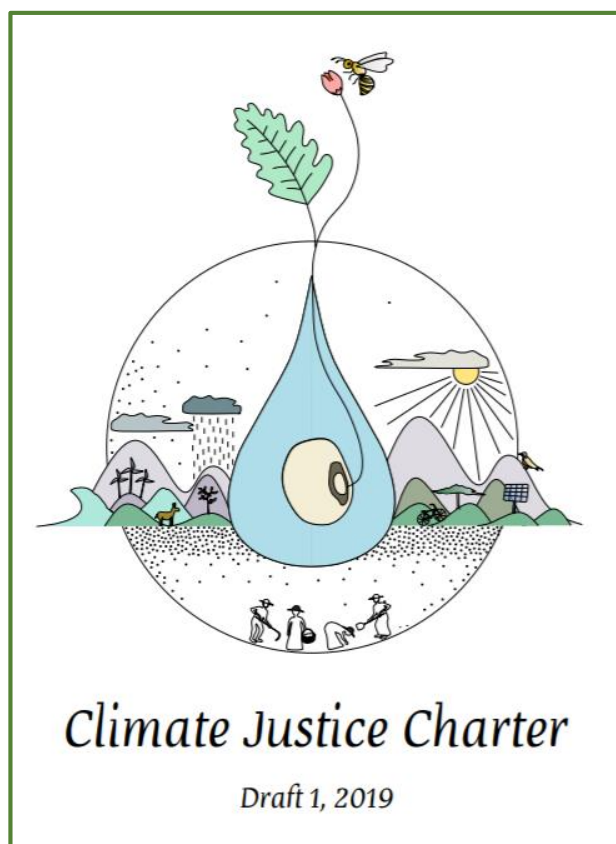
## II. NATIONAL NEWS

### 2.1 Climate Justice Charter Launched

Our people’s climate justice charter has been launched. This is a first for South Africa and the world. The charter (draft 1, 2019), which has been developed through a process of grassroots engagements including roundtable discussions with a host of constituencies was launched on 19 November at a climate conference in Johannesburg.

“We care about the climate crisis and its implications for all in South Africa as well as for all life on planet Earth. With a 1-degree Celsius increase in planetary temperature since before the industrial revolution, extreme weather shocks (droughts, floods, wild fires, tornadoes, heat waves), ecosystem collapse, sea level rise, together with major stresses on the Earth’s systems, everything is changing fast. Irreversible changes to the Earth’s systems are not locked in yet and climate science confirms that action is critical to prevent further planetary heating, catastrophic climate breakdown and ensure climate justice, for those least responsible but who will be most affected. We need to address the root causes of the problem through unifying, all-encompassing and deeply transformative action. It is time for a common vision, clear goals, guiding principles and alternatives from

below to lead the climate justice movement to secure a different future, where all human and non-human life is sustained. A Climate Justice Charter (CJC), developed in a participatory manner, is one way to do this. The Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre, together with



the South African and Food Sovereignty Campaign, and other civil society organisations have engaged in a process to develop a Climate Justice Charter for South Africa. The process has been the culmination of campaigning for food sovereignty and climate justice, during our drought”

**The charter is available for download at:**

<https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Climate-Justice-Charter-Draft1-2019.pdf>

**We encourage your input into the charter;**

As this is an ongoing process, comments and endorsements can be emailed to [copac2@icon.co.za](mailto:copac2@icon.co.za) or shared with us over social media: [www.copac.org.za](http://www.copac.org.za) or [www.safsc.org.za](http://www.safsc.org.za) and our Facebook page. In addition to submitting comments, we encourage all those who have been involved in the process to take the charter back to their communities, organisations and constituencies to hold discussions and workshops around the charter and report back to the working committee.

## 2.2 Climate Conference: A Convergence of grassroots activism

*Courtney Morgan*

On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of November, as most of the country was winding down for the last couple of weeks of the year, the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center was gearing up for one of the biggest conferences of the year, the Climate Conference. The aim of this conference was to bring together climate justice forces from around the country, forces who have been on the ground for decades, forces who have just entered the conversation as well as those who are looking to take up this fight. The conference also had the purpose of launching the first Peoples’ Climate Justice Charter for South Africa, arguably the first one in the world. Over the 2 days, the various constituencies broke up into groups and discussed pertinent issues facing the country in terms of climate change, as well as challenges for the movement.

In September 2018, COPAC hosted a Water Sovereignty conference, where they launched their water sovereignty activist guide. This workshop was also aimed at starting a process to develop a Water Sovereignty Charter for South Africa, in the context of the drought. At this meeting, the conclusion was met that there is a greater need, a need for a climate justice charter. The decision was taken at the meeting to begin this process. Throughout 2019, COPAC hosted roundtable discussions with various constituencies: Drought affected communities, media, youth, labour, faith based organisations as well as Environmental and social justice organisations to discuss the climate crisis and the need for a charter as well as what would go into such a charter. All of these constituencies as well as additional people were then invited into the climate conference space where the charter was ultimately to be launched.

Throughout the engagements, and within the conference, there was an emphasis on the science of climate change, and the importance for us, as activists to always make sure our claims are backed up by the science, which they are. Because of this, it was important that the first panel of the conference was by climate scientists: Bob Scholes, Coleen Vogel and Francois Engelbrecht. This panel, entitled *Climate Science and Challenges for South Africa and the world* spoke to the conference about the importance of centering the science, explained the unique and vulnerable position southern Africa is in and what we should be doing. The next panel was entitled *Eco-utopia and Climate Justice Futures: Launch of the Draft Climate Justice Charter*, this was the official launch of the draft charter, where the alternatives and principles were presented by Courtney Morgan and Vishwas Satgar, this was followed by an hour long discussion about the charter where participants were given the chance to critique and give comments about the charter.

On day 2, we got down to planning our actions. The first panel *Climate Justice Agency #GridlockCarbon* was presented by Vishwas Satgar. He outlined a proposal for actions throughout 2020 and the group was given an opportunity to commit themselves to that plan, respond to the plan as well as contribute to the plans. This was a great opportunity for the participants to discuss real concrete plans for action and to discuss tactics for disruption. This discussion was very much needed, it was helpful to see the various tactics that people had in mind, their stances on being arrested and a legal strategy for the disruption. The final panel of the conference was entitled *Transformative network building for a climate justice movement* presented by Ferrial Adam, speaking through the need for a strong, independent climate justice movement for South Africa. It is only through a movement that we, as the people can overcome the effects of climate change, and this panel was an opportunity for the participants who would make up this movement to discuss what such a movement would look like, how they see it constructed and how it would need to work.

This conference was a catalyst, it was the beginning of a long journey towards climate justice and the deep just transition. Throughout the conference it was made clear that the charter as well as the movement would be created and led by the people, not an NGO, not one person, but the people. It was also emphasised that we would need to act, not just symbolically, but real climate action was necessary, we cannot allow it to be business as usual. Finally, an important point coming out of the conference was also solidarity, we must stand with each other, we must stand with communities being affected now, and we must stand with our youth. All in all, the conference was a vibrant space where a multitude of voices were present, were heard and were able to articulate their interests without comprising the interests of the entire group. It was diverse, people from across sectors, age groups, professions, gender, race and class came together with one purpose, and in a divided world, where the ruling elites would wish to divide us even further, this was a great showing of unity and a glimpse into what we have the potential to build.

Proceedings of the conference are all available for viewing on Youtube. See the 'Activist resources' section for links.

### III. LOCAL CAMPAIGNING NEWS: BUILDING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES

#### 3.1. Wits Communal Kitchen

*Sophia Sideras-Haddad and Claire Tsumane*

Although the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) provides financial support to many disadvantaged students, there remains a significant amount of students who are left destitute or without food or accommodation. Most of these students are the first in their families to attend university, and many of them are found sleeping in libraries and 24hour facilities. It is simply unrealistic to expect students to excel academically whilst wondering where their next nutritious meal will come from.



The Communal Kitchen which is housed at the Sanctuary Building, aims to tackle this student issue by providing students with a daily evening meal. The kitchen forms part of the Food Sovereignty Centre at the university of Witwatersrand and daily slots from 16:30 to 18:00 are run and facilitated by members and volunteers of Amnesty International's Wits chapter. It is a space for students to prepare their own meals in groups using the ingredients and facilities at the kitchen and from the surrounding food gardens. The kitchen is equipped with a gas stove, fridge, freezer, a sink, as well as pots and pans and other cooking utensils. The kitchen is fully stocked with donated non-perishable food as well as organic vegetables from the gardens around the campus. The kitchen is up and running with regular students who use it everyday, as well as other students who use the kitchen occasionally. It has become a space beyond just cooking, but has now evolved into a space of learning where cooking demos by various chefs take place, mutual learning between students as well community building. In 2020, we hope to see the kitchen grow from strength to strength.



### 3.2. Wits community gardens update

*Felix Donkor*

Food insecurity is still a great concern for many households in South Africa. COPAC and the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign have been working with other organisations to address this challenge.

One of the approaches it has adopted is the use of food gardens as a means of enhancing access to good nutrition in the wider framework of food sovereignty. Some of these gardens can be found at the University of the Witwatersrand, where they are making a difference in the lives of students.

Currently there are about four operating gardens on campus namely the West Campus garden, International House, Sanctuary and Sunny Side gardens. These are managed in collaboration with the WCCO (Wits Community and Citizenship Outreach), Inala and Engineers without borders. These food gardens host a variety of plants and serve as a direct and effective way to enhance food availability and access amongst the student community. The community gardens include plants such as beans, spinach, morogo, tomatoes, eggplants and beetroot, and enable the university community to collaborate in fighting food insecurity.

Harvesting has been on ad hoc basis depending on which plants are ready for harvesting to be fed to the Wits food bank, allocated to students and used in the Wits Communal Kitchen.

The use of the gardens continue to evolve and are not merely a garden; but also serve as a platform for other activities that enrich students' holistic academic experience as well as community engagement such as:



- Exposing the student community to a diverse range of good and nutritious food;
- Avenues for research that can contribute to relevant policy and strategies;
- Dialogue and training between emerging farmers and students in the area of food gardens and sustainable livelihoods;
- Engagement in advocacy and networking activities

The gardens are becoming an integral part of student life and providing an invaluable opportunity for urban interactions with agroecology/permaculture principles which have become urgent in an era of climate change.



## IV. SOLIDARITY WITH STRUGGLES

### 4.1 Philippi Horticultural Area zoning battle continues in court

*Tessa Knight (Cross posted from Daily Maverick)*

The Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA) case, which PHA Food and Farming Campaign chairperson Nazeer Soudy on Tuesday called “precedent-setting” had attorneys representing the PHA Campaign, the City of Cape Town, the province and the developers debating a 2011 provincial government decision to rezone the city’s urban edge. The decision resulted in urban land encroaching on agricultural land, located in what campaigners refer to as the Philippi Horticultural Area.

The piece of land under debate comprises 472.36ha in an area that the campaign argues forms part of the PHA, while the respondents argue that it is not part of the horticultural area. Developers intend on turning the area into Oakland City, comprised of 15,000 housing units, a private school, malls and other urban developments, according to advocate Michael Janisch, who represented the Oakland City Development Company.

The PHA Campaign, supported pro bono by advocate Murray Bridgman, claim that Western Cape Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning MEC Anton Bredell, who made the 2011 decision to shift the city’s urban edge and excise the land from the PHA, did so unlawfully. The PHA Campaign on Wednesday argued that Bredell cited the wrong statutory provisions in shifting the urban edge. He acted in terms of the Land Use and Planning Ordinance, and the Physical Planning Act. Had he acted in terms of the Development Facilitation Act his decision would have been lawful, argued Bridgman.

A year after Bredell amended the urban structure plan and changed the designation of the land from horticultural use to urban development, the MEC withdrew the plan. According to Ron Paschke SC, for the City, the applicants did not contest this withdrawal. Ten days after the withdrawal, City council adopted the Cape Town Spatial Development Framework. It included the Oakland land in the urban edge, marking it for urban development.

Although the City and province argued that the 2011 decision was withdrawn and therefore is moot, Bridgman argued that “the illegal decision tainted” further decisions.

The campaign wants Bredell’s decision reviewed, but Paschke asked Judge Kate Savage to dismiss the request to review the 2011 decision.

The PHA Campaign also wants 3,000ha of horticultural land in Philippi to be protected. In 2018 1,884.8ha of the PHA, which the City considered the “core PHA” and excludes the Oakland land, was declared a Critical Natural Area and cannot be used for development. But the campaign wants the entire area protected, including Oakland land. Nazreen Bawa, representing the province, said in reference to the development the provinces was “damned if they do and damned if they don’t” allow development to occur.

According to Bredell's spokesperson, James-Brent Styan:

"The province's main goal is also to protect and look after the PHA farming area. Not a centimetre of land currently being used for farming in the PHA area is at risk of being taken over by the current developments under consideration."

However, the campaign also charged that Bredell did not have enough information to make the 2011 decision to shift the urban edge, saying he should have erred on the side of a "precautionary principle". In particular, the campaign emphasised the need to protect the Cape Flats Aquifer, which it claims has the potential to "support increased agriculture and to provide potable water for Cape Town". But both the province and the City argued that farming in the area will have a significant detrimental impact on the aquifer, and that proposed developments will include necessary measures to protect the aquifer. "This is not a development which will prevent recharging of the aquifer. This is not a development which will cause pollution to the aquifer in a way that cannot be mitigated," Paschke told the court. Paschke also argued that the campaign is anti-development, questioning why they would want to prevent the creation of thousands of jobs in an area where people struggle to find work.

"Expert reports on food security say that the problem of food security is not a shortage of food, but [of] people not being able to afford to buy the food," Paschke said on Tuesday, arguing that the development would create jobs that would provide residents in the area with much-needed funds. But the PHA Campaign claims the poorest of the poor are only able to feed their families because of food from the PHA, and the land under debate could be used to farm more food. Bawa, Paschke and Janisch all argued that the fact that the land has not been used for farming purposes and has instead been used for sand mining is a common cause. Paschke referred to the applicant's claim that the land could be farmed as a "myth". Bawa also referred to the "erroneous argument that land will be used for farming". Bridgman and Sondag counter that the land has irreplaceable agricultural worth, as indicated in a study by Indego Consulting.

Importantly, Janisch said the land will not be used for farming, saying:

"The developer seeks to create real value out of land that has only been used for sand mining. It has no desire to develop farming land."

After two days of proceedings, Judge Kate Savage has taken the case under review. Neither the City nor the province will seek costs from Sondag. However, Oakland City will.

Originally posted at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-10-17-philippi-horticultural-area-zoning-battle-continues-in-court/>

## V. INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### 5.1 Democratise the Land, Empower the People: A conversation with Zuleima Vergel

A campesino organisation calls for a new way of doing politics, inspired by Chavez

By Cira Pascual Marquina – [venezuelanalysis.com](http://venezuelanalysis.com)

15 November 2019

*Zuleima Vergel is the international relations liaison of the Bolivar and Zamora Revolutionary Current ([CRBZ](#)). In this interview, she walks us through the current situation in rural Venezuela and examines the formation of the National Productive Alliance, a CRBZ initiative that seeks to respond to the crisis while democratizing the countryside and recovering of Chavez's way of doing politics.*

**The rural oligarchy has carried out a low-intensity war against *campesinos* in Venezuela since Chavez promoted the [Land Law](#) in 2001. However, it seems that the war has become more intense in the last year or so. On July 27, [six militants](#) of the Hugo Chavez Popular Defense Brigades and the CRBZ were killed in Ticoporo, Barinas state. On October 28, another CRBZ member, Reedys Morillo, was assassinated. What are the structural causes of the landowning class' violence against *campesinos*, and why has that violence picked up more recently?**

One of the first important things that happened after Chavez's arrival to power is that he legitimated the struggle for the land, a struggle that goes way back in time. He did this through his discourse but also by promoting a very advanced Land Law. However, that produced an immediate reaction from the oligarchical class.

Their response was (and still is) tremendously violent. They went full force against *campesinos* and small producers that were committed to recovering idle land. The landowning class was responding to its own interests, since the political and legal changes were undercutting their privileges and damaging their interests.

So the landowning class's violence has been present in the *campo* for a long time, but it has intensified in recent years. They have "polished" their methods by cooperating with Colombian paramilitarism.

You mentioned the Ticoporo Massacre, but we should also remember that last year, in May, CRBZ *campesinos* were killed in La Escondida. All this must be understood as a military operation that is directed at one political organization: the Bolivar and Zamora Revolutionary Current.

There are many issues at play here, but the main one is that our organization is very active in the territories, and we are proposing an alternative. We organize the *campesino* sector, we mediate with the state, and we develop plans and proposals

together with the producers. At the same time, we continue to support occupations of idle land and work toward the eradication of latifundios [large estates historically devoted to livestock farming or monoculture]. All this goes against the interests of the landowning class.

Ticoporo is actually located in a strategic area of Barinas state, where there is a complex relationship between diverse actors. The CRBZ is committed to recovering that territory and defending the sovereignty of the nation. All this threatens the interests of the oligarchy, and that is why terror rears its head. It's a message to our organization, and it aims to break the morale of the pueblo. They won't succeed.



CRBZ militants call for an end to impunity two months after the Ticoporo massacre in Barinas state. (CRBZ)

**You mentioned Colombian paramilitarism, but as I understand it, the key issue here is class struggle. It's a struggle for the land between *campesinos* and landowners.**

Yes, that is correct. I mentioned paramilitarism, because it is a resource that landowners use to impose terror. No doubt, however, this is a class struggle between the oppressed people – the *campesinos* whose vocation is to produce – and the landowners who struggle to maintain their privileges and even widen their control.

The involvement of paramilitarism is due in part to the fact that some of the largest concentrations of land, where the struggle against *latifundio* is most intense, are in border regions.

The state and the legal system are not responding effectively to the landowning class's violence. There are even cases where the state's security forces participate in *campesino* evictions and they have actually been involved in assassinations. Why does that happen?

Only if the state addresses this situation in an integral manner will it be able to effectively combat the assassinations and all forms of violence against *campesinos*.

Democratization of the land and justice go hand in hand. In the *campo*, one can't happen without the other.

That means there must be an overall plan that is not limited to technical and administrative support, which is what the INTI [Venezuelan Land Institute] now offers to *campesinos*. The justice system must be reformed, while the Public Defender [Defensoria del Pueblo], the agrarian courts and, of course, the police forces must be incorporated into the plan.

Without a [governmental] plan to guarantee the lives and protect the work of those recovering land, the mafias will continue to use force against *campesinos*.

Instead, we have institutions that are remiss in their duties, investigations that don't go anywhere, and we experience procedural delays. How many more compañeras and compañeros will have to be killed? Aren't twenty years and hundreds of dead *campesinos* enough? The government needs to design a comprehensive policy to address these issues. It should be a priority.

To continue reading this interview, see: <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/14720>

## 5.2 The Global Assessment report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

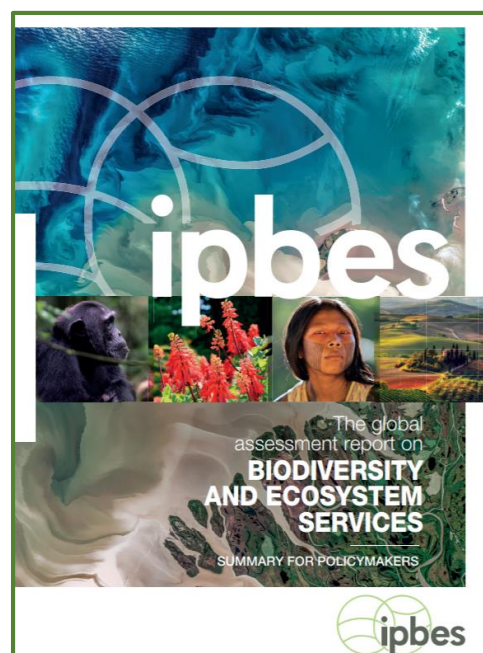
The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) launched its report on Biodiversity and ecosystem services earlier this year.

“This report represents a critical assessment, the first in almost 15 years and the first ever carried out by an intergovernmental body, of the status and trends of the natural world, social implications of these trends, their direct and indirect causes, and, importantly, the actions that can still be taken to ensure a better future for all. These complex links have been assessed using a simple, yet very inclusive framework that should resonate with a wide range of stakeholders, since it recognises diverse world views, values and knowledge systems”...

This report reaffirms the call to leave the current land-use practices and eco-cidal industrial food system.

Download the report (summary for policy makers) at this link:

[https://ipbes.net/system/tdf/inline/files/ipbes\\_global\\_assessment\\_report\\_summary\\_for\\_policymakers.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=36213](https://ipbes.net/system/tdf/inline/files/ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=36213)



### 5.3 Alliance Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) report from Addis Ababa

*Itumeleng Mogatusi*

*Report on the Regional Conference on Agroecology for Climate Resilience Held in Ethiopia. Addis Ababa on the 5-7<sup>th</sup> November 2019*

I had the privilege of attending the conference on behalf of COPAC on the stipulated days. It was attended by 24 countries in Africa representing West, East, Central, North and Sadec and 40 from the world. There were 114 participants comprising of CSO, government, farmers, researchers and academics.

The meeting was opened by a representative from the host organisation, MELCA Ethiopia, together with AFSA's Million Belay on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and the purpose was outlined which was to put Agroecology as a mainstream alternative in Agriculture to restore and adapt against Climate Change.

We were introduced to the best agroecology practices to address climate change, enhance soil fertility, increase productivity and ensure nutritious healthy food. Some examples include merging science with indigenous knowledge; Climate resilient push and pull technology practiced in Ethiopia South Wello district and the learnings thereof; and How Ethiopia has started a reforestation programme to plant 200 trees a day. Peter Gubbels introduced us to the concept of agroforestry where trees and plants grow permaculturally. Osmond Mugweri introduced us to agroecology in drylands in order to manage water shed whilst Peter Byaruhanga gave us their experience from Uganda.

From those presentations we pondered the three questions:

- Why is agroecology best for climate change adaptation?
- What questions must agroecology answer?
- What are the best agroecological practices that we should learn about and promote?

The afternoon session was reserved for highlighting the research results demonstrating both the socio economic and ecological values of agroecology related to climate resilience and soil fertility. Other topics included productivity, gender sensitivity, participatory technology development and labour. Presentations were done by Timothy Wise, Andre Leu and Dakishoni Laifo. Wise's research was based on Malawi and Zambia's experience of the farm incentive subsidy plan (FISP) which became unsustainable though it had increased maize production in its inception. It was unsustainable due to lack of champions in the programme, no discussions with partners and an environmental enhancing policy. Leu presented his research on regenerative Agriculture, emphasising that the soil is the most effective carbon capturing tool because organic material increases soil stability and the efficient use of water as it is stored on the root zone. Laifo presented a study on gender and agroecology in Malawi based on 702 households. The study concluded that soul food leads to healthy communities

which guarantee participation and attention to equity, and that is how the first day was concluded.

The second day of the conference was initiated with three questions in order to distill what was discussed in day one;

- How much evidence is needed for agroecology, and how much do we have?
- What kind of research is needed?
- Who should get involved in the research?

Policy was the most important part of day two, the objective being to explore policy spaces related to agricultural resilience to climate change, e.g. National Adaptive plans on Agriculture; does Agroecology have a role in nationally determined contribution, even in the nine climate actions proposed by the UN secretary general? What institutional mechanisms are required nationally and at a regional level to mainstream and advance agroecology in major development planning.

Some of the presenters included Sena Alouka, Regassa Feyissa and Asrat Yirgu. Alouka stressed that policy should include the right to land and agroecology, Feyissa advocated for agroecology as the reversal of bankruptcy of resources governance.

The inputs were followed by group discussions on:

- How do we reach out to these policy spaces to effect change on agroecology and climate change?
- What institutional mechanism are needed for the implementation of policies related to agroecology and climate change?

Thereafter, Peter Gubbel gave us a report on how West Africa is creating an enabling environment to support local government and rural communities to rapidly adopt agroecology through a system change, which is knowledge intensive and context specific, as most farmers generally adopt processes incrementally. He stressed that systems need to include social and cultural issues, which mobilise farmers, community leaders and organisational structures. The process should promote aspects for tangible results, foster peer learning, decentralise training, encourage dialogue and develop an environment that will promote equity value and commitment.

The last day was dedicated to developing an African Food Policy. It was stressed that this policy is required due to malnutrition in Africa, causes of which include social inequity and neglect of cultural values. Some of the key discussion points from day 3 include: 1) Food systems should be transformative and not consumer centric as diet is a social contract, 2) Technology for just transition is required, 3) Financing food systems for social protection is also required.

## VI. CLIMATE JUSTICE NEWS/ STRUGGLES

### 6.1 Its business as usual as Sasol brushes off climate activist shareholders

*Leanne Govindsamy*

Over the past few years, annual general meetings of shareholders in listed companies have become a common platform for environmental and climate activists all over the world. As long as they are able to purchase a share in that company, activists and affected people are able publicly to confront and challenge the leadership of companies whose operations cause environmental harm and contribute to global heating.

The questions to corporate leaders often require such companies to invest in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions, more sustainable operations, and in people and in the rehabilitation of the environment which it has sought to exploit and pollute. Since these are usually costly investments that reduce profits, companies are inevitably slow and reluctant to make the commitments activists demand.

Last week, a number of environmental activists attended and participated in Sasol's AGM, asking critical questions about Sasol's failure to address the impacts of their pollution on the health of affected communities, as well as the company's massive climate impacts. The whole affair had a sense of wearisome indignity: ordinary people and activists who have for years tried to get Sasol to curb its massive environmental impacts in Secunda, Sasolburg, South Durban, Mozambique and its contribution to the climate crisis globally, still trying to have their voices heard; and senior executives and board members, glib and arrogant, spending as little time responding with as little information as possible, and committing to as little action as possible.

Outside the AGM, activists from Secunda and the Vaal, who suffer the health impacts of Sasol's pollution in those areas every day, peacefully gathered outside the gates of a large office park, asking to be let inside in order to hand a memorandum directly to the chairperson of the Sasol board and so that their lawful demonstration could be directly outside the building in which the AGM was held. They were prevented from doing so because inside private property, with police and private security on hand, their peaceful gathering was apparently a little too far beyond established norms.

If one of South Africa and the region's biggest polluters were properly regulated and held to constitutional imperatives, instead of appeased and included in government's climate negotiation team, would activists and affected communities have to go to this kind of length just to be heard? Should concerned parents, whose kids are sick from air pollution, have to travel from Secunda and Sasolburg at 6am, only to be prevented from accessing private property and having their protest heard, despite an overwhelming police presence, because it is inconvenient for private property owners?

When the Sasol board chairperson decided after an hour of questions that only a further four out of 20 questions would be allowed, overruling objections from activists who had travelled a long way to raise important questions, the whole process seemed a sham — a reinforcement of unequal power relations between the company and those who sought to challenge it. It did not feel, sitting in that room, that Sasol was accountable to its shareholders, or to the people whose lives were affected by its operations. It did not feel like the dignity of those who were acting in the public interest was being respected and protected, or that people outside really had the freedom to demonstrate, and to present their petitions.

It certainly did not feel as if everyone had rights to an environment which is not harmful to their health or well-being, or that the environment would be protected for present and future generations.

Instead, there was the tedious exhaustion of having to raise questions with the second-highest greenhouse gas emitter in the country, but which has only now started to develop a “roadmap” to address its climate impacts.

This is despite a new report from climate scientists that says that the world is on track for a temperature rise of more than 3°C, which will bring mass extinctions of species, and make large parts of the planet uninhabitable. This is despite the UN Secretary-General, speaking at the 2019 Climate Change Conference in Madrid, saying that “we stand at a critical juncture in our collective efforts to address the climate emergency, and either we stop this addiction to coal or all our efforts to address the climate crisis will be undermined.”

While we recognise that corporations like Sasol are important stakeholders in our economy and that it employs good people working towards sustainable solutions, their efforts need to be scaled up massively, and urgently. If anything is clear after its AGM, it is that Sasol will not take adequate measures fast enough without strong climate regulation — and bear in mind that we know from the experience with air pollution standards that Sasol will likely spend the next decade trying to set aside regulation designed to compel it to reduce its GHG emissions.

This show of corporate power, inaction and disdain cannot be allowed and tolerated within a constitutional democracy and within the context of a global climate emergency.

What we cannot do is continue to allow corporations to leverage power and control over those who are only seeking to protect our people and our planet. The age of unmanaged extraction and pollution by corporations under the guise of maximising shareholder value is over. We need a new way for business and for those who should be governing it.

Originally posted at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2019-12-05-its-business-as-usual-as-sasol-brushes-off-climate-activist-shareholders/>

## 6.2 Drought and the Rural Socio-economy: A case study of Jekezi Livestock Producers

*By Felix Kwabena Donkor, Nosintu Mcimeli, Asive Mcimeli and Qaba Sinalo*

Making our communities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable is a core theme of the National Development Plan (Vision 2030) and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG 11. However, climate induced extreme events are some of the key challenges to the thriving of vulnerable communities mostly found in the rural areas of the global south. One of such extreme events is the phenomenon of droughts. Generally, drought refers to a period of prolonged water shortage and has become a recurrent feature of the climate [globally](#). Over the last century, southern Africa has been suffering from dramatic changes in climate conditions resulting in severe droughts. This has translated into particularly detrimental impacts on rural



*Gardens in the community have all been abandoned due to the severe drought conditions. This comes with consequences on transfer of indigenous knowledge practices to the younger generation.*



*Sheep die from thirst and exhaustion on the dry river bed.*

subsistence farmers; the health of rural communities and the sustainable management of environmental [resources](#). These challenges were made vivid during a visit to the Jekezi community in Namakwa (Eastern Cape).

Jekezi is one of the 12 villages that make up the Xilinx community in the Namakwa District Municipality. The severe drought is such that the community folk are no longer growing crops and vegetables to help feed their households (See figure above). This has led to a situation where grannies are forced to rely on the child grant (of their grandchildren) to supplement the entire households' nutritional needs. However, several studies have pointed to the importance of child grant as critical for the children's health and wellbeing. Moreover, it is the most important form of assistance for children in poor families with implications for the improved human resources

development of the nation. It comes with positive impacts on addressing the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the country (HSRC, 2018). Helping the community with a pilot community garden will be essential to alleviating the grave household food insecurity in the village.

In addition, the communal grazing field is virtually dry such that livestock struggle to find grass to graze on. Furthermore, the local river is totally dry leading to a situation where livestock die of thirst and exhaustion. See plates below showing exhibits from field work:

Comrades Nosintu, Asive and Qaba who have been vocal activists defending the interest of rural communities in the Eastern Cape, explained that because subsistence farmers in the community cannot afford the price of a bale of grass, they buy little of amounts of Lucerne from commercial farmers which are of low quality for their livestock. This further reduces the value of their livestock. Developing a communal grazing field where vital plants like Lucerne which easily grows in that area will be grown by the community will help feed their livestock.



*Cow supplied with scanty Lucerne grass bought from commercial farmers due to lack of funds*

A tank of water costs about R1 500 which is exorbitant for the rural households.

The drought has had grave sequence on the entire agricultural value chain and household economy. For example, livestock producers are not able to get quality wool anymore as they indicate that the wool from their sheep are exceptionally dirty due to lack of rain and the poor nutrition manifests in absence of grease in the wool which leads to them getting poor sales for their wool. The exceptionally dirty nature of the wool is also a matter of health concern. This because the sorters (mostly women) now need to wear masks to avoid chest infections and other health implications due to exposure to particulate matter. At the time of the visit some had already been diagnosed with chest complications



*Wool sorters facing health risks due to poor quality wool from dust*



*Poor quality of wool is the new norm.*

due to exposure to particulate matter emanating from the dirt. This compromises their health conditions and further drains the little wages they earn. The World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that such exposure affects lung development in children, including reversible deficits in lung function as well as chronically reduced lung growth rate and a deficit in long-term lung [function](#).

The farmers expressed their wish for government and donors to assist them with mechanical sorters and packaging equipment to enhance their production. They lamented the lack of response from the local government in supplying them with water and extension services to enhance their livestock production. They indicated that the dilapidated communal borehole, if repaired, can go a long way to alleviate the poor access to water in the community.

### 6.3 Media statement: COP25 – Africa is thrown by the wayside

#### *Inyanda National Land Movement*

10 December 2019

As the world Climate Talks – COP25 – enters its final week in Madrid, the Inyanda National Land Movement observes that Africa once again looks set to be betrayed and sold down the river by rich developed nations as they fail to own up to the climate crisis of their making.

In 2019, parts of east and southern Africa were devastated by floods, landslides, drought and cyclones resulting in over a thousand deaths, hundreds of thousands displaced and several million people facing emergency levels of food insecurity.

And in South Africa, a serious multi-year drought in parts of the Northern and Eastern Cape provinces has seen a number of towns face total water supply failure; the financial ruin of many livestock farmers and catastrophic job losses for farmworkers, the poorest of the poor in South Africa's job market.

The climate crisis is real and present, and it is making worse the inequalities that exist around the world, and in our country specifically. While rich landed farmers can cushion the effects of their financial losses, impoverished farmer workers and small-scale farmers are driven into further depths of desperation and hunger.

Similarly, rich developed nations have been at the forefront of capitalist growth and consumption, while African countries were colonised, plundered and sabotaged by the West.

Inyanda Land Movement says no more!

Western Industrialised nations **MUST NOT** continue to feed their overconsumption through exploitation of indigenous people's lands, labour and natural resources. **Western nations must recognise their colonial and environmental atrocities and pay their ecological debt to the world?**

The climate crisis is the culmination of centuries of resource plunder and environmental destruction of the Earth by wealthy nations and corporations. Many people on the ground, particularly those who contributed the least or not at all to the causes of this crisis, are experiencing the worst of its impacts. They lose access to their lands, food and water and other sources of livelihood and their ability to manage them. Intensified neo-liberal globalization has been driving this crisis.

**We demand that COP-25 provides a framework for concrete financing solutions that are urgently needed to repair the devastation already being caused by climate change and to prepare for an uncertain future.**

Africa is responsible for only 4% of global carbon emissions but is suffering the worst effects of climate change. The fact is that Africa is already paying to deal with an issue that Africa did not create historically. Africans' livelihoods mostly depend on agricultural activities, which make them highly vulnerable to climate change. African countries need financial and material help to cope with climate change.

COP-25 needs to be absolutely clear on the issue of liability and compensation. **Polluters must pay!!**

We reject market-based and market-driven solutions of carbon trading and carbon taxes as a way to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. This allows capitalist markets to determine the quantity of emission reductions and prices, allowing the polluters to continue in "business as usual".

Inyanda further believes that the Climate Crisis is an urgent wake-up call for African societies to explore radical changes to our economies, financial systems and systems of agriculture and food production. **Against the backdrop of the relentless neo-liberal plunder of our resources, we insist on every community's right to say:**

- **NO to Mining,**
- **NO to the exploitation of oceans for oil, gas and minerals,**
- **NO to industrial aquaculture,**
- **NO to the imposition of genetically modified seeds and harmful agricultural inputs and,**

- **NO to land grabs for contract farming by agri-businesses and their extensive use of pesticides!**

For Inyanda, the only solution and way forward out of the Climate Crisis is to intensify the struggle for the liberation and empowerment of oppressed peoples and to infuse into this struggle our respect for nature and for all living things, so that we may consolidate power in achieving the ultimate freedom: the ability to chart a path beyond capitalism.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND COMMENT PLEASE CONTACT:**

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**Nomvuzo Nopote (Eastern Cape Province) – Tel: 078 017 8749 / 083 505 7819**

## **VII. SAFSC IN THE MEDIA**

### List of SAFSC's Latest Media Engagements

**15 September 2019** The climate emergency: Disruption and rebellion are now a matter of life and death. By Vishwas Satgar. Daily Maverick 15 September 2019. Available at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-09-15-the-climate-emergency-disruption-and-rebellion-are-now-a-matter-of-life-and-death/>.

**20 September 2019** The country's heating up and not in a good way. Global Warming Strike. Vishwas Satgar was interviewed on ENCA on 20 September after the global climate strikes. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MqlrFBTuxk>.

**23 September 2019** Climate Change, Vishwas Satgar interviewed on SABC, Morning Live, 23 September 2019. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=306F-li5NIM&feature=youtu.be>.

**25 September 2019** Open letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, General Antonio Guterres, by Vishwas Satgar. Daily Maverick <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-09-25-open-letter-call-for-a-un-treaty-to-end-fossil-fuels/>.

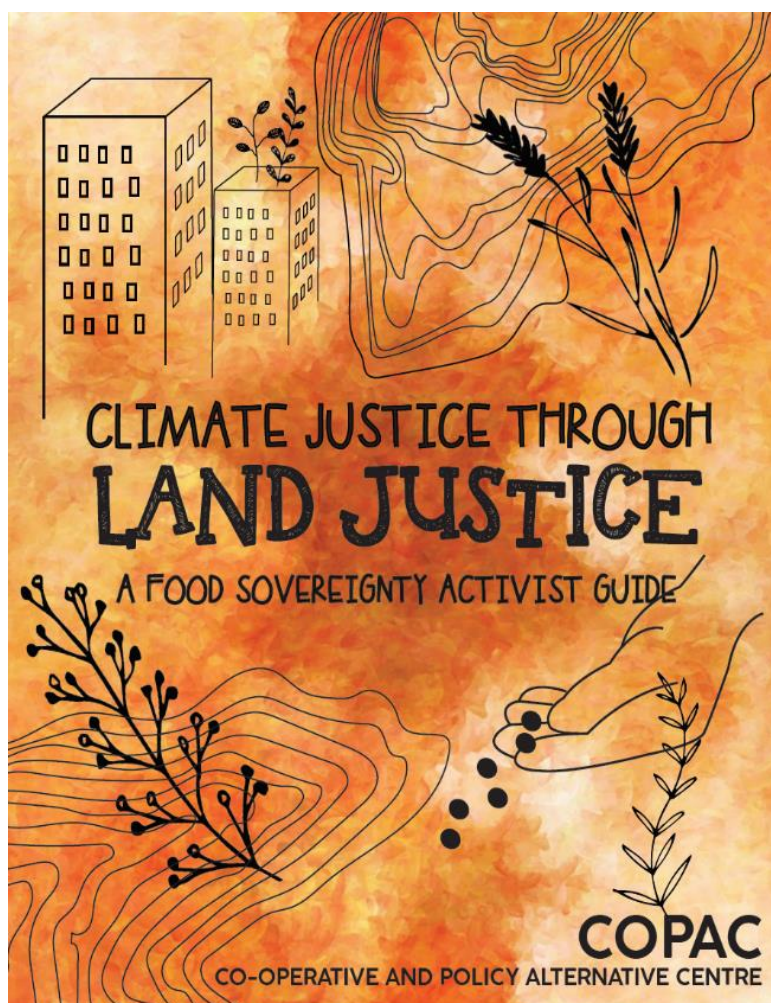
**13 November 2019** Climate and Food Inequality: The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign response, by Vishwas Satgar and Jane Cherry. Daily Maverick, 13 November 2019. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-11-13-climate-and-food-inequality-the-south-african-food-sovereignty-campaign-response/amp/>.

**25 November 2019** Climate Justice Charter draft Launched. Vishwas Satgar is interviewed on ENCA <https://youtu.be/UFurY1HPPuA>.

## VIII. ACTIVIST RESOURCES

### 8.1 Climate Justice through Land Justice: A Food Sovereignty Activist Guide

In case you missed it... COPAC recently launched its land Justice activist guide. This guide is a popular education tool for communities and grassroots activists. It serves to:



- empower people to understand the land crisis and the power relations involved in controlling and destroying land;
- equip people with the basic knowledge and understanding of land as a source of life;
- empower communities to organise and respond to policies on land;
- provide user friendly and practical techniques to use land in an eco-centric way to sustain it as the basis of eco-systems;
- protect, value and celebrate local and indigenous knowledge on land use;
- empower communities to strive towards systemic change through food, seed, and water sovereignty, land justice and a deep just

transition.

Download the guide at this link: [https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Land-Justice-Guide-2019\\_Final-compressed.pdf](https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Land-Justice-Guide-2019_Final-compressed.pdf)

## 8.1 Climate Conference recordings

On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of November, COPAC hosted around 80 grassroots community activists, academics and youth from across South Africa. The purpose of this conference was to spotlight the science around climate change, propose an agenda of action for 2020, discuss how to build a climate justice movement in South Africa and finally to launch the draft of the climate justice charter. Recordings of the opening, panel inputs and closure are linked below:

Opening and welcome: <https://youtu.be/3NweLMIQTGw>

Climate science and challenges for South Africa and the world: <https://youtu.be/SZAQs3ByQgQ>

Eco-utopia and Climate Justice Futures: launch of the draft climate justice charter: <https://youtu.be/6cOROzMILHc>

Climate Justice Agency- #GridlockCarbon: <https://youtu.be/bZN1pww9FrA>

Transformative network building for a climate justice movement: <https://youtu.be/vz-IP84KCsc>

Closure: <https://youtu.be/Kw-oH8hKbzE>

### More information:

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