

Food First NEWS & VIEWS

INSTITUTE FOR FOOD AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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Urban Farmer Field School project. Photo by Leonor Hurtado

2013 Annual Report: 38 Years of Research, Education & Action to End Hunger

Dear Friends,

Farmers teaching farmers is as ancient as agriculture itself. For thousands of years, seed exchanges from farmer to farmer were accompanied by essential information about soils, climate, plants and food. Until relatively recently, agriculture was rooted in a shared culture of innovation and adaptation that produced food systems of extraordinary social and environmental resilience. In

large part, we co-evolved with agriculture and in the process produced a vast reservoir of knowledge-based genetic resources. This is the essence of agroecology.

The rapid industrialization of agriculture over the last half-century privatized seeds and destroyed much of the world's agroecological knowledge networks. More recently, by patenting what were once common genetic resources, giant chemical companies like Monsanto, DuPont and Syngenta have gained monopoly control over seeds, allowing them to impose forms of production that require the use of their chemical products. This is the essence of the new "Green Revolution."

The global food crisis, climate change and the widespread production failures of GMOs have brought agroecology—and farmer-to-farmer networks—back to the forefront.

As the nation's first food think tank, Food First denounced the myth of scarcity and the environmental destruction of the Green Revolution, and warned of the dangers of corporate control over our food nearly forty years ago. We called for *ending the injustices that cause hunger*. In the face of the growing food, fuel and climate crises, Food First has intensified its work with researchers, farmers, community groups, policy makers and social movements to build a just and sustainable food system. We are democratizing our food system, from the ground up.

This year we continued our work with the "We Are the Solution" campaign launched by women farmer organizations in West Africa. Food First partners are spreading "farmer-managed natural resource" techniques for dryland farming with the help of Food First's farmer-to-farmer agroecological training materials. In Mexico, the *Campesino a Campesino* Movement protected 60 more hectares of pollinator habitat by spreading agroecological farming methods in the states of Puebla, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Tlaxcala. Food First fellow Manuel (Manolo) Moran expanded the movement's Community Supported Agriculture networks to five more campesino producers and dozens of new consumer families.

In a novel application of the peasant-based peer learning networks from rural Asia, our *Urban Farmer Field School* project—coordinated by Katie Bradley, a phd student at UC Davis whose position is funded by

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FELLOWS

Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Jun Borrás, Zoe Brent, Jonathan Fox, Leonor Hurtado, Manuel Moran, Raj Patel, Anders Riel Muller, Annie Shattuck and William Wroblewski

CONTRIBUTORS

Corey Blant, Katie Bradley, Christina Bronsing, Giorgio Cingolani, Ashley Pinkerton, Antonio Roman-Alcala, Leah Scrivener and Charles Wolinsky

INTERNS

Chelsea Enwall, Hayley Hedges, Lauren Heumann, Sofia Salazar-Rubio and Ian Winbrock

VOLUNTEER TRANSLATORS

Anna-Sarah Eyrich, Allen García, Felipe Gavioli, Juliana Glufke, Mónica Goya, Robert Hilliard, Geneviève Lavoie-Mathieu, Oliver Mazeas, Alexandra Praun, Juliana Ricarte, María de los Angeles Rivera, Céline Rosso, Camille Vignerot, Janaina Stronzake

The Institute for Food and Development Policy - known as Food First - is a member-supported, nonprofit "peoples' think tank" and education-for-action center. Our work highlights the root causes and value-based solutions to hunger and poverty around the world, with a commitment to fighting racism and establishing food as a fundamental human right.

C-prep—is building agroecological knowledge in the San Francisco Bay Area. Workshops on crop planning, greenhouse management, fruit tree pruning and “fertigation” are helping to address the lack of farmer extension services for urban farmers in the East Bay’s underserved communities. By working closely with these path-breaking grassroots efforts, Food First is able to draw out important lessons for agroecology, food sovereignty and food justice.

We’re a “think-and-do” tank. Our direct engagement with the grassroots gives us a practical perspective on food system research that both helps to inform the larger food movement and amplifies the voices of the communities and organizations on the front lines of food system transformation. Along with dozens of worker-researchers, we designed a study carried out by the Food Chain Workers Alliance that measures the food security of restaurant workers. Their results are due to be published soon—and you may be surprised at what we found.

In June of 2013, we joined an invited group of civil society organizations to *Vía Campesina’s* 20th anniversary conference in Jakarta, Indonesia in which the 2.5 million strong peasant federation declared that building alliances and agroecology (two pillars of our work) are central to food sovereignty. Following up on the Land Grabs Conference we co-organized at Cornell University in 2012, last September, along with the Transnational Institute (TNI), we co-organized the first *International Conference on Food Sovereignty* at Yale University in which social movements and leading academics debated the future of food sovereignty in agrarian studies—and vice versa. Food First fellows Jun Borrás and Annie Shattuck worked countless hours pulling off this remarkable event. At the conference, Food First fellow Zoe Brent presented research on farmland preservation in California; Annie Shattuck chaired a panel on culture, tradition and food

sovereignty; fellow Raj Patel spoke in a plenary session; Food First research coordinator Tanya Kerssen presented research on the quinoa boom in Bolivia; and Eric Holt-Giménez spoke in the closing plenary. With such a large presence of Food First scholars, the event underscored Food First’s important role in both social movements and academic inquiry. View videos from the conference at: www.foodfirst.org/publication/food-sovereignty-a-critical-dialogue/

In 2013, Food First researchers Eric Holt-Giménez and Tanya Kerssen gave numerous lectures, classes and taught courses for undergraduates, Masters and Doctoral candidates on international development, food systems, agroecology and social movements. Tanya Kerssen’s online course in “Community-Based Food Systems” through Village Earth and accredited by Colorado State University was also adopted by Duke University in September 2013. Our educational work took us to universities in the US, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands and Colombia. Many of these presentations were filmed by Food First fellow Leonor Hurtado (along with over twenty short food justice and community-based video documentaries) and can be found on our Vimeo and YouTube sites. Food First books, briefs and reports have been taken up as part of the curriculum in universities across the US and internationally. The Food First translation team coordinated by Leonor diligently translated many of these into Spanish, Portuguese and French.

Food First integrates academic and activist worlds in much of our work, particularly our *Land and Sovereignty in the Americas* collective coordinated by fellow Zoe Brent. In 2013, the collective released four policy briefs exploring community resistance to land grabs, including important case studies on Guatemala, Bolivia and Argentina. In early 2013, Food First published the first book in the Land & Sovereignty Series *Grabbing Power: The New Struggles for Land, Food and Democracy in Northern*

Honduras by Tanya Kerssen, which has already sold over 800 copies. UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Olivier De Schutter called it “required reading for those who wish to understand land grabbing from the point of view of the victims.” We’re currently developing the next book in the series—stay tuned!

In our renowned quarterly Backgrounder series, we continued to address timely issues for understanding our increasingly complex global food system. In 2013, we published the following Backgrounders:

- “Land Grabs Vs. Land Sovereignty” by Eric Holt-Giménez (Winter 2012/13)
- “Farm Bill Fiasco: What next for the food movement?” by Christopher D. Cook (Spring 2013)
- “The Trans-Pacific Partnership: A threat to democracy and food sovereignty” by Anders Riel Muller, Ayumi Kinezuka and Tanya Kerssen (Summer 2013); and
- “Food Sovereignty in Practice in the Basque Country” by EHNE-Bizkaia (Fall 2013)

Our e-newsletters—People Putting Food First, Food Workers Food Justice, and Movements (a newsletter of Food Sovereignty Tours)—received a much-needed facelift in 2013. With a new format and compelling analysis of current events by staff and interns, the newsletters have increased their subscribers by 35, 58 and 40 percent respectively. To subscribe, visit: www.foodfirst.org/get-involved/stay-informed/

Our *Food Sovereignty Tours* run by Program Coordinator Katie Brimm added South Korea to its destinations in collaboration with the Korean Women Peasant’s Association. In 2013, the program took a total of 56 participants to four countries. We also hosted several report back events and educational calls to bring our international experiences home to our communities. Now in its fourth year,

the program continues to advance Food First’s educational mission by bringing people to the front lines of our global food movement. Here’s what South Korea tour participant Sonda Dawes had to say:

The tour was absolutely wonderful. It was a great treat to meet the Korean women peasants and hear about the amazing work they are engaged in. Travel is a greater reminder of how much we share with others no matter how different our cultures are.

With a deep commitment to making these delegations accessible to young activists, low-income communities and farmers, the Food Sovereignty Tours team has been hard at work building up its scholarship fund. In 2013, Food First launched its first Food Sovereignty Tours Scholarship Fundraising Campaign, raising enough funds to award 2 to 5 scholarships for every trip in 2013 and 2014. Our first ever Food Sovereignty Tours fellow Sunyoung Yang—with a full scholarship and travel expenses funded by the Small Planet Fund—participated in our first South Korea delegation, strengthening her work for climate justice and her ties with the South Korean movements for peace and reunification.

This year Food Sovereignty Tours also hosted the Basque Farmers Union for a Food Justice Tour of the Bay Area co-organized by Katie Brimm and Zoe Brent, which built tremendous goodwill and solidarity between Food First and this important social movement, and also forged alliances between the Basques and food justice movements in the Bay Area. The tour culminated with Food Sovereignty Tours’ first fundraising dinner hosted by Sky Horse Ranch in Valley Ford, CA, which succeeded in raising support for our scholarship fund and awareness about the global food sovereignty movement.

While here, the Basques also kicked

off Food First’s third-Wednesday discussion series at the newly renovated La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, CA. These monthly events have allowed Food First to engage with our Bay Area community around important and provocative topics such as land grabbing, labor and immigration, and food justice in underserved neighborhoods. See our website for future events, and join us! www.foodfirst.org/get-involved/events/

We continued to participate in the US Food Sovereignty Alliance. This year we brought in journalist and author Christopher Cook to help launch a media campaign for the USFSA’s 5th annual Food Sovereignty Prize (won by the Group of 4 Dessalines Brigade of Haiti). In her ongoing solidarity work, Tanya Kerssen co-led a human rights accompaniment and election observation delegation to Honduras in November 2013 including 55 activists, academics, lawyers and a sitting judge.

Among all these activities, we also launched a new website. Tanya Kerssen led the effort and helped us all rise to the challenge of organizing all of Food First’s publications, videos, events and activities into an easily accessible and engaging format! Please visit the new site (www.foodfirst.org) and let us know that you think—including how we can continue improving our online presence and accessibility.

Food First is growing, responding to rapidly-changing events and building alliances around the world, building a movement to end the injustices that cause hunger. Internally, we spent a year contacting and vetting new Board members. As a result, this year we welcomed Devon Peña, Michael Dorsey, Brahm Ahmadi, Gaye Adams Massey and Pascal Bokar Thiam to the Food First Board. (See their bios here: www.foodfirst.org/capacity/board-members/)

Our fundraising and administrative staff Marilyn Borchardt, Martha Katigbak and Rowena Garcia make

all of this happen, bringing in funding, doing outreach, selling our books and materials (including a brand new Food First tote bag, beautifully designed by fellow Leonor Hurtado). Marilyn Borchardt, who has been with Food First for 28 years, began preparing for her retirement in summer 2014. We are deeply grateful for Marilyn's immeasurable contributions and commitment to Food First over the years—from maintaining relationships with a strong base of supporters, to gardening, cooking, event planning and mentoring interns. Marilyn's continued involvement in the hiring process and beyond will ensure a smooth transition.

The core funding of our work—that core that allows us to take a strong, independent course—comes from, you, our members. Together, we produce independent, hard-hitting analyses on key issues regarding the causes of and solutions to hunger; we coordinate with community organizations

and national/international coalitions; collaborate with progressive researchers and institutes; and work on the ground with the communities and organizations who are standing up for a new, healthy, equitable food system. Together we are ending the injustices that cause hunger and poverty.

We are gearing up for another strong year, looking forward to new work in land justice and ending food racism. We're also putting out the updated, 2nd edition of *Food Rebellions: Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*. Come with us! It's time to bring out the justice and democracy in our food system.



Eric Holt-Giménez, Executive Director

Visit Food First at our new and improved website and let us know what you think!
www.foodfirst.org

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FOOD *Sovereignty* TOURS

ITALY: Small Farmers, Organic Agriculture & Terra Madre, Oct. 18-26, 2014



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SOUTH KOREA: Land, Food and Democracy, May 8-17, 2015



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398 60TH STREET • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94618 USA • TEL: (510) 654-4400 • EMAIL FOODFIRST@FOODFIRST.ORG

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