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Editorial

Securing the future of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC)

Vishwas Satgar



Introduction

After two years of active campaigning the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) has set in motion local forum building in local sites, a social media platform, built an active alliance of 50 organisations, built a national profile around key platforms (such as the hunger tribunal, drought speak out, bread march and national Food Sovereignty Festivals) and is advancing transformative activism through building key elements of food sovereignty from below. It is translating food sovereignty into South African conditions, including marrying it to solidarity economy building and ultimately laying the basis for an anti-systemic logic.

At this year's Assembly, on the 13th November, it made three important decisions:

- To have a national campaign focus made up of contributions from each alliance partner. In other words, every partner wherever they are located will use what they have to commit and advance food sovereignty campaigning. The contribution of each partner makes up the national campaign platform. All organisations will report on their contributions as the campaign unfolds in 2017. This is different from merely having a few organisations give

momentum through national campaigning;

- To advance unity and strengthen the SAFSC it was agreed to formalise it as a member based cooperative. This means the SAFSC alliance partners will have to formalise membership, which will come with rights and responsibilities. It also means the SAFSC can formalise leadership, resource mobilisation and strengthen grassroots organising. This is different from having an informal and loose alliance. The alliance will continue with partners but will require formal processes to cement relationships, guided by a jointly agreed constitution, organising approach and fundraising strategy. Everything is up for input, debate and collective decision-making in the course of 2017.
- The SAFSC chose to compose its NCC with greater participation from grassroots forums and small scale farmers. This means 8 out of the 16 positions are filled by the latter, while 4 positions go to NGOS and 4 to community organisations. In short, the SAFSC is ensuring the centre of gravity in its leadership is the grassroots transformative impulse. It is building organically and uniting as it moves forward. This is also different from sectoral representation when the SAFSC started out: agrarian, food justice, environmental justice, community movements and solidarity economy. There is a common identity crystallising around a common campaigning emphasis, with the grassroots being the most important.



Important Achievements of 2016

- 2016 was an exciting year of activism with the 3 days of activism in mid-May starting in Emalahleni with a Speak Out against coal pollution, a Drought Speak Out at Constitutional Hill the following day and a national bread march and on day three a march to a coal mining magnates compound (the Guptas mansion in Saxonwold) with a coffin full of coal. We succeeded in connecting the dots between coal extraction, climate crisis and food crisis. The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign is emerging in its own right as a serious climate justice social force. Over the 3 days of activism it worked with and built links with 350.org, Earthlife, MACUA, R2K and various communities.
- Central to the bread march was the handing over of a memorandum, by Inala Forum, to Wits University to ensure zero carbon emissions and zero hunger. The response from the University has been to provide a space for a Food Sovereignty Centre. The centre will provide a space for: eco-centric demonstration, dignity for hungry students and a food sovereignty support space. This will be a pilot space for other universities and will give momentum to transforming the University as part of the just transition. COPAC and Inala are key to taking this forward.
- Several local forums have taken root driven from below in Mount Frere, at Wits, in Khayalitsha amongst Slow Food activists, in Lutzville, in Nelson Mandela Bay and more. Several students at other campuses are also keen to do the same. This grassroots impulse is the lifeblood of the SAFSC. It defines the SAFSC.
- This year several tools and solidarity actions were taken forward at the grassroots supported by COPAC: a seed saving activist guide, a national activist school, a peoples food sovereignty law, learning exchanges between small scale farmers, forum building, worker cooperative building, an animation on the Hidden Story Behind Hunger and diffusing agro-ecology. Others like ACB have provided tools, like posters, to campaign against GMOs, and Nkhuzi has assisted with developing our critique on agri-village hubs. The base of the SAFSC is deepening around concrete transformative interventions. This is a new activism in the South African context. It channels resistance into building the future now; it marries systemic alternatives such as food sovereignty with solidarity economy building.
- The second annual Food Sovereignty Festival was hosted in November under the banner: Celebrating Food Sovereignty in Africa. A peoples parliament was hosted on the first day launching the Peoples Food Sovereignty Act. Seven other African countries were in attendance including the African Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA). Out of the strategising with other African allies we will be considering affiliating the SAFSC to AFSA, deepening social media links, continuing with learning exchanges and actively championing indigenous knowledge systems and the science of agro-ecology.
- COPAC has reluctantly volunteered to remain the secretariat to the SAFSC for another year. This was a role it was willing to surrender to any other organisation in the



campaign. There are no resources for this role. COPAC will use its own food sovereignty commitments to assist the SAFSC. At the same time, COPAC will actively play a role in ensuring it is institutionalised as a formal campaign. This is a decision of the November 2017 Assembly of the SAFSC. Key elements will be put in place in 2017 with COPAC's assistance: common campaigning from below, a constitution, an organising strategy and a resource mobilisation strategy.

Challenges for the Way Forward

The SAFSC is transitioning from a phase of loose campaigning to formalization. Many post-apartheid movements have not managed this transition appropriately and have ended up collapsing. Many factors have fed into this: distrust, corruption, factionalism, racial divisions, the lack of strategic politics etc. To avoid these mistakes the SAFSC has to confront and resolve on the following challenges. These challenges derive from its successes achieved thus far:

First, the grassroots impulse in the SAFSC must not be substituted by a top down organising approach or structure. Instead, the grassroots transformative impulse must be provided a central place in the formal and self-organising strategy of the SAFSC. The MST, in Brazil, calls it 'organicity'. More forums, learning exchanges, lesson sharing through social media, activist schools, conversations at festivals, collective campaigning, reporting on activity etc. must be brought into the new SAFSC and given a central place in its formalized processes. The independence and self-initiative of formal alliance partners must be respected as they contribute to a common cause. The SAFSC does not own food sovereignty but rather is a platform to share

contributions to advance it. We are a collective intellectual searching for a common way forward by learning from each other. The answers lie in our collective journey and the contribution each makes to that process.

Second, the SAFSC embodies a strategic and political unity unique in the current cycle of post-apartheid resistance. It has not been swallowed so far by a racialised authoritarian populism but maintains a transformative strategic orientation. It embodies a genuine radical non-racialism, uniting black and white, defined by the task of building a people controlled food system from below. It brings together working class and middle class forces, it brings together agrarian forces and urban forces, individuals and collectives, professional intellectuals and organic intellectuals, and all those confronting the contradictions of a broken food system, in particular the hungry and small scale food producers. It is an anti-systemic force building a transformative alternative to the corporate controlled food system. Its unity has been nurtured and is necessary for it to go forward. Everyone journeying within the SAFSC must have a home in it as a formal campaign.

Third, the process of formalisation of the SAFSC including the debates about the constitution, organising strategy and resource mobilisation, must be owned by all. These outcomes must emerge from open-minded debate, reflection, a willingness to respect and listen to others and must mature the best ideas for the future of the SAFSC. Nobody has the monopoly on the way forward. The debates started before the 2016 Assembly, at the Assembly and in 2017 have to continue being constructive, inclusive, comradely and empowering. If these debates are not conducted in this spirit the SAFSC in its transition will falter. Most importantly, all these conversations must be grounded in the reality of



campaigning. All campaign commitments made at the 2016 Assembly must be acted on to keep the lifeblood coursing through the SAFSC and its debates about its future.

Fourth, the leadership issue in the SAFSC must always be understood in collective terms. The SAFSC has not been built around a single organisation or a big man. It is led from below by activists and organisations advancing food sovereignty in their different spaces. Their leadership shapes conversations on the SAFSC social media platforms, the Assemblies, activist schools and food sovereignty festivals. Leadership in the national coordinating committee has merely served a coordination function to ensure these impulses are strengthened. It has not taken away from efforts to innovate, pioneer, experiment and open up new pathways from below. Those coordinating learn from this and are guided by this. Leadership through a collective of coordinators is important, with clearly defined roles, but this is leadership with the grassroots not for the grassroots. The SAFSC should never become a space in which forces have to look up for leadership. There are no saviours sitting at the top. The approach to leadership described here has existed informally, in a rather loose way, and has to be taken forward formally. It is this kind of leadership that has brought us to this next exciting phase.

Finally, the SAFSC in its essence is about a politics to sustain life. It is a cutting edge campaign to eradicate hunger by transforming the food system. This is about scale. However, it is also about confronting the biggest threat to water and food systems: corporate induced climate change. The SAFSC has to think about its future in the light of the climate crisis. It is a campaign to withstand the disastrous impacts of climate change that have hit us and which are going to get worse. The next El Nino drought will be

worse and harder to deal with than the current one. Climate change is central to this. We will be living through an increase in planetary temperature from 1 degree higher than the pre-industrial revolution to 1.5 degrees over the next 5-10 years. We are likely to experience a 2-degree increase over the next 30 years given current emission rates and the false solutions coming forward by corporate controlled governments. The SAFSC has to build capacities to feed villages, towns, cities and the country in this context. It must demonstrate this in practice in coming years. It must lead the just transition to sustain life from below. It has already started this journey and so let's deepen unity to move forward. Future generations will be condemned without us. We have to act for them now! We are building an inter-generational movement that must last for centuries. Seed saving has been around for centuries and so has the indigenous knowledge of agro-ecology. We are not starting from scratch. We can do it!

Vishwas Satgar is the Chairperson of the Board of COPAC, a co-founder of SAFSC and a member of the SAFSC National Coordinating Committee.





National News

Transition township: Piloting an alternative solidarity economy in Kwazakhele, Nelson Mandela Bay

Janet Cherry



the municipality for energy and on the government for social grants, residents will create jobs and livelihoods from producing energy, producing food, and recycling waste. Instead of grant money being spent at supermarkets ‘in town’, this grant money will be spent within the Kwazakhele solidarity economy. Food, energy, culture and waste cooperatives will be formed by residents to control existing resources and manage the income that is generated from these resources.

Introduction

For the past nine months a team of community researchers from Kwazakhele township have been preparing to pilot an innovative new model of economic development. This extraordinary project is a partnership between the Department of Development Studies at NMMU, the Amandla! Resource and Information Centre (which is an affiliate of the AIDC in Cape Town), and COPAC. The initial phase of the project – which is an Action Research project – is funded by the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences.

In five wards of Kwazakhele, a densely-populated old formal township, the community research team (or CRT) is mapping, interviewing and documenting the economic activity in the township, in particular in relation to food production and cultural industries. In addition, detailed preparations are being made for the piloting of a rooftop solar energy cooperative – one which will see residents of Kwazakhele producing energy and feeding it into the grid, and generating income which can be reinvested into the local economy. Instead of being dependent on





The project has seen the CRT – a diverse group of energetic and committed community activists – presenting the project and facilitating intense discussion at two community workshops in Kwazakhele. In addition it has involved CRT members in attending workshops on renewable energy and building worker-controlled cooperatives, travelling to Johannesburg for the Food Sovereignty Forum, and presenting their findings at seminars of activists, academics and industry professionals in the renewable energy sector. The objective is that through this action research process, the three ‘commissions’ within the CRT – on energy, food and cultural industries - will each produce a feasibility study which can be implemented in the new year. The projects will be implemented as self-sufficient, community owned and managed cooperatives, integrated into a sustainable and localised economy which will provide for the needs of residents. The vision is that residents of this working-class township will control their own resources and build their own economy, providing employment and services and making Kwazakhele a vibrant and comfortable place to live.

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International News

Industrial and service cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific region: challenges for their development.



Although the concept of industrial and service cooperatives has yet to be fully developed in Asia, there are already many of them working in the region. Therefore, to further develop these cooperatives, the most important and urgent thing is to understand who these cooperatives are and to identify the challenges for their development, as well as for a more conducive environment for the fulfilment of their potential. In order to examine this worldwide reality and to gain a greater understanding of those that already exist in the region, CICOPA organized a workshop, together with ICA Asia-Pacific, in the framework of the 12th Regional Assembly of ICA-Asia Pacific, held in New Delhi (India).

Cooperators from Japan, Korea, Philippines, India, Indonesia and Iran learned about a variety of models and experiences of industrial and service cooperatives in Asia and examined the main instruments to develop industrial and service cooperatives in the region. The workshop also addressed the issue of why it is strategically important today to promote industrial and service cooperatives, from the point of view of the creation and preservation of sustainable jobs, their



contribution to entrepreneurship and the economy, as well as to local and regional development. Bruno Roelants, Secretary General of CICOPA, presented the state of the art of industrial and service cooperatives worldwide, while Hyungsik Eum, the CICOPA Data Analyst, explained the preliminary results of the mapping exercise on industrial and service cooperatives in India and Sri Lanka, which is based on the field research carried out last summer.

The President of the Korean Federation of Worker Cooperatives (KFWC), Park Kang-tae, explained the general situation of worker cooperatives in Korea and gave an example of the conversion of a private enterprise into a worker cooperative. The Director of the Japan Worker Cooperatives Union (JWCU), Tashima Yasutoshi, explained their work in the context of increasing unemployment and discussed the efforts being made to integrate young people within cooperatives. Different experiences from the region were also presented: India (ULCCS and the Kerala State Federation of Labour Cooperatives), Iran (Iran Chamber of Cooperatives), Philippines (Union of Labour Service Cooperatives) and Indonesia (new initiatives concerning Labour cooperatives). Participants also discussed the strategies for developing industrial and service cooperatives in the region, including the creation of a CICOPA regional network.

Furthermore, during the Workshop on University Cooperatives on the same day, a screening was held of the Working Together for a Cooperative Future video, which shares the stories of young cooperators and has been produced by CICOPA. Bruno Roelants also took the opportunity to present the Youth Cooperative Entrepreneurship campaign, which is currently being developed by CICOPA.

Article source: <http://www.cicopa.coop/Industrial-and-service-1966.html>

Coopetín is born: Colombia's first social cooperative



The cooperative is made up of 20 people who used to live on the streets. It will provide artistic, environmental, and maintenance services, with support from solidarity-based unions. Although social cooperatives have yet to have been introduced into legislation by the National Government, this cooperative has been set up with support from CICOPA members in Colombia, Ascoop and Confecoop, to provide an alternative for its members struggling with social reintegration.

Carlos Mario Zuluaga, Executive Director of Ascoop, was touched by the creation of Coopetín, saying “we welcome them as fellow cooperativists” and emphasised that this social cooperative, in common with all cooperatives “seeks to put capital at the services of humans, unlike other businesses which put humans at the services of capital”.

Carlos Acero, President of Confecoop, stressed how this is a model example of the social integration of socially marginalised groups, amongst them people who live on the streets. Social integration is the ultimate aim of social cooperatives which is why he asked the National Government to recognise this type of cooperative without delay. He went on to stress how confidence is key to the success



of Coopetín. “We have put the hope of many Colombians and people from society’s marginalised groups into this cooperative”, he said.

Article source: <http://www.cicopa.coop/Coopetinis-born-Colombia-s-first.html>





The Worker Cooperative Campaign

We Are All Leaders Here! How Democratic Leadership Makes Us More Powerful

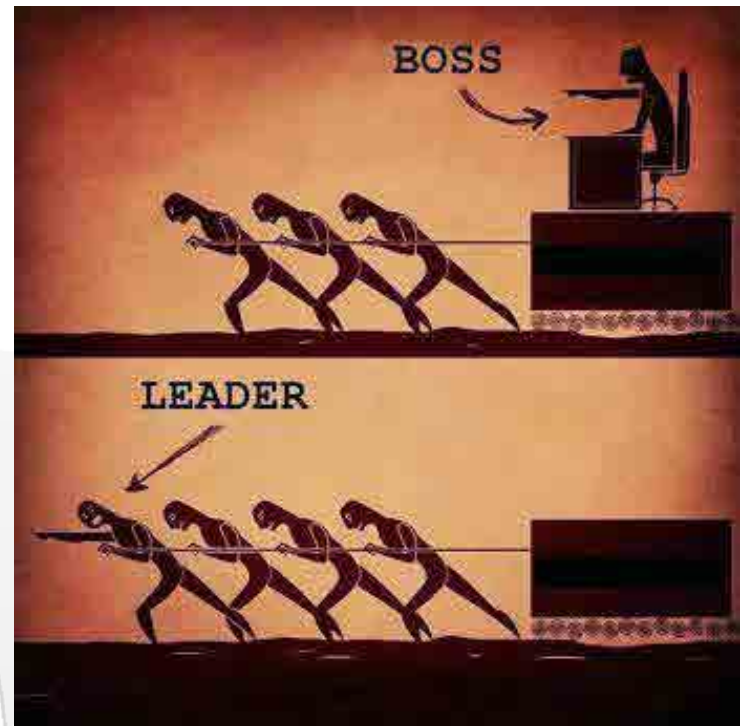
Bill Caspary

We all want to get away from top-down management. We don't want to tell people what to do, or be told what to do. Yet if it weren't for the inspired leadership of a few dedicated people, many coops wouldn't exist. Since in worker-managed coops we are going to have leaders—in fact we're all leaders at times—we need democratic leadership. But what is that?

Strong leadership, no matter how well intentioned and benevolent, can foster dependency and subvert democracy. Yet absence of any leadership can lead to confusion, drift, and tension. Every organization will solve the problem of leadership in a different way. Some successful co-ops—especially smaller ones—are highly egalitarian. They have no formal leaders and few overt signs of leadership behavior. Other groups do well, at least for a generation, with a single central leader who encourages the members to participate. Many successful groups find middle ground. They reject dominating leaders and also escape 'structurelessness'.

To realise democracy the powers of leaders are limited and divided up—informally or by charter. All members take some responsibility for making the organisation work. We all lead—sometimes by motivating others, or contributing solutions to problems, or simply by sharing our experience and knowledge. There are a number of ways to ensure this happens. Instead of imposing someone's proposal quickly, we can try to figure out how each member can have a role in reaching a decision, and feel that her role is valued. Knowing that some members have more expertise in given areas, we'll give more weight to their views in making decisions

in those areas. But everyone can help the group come together to make a decision that all members can stand behind.



Challenge and Support: The Mondragon Example

Examples of good “leaders” can be helpful. Father Jose Maria Arrizmendiarietta, inspirer of the Mondragon cooperatives, led by the force of his personality, his faith in people, and his belief in cooperative relationships. Though he inspired the founding and developing of the co-ops, he never held a formal position. His leadership consisted in challenging and supporting others, helping them to acquire the needed expertise. Those who later rose to leadership followed Father Arrizmendi's model of challenging and supporting their co-workers.



Developmental Leadership: The Example of Ella Baker

Ella Baker, a hero of the civil rights movement in the United States, is little known because she preferred to develop and nurture new leaders, rather than place herself in the foreground. “As a leader she was strong and powerful . . . she would lead and be in front. But she also led by the way she listened and questioned . . . you got the feeling that what you felt inside made sense. . . . Miss Baker put nothing in front of teaching others to organise for themselves. She urged us as organisers to understand how to create structures that allowed others in our group to also be leaders.”

Self Reflective Leaders and Responsible Members

Those chosen to lead need to recognise the temptation to impose decisions. They need to ask, “when I made that decision alone was it just for the good of the organisation, or did I get off on the power? Did I lack faith in members’ ability to come to wise decisions?” These leaders need to strive deliberately to foster leadership skills in others. Typically, such co-ops encourage and accept what’s been called “empowering,” or “developmental” leadership that includes all members and fosters our learning and productivity.

Equally, co-op members must guard against tendencies either to depend on “leaders” or to rebel automatically against all leadership. As members, we need to act deliberately to constrain leadership excesses, but also to be responsive to constructive challenges from leaders and other members.

A crucial tool for those in leadership roles and those responding to leadership is respectful, attentive listening. If our response to a member’s words shows that his or her ideas and concerns have been fully understood, this conveys support. On

this basis, respectful disagreement can then be introduced constructively. Listening is crucial to democracy in co-ops.

Division of Labor

A given coop has many different leadership needs. Members with different skills or qualities can lead in different sectors like production, finance, or marketing, by virtue of their expertise. Others lead by motivating, through their sheer energy or contagious optimism. Some lead by their ability through humor to both ease tension and clarify an issue. Others are turned to for their steadiness and reliability. This division of leadership eases dangers and doesn’t leave anyone out. It’s important that all members of the co-op have the chance for personal and skill development that leadership affords. In coops where jobs are rotated, some members will discover leadership talents they did not know they had, and acquire the expertise to lead effectively.

Democratic Organizational Climate

Members in co-ops where democratic empowering leadership and participation have been achieved find a climate of relaxation, camaraderie, and a capacity to rise to the occasion in the face of novel situations, challenges and crises.

Article Source: <http://www.geo.coop/story/we-are-all-leaders-here>



The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign

Food Sovereignty Act launched at 2nd Food Sovereignty Festival

Felix Donkor

The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that about 795 million people worldwide, which is approximately one in nine people, lack enough food to lead a healthy and active life. Developing countries host most of the world's hungry people with 12.9 percent of the population undernourished. Furthermore, Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the most prevalence (percentage of population) of hunger – one person in four is undernourished. Several movements which share in the goal of ending hunger are rolling out campaigns and programmes to address this global issue, which is made all the more urgent by the recent drought that has ravaged southern Africa.



The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC), which is one of the campaigns at the forefront of fighting hunger in the country, hosted a Food Sovereignty Festival which brought together several civil society organisations and movements to deliberate on the issue of fighting hunger and injustice in the food system and to celebrate food sovereignty in South Africa and Africa. The event also hosted sister organisations from neighbouring countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

The festival opened with a People's Parliament to launch and engage on the Food Sovereignty Act, which lays out a people's agenda for the role the state should be playing in securing the conditions for food sovereignty. The Act was well received and integrates lessons from comparative studies drawing from Senegal, Mali, Ecuador and Venezuela on how frameworks and laws that govern food sovereignty. It also incorporates the aspirations of small scale farmers and other grassroots organisations. It addresses most of the pertinent issues on the local food insecurity landscape; use of indigenous seeds, rights of producers in relation to land, rights to water governance, use and ownership by small scale farmers, diets and cultural foods, promotion of local food supplies and community markets, participatory systems, corporate food systems, repealing counterproductive laws with regards to food sovereignty.

The event also had panel sessions where individuals and grassroots organisations gave presentations on their works in addressing food insecurity. At a panel session which addressed the Food Crisis in Africa, Rex Chapota of Farm Radio Malawi talked



about overcoming information poverty in agriculture. The representative of the Inala Food Sovereignty and Climate Justice Forum and Wits University, Bellise Omondi, enlightened participants on how the student based organisation was addressing the issue of hunger on campuses. Other presentations touted the values of indigenous systems and hence the need to integrate traditional knowledge systems in food production systems which underscore a reciprocal relationship between the physical, spiritual and natural worlds.

A common narrative that ran through all the presentations was that there is the need for us to rethink how we grow, share and consume our food. This is because when done efficiently agriculture, forestry and fisheries can supply nutritious food for all and create decent incomes, while supporting

people-centred rural development and safeguarding the environment.

Felix Kwabena Donkor is currently a student at Wits University, Johannesburg. He co-manages a food garden which is entirely for feeding hungry students under the Inala Wits Food Sovereignty & Climate Justice Forum and represents the forum at the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign. Felix can be contacted at felixdonkor2002@yahoo.co.uk



The Wits Inala Forum: Tackling the Hunger Crisis on Campus (and Beyond)

Bellise Omondi

The Wits Inala Forum (WIF), established at the university's main campus in 2015, is a food sovereignty and climate justice forum that, in its youth, has made substantial headway in mobilising students on campus. In its early stages, the forum focused a great number of its resources on the maintenance of a fresh produce garden it acquired in an attempt to supplement the university's food bank, which struggles to stretch a limited number of meals for an even larger number of hungry students. Alleviating hunger and raising awareness around food security have been the forum's primary focus over the last few months.

Some of the major challenges the forum has faced since its conception included the general lack of support from the university body, the limited pool of resources available to the forum and, overtime, some members becoming inactive. These were issues active members of the forum thought, if adressed efficiently, would be most crucial to the sustainability of the workings of the forum. Contributors to these three issues are based solely on a lack of an efficient funding system. As a result, the WIF has been self-funded and dependent on the efforts of its active members which in turn puts strain on the number of students willing to support its efforts.

In its entirety however, the forum has been a great success, taking each new obstacle in its stride and using its constraints as a point of innovation. These aforementioned challenges have encouraged the forum to build its networks outside the university and learn from other organisations (small scale farmers, NGO's such as COPAC, and any other willing

parties). It is these networks that made possible the submission of a memorandum to the university during the SAFSC national bread march demanding that it take a stand against hunger and climate change and set an example for other universities around the country. Additionally, the forum has been able to look into expanding its horizons beyond gardening and hopes to start conversations of food sovereignty and climate justice in the academic arena of the university.

2017 shows a lot of promise in the way forward for the WIF. Not only has the forum now been formalised but, discussions around the development of a dignified food commons for students are well underway. We are currently engaging with the university to, together with the Wits Centre for Community Outreach and COPAC, obtain a building that we plan to turn into a food centre that moves beyond the food bank approach of passive recipients. The centre will actively involve those students needing food, and others, in shaping their food environment and the availability of food on campus. It is our hope that in future, we might be able to educate our fellow students and create a generation of activists that are conscious of the implications and the impact that climate justice and food sovereignty may have for their futures, beyond the confines of the university.



SAFSC launches new video: The Hidden Story Behind Hunger!



At the Food Sovereignty Festival held in November of this year, a new short movie called The Hidden Story Behind Hunger: Why we need food sovereignty and climate justice was launched. The movie looks at the coming together of multiple crises in the food crisis, including climate change and corporate profiteering. It is an engaging education video that answers some key questions:

Did you know that 14 million people go to bed hungry in South Africa daily? And that 53% of the nation is food insecure?

Did you know that the climate is changing and that we are experiencing the hottest recorded years in history?

Did you know that the drought, climate crisis and hunger are connected? And that the unsustainable, globalised and coal-driven, capitalist economic system is to blame for these crises?

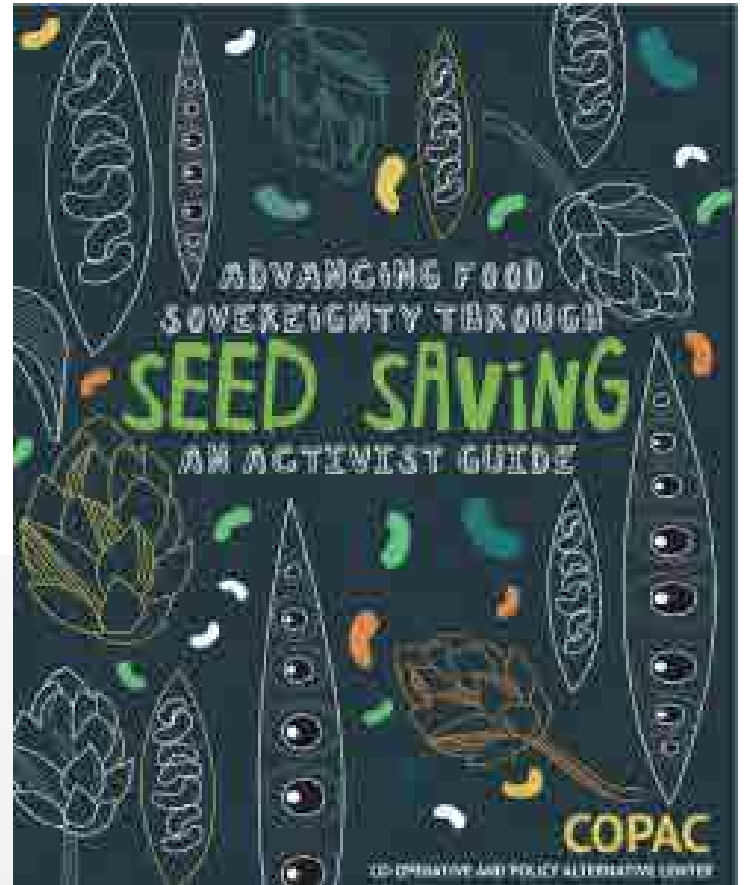
Did you know that the global leadership is paralysed? And we need solutions from below?

Did you know that we can escape climate change and hunger if we unite and struggle for food sovereignty and climate justice?

Watch the video, share it and use it for mobilising by going to <http://www.safsc.org.za/animation-the-hidden-story-behind-hunger/>

Activist Resources to Build the Solidarity Economy From Below

New Seed Saving Activist Guide Launched!



Seed is the basic block of all life, it has the ability to multiply plants and to reproduce populations (plant populations and people via food). Seeds are available to humans through nature, but through people they are used to produce food. Nature has given humanity the gateway to life. This is why seed is essentially sacred, and a vital part of humanity and cultures. Climate change is also posing an increasing threat to our food systems, and maintaining and building diversity is key to coping with climate change. Diversity in our seed, that is suited to local conditions and can adapt to changes, is a crucial first step in this. Based on a workshop with seed saving practitioners and small farmers, COPAC produced the new tool Advancing Food Sovereignty Through Seed Saving: An Activist



Guide, which explains some straight forward steps for saving seed, storing it, building cooperative seed banks and advancing food sovereignty. The guide therefore takes activists through a process of learning valuable skills with one another, of how to save seeds, how to establish seed banks, and in the process, to sustain life.

The guide is available in hard copy and can be freely downloaded and shared from <http://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Seed-Saving-Activist-Guide.pdf>

New ACB publication on moving away from GM maize and towards agroecology and social justice

To cope with drought and rising food prices, we need to urgently move away from genetically modified food and towards indigenous African crops. So warns the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB). “We need to urgently shift away from maize towards embracing a diversity of crops – particularly indigenous African summer grain crops such as sorghum and millet – and agro ecology,” says ACB director, Mariam Mayet, after launching the African Centre for Biodiversity’s (ACB) new publication, *Transitioning out of GM maize: towards nutrition security, climate adaptation, agro-ecology and social justice*.

In addition to showing the ecological and economic reasons why the current maize production system is unsustainable, the report sets out steps that we must adopt on the path to the transition:

- Support farmers and use of safe, open source and appropriate technologies
- Provide more resources for public research and extension services

and move towards agroecology (farming in harmony with nature).

- Invest in research and development, using participatory breeding techniques of farmer varieties and improved open pollinated varieties (OPVs), for drought tolerance, and other useful traits, and look at naturally drought tolerant, indigenous summer grains such as sorghum and millet.
- Shift away from the focus on high-yielding crops with high calorie content, to a diverse range of foods that are accessible, affordable, produced in ecologically sustainable ways and are culturally appropriate.
- Enhance the ability of farmers and processors to improve food, energy and technology.

The full report can be downloaded at <http://acbio.org.za/transitioning-out-of-gm-maize-current-drought-is-an-opportunity-for-a-more-resilient-and-just-food-system/>. A shorter and easy to read version of the report can be downloaded for grassroots education and awareness work at <http://acbio.org.za/4561-2/>.



contact us

We invite organisations and activists to make contributions to the Newsletter by writing stories, contributing photographs or cultural contributions, such as poetry, art, songs etc.

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