

Food Sovereignty is a key for Sustainable Society: Gardening in Nutritious Green Plot Ensuring Environmental Justice

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Abstract

A vital component of human existence, food sovereignty has changed dramatically over time. In order to ensure everyone's well-being and prevent malnutrition, the term "food sovereignty" refers to the availability of safe, wholesome food for everyone at all times. Food sovereignty is the wide right of local peoples to govern their own food systems, encompassing markets, natural resources, food cultures, and production methods. It is a crucial alternative to the idea of food security.

This article argues that the Indian Constitution and its underlying ideas provide a sound framework for thinking about the right to food. In this framework, the right to food is one of the basic economic and social rights that are essential to achieve "economic democracy", without which political democracy is at best incomplete. Examined the elements of food sovereignty include food regimes, rights-based and citizenship approaches to food and food sovereignty, and the substantive concerns of advocates for this alternative paradigm, including a new trade regime, agrarian reform, a shift to agroecological production practices, attention to gender relations and equity, and the protection of intellectual and indigenous property rights.

Keywords: Food sovereignty, Sustainable Society, Environmental Justice, Constitution.

Introduction

Food sovereignty is a concept that has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly within the context of global food systems and agricultural policies. It emphasizes the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture systems, focusing on local production, consumption, and cultural distinctiveness. The term "food sovereignty" was first introduced by the **Via Campesina**, in an *International Peasant Movement* in the *World Food Summit, 1996*.

Food sovereignty refers to the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture systems, prioritizing local production, culture, and ecological balance. It emphasizes the importance of communities having control over their food systems, ensuring access to healthy and culturally appropriate food, while also promoting social justice and environmental sustainability. Food sovereignty contrasts with the conventional, globalized food system, which often prioritizes corporate profit and industrialized agriculture, leading to negative consequences on local communities, the environment, and overall food security.

The capacity to hunt, collect, and grow food was the main determinant of food security in early human communities. Revolutions in agriculture, like the Neolithic Revolution some 10,000 years ago, signaled important shifts in the availability of food. Humans were able to produce food more reliably and in bigger numbers after domesticating plants and animals. A multitude of variables have impacted food security over time. These include changes in the political and economic institutions, commerce, climate, population increase, and technology. The need for food increased along with the growth of human populations. As a result, more effective agricultural techniques were created, such as the Three Sisters agriculture used by Native Americans, which mixed maize, beans, and squash to produce a diet that was balanced.

Food production saw substantial changes throughout the Industrial Revolution as a result of the advancement of refrigeration, better transportation, and automation. Increased food security was made possible by these developments, which made it possible for food to be produced, distributed, and preserved more effectively. In the past, variations in the climate have affected food security. For instance, famines and agricultural failures were caused by the Little Ice Age (1300–1850) in various regions of the world. On the other hand, population growth and greater agricultural output were observed throughout the Medieval Warm Period (800–1300).

The development of trade routes and international trade networks made it possible for food and agricultural expertise to be shared. This made it easier for new crops to spread, such as tomatoes and potatoes, which greatly improved food security in a number of areas.

Economic and governmental structures have had a significant impact on food security. For example, in order to boost food production during the Soviet Union era, the government carried out extensive agricultural programs like the Virgin Lands Campaign. Contrarily, free markets and private entrepreneurship have frequently been the means by which capitalist economies have addressed the problem of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty has become a

major global problem in the last several decades as a result of variables including urbanization, population increase, climate change, and economic inequality. The Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) of Sustainable Development was created in response to the United Nations in World Food Summit, 1996, which set the goal of halving world hunger by 2015. By 2030, this objective seeks to eradicate hunger, provide food security, enhance nutrition, and advance sustainable agriculture.

Issues and Challenges in Achieving Food Sovereignty

Achieving food sovereignty faces several issues and challenges, which include:

- **Industrial Agriculture:** Large-scale industrial agriculture often prioritizes profit over sustainability and local food systems. It can lead to monoculture, loss of biodiversity, and environmental degradation, making it difficult for communities to achieve food sovereignty.
- **Global Trade Policies:** Global trade policies can undermine food sovereignty by promoting the export of agricultural products from developed countries to developing ones, sometimes causing local farmers to lose their markets.
- **Corporate Control:** The dominance of large corporations in the food industry can lead to the concentration of power and resources, making it challenging for small-scale farmers and local food systems to thrive.
- **Climate Change:** Climate change affects agriculture through extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and changing precipitation patterns. This can lead to reduced crop yields, food insecurity, and challenges in achieving food sovereignty.
- **Lack of Access to Resources:** Small-scale farmers and communities often face challenges in accessing resources such as land, water, seeds, and technology, which can hinder their ability to produce food sustainably and achieve food sovereignty.
- **Urbanization and Migration:** Rapid urbanization and rural-to-urban migration can lead to the loss of agricultural land and a decline in the number of farmers, making it difficult to maintain local food production systems.
- **Limited Education and Training:** Insufficient education and training opportunities for farmers and communities can hinder the adoption of sustainable and ecologically sound agricultural practices that support food sovereignty.
- **Inequality and Poverty:** Food insecurity and poverty can limit people's ability to access and produce healthy, culturally appropriate food, making it difficult to achieve food sovereignty.

- **Lack of Political Will:** Governments may not prioritize food sovereignty due to pressure from corporate interests or lack of awareness about the importance of local and sustainable food systems.
- **Cultural and Traditional Knowledge Preservation:** The loss of traditional knowledge and practices related to agriculture and food systems can hinder efforts to achieve food sovereignty, as these practices often promote sustainability and resilience.

However, these issues and challenges requires a combination of policy changes, community engagement, education, and support for small-scale farmers and local food systems. By working together, communities can strive towards achieving food sovereignty and ensuring access to healthy, culturally appropriate food for all.

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Food sovereignty indeed plays a vital role in creating a sustainable society. By promoting gardening in nutritious green plots, we can ensure environmental justice and contribute to a healthier and more equitable world. This approach fosters self-sufficiency in food production, reduces carbon footprints, and encourages a deeper connection with nature. Indeed, a sustainable society is built on the foundation of food sovereignty. By giving communities the power to determine their own food systems, we can create a more equitable and environmentally conscious world. This approach not only addresses issues of food access and nutrition but also promotes economic stability, cultural preservation, and social cohesion. In essence, food sovereignty serves as a crucial component in the pursuit of a sustainable and thriving society for all.

Achieving food sovereignty involves creating a sustainable, equitable, and just food system. Supporting local farmers and small-scale agriculture helps reduce dependence on large corporations and global markets. This can be achieved through community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, farmers' markets, and policies that favor local producers. Agroecology is an approach to agriculture that emphasizes ecological processes and practices, such as crop rotation, intercropping, and integrated pest management. It focuses on sustainability, biodiversity, and social justice. Ensure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. This can be done by implementing policies to reduce food waste, improve food distribution, and support community food initiatives.

Involve local communities in decision-making processes related to food production, distribution, and consumption. This can help ensure that their needs and priorities are

considered. Implement policies and practices that protect the environment and natural resources, such as implementing sustainable water management systems, preserving fertile soil, and preventing deforestation. Promote education on food systems, sustainable agriculture, and nutrition. Encourage people to make informed choices about their food and support policies that promote healthy eating.

Collaborate with other countries and regions to share knowledge, resources, and best practices in achieving food sovereignty. Work with governments and policymakers to create and implement policies that support food sovereignty, such as subsidies for sustainable agriculture, regulation of large agribusinesses, and protection of farmers' rights. Tackle the underlying issues that contribute to food insecurity, such as poverty, inequality, and lack of access to resources and markets. Achieving food sovereignty is a long-term process that requires continuous effort, learning, and adaptation. Be prepared to face challenges and setbacks along the way, but remain committed to the goal of creating a more just and sustainable food system.

International Conventions on Food Sovereignty or Right to Food or Food Security

United Nations, have recognized the importance of food sovereignty in creating a sustainable society. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizes the need to ensure access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for all. The Right to Food is also recognized as a fundamental human right in various international treaties and conventions, such as:

- ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)***: Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, Article 25 of the UDHR states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their family, including food.
- ***International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)***: This covenant is adopted in 1966, this covenant is one of the core international human rights treaties. It legally binds its state parties to work towards the fulfillment of economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to adequate food.
- ***The Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (also known as the Right to Food Guidelines)***: Adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and

the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2004, these guidelines provide states with a framework to implement the right to food domestically.

- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):** It was adopted in 1979, the CEDAW recognizes that discrimination against women in accessing and controlling resources, including food, perpetuates their marginalization and vulnerability.
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):** It was adopted in 1989, the CRC's main emphasizes the right of children to adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, and essential healthcare.

These international conventions and treaties establish a legal framework for states to ensure the right to food for their citizens. By ratifying and implementing these agreements, countries commit to taking necessary steps to address hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity.

Indian Legal Norms Ensuring Food Sovereignty

Indian laws, policies, and statutes collectively contribute to the concept of food sovereignty in India by addressing issues related to food production, distribution, and accessibility. However, challenges such as climate change, urbanization, and the need for more inclusive and sustainable agricultural practices remain.

- **The Constitution of India:** Article 21 ensures the right to food as a fundamental right. The Directive Principles of State Policy, enshrined in Part IV of the Constitution, emphasize the responsibility of the state to improve public health, to raise the level of nutrition, and to ensure the availability of adequate nutrition to all.
- **The Minimum Support Price (MSP) System:** This system, established under the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Acts of various states, ensures that farmers receive a minimum price for their produce, which helps to maintain food security and protects farmers' interests.
- **The Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** This act regulates the production, distribution, and trade of certain essential commodities, including food items like cereals, oilseeds, pulses, onions, and potatoes. The act aims to prevent hoarding, profiteering, and black marketing of these commodities, ensuring their availability and affordability to the public.
- **The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA):** This act aims to provide for food and nutritional security in the country by ensuring access to adequate food for people in need. It provides for subsidized food grains to eligible individuals under Targeted

Public Distribution System (TPDS) and aims to address malnutrition and undernourishment in India.

- **The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001:** This act provides for the protection of plant varieties, the rights of farmers, and the promotion of plant breeding and innovation. It ensures that farmers have the right to save, use, and sell their farm produce, contributing to food sovereignty and agricultural sustainability.
- **The Right to Information Act, 2005:** This act guarantees the right to information for citizens, promoting transparency and accountability in governance. It empowers citizens to access information related to food security, agriculture, and other related issues.
- **The National Policy for Farmers, 2007:** This policy aims to provide a comprehensive framework for the welfare and development of farmers, ensuring their economic and social security, and promoting sustainable agriculture practices.

Conclusion

Today, the nation inured to scarcity of food and starvation, the nature of this problem is ironic, in spite of the increasing number of starvation deaths amidst overflowing food grain go downs of the government. The obvious affirmation to the query necessitates that a single starvation death in the midst of several millions of food grains in warehouses is a blemish on the state

and food policy and public distribution system. The Indian government enacted Right to Food (Guarantee of Safety and Security) Bill that guarantees access to sufficient food for all people, particularly the most vulnerable sections of society.

India does not seem to have a problem in terms of physical availability, as the production of food grains is more than adequate. The corruption is eroding the well-designed schemes, so there is a need to check this practice. Starvation deaths and the high prevalence of hunger clearly show that India needs to wake up. The government needs to review policy from time to time and take corrective measures for effective implementation of different schemes and programmed, establish effective mechanisms of accountability and ensure the right to food for all. The right to food is not just a basic human right; it is also a basic human need. Implementation of the right to food does not imply that impossible efforts be undertaken by the states. The obligation to protect and respect the people compels the state to implement the

right to food effectively, without recourse to extensive financial means. Food Sovereignty is essential in maintaining Sustainable Society.

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