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# Taking back power in a brutal food system: food sovereignty in South Africa

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MA RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared for the Department of Development Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

# Taking back power in a brutal food system: Food Sovereignty in South Africa

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June 2016

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is exclusively my own work except where otherwise indicated. I am aware of the university's regulations concerning plagiarism, including those regulations concerning disciplinary actions that may result from plagiarism. Any use of works of any other authors have been acknowledged in the text as well as in the reference list.

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Jane Cherry

3 June 2016

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) emerged during early 2015 in response to a range of brutalities affecting a large proportion of South Africa's poor, particularly small-scale farmers and swathes of the population who are at risk of going hungry, or who are currently experiencing powerlessness associated with hunger. Of particular importance to the campaign is the unjust, unsafe and unsustainable food system (Cock, 2014:53), which actors in the campaign argue requires fundamental transformation before it can cater to the needs of the hungry in South Africa over the needs of profit for corporations.

This research, which makes use of the SAFSC as a case study, aims to explore how the food sovereignty framework is being pursued by grassroots activists in South Africa to address hunger at its roots, namely at the food system level. To set the scene for the research I first describe the South African food system to reveal its brutalities in the form of corporate concentration, land dispossession, malnutrition, environmental degradation and hunger, to name a few. Thereafter I explore current solutions undertaken by the state, business and NGOs which aim to address hunger. After presenting these policies and programmes I provide a food sovereignty critique of them, showing how despite their reach and at times their valuable contribution to nutrition in a highly malnourished country, South Africa still remains largely food insecure (and unsovereign). This is because often policy and programmes do not address the root causes of hunger, namely the lack of democracy in the food system – I elaborate on this root cause in the sections below. Finally, I explore the SAFSC, a campaign which came together to unite grassroots' struggles for a more just and sustainable food system. I explore the genesis of the campaign, the actors in the campaign and show how they understand food sovereignty and further practise it to provide systemic alternatives to the current unjust food system.

Below, I discuss this unjust food system and show how my research fills a gap in the literature on food sovereignty, particularly on food sovereignty in South Africa, which is currently sparse. Thereafter, I further elaborate the research objectives, and finally conclude this chapter by outlining the structure of this research report. Below, I begin

my discussion on the unjust South African food system by outlining the story of a bread distributor.

**The story of a bread distributor**

A dedicated bread distributor for Tiger Brands and Premier Foods, Imraahn Mukaddam would wake up at 4:30 every morning to receive deliveries of bread and milk for clients in risky, crime-ridden areas in Cape Town, areas where Tiger Brands and Premier foods decided not to service. One day during December 2006, Mukaddam noticed that three bread companies, Tiger Brands, Premier Foods and Pioneer Foods had announced exactly the same bread increase at the same time, and simultaneously reduced the distributor discounts by the same amount (The Star, 4/11/15). Four years later, after Mukaddam had approached the Competition Commission, who had referred some cases to the Commission and Competition Tribunal, the bread companies were found guilty. It emerged that during December 2006, the three bread companies were part of a bread cartel in contravention of the provisions of the Competition act (Mongalo & Nyembezi, 2012:368). The extent of the price-fixing was much more serious than what was thought, and the commission established that in most cases consumers were paying 25 per cent more for a loaf of bread than if the market had been even (The Star, 4/11/15).

Mukaddam made history in the above events as he exposed the largest settlement over uncompetitive behaviour in the history of South Africa. But after the bread companies paid their fines, what consolation did the consumers and distributors like Mukaddam receive? Even when Mukaddam applied for a class-action certification against the three bread companies for the ‘compensation of the consumers and distributors who were detrimentally affected by the conduct of the companies in contravention of the competition act’, the application was dismissed (Mongalo & Nyembezi, 2012:368).

Sometimes it is not colluding corporations who are to blame, but it is the very ‘government’ put in place to oversee and care for its people which causes gross violations when it comes to food. The story of the ‘great potato famine’ in Ireland is

worth mentioning. Between 1845 and 1849 over one million people died of hunger, while another one and a half million had no choice but to emigrate. It was thought that a natural disaster in the form of potato blight caused the epidemic which led to famine and widespread hunger. However, interestingly, during that time, Ireland was a net exporter of food. What is more, a letter to the prime minister in 1946 noted that 'for 46 years the people of Ireland [had] been feeding those of England with the choicest produce of their agriculture and pasture; and while they thus exported their wheat and their beef in profusion, their own food became gradually deteriorated… until the mass of the peasantry was exclusively thrown on the potato.' What becomes evident from this letter is that the majority of the poor were vulnerable to potato blight because under British rule their impoverishment had reduced their diet to potatoes alone as opposed to being dependent on a variety of crops (Lappé *et al*., 1997:15). Other examples of devastating human-made famines include those of the regimes of China and the USSR in the 20th century. Although droughts occur on a regular basis in Russia and the Soviet Union, the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 occurred during a time when such droughts were not severe. The cause of famine and starvation of between five and eight million people was instead due to a combination of factors, including a lower than average harvest, with an increased demand for food caused by forced collectivisation, industrialisation and urbanisation, coupled with the grain exports by the Soviet Union at the same time (Tauger, 2001:4). China's example is similar, where famine was initiated by political policies that diverted labour from farming, and where government refused to recognise the reality of the problem where 45 million people died in a period from 1958-62, and yet China still maintained food exports (Dikötter, 2010:3).

**How did we get here?**

How did we get here, to a place of vast inequality, exploitation and scandal, where the poor remain hungry and hardest hit by shocks, food crises, price hikes and outright collusion? How did we arrive at a place where profit matters more than people. Price-fixing and 'famine' are just two of many examples of exploitation of the country's poorest, most vulnerable and as a result, hungry. Deeper roots of such exploitation include the commodification of food, displacement of people from their land, and intellectual property rights on nature's gifts, namely seeds. In any event, it is the

poorest who suffer most, no matter the reparations of the colluding companies, business or government, for example. There are indeed links between these injustices and hunger that people fail to see and that are worth mentioning, but first we turn to understand this hunger as it plays out in South Africa.

**Half the population at risk**

> Only until humanity has solved the most basic human problem – how to ensure that every one of us has food for life – we cannot consider ourselves fully human. (Levine in Lappé and Collins, 1988:6)

South Africans have a long way to go before they can realise their humanity. A recent Oxfam report estimates that in South Africa, a country of 53 million, more than half of the population lives in such precarious conditions that they are at risk of hunger. The number of those currently facing hunger in South Africa is roughly half this amount, fourteen million. While South Africa's hungry only account for 1.7 per cent of the world's total hungry population – which during the period 2012-2014 was at around 805 million people (FAO, 2014:4), the percentage of hungry in South Africa (26 per cent) is far above the world average of 11.3 per cent. Furthermore, while the situation of hunger in the world is improving, Sub Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest food insecurity prevalence, and this prevalence is worsening (FAO, 2014:11). With such rates of hunger, it becomes clear why theorists claim that hunger, particularly urban hunger, is one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century (Crush and Frayne, 2010a:6). It is for this reason that the persistence of hunger in developing nations such as South Africa requires continual exploration, as do approaches to eradicate it.

Back in South Africa, where 'fourteen million at risk in a land of plenty' only makes it to page fifteen in the *Saturday Star* (22/03/15), the scale of hunger is being exacerbated and is creating divided, dehumanised and conflict-prone societies (Satgar, 2015). Surely hunger of such a scale should feature on the front page every day; especially in a country where hunger is 'hidden' behind definitions of food security and in reports that state that South Africa is a food secure nation. South Africa is

indeed a food secure nation because within South Africa there are enough calories to adequately feed every one of the 53 million citizens. But the problem is that still so many lack access to these abundant calories (Oxfam, 2014:10), and still fourteen million go hungry on a daily basis. While these numbers, when exposed, serve well to shock us, even if only on page fifteen of the newspaper, they can be misleading as they restrict one's vision to view solutions to this hunger in terms of numbers alone. For example, if there are five hundred hungry people in a community, the simple solution is to provide five hundred packages of food with the correct amount of calories to that community. This solution is insufficient because it first, perpetuates dependency, and second, food is more than a calorie count, it has social value, traditions, meaning and importantly, nutritional value associated with it. Furthermore, viewing hunger in terms of numbers tends to numb us to the real people behind these figures who experience real emotions linked directly to hunger (Lappé and Collins: 1988:3). As a result, numbers can also distance us from what is actually very close to us, emotions that we have also felt, as I discuss below.

**Hunger as powerlessness**

Lappé and Collins (1988:2-3) sought to understand why hunger existed in a world of plenty. While undertaking research they established that they could get closer to the answer if they understood the roots of hunger. For them a clue to the roots of hunger lay in the perceptions and emotions of those experiencing hunger. They established that hunger translates into anguish, grief, humiliation and fear. Ultimately hunger becomes for many a symbol of powerlessness. Once we perceive hunger as a lack of power it is then that we begin to see its roots. Lappé and Collins (1988:3) encourage a thought experiment. When you or I feel powerless, what is the cause of it? It is often when we feel out of control of our lives, lacking the power to protect ourselves or those we love. From this simple thought experiment, they further probe, that if powerless lies at the heart of hunger, what are its causes? The answer for them is not a scarcity of land or food, but rather a scarcity of democracy. This finding gives a new dimension to the way that theorists look at hunger.

When we look to South Africa, an Oxfam (2014:6) study confirms these findings as hunger is described by people who experience it as a sense of hopelessness, despair and something that deprives people of dignity and creates 'genocide of the mind'. In light of the above, if the state of hunger in South Africa is thus viewed not as a percentage of the population, but rather as a form of hopelessness, powerlessness and despair, then solutions would not (only) involve a certain number of relief packages (in the short term), but could instead be framed as approaches that increase the power of the hungry and marginalised. Food system and food sovereignty theorists echo this sentiment and apply it to a food system analysis, revealing that the lack of democracy in the food system has an even deeper cause, and this takes root in the concentration of power in the corporate food regime.

**The corporate food regime – concentration of power at the root of hunger**

The corporate food regime is theorised by Friedman and McMichael to be the root cause of contemporary hunger. I discuss the food regime theory and various frameworks of hunger in the literature review of this report so I will merely describe the corporate food regime and a few of its brutalities here.

A defining feature of the corporate food regime is that it places faith in neoliberal market policies and corporatisation of agriculture. Under such a regime, the state gradually cedes its power and responsibility to international financial institutions and transnational corporations. Furthermore, as it is linked to globalisation, the corporate food regime strives for and enables the removal of social and political barriers to the free flow of capital in food and agriculture, and ensures this by the institutionalisation of the World Trade Organisation's agreement on agriculture. This regime has led to neoliberal policies that encourage agribusiness consolidation, dismantling of marketing boards and the elimination of small-scale farmer subsidies. This has in turn led to the displacement of small-scale farmers, and the undermining of local means of subsistence (McMichael, 2009:287). Further, as a result of concentrated power, the corporate food regime is able to deal out brutalities to those with no voice or power to appeal. These harsh realities include increased hunger, malnutrition and obesity as a result of a shift from more indigenous diets to modernised and processed ones – this

is referred to as a ‘nutrition transition’. Brutalities also include, the erosion of small-scale farmers’ control over seed, leading to dependence on Genetically Modified (GM) seeds and pesticides and thus resulting in the degradation of nature and health, to name a few of these brutalities. Yet while the corporate regime has produced these phenomena, it has also evoked something positive, namely another type of power, expressed in the food sovereignty alternative, as I discuss below.

**The food sovereignty alternative and people’s power**

In response to the above injustices and brutalities, various grassroots movements have emerged to challenge the system that upholds inequality as they envision ‘fundamental changes in the basis of modern society’ (Handy, 2007 in Wittman *et al.*, 2011:4). One such example is food sovereignty, an ideal that originated amongst a peasant movement in the global South, named La Via Campesina (translated as ‘the peasants’ way’). This movement of peasants promoting food sovereignty is now one of the largest international civil society movements globally, and is making great strides in advocating for change in the current broken food system. I describe food sovereignty in more detail below.

While food sovereignty initially emerged as a rural-based counter movement to neoliberal polices, it has shifted to urban areas too as the corporate regime has entered a phase of multiple crises, including rampant hunger, environmental and social crises (McMichael, 2014a:11). As such, the call for a new food system emanates from current inequalities caused by the neoliberal agenda, and more specifically from the way in which its policies unfavourably impact food systems and the sovereignty of people to determine their own food requirements.

Food sovereignty proponents argue that policies under the household food security framework, (the framework currently used to inform many government interventions, including in South Africa) do not offer any genuine possibility for changing the current system and reducing the power inequities that exist in the social, political and economic structures of society (Wittman *et al.*, 2011:3). These policies simply try to ensure that there is enough food available and accessible to every household, without

questioning the power relations, the environmental impact and the social impact involved in producing and distributing that food. Food security sees food aid, financial aid and industrial agriculture as vital means to ensure food security.

In contrast, food sovereignty embodies a political struggle for the right to food, centred on democracy and justice, calling for democratisation of the food system by relocalising markets and governance in favour of the poor and underserved (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2010:76, McMichael 2010:174; McMichael, 2014a:7; Via Campesina, 1996). Importantly all of this is to be undertaken with a deep appreciation for nature. Food sovereignty thus requires 'agrarian reform in favour of small producers and the landless; the reorganisation of global food trade to prioritise local markets and self-sufficiency; much greater controls over corporations in the global food chain; and the democratisation of international financial institutions' (Branford, 2011:3). Food sovereignty comprises of a vision in which decisions on how food is cultivated, processed and traded are handed back to the people as power is reclaimed from those currently exercising largely unbridled control, namely the few large agribusiness corporations who are promoted and maintained by markets, governments and international regulators such as the World Trade Organisation (Wittman, 2011:3; Handy & Fehr, 2011:58; McMichael, 2010:171; Branford, 2011:3).

Food sovereignty movements worldwide, including La Via Campesina in the South and the National Farmers' Union in Canada in the North, express a range of the abovementioned demands, and undertake various activities to engage with consumers, workers, producers and other organisations, who are increasingly becoming aware of the importance of domestic food systems (McMichael, 2015:157). Where South Africa fits in to this international picture today is still to be determined as the literature and research on food sovereignty in South Africa is sparse. Nevertheless, the need for food sovereignty alternatives are already being proposed by various actors in South Africa as many of the issues that prompted the emergence of the food sovereignty alternative internationally are deeply felt in South Africa too. It must be emphasised that it is no longer only landless peasants and small-scale farmers who are feeling the brutalities of the food system. Increasingly, as the corporate regime expands, poor, young, consumers, farm-workers, business-men, students, shop attendants, commercial farmers and small-scale farmers alike are implicated. For

example, environmental degradation, a nutrition transition, rising food prices, and a broader set of crises as a result of the neoliberal agenda, such as climate change; and an unjust agrarian structure affects everyone. This further shows the potential that food sovereignty has to benefit all of these people in South Africa. And while the same brutalities are being felt by a host of people in South Africa, this does not mean that food sovereignty will be expressed in the same way as it has been in other countries that have been researched. Neither will its expressions remain constant, as I discuss below.

While food sovereignty has a clear goal of transforming the food system to eradicate the abovementioned crises, it is also quite an elastic discourse and practice because the food regime itself is continuously evolving and restructuring. As such, food sovereignty embodies movement and it is an uneasy and organic process. It is also not a movement concerned with clear-cut solutions, rather, it incorporates a wide range of ideals of a multi-faceted counter-movement which is gradually feeling its way into the future (McMichael, 2015: 200).

As food sovereignty is gradually taking root in South Africa its expressions cannot be studied and extrapolated from other similar developing countries. This is simply because food sovereignty movements are determined largely by local dynamics (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014:1156). It is for this reason that the emergence of the food sovereignty campaign in South Africa, and the local dynamics of the South African food system require exploration. Furthermore, it is of particular importance that the voice and choice of small-scale farmers be made known, in order for the movement to address their challenges effectively. As such I seek to include some of the voices of food sovereignty actors and activists in South Africa to inform my research. Further aims of the research are discussed below.

**Aims of the research**

This research explores approaches to address hunger in South Africa. By viewing the corporate food regime as the root of the crises, I show how current policies and interventions in post-apartheid South Africa are failing in various ways to bring about

the desired changes. This is, as I argue in this research, because hunger has been produced by, exacerbated by, and cannot be eradicated under the current capitalist, neoliberal South African food regime which continues to distort power concentration into the hands of an elite few in the food system. Instead, as the food sovereignty proponents make clear, a 'just transition' is required to usher in a new regime, one that is based on eco-socialist principles and, in terms of the food regimes, one that embraces a more holistic food sovereignty framework that seeks to disrupt the status quo of power distribution. Food sovereignty is unlike the common food security framework that sees hunger in numerical terms, and which leads to further concentration of power as policy does nothing to challenge the power in the current neoliberal regime.

This research also explores a South African case study. Because literature on food sovereignty in South Africa is sparse, I document how in the margins of the crisis, alternatives to the corporate regime and its brutalities are emerging. These alternatives are being coordinated and scaled up by a nascent campaign, namely the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC). This research thus provides a detailed report of the emergence of the campaign, the actors in the campaign and their perceptions or understandings of food sovereignty.

The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign is a grassroots campaign that emerged in early 2015 in response to the crises of hunger. It was the project of the Solidarity Economy Movement and the grassroots NGO, the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC). The SAFSC is comprised of various organisations that are already working on the ground in their various fields to create awareness about alternatives in different areas, including in the agrarian space, in mining affected communities and with small-scale farmers, to name a few. I have chosen this case study as it is an active, nascent campaign that is operating at a national level. While other food sovereignty campaigns and movements do exist in South Africa, they are in most cases regional or local projects and on their own have not been able to wield sufficient power to engage at a national scale.

The research thus has two aims. First, I aim to explore the South African food system and reveal its inherent crises embedded in the corporate food system, as a result of

both apartheid policy and current neoliberal policy. I explore these crises and solutions to them in order to provide a food sovereignty critique of such policies and various approaches at eradicating hunger. Second, I aim to explore food sovereignty in South Africa as the SAFSC attempts to initiate a campaign to bring about greater awareness, create farmer networks, and fight for a fundamentally different food system; one that is more just, democratic and anti-capitalist.

Two key factors motivate this research, and these are linked to the nature of the unjust, unsafe and unsustainable food system in South Africa. The first motivation is the state of hunger in South Africa, and the second is the state of the environment. First, the hunger situation in South Africa is not getting any better as her citizens remain hungry, malnourished and are becoming increasingly obese. I have discussed this above, but it is worth stating again that even though a group of South Africans, comprising of forty per cent of the population eat the correct amount of recommended calories, the calories that this group eats have so little nutrition, that they actually leave one malnourished (SANHANES, 2013:170). Furthermore, South Africa is a 'fat, hungry nation' as it falls among the top 20 most overweight countries in the world (Stassen, 2015), and this is as a result of excess calories, but too little nutrition. Thus the situation is very unsafe (Cock, 2014:53).

Not only are our unhealthy eating practices harming our bodies, but they are also harming the environment, and this is the second motivation; the environment is not getting any better. This is because the current corporate regime's industrial agriculture and food-processing practices are anti-ecological and unsustainable. As a result, ecological disasters associated with conventional agricultural production are proliferating. These include pollution of surface water and ground water with pesticides, nitrates, phosphates and sediments, and contamination of food. In addition, crop farmlands are experiencing nutrient depletion, while nutrient rich wastes are accumulating to dangerous levels in large scale animal production facilities (Magdoff and Tokar, 2010:13). Findings from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation further reveal that the world has on average 60 years left of growing crops if current production methods continue unaltered (*The Guardian,* 25/03/15). Not only is our soil being depleted of nutrients, and polluted with pesticides for example, but industrial agriculture farming practices that heavily rely on excessive fossil fuel use in the

transportation and processing of food are all contributing to a more toxic and unsustainable future for the environment and all who depend on it (Magdoff and Tokar, 2010:13; Via Campesina, 2008:52). Again the system is unsafe, and further unsustainable.

What both of these rationales further point to is a food system in which food has become a by-product of an agricultural system that destroys nature and dehumanises people in its relentless drive for profit. Not only is power that is concentrated in the hands of the few corporations and agribusiness along the food chain playing and winning a zero-sum game with the poor as it profiteers out of food and exploits farm workers, benefitting only itself and the wielders of the power, this zero-sum game is also being played with nature, for in the drive for increased profits, industrial agriculture is eroding nature's power which is best displayed in biodiversity of ecosystems. Slowly but surely nature and the poor are suffering most from this corporate food regime. This is unjust.

But the poor, in their coordinated numbers might be able to stand together to take back their power, and with their eco-logical practices, give back the power to nature. Herein lies the potential of food sovereignty. Below I discuss the structure of this research project, in which I aim to, among other things, tell the story of how the SAFSC seeks to take back and redistribute power along the food system in a more equitable way.

**The structure of the research report**

Chapter two provides a review of the literature on hunger and various frameworks that have existed to combat it. These range from the right to food to the household food security, to the food sovereignty framework. Food regimes and food frameworks are described in order to explain historical food crises and solutions to them, as well as to contextualise and establish the roots of the current the food crisis in the contemporary corporate food regime. Reviewing food sovereignty literature also gives rise to interesting and important principles of food sovereignty that food sovereignty movements internationally promote. These principles (which can also serve as preconditions to achieving food sovereignty) are useful to inform and compare the

current situation in the South African food system against. The literature also addresses the role of the state in achieving these conditions. This is particularly important in South Africa where the state is gradually ceding its power to corporations and at the same time lacking political will to assist its most powerless citizens through policies of agrarian reform and comprehensive support for small-scale farmers. The literature also highlights different pathways by which food sovereignty has evolved, from the first generation of rural peasants, to a second generation that includes urban middle class consumers. In South Africa the SAFSC is made up of both these generations, as I show in chapter five. Finally, I also draw attention to the debates that food sovereignty has sparked in the literature (See Bernstein, 2014 and Agarwal, 2014) to highlight recent critiques of the viability of the alternatives that the food sovereignty movement proposes, particularly in the ability of small-scale farmers to feed the world. Answers to this question conclude the literature review and present the gap that this research intends to fill, namely to understand the food sovereignty alternative in South Africa.

Chapter three describes the methodology used to undertake this research. Since numbers tend to numb, this research provides a qualitative assessment of the food system and food sovereignty actors and activists' perceptions of it, as well as a qualitative description of the SAFSC. To do this, research methods include desk review, in-depth interviews and participant observation. In this section I also describe how my initial plan changed with the opportunity that I was presented with, namely to volunteer at COPAC, the secretariat to the SAFSC. This opportunity allowed me to take part in various campaign activities such as organising for the national festival, attending activist schools and national coordination committee meetings, and taking part in a seed saving workshop. These opportunities further enabled me to experience first-hand what actors in the campaign are exposed to and gave me insight into what goes on in the background by the facilitators of many of the national events who also work at COAPC. Finally, and importantly it introduced me to various partners in the campaign. My tasks while volunteering included assisting with coordination, working on the webpage, communicating with partners telephonically and establishing and facilitating a food sovereignty and climate justice forum at Wits University. Insight gained during my six months of volunteering provided me with invaluable information I would have not been able to elicit from participant observation and interviews alone.

All of these experiences gave me great insight to tell the story of the SAFSC, understand its operations and contribute to a qualitative study to understand a grassroots campaign set up to challenge the current South African food system. I explain these experiences as well as additional methodology and limitations of the research in the methodology section.

Thereafter, Chapter four turns to discuss the uniqueness of the South African food system as a result of apartheid's exclusionary policies on the majority of the population. The impact of this on the state of hunger today is also addressed, followed by descriptions and food sovereignty critiques of significant relevant post-apartheid government's policy achievements and failures to address apartheid legacies, contemporary hunger and environmental crises.

In chapter five I address the preconditions to food sovereignty as described in the literature and apply them to the South African context. The purpose of this chapter is to comment on policies, statistics and examples in the South African food system to explore the way in which food sovereignty initiatives would have to overcome issues of powerlessness and hunger. By doing so I also contextualise the SAFSC's terrain for struggle in each area and highlight where specific action is required to make a very food unsovereign South Africa more just.

Chapter six, entitled 'The food sovereignty alternative in South Africa,' introduces and explains the genesis of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign. In this section I detail how it emerged, what brought about the emergence of the campaign and who the integral players have been thus far. Thereafter, I introduce the various actors in the campaign, discuss their understandings of food sovereignty and further establish what activities they undertake locally to advance food sovereignty and the campaign. Throughout this chapter I allude to the preconditions of food sovereignty as discussed in the previous chapter and the literature review to determine what gap the campaign is filling, and to what extent it is achieving its objectives of promoting a more food sovereign South Africa.

Finally, chapter seven concludes this report. In the conclusion I bring together the most interesting findings of the research and show how I have answered the research

questions. I explain how, in South Africa, an alternative food regime is possible and is gradually emerging under the coordination of the SAFSC. I also highlight the gaps that the campaign has filled thus far and assess its importance by reflecting on what the situation would be like in South Africa if there was no campaign. I argue that the prospects of achieving a food sovereign South Africa are seemingly dire in the short term, because of the entrenched neoliberal state, but this does not mean that there is no hope. Hope lies in the corporate food regime and the powerless majority. While 'prospects' are not entirely measurable or predictable due to a range of factors inherent in the corporate food regime, for example those external to any one group of people's control such as financial crises, exacerbated environmental crises, an illegitimate government, or a government that is inadequate to deal with prolonged drought, these factors may give rise to greater resistance sooner than the SAFSC can handle. While the past year has given some indication that resistance is brewing in a very troubled and insecure South Africa, for example through the student protests, this does not suggest either that the SAFSC might become redundant. Instead it shows that the SAFSC is currently playing, and may continue to play a vital and central role in the upcoming years as it attempts to coordinate and consolidate various alternative approaches in the transition to a safer, more just and sustainable food system.

# CHAPTER 2
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

Theorists have long debated the issue of hunger and proposed different solutions to address it. For example, the orthodox approach to hunger founded by Thomas Malthus regards overpopulation as the chief cause of hunger. In 1798 Malthus claimed that population growth would naturally outstrip the growth in food production until the world would no longer be able to feed itself. For Malthus this would result in eventual starvation, which would drastically reduce human population to a level that can finally be sustained by the available food supply. Solutions to hunger for Malthus ought to then reduce population growth by reducing fertility for example (Thomas and Evan, 2011:471-472). Not only have solutions such as these presented ethical dilemmas in development, but they have not proven very successful either. For example, Post Malthusian theorists have since promoted strict family planning policies that limit Third World populations in one way or another.

Other solutions to hunger have arisen out of criticisms of the orthodox approach. Critics argue that orthodox theorists' analyses ignore important factors of food distribution. They note that despite the increases in food production per capita, little impact has been made on the devastating numbers of hungry people globally, in fact the number of hungry continues to grow, especially in the Third World where most of the food is produced (Thomas and Evan, 2011:444). Amartya Sen has since put forward a convincing alternative to the orthodox explanation of hunger in his pioneering book, *Poverty, and Famines: An essay on entitlement and deprivation* (1981). Here he argues that famines have often occurred during years of peak food availability and rather than not having enough food to eat, people go hungry because their claim to food has been disrupted, and as a result they lack entitlement to that food. In this theory, labelled the *entitlement approach* to hunger, theorists argue that hunger is caused by lack of access to food, not only lack of availability thereof. As such, conditions for hunger prevail, even in a land of plenty.

It is here where Lappé and Collins (1988) pick up on the same question as they seek to establish why there is hunger in a land of plenty. For them hunger is as a result of powerlessness, whereby power to protect oneself and those one loves has been stripped from the poor. From this insight, they find that the root cause of hunger is not natural disasters or scarcity of food or land, but rather a scarcity of democracy. They claim that it is in antidemocratic systems where power is tightly concentrated that the majority of people are left with no say at all (Lappé and Collins, 1988:3).

The food regime analysis presented by Friedmann and McMichael (1989) adds to the above views by exploring the broader relations of food production, consumption and distributions to show that different forms of capital accumulation in agriculture constitute global power arrangements (Magnan, 2012:375; McMichael, 2009:144), thus showing that it is not only lack of democracy held by an individual in a state, but further that between states there are power relations affecting the way that food is produced and distributed, which ultimately affects the availability of food and thus hunger. Madeleine Fairbairn (2011) further develops the food regime analysis as she shows that within each food regime, a framework to address hunger has emerged. These frameworks include the right to food frameworks, freedom from hunger, food security and finally food sovereignty.

In this literature review I discuss the food regimes and Fairbairn's framing of hunger to show how, as she argues, food sovereignty has arisen out of crises in the current corporate food regime and is a framework with solutions that take a deeper and broader look to the roots of the food crisis. The food sovereignty framework differs fundamentally from the previous frameworks because it was developed by the underdogs of the world food system and is the first framework that seeks to overturn the regime within which it was created (Fairbairn, 2011:30).

This literature review thus serves to introduce historical frameworks for analysing and addressing hunger, and to ultimately arrive at a framework that addresses issues of hunger at a food system level, namely food sovereignty. By drawing on Friedman and McMichael's historicisation of food regimes, I explore the origins of the current food crises, namely the corporate food regime, which is characterised by bread cartels, price-fixing, and corporate control of the food system from production to consumption.

Most importantly it is driven by profit and greed. It is also an environmentally unsustainable and socially unjust system, where staple foods are regarded as commodities for raking in large profits. In such a regime people seldom matter. It is at these roots where solutions to targeting perpetuating hunger need to be directed.

Thereafter the literature review turns to explore solutions to various crises of hunger. As I summarise Fairbairn's analysis of different frameworks of hunger, I introduce the alternative of food sovereignty, argued here as the only framework to address hunger at its roots, the roots which exist at the system level, namely at the level of the corporate food regime. For Fairbairn, each framework arises out of conditions within the food regimes in place at the time, and aims to describe and address hunger. What we can learn from Fairbairn's analysis is that solutions to hunger that focus on only one or two aspects of hunger, for example entitlement, provision or access, such as the current household food security framework, are failing to eradicate hunger, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where hunger levels are increasing. For example, Sub-Saharan Africa's global share of undernourished people has increased from 17.3 per cent in 1990-1992 to 26.6 per cent in 2012-2014 (FAO, 2014:11). A more progressive framework for addressing hunger, according Fairbairn is one that food sovereignty proponent's advocate, one that deals with the power in the system and envisions and promotes an alternative food system.

Because this research focusses on actors, actions and campaigns promoting food sovereignty in South Africa, I then turn to the literature to explore what food sovereignty entails and how it can be achieved. Little literature exists on food sovereignty, particularly in South Africa. As such, a chapter is dedicated to exploring hunger, the food system and food sovereignty in the South African context, while the corresponding section in this literature review points to various international experiences, theories and critiques of food sovereignty and how to achieve it. Raj Patel recognises the 'big tent' nature of food sovereignty, as a broad concept under which many definitions, principles and ideas are birthed and advocated for. I present a few of the principles and characteristics that have been established, put into practice and theorised about in order to understand what food sovereignty is, how it is practiced and how it is evolving from the first generation of rural peasants, to a second generation that includes urban middle class consumers (De Schutter, 2015:2).

However, for some food sovereignty theorists like Akram-Lodhi, food sovereignty principles such as distributive agrarian reform and food system localisation for example, can only offer limited guidance on what kind of specific changes would need to happen in order to achieve the specific outcome, such as agrarian reform or localised food systems, and ultimately food sovereignty. As such I present arguments, examples and concrete preconditions from the literature to suggest what needs to exist in a country before food sovereignty can actually be present. The literature review concludes with criticisms of food sovereignty as presented in the literature, of which there are many due to the radical, transformative and seemingly 'backward' appeals of its proponents.

**The roots of the ongoing food crisis**

Analysts of early modern food systems, Friedmann and McMichael (1989) sought to determine the conditions under which the world staple food circuits emerged to form a world food system which catered to the needs of capitalism in its drive to raise profits by reducing inputs (McMichael, 2015:195). The answer to this question culminates in a food regime theory, detailing a Marxist analysis of food's role in the accumulation of capital in the international food system. Through their analysis, Friedmann and McMichael identify two food regimes. The first food regime is characterised by an era of exports to Europe from the colonial states during 1870-1914. During this regime, family farmers were the primary suppliers of grain and meat which would serve the emergent European urban workforces (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989:100). The first regime thus exemplified the culmination of the organisation of pre-capitalist regions by colonial powers and also saw the rise of the nation state system (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989:95).

The second food regime extended the relationship agriculture had with metropolitan nation-states to the post-colonial world. It was termed the mercantile and industrial regime which encompassed the period from 1950s-1970s, and was initiated by the US after World War II. The US was in a strategic position, it had grain surplus which it provided to Third World countries in order to fulfil its political and economic national interests. Political interests were met as the US was able to win states over (with aid

in the form of new staple foods) in the context of the Cold War struggle with Russia. Economic interests were met as the US could 'dump' surplus grain in the Third World, thus removing food surpluses from economic markets (Clapp, 2012:31) and providing developing countries with food 'aid' – often with strings attached, and further encouraging trade. The effects that such trade had on the receiving countries left them dependent on foreign aid, while trade relations also reached to the countryside (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989:95). The second food regime grew around the grain-livestock and durable foods complexes, these were central to the restructuring of agriculture both transnationally and culturally (McMichael, 2009:149). While the first food regime saw the rise of the nation state, the second brought the state system to completion through decolonisation, but also weakened it through the transnational restructuring of agricultural sectors by agro-foods networks (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989:95).

These two regimes illuminate the international relations of food since the 1870s and show how transitions between different food regimes are birthed out of tensions in the previous order. McMichael (2009:287) further identifies a possible third food regime with its tensions, namely the corporate food regime. It is this current food regime which places faith in neoliberal market policies and the corporatisation of agriculture. For example, this regime is linked to globalisation and strives for the removal of social and political barriers to the free flow of capital in food and agriculture, and ensures this by the institutionalisation of the World Trade Organisation's agreement on agriculture. The effects of this regime are already being experienced as neoliberal policies encourage dismantling of national marketing boards, agribusiness consolidation and elimination of small-scale farmer subsidies. This has further led to the displacement of small-scale farmers, the undermining of local means of subsistence (McMichael, 2009:287) and a host of other brutalities, including inequality, increased hunger, ecological degradation, the introduction of genetically modified crops, a nutrition transition, environmental degradation, food price fluctuations, and the erosion of small farmers' control over their seeds, to name a few (Branford, 2011; McMichael, 2009:292)

The corporate food regime may however never fully consolidate as it is being challenged by food systems change activists as a result of the recent and current food

and climate crises. As the assumptions that underlay the corporate food system are unravelling, so the problems inherent in it are becoming evident, and the brutalities are increasingly being felt (McMichael, 2009:292). It is this regime with its brutalities which rural peasants of La Via Campesina came to reject (McMichael, 2015; Desmarais & Wittman, 2014:1155; Wittman et al. 2010, 2). Patel (2011:190) presents the problem succinctly:

> 'The structure of the modern food system has been designed by a handful of privileged people… this is illegitimate because the design of our social system isn't the privilege of the few, but the right of all.'

By recognising that we live in a corporate food regime that is controlled by capital designed by a few, and that perpetuates hunger, Fairbairn shows how food sovereignty offers a systemic solution to hunger. I summarise Fairbairn's analysis below, drawing on other theorists' texts to supplement the analysis.

**Framing of hunger and solutions to it**

In her paper, '*Framing Resistance: International food regimes and the roots of Food Sovereignty,'* Fairbairn (2011) further develops Friedmann and McMichael's (1989) food regime analysis as she traces the development of the discourse of the question of hunger and access to food. Unlike other approaches or theories of hunger, such as Malthus' orthodox approach or Sen's entitlement approach, that are shown to arise out of a focus on improving or altering the conditions of the hungry, Fairbairn establishes that various frameworks, for example, from the right to food, to household food security, and finally food sovereignty, arise out of contradictions in each food regime (Fairbairn, 2011:16) and therefore the socio-political, and economic systems present internationally during that period. As a result, food regimes shape food frameworks and vice versa. Food sovereignty is thus argued by Fairbairn to be the most recent in an evolution of historically embedded frameworks created to address global food issues (Fairbairn, 2011) because it deals with the problem of hunger at its roots (Wittman *et al*., 2011; McMichael, 2015; Patel, 2011; Brem-Wilson, 2015) as it 'strives to create a radically different food system' (Fairbairn, 2011:16). At the same

time her analysis brings attention to the inherent difference between food sovereignty and the well-known, frequently used framework/concept of 'household food security.' Fairbairn's analysis is presented below.

During the first food regime, no universal food frameworks were present. While historians have documented public claims for food such as bread riots which can be said to have taken place during the first food regime, it was only during the second regime that the first universally recognised framework for food emerged (Fairbairn, 2011:19). The first framework, termed the 'right to food' was followed shortly by the 'freedom from hunger' framework. Both of these frameworks served as a means of conceptualising hunger and further promoting solutions to hunger and food crises during the post-war regime. Both frameworks reflected and were influenced by the dominant political and economic ideologies of the post-war regime, and were conceptualised by relatively powerful diplomats. The post-war regime saw the emergence of the nation state, and it was also during this time that the nation state (particularly in Europe) began to take on unheard of responsibilities in the regulation of food supply, such as rationing, subsidising bread and providing nutritional education. It was believed that through such state-led interventions, hunger could be eradicated, as states attempted to ensure that acute food shortages would not be experienced. During 1948, the right to food was even given a place in article 25 of the *Universal declaration of human rights*. Although these documents were drafted by international bodies, the obligation to ensure the right to food was dependent on national level policy and enforcement (Fairbairn, 2011:20).

The right to food and freedom from hunger frameworks thus place the responsibility of feeding the hungry on the state. This is because in the post-war regime the state had established political and economic prominence, and now apparently a social role. Central to the role of the state was its intervention in the markets and the development of agriculture as a national sector and an industrialised sector (Fairbairn, 2011:29). The development project was birthed out of this regime, and this too influenced the framing of the question of hunger. Since it was held that US style development ought to be a universally attainable goal, it was to be achieved specifically by advances in agricultural technology. Thus, states sought to ensure this end particularly in Third World countries where traditional small-scale agriculture was viewed as an

impediment to progress. The development project, coupled with Cold War politics also influenced the way hunger in the Third World was approached. It is for this reason that food aid and capital investment for agricultural advancement was provided to the Third World, especially by the US (Fairbairn, 2011: 20, 28).

When crisis struck the post war regime during 1972-73, the problem of hunger had to be reframed. Delegates to the 1974 World Food Conference reframed it in terms of food security. Because this new food security framework was created as a response to a failed post-war regime, much of its sentiments reflected aspects of the regime, particularly the development project (Fairbairn, 2011:28). However, like its two predecessors, food security was conceptualised by global powers, and even though it attempted to remedy the faults in the post-war regime, it did so without questioning the dominant economic and political ideologies (Fairbairn, 2011:22). The food security discourse has since been shaped and reshaped, but the essence of this framework is that food security is addressed in terms of national food supply. Integral to this approach were strong states who can create favourable environments to ensure the adequate availability of food for their citizens, coupled with a global approach that ensures that adequate global food supplies are promoted, all of which were to be undertaken by increased production, market intervention and external food aid (Fairbairn, 2011:22-23).

During the 1990's a new structure emerged, and the food security framework underwent a major reformulation. Changes in the development discourse occurred, particularly under the influence of Amartya Sen's (1989:7) claim that availability of food in a state does not translate into access to food for all its citizens. This belief introduced changes to the way food security was viewed. This new framework was termed household food security, for it was argued that if a household cannot afford to buy food, all members would go hungry irrespective of the amount of food available in the country (Webb *et al*., 2006:1405; Fairbairn, 2011:29). This shift to household food security occurred under the emergence of the corporate food regime. The framers were again in the seat of power, and the household food security framework that resulted therefore mirrors a number of structures inherent in the new regime and the emerging globalisation project. These include the erosion of state responsibilities due to the assignment of increasing power to international financial institutions and

transnational corporations. In addition, the transnationalisation of agriculture was undertaken and market liberalisation was prioritised over social goals. Yet such neoliberal approaches adopt mostly technical means to achieve food security and as a result do not pay attention to inequalities in the political economy. In addition, these approaches do not concentrate on policies that might expand economic democracy and transform unequal social relations (Rai and Selvaraj, 2015:149). What this framework has further encouraged is the commodification of food because of the prolonged influence of the corporate regime. This new dimension of food security in its household guise is the dominant framework used today by international institutions, national governments and most NGO's (Fairbairn, 2011:29-30), yet it is merely contributing to greater strains on the poor (Rai and Selvaraj, 2015:151). It is this regime and this framework that is in crisis.

Thankfully this is not the end of the story of the discourse on hunger alleviation and access to food, for it would be a dismal ending, as corporations would continue to take advantage of poor farmers and citizens, and the number of hungry would continue to increase. Another framework offering some hope has since emerged. This final framework differs significantly from the other four, because it was not defined by those in any seat of power, and furthermore, unlike the other regimes, it does not seek to make small changes to the current regime, instead it attempts to completely overhaul it (Fairbairn, 2011:27). This framework, referred to as food sovereignty, is discussed in detail below.

## Food sovereignty: An alternative, progressive framework for addressing hunger

In this section I provide a brief history of food sovereignty, and further elaborate its principles, ideals and solutions to ending huger. Fairbairn clearly shows how food sovereignty emerged as a response to the corporate food regime, to be exact it emerged in 1993 from both the mobilisation of campesinos in Costa Rica and the protests of small-scale farmers in Kamataka, India (De Schutter, 2015:1). Since its emergence, as a concept and framework, and thereafter its elaboration at the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome 'food sovereignty' has increasingly occupied a significant

place in the discourse of food activists globally (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:2), such that today development agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the UN regularly use the term in discussions and documents. For example, the UN and World Bank led International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development makes mention of food sovereignty in their report, recognising that corporate concentration of agriculture and increased international trade have had negative impacts on the environment and social equity (IASSTD, 2009:8). In addition, in some countries like Bolivia, Mali, Venezuela, Senegal and Nepal food sovereignty has been embedded in their constitutions. This proliferation of food sovereignty and its infiltration into the basic discourse of social justice advocates could suggest that the food sovereignty alternative is gaining prominence as a result of the increasing problems facing the food system, thus reflecting a series of basic failures and crises in the corporate food regime, which present a desperate need for alternatives (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:2; De Schutter, 2015:2). The proliferation of these problems also explains why food sovereignty movements in different countries, which initially emerged as rural-based counter movements to neoliberal polices, have since shifted to urban areas too - as the food regime has entered crisis phase (McMichael, 2014a:11; De Schutter, 2015:2). De Schutter (2015:2) suggests these crises and shifts have given rise to a second generation of food sovereignty which takes on a number of new key characteristics. I discuss these characteristics in the following section, after outlining some key tenets of food sovereignty.

*What is food sovereignty?*

Food sovereignty proposes a radical alternative to the orthodox frameworks because it embodies a political struggle, the right to food, and agrarian reform. It is centred on democracy and justice, calling for democratisation of the food system by prioritising local markets and self-sufficiency. It calls for greater controls over corporations in the global food chain, and the democratisation of international financial institutions. It also presents a vision of the world in which decision making and governance around how food is cultivated, processed and traded is reclaimed from capital and handed back to the people, particularly the poor and underserved (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2010:76, McMichael 2010:174; McMichael, 2014a:7; La Via Campesina, 1996;

Branford, 2011:3). Ultimately, in the face of the organised power of science, business and mainstream politics, food sovereignty is about strengthening local organisations of food producers and of citizens to reclaim the power over their lives (Pimbert, 2009:12). In its second generation, food sovereignty has taken on these and additional characteristics, such as a focus on agroecology, social innovations and resilience as means by which this power can also be built.

In order to gain a greater understanding of the potential and traction that the food sovereignty alternative has to go beyond the contradictions in the present food regime, namely the social, ecological and economic crises (Rosset, 2009:192; Akram-Lodhi, 2013:2), I elaborate on its key principles below. To do this I draw from two sets of food sovereignty principles put forward by Nyeleni (2007) and Via Campesina (1996), as well as De Schutter's (2015) characterisations of the second generation of food sovereignty. In addition to these principles and characteristics I provide examples from the literature of how food sovereignty is being practiced/achieved internationally. Furthermore, while many food sovereignty theorists are not able to 'identify the possible pathways by which societies can move from the corporate food regime to food sovereignty, transforming the disaster that is the corporate food regime into a more equitable and just future' (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:2), I also show how some literature does provide concrete suggestions of how changes to global and local food systems are required to bring about food sovereignty, in the 'messy reality of the present' (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:2). As such, after each principle/characteristic provided below, I provide further ideas and examples from the literature to draw attention to what achieving these principles in practice looks like or might entail.

*Principles and characteristics of food sovereignty*

In this section I elaborate on nine principles to achieving food sovereignty drawn from various sources in the literature and food sovereignty declarations to highlight how achieving food sovereignty is being thought about in the literature and practiced in various locations. The first of these sources include the pillars of food sovereignty formulated at the Nyeleni forum for food sovereignty that took place in Mali in 2007 with more than 500 representatives from over 80 countries (Via Campesina, 2007a).

At this conference food sovereignty was further articulated and collective understandings of food sovereignty were deepened (Nyleni, 2007a:1). These understandings form the six pillars of food sovereignty. I also draw from previous principles put forward by Via Campesina at the World Food Summit in 1996. These principles serve as a set of mutually supportive principles which present an alternative to the world trade policies, as they seek to realise the human right to food (Pimbert, 2009:7). De Schutter's distinction of the first and second food sovereignty generations also serves as useful for highlighting and analysing new ways by which food sovereignty is being understood and practiced today. The first generation is comprised of the rural peasants like those farmers in Via Campesina who initially emerged in 1993 to challenge the way in which food was going to become the 'next frontier in the mill of commodification' (De Schutter, 2015:2). While peasants are still emerging today and fighting for food sovereignty, a second generation has since emerged in rural and urban areas alike as problems facing farmers and consumers have grown bigger. Taking together these principles, characteristics and preconditions to food sovereignty, much can be learned about what food sovereignty entails and how it is being promoted. I discuss these principles and examples from additional literature below.

The first principle of food sovereignty is the *right to food for all people*. Food sovereignty stresses the right to sufficient, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for all. It is a call for each nation to declare that access to food ought to be a constitutional right, and thus ensure that the fundamental right to food is then realised (Nyeleni, 2007; Via Campesina, 1996). While using similar rights language, this principle differs from the right to food framework as it is much more encompassing, stressing that it is not just any food, but the right to nutritious and culturally appropriate food (Desmarais and Wittman 2014:1156), and further adds that food sovereignty includes a right to produce food sustainably and ecologically. However, as Bentham (in Patel, 2011:190) stresses that 'wants are not means, hunger is not bread', for rights to mean anything at all they require a guarantor who is responsible for implementing a parallel scheme of duties and obligations (Patel, 2011: 191). The guarantor of this right, as stressed in the Via Campesina principle, is the state, and this is another way in which the food sovereignty right to food principle differs from that of the right to food framework. While the right to food framework focusses on the state's obligations to

guarantee the right to food and to use legal remedies to get their rights achieved, it does not rest on a particular set of policies (Windfuhr and Johnsen, 2005:23). While the food sovereignty principles clearly call on each nation to declare that access to food ought to be a national constitutional right (Via Campesina, 1996), what they further do, which is a strength of the food sovereignty framework, is to address the problem of decreasing state regulatory power. Food sovereignty thus comprises a more precise policy proposal while its proponents challenge political inactivity and the failure of the state to pursue appropriate policies that would promote a more equal food system (Windfuhr and Johnsen, 2005:29).

This leads us briefly to the role of the state in ensuring the right to food and food sovereignty. Clarke (2013:7) stresses that the state is currently an obstacle to the achievement of food sovereignty because in most nations, state power is used to impose neoliberal policies that have led to the unjust corporate food regime. Despite these obstacles, food sovereignty proponents view state power as a necessary practical means by which neoliberal trade policies can be reversed (Clarke, 2013:8). To do this, food sovereignty movements in Ecuador, for example, have dedicated most of their efforts to influencing policy change, and pushing the state to rethink and reshape the politics that govern food (Pena, 2013:1).

The right to food therefore entails the promotion of a rights-based approach, not only to food but also to food and agricultural policies. However, in order to achieve this right, further preconditions are stressed. These include a more active role of the state in promoting policies that tackle inequalities of power in the food system by ensuring adequate access to physical and economic resources, to nutritious and culturally appropriate food, as well as to culturally appropriate food producing resources, including access to water, seed and importantly land (Beauregard, 2009:9; Windfuhr and Jonhsen, 2005:14). This leads us to the next precondition, *agrarian reform.*

*Agrarian reform* is the second principle of food sovereignty. Via Campesina (1996) stresses that genuine land reform is necessary to provide landless and farming people with the ownership and control of land they work. It is also necessary to return the land to indigenous people. Food sovereignty proponents of Via Campesina believe that the land belongs to those who work it, as such, the right to land that is free of discrimination

on the basis of gender, religion, race, social or class ideology is an important precondition to achieving food sovereignty. Via Campesina also stresses the role of the government in ensuring that social and ecological infrastructure is sufficiently invested in, in addition to agrarian reform.

Pro-poor, gender responsive redistributive agrarian reform is one of the key starting points in constructing a pathway toward food sovereignty. This is because it has the potential to directly address historical injustices by which farmers lost access to land over the course of the last two centuries (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:8). As it addresses these injustices, agrarian reform fundamentally tempers with the inequality generated by market imperatives under capitalism, thus creating preconditions for the marginalised to improve their wellbeing, livelihoods and human rights. This is why Via Campesina and other food sovereignty proponents stress the importance of agrarian reform.

Some food sovereignty proponents, namely Borras and Franco (2012), opt to rather speak of *land sovereignty* as they argue that in the changing global context of the 'global land grab'. As the industrial agro-fuel context, together with the energy complexes, have made land and water key resources in the global capitalist system, they argue that *land sovereignty* can best capture the essence of the demand for land (Borras and Franco, 2012:1,6). Land sovereignty is the right of working people to have access to, use of and control over land. This principle is similar to Via Campesina's, however the way in which it is sought goes further to encompass first, a call to action against a renewed corporate and (trans)national global push to enclose the commons and second, an assertion of the need for a people's enclosure of the land (Borras and Franco, 2012). In terms of the first, elite and corporate enclosure in the form of land grabbing has been experienced globally, for example in Cambodia, where previously occupied and farmed lands were suddenly seized by the state and reallocated to domestic and transnational investors. In many cases policies such as those in Cambodia have led to dispossession of the poor and as a result are met with resistance in various organised or unorganised, legal or extra-legal ways, taking place at both local and transnational levels. Resistance like this, referred to as 'the working people's counter enclosure campaign' is a critical component of the land sovereignty principle, but represents only half of the picture of the agrarian struggle that is taking place today (Borras and Franco, 2012:8-9). The second is a more pro-active campaign

for people's enclosure where working people proactively assert their political control over their remaining lands against actual and potential threats. Land sovereignty campaigns for people's enclosure can take place through three broad strategies, including state led policies, community or highly organised social movement-led strategy, or a state/community driven strategy (Borras and Franco, 2012:8-9). I summarise each briefly below to show how the agrarian reform principle is being pursued.

State-led redistributive land reforms have been carried out by a range of states in varying contexts and have been key in ensuring land reform takes place. The state's role in land redistribution is in many contexts vital because the state often has the power, or if necessary, the coercive apparatus to make authoritative decisions in society on some significant policies and programmes. In terms of social movement led campaigns, the best known one at a national scale is that of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST) and other militant agrarian movements in Brazil. Both inside and outside Via Campesina, these movements have used strategies such as land occupation to implement state land reform law. However, models such as these, although most popular perhaps because of their dramatic methods, are difficult to replicate and are also rare. The final strategy for promoting people's access to land involves state/community-led or state/social movement led techniques. Here land reform occurs when actions from below (from communities) are met by actions from above (the state). These are the least popular, but can result in desirable outcomes for the poor as has been the case in the Philippines during 1992-2000 and in Kerala in the 1960s to 1970s. This model is important for land reform especially when the state is unable to overcome institutional or structural policies on its own, or where powerful national movements do not exist. Combining limited forces of societal actors and the state thus becomes central to land redistribution in the presence of no alternatives (Borras and Franco, 2012:10-11).

While land sovereignty involves a struggle against corporate and transnational enclosure and an assertion for people's enclosure of the land, for this to lead to the end goal envisioned by food sovereignty proponents, more than just agrarian reform is required. Akram-Lodhi stresses that what is missing from this demand is a host of additional measures that would assist male and female producers to increase

production, productivity and incomes, and thus improve their livelihoods. These include access to inputs, electricity, machinery at prices that they can afford, access to credit at important times and at the right price, and access to markets (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:8). Pro-poor gender-responsive redistribution agrarian reform with extra supportive measures that enable male and female farmers to succeed is thus the initial pathway by which societies can move from the corporate food regime toward land sovereignty and ultimately guide it on a path toward food sovereignty. Additional supportive measures are addressed in sections below.

A third principle of food sovereignty is that it *values food providers.* Food sovereignty supports the contributions of all types of food producers including women, men, migrants, pastoralists, small-scale farmers, forest dwellers, and indigenous people. Food sovereignty rejects all policies that undermine livelihoods and undervalue food producers (Nyeleni, 2007). Via Campesina stresses that government too has a role to play here in ensuring that food providers are valued. This can be done by ensuring that peasant families have access to productive land, credit, technology, markets and extension services. Government also has a role in supporting decentralised rural credit systems that prioritise the production of food for domestic consumption to ensure food sovereignty where production capacity above land is used to determine provision of credit. For Via Campesina (1996), government should encourage young people to remain in rural communities as productive citizens, this would then entail assigning new values to the work of producing food, both socially and economically. De Schutter (2015:3) recognises that these values are changing as food sovereignty actors unite to challenge the status quo, make demands on establishments and join forces to fight against government policy, for example. By doing so, they move away from the roles pre-assigned to them by the division of labour within society; they also redefine their social identities, acting as citizens to reshape their environment.

The food sovereignty principles of agrarian reform and additional support measures that value providers by providing access to credit, technology and markets, fails to address the problem of continued accumulation, however. Akram-Lodhi argues that if farmers were to continue producing using the current market model, what would eventually happen is what currently happens under capitalism. Those who are most productive and meet the market imperative will accumulate, while those who fail to,

will ultimately have to distress sales to meet short-term cash needs, and later might have to sell their assets and ultimately their labour for the same reasons. What remains is two types of producers, those who accumulate, innovate and then expand, and those who eventually rely upon selling their labour power for a wage in order to survive in the capitalist economy. One way in which this could be prevented is by implementing a restriction on the market imperative, fundamentally by restricting land markets. Such a restriction would demand that when the more successful farmers produce more and are ready to expand, they should be restricted to do so, and instead be encouraged to continue accumulating by diversifying, which could involve processing the agricultural output. The role of the state would be important here to use fiscal incentives to push successful farmers to diversify into non-farm activities. In this way, as successful farmers diversify, the need for their land diminishes, thus releasing more land for others to farm, or for providing additional land for those who are not as successful, to fully utilise available labour in an effort to improve their livelihoods (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:9-10). While this proposal may in some way promote a more equal distribution of land and capital, it does not however deal with the profit incentive, and loopholes in the state's policies may remain. What some food sovereignty proponents rather promote is the development of alternatives outside of the state that support small-scale farmers. An example of this is in Ecuador where the promotion of agroecology or the solidarity economy, whereby alternative forms of finance, production and consumption to the capitalist economy are promoted (Williams, 2014:51). Such methods are additionally implemented to achieve food sovereignty (Clarke, 2013:8).

This is not to say that state policy is not necessary. Food sovereignty actors, particularly in Ecuador, engage with state and policy for a range of demands – increased support to small-scale farmers is one of these. Major state supportive policies that are implemented, particularly at the international level are viewed as key for food sovereignty proponents who see free trade as the greatest threat to small-scale farmers (Bello, 2007). These policies might include specifically targeted protectionist measures to counteract the distortions in the world food market arising from subsidies to farmers in developed countries (Kay, 2006: 474). State policies in some cases might also serve better to stop the forced exportation of food desperately needed by their own populations (Rosset, 2011:473). Dealing with international trade

policies also aids in localising food systems – this is an additional principle I discuss below.

The fourth principle of food sovereignty is to *localise food systems and reorganise trade.* As alluded to above, this means a return to the protection of national food production against the dumping of both, artificially cheap food that undercuts local farmers and against the artificially expensive food imports that are also present today. It also means rebuilding national grain reserves and parastatal marketing boards that actively include farmer organisations. This is one of the key ways by which the food system can be taken back from the transnational corporations that serve to hoard food stocks to drive food prices up (Rosset, 2008).

In terms of localising food systems, while the first food sovereignty generations' frontline was the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the second generation seeks to invent new ways to build bridges between urban consumers and local farmers. Now the move is towards more local connections, encouraging schools, universities and farmers' markets to source locally. Alliances are thus being built at local levels between citizens, farmers and municipalities (De Schutter, 2015:2). As these actors come together to fight a common cause, providers and consumers are put at the center of decision-making over food issues; consumers are protected from poor quality and unhealthy food and GMOs; and they are able to resist governance structures and agreements that depend on and promote unsustainable and inequitable production and trade that gives power to often remote and unaccountable transnational corporations (Nyeleni; 2007). While the first generation of food sovereignty was accused of putting the needs of farmers above those of the urban consumers, today's generation's most dynamic members are often from the urban middle-class united with low-income communities, fighting for more food justice in the form of localised food systems (De Schutter, 2015:3).

There are several advantages to having more localised food systems, these include healthier communities which are more resilient in the face of shocks as they can ensure that food is distributed to those in need of it. Local food systems also have less impact on climate as they travel less food miles than the current long-distance, corporate food regimes international food system (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:13).

As food sovereignty seeks to re-establish local markets, it is imperative that those who consume food also go through a transformation, importantly a transformation of tastes (Patel, 2012 *in* Akram-Lodhi, 2013:13). Food preferences today show how corporate interests have shaped the food system. For example, the need for manufacturer's long shelf-life and the capacity for food to travel long distances without perishing is reflected in the production of processed foods, full of sodium, high fructose corn syrup and soya, and this in turn is reflected in the taste preferences of the majority of people today. What this suggests is that the taste preferences today by no means reflect the needs of food providers, nor consumers, but is purely an invention to suit the needs of capital (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:13). Only by eating locally, seasonally and by paying prices that reflect actual costs of production (including ecological costs) are the needs of the food providers met. At the same time, a system is created that does not massively contribute to climate change. The needs of the consumers are also met as they eat locally, for the current food system's taste formation has done nothing to look out for the consumer's need, and has produced an onslaught of obesity, nutrition-related diseases and a vast proportion of the population who are undernourished and underfed. In addition to working towards localised food systems, it is also important that these systems are gender responsive and producer and consumer responsive, so that they can resurrect the damaging social transformation that the corporate regime has successfully created (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:13,14).

A fifth principle and important precondition to achieving food sovereignty is to ensure democratic control and local decision-making. There are two levels at which democratic control of the food system can be attained. The first is at the producer level, and the second at the consumer level. The latter is where the new generation is making great strides. For the first, Via Campesina (1996) stresses that smallholder farmers must have direct input into formulating agricultural policies at all levels. What this entails is that the UN and other similar organisations will have to undergo serious democratisation. Democratic control also entails access to territory, land, grazing, seeds, livestock, and fish populations for local farmers. Importantly, Via Campesina stresses that resources should be shared in ways that are environmentally sustainable and socially just. Food sovereignty also rejects privatisation of natural resources through laws, commercial contracts and intellectual property rights (Nyeleni; 2007),

while Via Campesina (1996:2) further stresses that 'rural women must be granted direct and active decision-making on food and rural issues.'

Innovations that form the second generation of food sovereignty today are already democratising, particularly when viewing consumers. People who were once passive consumers, now seek to reclaim control over their food systems and to exercise their rights to choose, as such they are increasingly becoming active citizens, such that the act of consuming has become political. More than that, their actions are increasingly political as they work together to co-design their food systems, with the end goal of ultimately recapturing them to the local sphere (De Schutter, 2015:2).

An additional precondition of food sovereignty is that it *builds knowledge and resilience.* Food sovereignty seeks to utilise and build on age-old knowledge that conserves, develops and manages localised food production and harvesting systems. In addition, food sovereignty aims to develop appropriate systems of research that support indigenous knowledge and the passing on of this wisdom to future generations. Food sovereignty rejects technologies that undermine, threaten or contaminate these traditions, and life (Nyeleni, 2007), for example seed patenting and genetic engineering that prevents saving of seeds. By drawing on indigenous knowledge, in many respects food sovereignty favours resilience over efficiency. This is because, while the current dominant food system produces food in an incredibly cost efficient manner, it is also energy and capital intensive, economically consolidated and globally integrated (Feenstra, 2002:100). As a result, the world is becoming more and more uncertain in an era of peak oil, an unbalanced nitrogen cycle, nutrient depletion of soil as a result of monocropping and erosion, and the repeated shocks from climate change, and economic disaster. This impacts small-scale farmers, community processers and other local businesses who are tied to food production (Feenstra, 2002:100; De Schutter, 2015:4). What these threats mean for the new generation is that there may be more instability and volatility, thus a need to invent solutions. These solutions, food sovereignty proponents stress, need to be invented locally, using predominantly local resources (which indigenous knowledge already depends on). These solutions would also benefit from being diverse, for the more diverse they are, the better the system will be equipped to deal with unpredictable shocks (De Schutter, 2015:4). Akram-Lodhi takes this principle further, as he shows

that knowledge-sharing can lead to agricultural surpluses, which ultimately lead to improved well-being. He also shows how this can be done in concrete terms. I discuss this below.

Sustaining knowledge and creating resilience, serves as an important precondition to food sovereignty. Akram-Lodhi (2013:11) stresses that a key objective of the food sovereignty movement ought to be the creation of a 'rural development framework that facilitates sustained increases in agricultural surpluses.' This is a precondition to food sovereignty based on the argument that farming has the capacity to produce more than what the producing family needs to live and keep working the farm, as such agricultural surpluses are the foundation of improvements in well-being in town and country (Ghatak & Ingersent *in* Akram-Lodhi:2013:11). If the food sovereignty movement develops a framework to increase agricultural surplus, which favours sustainability of nature and the poor (unlike the technocratic green and gene revolutions), then what is required is that indigenous knowledge of men and women be shared. How this can practically be done is through farmer to farmer networks, as has been done in Central America. Such networks and socially-embedded learning spaces have been found to provoke changes in behaviour and further empirical evidence has shown that social learning has also led to greater innovation (Pretty and Hine, 2001:18). The food sovereignty movement is increasingly faced with the challenge of developing more autonomous and participatory ways of knowing to produce knowledge that is relevant to the context, socially just and also ecologically literate. What this means is that they have made a radical shift from the existing hierarchical and increasingly corporate-controlled research system to an approach that transfers more decision-making power to farmers, indigenous peoples, consumers and citizens for the production of social and ecological knowledge (Pimbert, 2006). One way in which this precondition can be sure to be met is not only encouraging farmer to farmer learning exchanges, but also by establishing publically funded agricultural research that is not directed solely at the urban and rurally prosperous, but is rather directed toward meeting the livelihood challenges of rurally-marginalised farmers (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:11).

The seventh principle of food sovereignty is *social peace.* Via Campesina realised that increasing levels of poverty and marginalisation in rural areas, along with growing

oppression of ethnic minorities would aggravate situations of injustice and hopelessness. These cannot be tolerated, as such they expressed that everyone has the right to be free from violence, and that food must not be used as a weapon (Via Campesina, 1996). The new generation proposes solutions to how this social peace can be achieved – namely, by strengthening social links. Polanyi noted that the market economy has in many respects eroded human relationships as useful goods have been objectified into commodities, human needs have been transformed into demand and the personal relationship of humans cooperating with one another has been corroded into the 'impersonal exchange-value of the goods produced by them' (Polanyi *in* De Schutter, 2015:3). The result of the penetration of market relationships into all spheres of life is that the human social and spiritual fabric that is part of society and food systems has been eroded. Furthermore, as 'people are individualised and less and less socialised, they are assigned roles as producers and consumers, as buyers and sellers, and they communicate through prices (De Schutter, 2015:3), critical connections between humankind and nature are lost (De Schutter, 2015:4; Feenstra, 2002:100). However, under food sovereignty and the principles and practices it promotes, these relations can be altered. For when people work together to change the system, they forge stronger community links and richer social relationships.

Another principle of food sovereignty is that it works with and protects nature. Simply put, 'those who work the land must have the right to practice sustainable management of natural resources and to preserve biological diversity' (Via Campesina, 1996:1). Furthermore, farming communities should have the right to use and protect their diverse genetic resources, especially their seeds, which they have been saving and developing throughout history. The new generation of food sovereignty has carried on this principle and is closely aligned with agroecology; a contribution to the science of agronomics which tries to work with nature in the process of producing food, thus maximising synergies between different elements of nature (Mendez *et al.,* 2013:4). By doing so, agroecology can also reduce fossil-based inputs and commits to recycle waste. Agroecology is more than a farming practice though, it is a certain way of thinking about our relationship toward nature (De Schutter, 2015:4). De Schutter provides some examples of how this principle is concretely being achieved, particularly in the production of food using agroecology methods. In the new generation this is

happening as farmers exchange information with one another, as the relationship with the farmers and 'experts' change, not to replace one hierarchy with another, but in order to work towards the co-construction of knowledge. A critical means by which the livelihood challenges of first and second generation of food sovereignty actors including marginalised farmers can be met is by facilitating the transmission of agroecological farming practices, and basing these practices and inputs on local ecologies and ecosystems instead of on the needs of distant external markets (Akram-Lodhi, 2013).

There are multiple benefits to using agroecological methods and these have been frequently documented. First is that they meet a key challenge of the 21st century of creating jobs, since agroecological farming is much more labour and employment intensive than conventional agriculture. Agroecological practices also sustain the micronutrients in soil, thereby increasing its productive potential. This is of vital importance, for built into a rural agroecological development strategy must be the ongoing effort to increase crop yields. This must be done so that the myth of the corporate food regime can be debunked, the myth which suggests that industrial agriculture is the only way to feed growing populations of people. Much research instead suggests that agroecology has the capacity to be as productive and as profitable as industrial agriculture (Rosset, 1999). In addition, when considering environmental impact assessments in the cost and benefits calculation, agroecology would prove to be even more productive economically and ecologically sustainable and more resistant to drought and other manifestations of climate change (Rosset, 2008:192).

There are additional principles and preconditions which ought to exist for food sovereignty to be achieved. These do not fall specifically under one or another principle, and neither is the list I have provided above comprehensive. Nevertheless, *a new common* sense is a principle that is important for the new generation of food sovereignty actors, as such I discuss it below.

The present-day politics of food sovereignty depends on the current relation of forces between food sovereignty and other complimentary movements against the dominant power of capital. Capital and corporate interests, with support from the capitalist state

are currently winning the battle, and this is because its agents have successfully manufactured a ‘common sense’ to suit its needs. This common sense has infiltrated attitudes, beliefs and aspirations of common people. This new common sense has provided legitimacy to those in power, while simultaneously robbing the powerless of the power they might have once had. Sustained reiterations of this common sense by those in power have resulted in a range of accepted truths. These truths include those that Lappé and Collins sought to debunk in their initial book on world hunger in 1986, such as the idea that industrial agriculture is the only way by which the world can be fed, and without it there would simply not be enough food, or that the free market can end hunger and free trade is a powerful solution (Lappé and Collins, 1986). More recently these myths have been built upon to further persuade us that small-scale producers are relics of pre-modernity, and that the presence of capital in the food system has increased choice, availability and consumer freedom, to name a few (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:18).

However, as these myths have gradually proven to be false, the corporate food regime has given rise to its nemesis, namely food sovereignty. And further, as the corporate food regime has evolved, from dumping of cheap food on increasingly unprotected farmers to appropriating land for agro-exports, the initial food sovereignty intervention has matured in vision and circumstance (McMichael, 2014b:951). It is this growing alternative movement that seeks to create a new common sense in order to forge new alliances to fight against the power bloc of capital, corporations and the neoliberal state. The movement contests ‘the contemporary 'common sense' across a range of arenas in social life in an effort to construct a new 'common sense' that configures different subjects, identities, projects and aspirations, building unity out of difference’ (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:18). Through all its differences in ideology and agendas however, finding a common ground in order to build a new moral and intellectual power bloc around food is central to the building of this movement (Holt-Gimenez, 2011:xvii). And because everyone is a consumer of food, food sovereignty offers significant potential to strike more chords than other subjects of great concern.

While the first and second generations of food sovereignty have done well to create awareness around issues of food miles, climate change, injustice and a broken food system, for example, there are further aspects which the food sovereignty movement

can elaborate in order to promote a deeper, broader and more inclusive appeal to change the food system. Theorists note the gaps that sometimes exist in the food sovereignty approach, and emphasise what more could be done to create a more inclusive appeal of food sovereignty. This could include highlighting that the corporate regime's industrial grain-livestock agro-food complex is centrally associated with climate change and ecological degradation. Furthermore, that food is centrally implicated in the livelihood inequalities that define the current critical state of affairs – for example, the fact that more people than we think are connected to the corporate food regime. These workers, including those in services, agriculture and retail, in both the developed and developing world, are not unionised and work in low-wage jobs. What this means for the food sovereignty movement is that the food sovereignty alternative may be in the interest of many more people than small-scale farmers and conscious consumers. But rather, by stressing these links persistently, they may in turn bring out the linkages required to give a stronger conviction about the ideals of food sovereignty, than is currently the case (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:19). The movement can use this key dimension to construct a new common sense 'around a broad democratic alliance of citizens united for change.' One concrete way by which this can be done is to intervene in the ongoing activities of organised labour, to establish collective bargaining units and negotiate over terms and conditions of employment and health safety. In this way, food can be inserted into other efforts to achieve economic justice, and by doing so can bring about the livelihood linkages that are needed to give more power to the food sovereignty alternative (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:20).

**From principles to preconditions to practice**

From the presentation of food sovereignty principles, characteristics and preconditions above, among others, we can learn two things. First we can obtain a greater understanding of what food sovereignty entails. It is clear that many of the principles which emerged from Via Campesina in 1996 are echoed at the Nyeleni conference in 2007. Furthermore, the second generation of food sovereignty has drawn from these principles and in the presence of the convergence of multiple crises, has elaborated, innovated and expanded the food sovereignty reach and practice. But it is clear that

more needs to be done. The second lesson to be taken from the above principles and preconditions is to approach food sovereignty with both criticism and admiration. Criticism because food sovereignty should be regarded as more than a set of principles, but it demands concrete steps that ensure concrete preconditions before food sovereignty can be achieved. And admiration because it has the potential to bring about the much needed change to the current unjust and unsustainable corporate food system which is implicated in systemic crises where multiple dimensions converge (Rosset, 2011:21). Food sovereignty can thus have positive implications for the environment and the majority of people currently oppressed by the food system - not only farmers, but also consumers and those who work in other low-wage jobs in the corporate food regime.

At the same time, we should question whether preconditions can be universalised. Akram-Lodhi does well to draw attention to the fact that we need concrete examples, and that we need to consider implications of achieving one principle in the long run. For example, achieving agrarian reform on its own as a first step in a capitalist society would not promote improved livelihoods for the majority of the people, as another form of accumulation would ensue. Thus additional support measures are required to ensure that recipients of redistributed land can benefit from that land, for example. However, what should also be noted is that while most of the preconditions are directed at the global food sovereignty movement, and some are directed at state and local levels, in some areas it is difficult to locate a local movement's roles in achieving these preconditions. Furthermore, the 'messy reality of the present' is different for movements in different countries, cultures, economies and geographies. This raises an important concern which Agarwal alludes to. I conclude this argument and the literature review by addressing critiques of food sovereignty below.

**Critiques of food sovereignty**

Food sovereignty and its ideals are not without flaws, and Bernstein (2014) is quick to notice them. His key concern is on the ability of small-scale farmers to feed the rest of the non-farming world (should all corporate farms be dismantled) (Bernstein, 2014:1057). Another concern from Bernstein is about the way in which food will be

distributed without a market model, should the peasant farmers win the battle. He terms this the downstream question (Bernstein, 2014:1051-1052). McMichael responds to the first question however with a reminder that small producers still account for up to 70 per cent of the world's food (McMichael, 2015:196). Akram-Lodhi would respond that Bernstein's version of 'common sense' is a fruit of the corporate regime's plans to lure in consumers and reproduce the industrial farming model (as is being done in Africa) to ultimately increase profits. Yet linked to this, further critique is provided by Agarwal (2014:1265) when he assesses the global nature of the food sovereignty movement and the way in which its vision is to be adapted to local contexts, like that of Akram-Lodhi's too. For Agarwal (2014:1265) 'it is equally important to recognise that the valuable rights of voice and choice of disadvantaged in local contexts cannot always fall in line with preconceived trajectories defined by global movements on behalf of the disadvantaged.' This is an important point, which Aerni (2011:30) echoes as he questions the assumption that all farmers would willingly choose to return to the peasant way. Perhaps some farmers in the North would, but these farmers might not suffer the same challenges that those in the South do. Herein lies a paradox within food sovereignty. McMichael provides a strong rebuttal to Bernstein's criticisms, which can be applied to Agarwal's paradox too. This is discussed as I conclude the literature review below.

**Overcoming Agarwal's paradox: Understanding alternatives and context**

It is clear that food sovereignty includes a range of struggles, and that critiques on the viability of such a movement are necessary. While food sovereignty has a clear goal of transforming the food system, it is also evidently quite an elastic discourse and practice because the food regime itself is continuously evolving and restructuring. As such, McMichael (2015:200) stresses that food sovereignty embodies movement and it is an uneasy and organic process. It is further not a movement concerned with clear-cut solutions, rather, it incorporates a wide range of ideals of a multi-faceted counter-movement which is gradually feeling its way into the future (McMichael, 2015: 200). This is a strength of the movement:

> The strength of this global movement is precisely that it differs from place to place… The world is a complex place, and it would be a mistake to look for a single answer to complex and different phenomena. We have to provide answers at different levels – not just the international level, but local and national levels too (Bové and Dufour, 2001:168).

Food sovereignty has felt its way into South Africa, and is as much a local endeavour here as it is a global movement. How it is expressed in South Africa however, and how its actors and activists seek to bring about change to the system is determined largely by local dynamics (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014:1156). It is for this reason that the emergence of the food sovereignty campaign in South Africa, and the local dynamics of South Africa require exploration. Furthermore, it is of particular importance that the voice and choice of small-scale farmers be made known, in order for the movement to address their challenges effectively. Methods detailing how I seek to explore the food sovereignty alternative in South Africa are discussed in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 3
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research question has originated out of a pressing need, namely to address a condition in South Africa where thirteen million people currently go hungry, in a world where hunger is exacerbating as solutions fail in various ways. The literature review has shown that a key way in which mainstream solutions such as food security initiatives fail is that they do not address the roots of hunger, namely the causes of powerlessness in the corporate food regime. At the same time, the industrial food system is exacerbating hunger in the long run as it destroys soils, ecosystems and biodiversity. The purpose of this research is to explore alternative solutions to hunger that exist in South Africa, particularly those that promote food sovereignty and, which have as their objectives to localise food systems, demonstrate alternatives such as agroecology and which seek to shift the balance of power in the food system away from corporates and back into the hands of producers and consumers. In this chapter I discuss the methodology used to undertake the research, as I explored the underexplored landscape of food sovereignty in South Africa, with a specific focus on the nascent South African Food Sovereignty Campaign as a case study. Here I detail the research design, data collection methods, the research site, sampling and limitations of the methodology.

## Methodology to explore food sovereignty in South Africa

Numbers, when exposed serve well to shock us, but at the same time they can distance us from real people and real solutions behind those numbers. Since we have been distanced from something that is actually very close to us, namely powerlessness (a feeling associated too with hunger), I do not seek to tell a story of numbers, but rather to provide a qualitative study of the state of South Africa's food system (admittedly, I do use numbers at times – to shock) and the progressive responses like food sovereignty that exist to try and give back the power to the people. Food sovereignty as an ideal and as a movement encompasses a broad range of issues from concerns about seeds to local markets to the agrarian question. As such the methodology required to explore food sovereignty involves a qualitative research

design. A qualitative approach to research consists of a set of practices that seek to make sense of the world, and in the process represent it through a series of interviews of conversations with people, thus making their perceptions visible (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003 in Davies, 2007:10). In addition, this research is exploratory, as I seek to use secondary data to understand the food system in South Africa. While research on the food system in South Africa has already been conducted (see Pereira, 2013), I refer to it in my research, but go further to explore and critique the food system and solutions to hunger in South Africa using the food sovereignty framework. In addition, this research explores a progressive alternative. There are thus two parts to the research which I discuss below. Thereafter I discuss the methods used to obtain data to answer each question.

**Two research questions**

The first question this research seeks an answer to is, very broadly, *what is the current state of the food system in South Africa?* This question is broken down into sub questions and is presented in the two chapters following this one. The first chapter entitled *The South African food system* aims to explore the roots of hunger in South Africa using a food regime analysis. It seeks to highlight some of the brutalities in the food system, citing both numbers and conditions. It further takes a look at solutions that exist in South Africa to eradicate hunger. Government's response to hunger has been well documented by McLaren *et al* (2015) in their report on the right to food in South Africa. This is a useful and comprehensive report which I use to draw on a few examples of policy responses in various sectors, but then go further and assess civil society and business' response too. The chapter following, entitled *How food unsovereign is South Africa?* assesses the food system in terms of the food sovereignty principles and preconditions to determine how far along the path towards food sovereignty South Africa is, and where additional intervention might be required. Answering these questions lays the foundation for the following question.

The second research question is *what does food sovereignty in South Africa look like and how is it being achieved*? Answers to this question are found in the third empirical chapter, *Food Sovereignty in South Africa.* In this chapter I turn to the case study of

the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and explore its genesis, organisation, actors, and importantly how it seeks to achieve food sovereignty. In this chapter I also explore what food sovereignty is to those in the campaign, particularly the farmers and local activists in order to understand the voice and choice of those fighting for food sovereignty in South Africa. Below I explain how I gathered the data required to answer these questions.

**Research methods**

To answer the research questions, I use three key methods, namely a desk review, participant observation and in-depth interviews. I discuss each below as it pertains to the research questions.

First, in order to locate data that answered questions about the South African food system, I used secondary data, news reports and additional literature from searches on the internet, in journals, news articles and on google scholar. These documents were useful because they provided answers about the conditions of hunger in South Africa and brutalities that can be attributed to the corporate food regime. Thereafter, I made use of internet searches to locate data on the government's various policies to address hunger. These searches proved challenging, and at times frustrating for two reasons. First, because there are a range of policies in South Africa that exist to address hunger. Some of these policies are specific to departments, while others depend on coordination between a range of departments. While an internet search on the policies brought up various applicable policies from the government gazette, and government departments, the results were overwhelming as I could not bring any order to the numerous, sometimes disconnected policies. Some of these policies also lacked implementation plans, and there was no way to establish how the plan was going to be carried out. From this range of seemingly disconnected policies it was difficult to establish which were the most relevant to my research, which had been implemented and which were successful.

The second reason why finding data on policy in South Africa was difficult and frustrating was because there is a lack of adequate reporting on these policies at any

level of government. Websites are not kept up to date and there is no central location to find which policies are still in practice. As such, I returned to the literature. Few literature searches returned positive results about what I was looking for, until eventually I found the working paper on the right to food in South Africa by McLaren *et al* (2015). This document was helpful because it provided a well-ordered outline of policy documents that exist to ensure the right to food in South Africa. Researchers had undertaken in-depth studies on the topic and provided both chronological accounts of policies and a list of various policies implemented by departments. I used the paper to guide my choice of policies, to determine which had been implemented, which were currently being implemented and which were outright failures. Accessing policies on the internet by searching for them by name thereafter proved a lot easier, however progress reports on these policies was also still sometimes scarce. The Parliamentary Monitoring Group website (www.pmg.org.za) filled this gap somewhat as it provided useful information about policy processes and progress. This non-governmental website delivers verbatim records of proceedings of parliamentary committees. Here some information about the progress in terms of policy could be gathered since reporting on different strategies of government departments was found to be inadequate. Therefore, to answer the question of the South African food system, I made use of purely secondary data, in the form of literature, reports, meeting minutes, internet sources and news reports. To assess the state of food sovereignty in South Africa, I drew from this data and additional secondary sources to provide a summary of the current state of the South African food system.

In order to answer the second question, and gather data about the food sovereignty alternative in South Africa, I used three methods. First, document analysis was used to answer questions about the genesis of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign, the partners and strategies. I could locate answers to these questions easily because progress and minutes from meetings have all been well documented in publically available reports, press statements and newsletters. These documents are available on the SAFSC website, and are also freely distributed at various SAFSC events. To complement these documents, I made use of an additional data collection method, namely participant observation, as I discuss below.

This method is one that presented itself to me at a later stage in the research, shortly after I started fieldwork. While my initial intention was to undertake participant observation with five SAFSC activists, to observe, assist and participate in the daily duties of their organisations as they promote food sovereignty, this plan changed before I had made arrangements for these observations.

Since the beginning of 2015 I volunteered at various events at the SAFSC through a connection at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits University). While volunteering at a SAFSC event in June 2015 I was met with the possibility of getting more involved in the campaign. Soon thereafter I became a part-time volunteer at the NGO, the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC) for six months. This was an exciting prospect, as not only would I get more access to the participants in the campaign, but I would be right at the centre of coordination of the campaign as COPAC is currently serving as the secretariat to the SAFSC. In addition, my concerns about being a researcher for purely degree purposes were quelled as I would be trained to be a food sovereignty activist and assist in the ongoing establishment and promotion of the campaign. Being an activist researcher, as I have heard, is an important form of ethical research.

As such, the key method used to gain greater understanding of my case study, was still by participant observation, but whilst at one organisation for an extended period of time whereby I was able to immerse myself in the campaign operations and activities. During this time, I was also able to meet activists of the campaign to undertake in-depth interviews, the third research method used, as I discuss below.

A final method used to elicit information, this time from those actors and activists who make up the campaign, was through in-depth interviews. Data from these interviews provided insight into what food sovereignty is in South Africa, according to actors and activists. Interviews also provided further insight into the establishment of the campaign, and gave me interesting insights into the activists' visions of what a food sovereign South Africa would look like, and what is being done to achieve these visions.

Together, these three methods gave me adequate data to inform this research. Below I describe the research site and sampling methods for the latter two methods in more detail.

**Research site, sampling and data collection tools**

The research site was in Johannesburg since COPAC is based in Johannesburg and many of the SAFSC events take place in Johannesburg as it is a central location for bringing people together. At these events, SAFSC activists from all over South Africa frequently met at a local conferencing venue for various assemblies, festivals or training. Being a volunteer gave me an opportunity to attend all these events in Johannesburg. These included two activist schools and a seed-saving workshop, where I was both a participant and a volunteer. I also attended national coordinating meetings, one which was a teleconference and one which was held over two days in Johannesburg. Here I was tasked with taking minutes. I also assisted in planning and organising the annual food sovereignty festival that took place on World Food Day, 17 October 2015 at the Greenhouse project in the Johannesburg CBD. This event brought together over 200 people from both the public and the campaign. It was a space to celebrate food sovereignty, and at the same time I was able to observe and take part in different activities and even assist in a session on creative campaigning where I demonstrated mural painting.

As a Wits student, I was also tasked with establishing a food sovereignty and climate justice forum at Wits. I facilitated many of the meetings of the forum, took minutes, communicated with the members and participated in activities hosted by the forum, such as documentary screenings and an agroecology training session in the Wits food garden. On one occasion I went with the rest of the COPAC team to the West Rand. The purpose of the trip was to scope out idle land for the campaign, for activist schools and demonstration sites. On this trip we also visited an activist's farm. This was a large farm that had been redistributed to the farmer. The visit gave me insight into what happens on the ground, and I learned about some of the challenges of farmers in the SAFSC.

Finally, most of my volunteering happened at the COPAC office and over email and telephone where I was required to follow up with various partner organisations and their commitments to the SAFSC. I also assisted with the website and the SAFSC newsletter. As such, even though the research site was limited to Johannesburg, I was fortunate that activists from all over the country gathered in Johannesburg, where I could arrange interviews with them, without having to travel far to meet them.

Interviews were undertaken during the two activist schools, one in June and one in July, 2015. These were optimal sites to locate activists in the campaign, who had been brought in from all over the country. Here I approached the facilitators and asked whether I could attend the schools and observe for research purposes. I was introduced to the activists and none had objections to me being there. They were also notified that I might approach them for interviews, which I did in between sessions and during mealtimes.

Sampling was thus convenience sampling. I had initially decided that I would require a certain number of farmers, activists and people from the NGO sector in order to obtain a representative sample of the activists. However, after completing the first few interviews I realised that many of the actors wore many hats and it was difficult to categorise them under one label. I ended up interviewing twelve people in total, each had to sign written consent which I explained to them before the interviews commenced. To maintain their anonymity, I have used pseudonyms in the report. The interviewees' positions and occupations include urban and rural farmers, community development practitioners, members of social movements, coordinators of cooperatives, forum coordinators, activists and environmental activists. Although many wore various hats, I was still able to make some distinction and analysis in terms of their understanding of food sovereignty, which I discuss in chapter six.

Data collection tools included an interview schedule and field diary. The interview schedule was a semi-structured schedule that made use of open-ended questions to understand the activists' positions, challenges and understandings of food sovereignty. The questions allowed for respondents to give as much information as possible, but when information was not sufficient or clear, I would probe the respondents. To record data from participant observation at events, I would take notes

on my laptop. In some of these events I was required to take minutes, which then also served as my field notes. After each event I recorded reflections and observations in a field diary. Initially I structured the entries to include the name of the event, a description of who was present, my observations, my role, supporting documents from the event that were available (for example minutes and press statements) and reflections on the entire event. However, as time went on and as activities became more frequent, I would just write general comments of observations and reflections after each event.

**Limitations and ethics**

Some of the data collected was not representative of all partners in the campaign, nor of all the different types of actors. For example, answers to the question of what is food sovereignty? and what does food sovereignty mean for your organisation? only reflected understandings of food sovereignty from twelve actors in the campaign. While these findings were not intended to be comprehensive, they are however supported by a document from the right to food dialogues (meetings held to discuss challenges facing people in the food system, which was one of the events that gave rise to the SAFSC). These dialogues were hosted by COPAC during 2014 and here definitions of food sovereignty from activists present were discussed and recorded in the report. This report and its findings provide a much more representative view of food sovereignty understandings, while my interviews merely confirm these findings and provide further insights into what food sovereignty entails and what it would look like if it was achieved in South Africa. Therefore, I overcame this limitation by triangulation.

In terms of ethics, it should be noted that I followed all required university procedures to apply for ethical clearance to undertake this research. I was thereafter granted ethical clearance. During the research phase, in line with my ethical protocols as set out in my ethics application, I began each interview by explaining the research to the activists, by clarifying my role and theirs in this research. Thereafter I requested that they sign a consent form, which all participants willingly did. Anonymity of these participants has been maintained as I make use of pseudonyms in this research report.

However, because the identity of various organisations in this campaign are publically available on the SAFSC website, and on other websites or documents, I could not maintain anonymity of them and this was explained to respondents. Furthermore, COPAC's role as the secretariat is also not something that can be kept anonymous, as such I made sure to obtain necessary permission from COPAC to undertake research of their and the SAFSC's operations and events while volunteering for them. Throughout the research I experienced no ethical dilemmas and all activists and respondents were particularly willing to share their understandings, experiences and knowledge with me in an effort to bring greater awareness to their challenges and the need for the food sovereignty alternative in their communities and in South Africa. This attitude is in line with what I would expect from such activists who are also trying to promote an alternative system that rests largely on promoting knowledge commons. In the following chapters I present findings from the research, beginning first with a look at the South African food system.

# CHAPTER 4
# THE SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEM

Twenty years of democracy in South Africa have seen some great advances in addressing the debilitating legacies of apartheid. Economic growth occurred for most of these years, and the provision of basic services like houses, water, medical services and electricity, as well as infrastructure to ordinary citizens has improved dramatically. Despite these improvements there is compelling evidence that structural poverty, a major legacy of apartheid is deepening (Ntsebeza and Hall, 2007:2; Leibbrandt *et al.,* 2012:19). Along with this poverty we are also witnessing an increasingly undemocratic and unjust food system, where millions still go hungry (Oxfam, 2014:6).

Why?

In this chapter we turn to the food sovereignty framework to answer this question.

## Crises and brutalities in the food system

Many of the issues that prompted the emergence of the food sovereignty alternative internationally are deeply felt in South Africa too, and are evident in the inequalities, injustices and brutalities present in the food system. In addition to widespread hunger, these brutalities include an unjust land structure, corporate control, a nutrition transition and lack of support to small-scale farmers, to name a few. These brutalities are exacerbated by crises present in South Africa, such as climate crisis, economic crisis, water crisis and an energy crisis. These brutalities, crises and the resultant hunger can be attributed to, among other things, the South African government's embrace of neoliberal policies of the corporate food regime. In some cases, the roots of hunger emanate not only from the corporate food regime's presence in a country, but also evolve from other structures inherent in a country's history and context. This is especially true for South Africa, whose history of apartheid presents a unique and important case for understanding the food system and food related policies (Koch, 2011:2). There is a history for this case which begins long before apartheid was

institutionalised. These injustices take the form of racial inequality and are still evident today, as I discuss in this chapter.

In order to better contextualise this research on the South African food system and food sovereignty, this chapter aims to do two things. First, it describes the current brutalities in the South African food system. While highlighting the brutalities, I then suggest possible causes of them. These causes are informed by the food sovereignty literature and the literature on the South African food system. Causes of hunger in South Africa have been well documented and range from the access of food, the availability of food, to the lack of resources (such as land, seed, water) for people to produce their own food. These causes are similar in other countries too; however, I seek to further show the uniqueness of the South African case which has its historical roots in apartheid's exclusionary policies on the majority of the black population. I also show how contemporary neoliberal corporate food regime characteristics, such as trade agreements, globalisation and the commodification of food is playing out in the South African food system to underpin and exacerbate hunger. I thus argue that the roots of present day hunger in South Africa can be found in both apartheid policies and in the neoliberal regime's hold on South Africa's government, which is reflected in state policies created to eradicate hunger.

Second, I present, discuss and critique post-apartheid and current strategies to address hunger in South Africa. These strategies include those broad national policies and strategies drafted by national government institutions, to more sector specific policies that deal with nutrition, food production and agriculture, food relief and emergency planning. At the same time, I refer to civil society's and business' involvement in hunger reduction strategies. This is done to paint a picture of what is being done in South Africa to address hunger. In doing so, I also critique various programmes to reveal several gaps.

This chapter does not only serve to contextualise the landscape in the South African food system, but will further inform the following chapter which aims to analyse and assess the current situation in South Africa in terms of the principles and preconditions to food sovereignty as addressed in the literature, thus providing a food sovereignty critique of the South African food system and the current approaches to address

hunger. This will be done to locate the space in which the case study, the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign is operating, in order to show the parameters and the gaps in the food system that might require attention by the campaign, but also to show that even though there is despair in the fields, and in the stomachs of so many hungry, there is an alternative. This alternative is present in pockets of South Africa and is being coordinated by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign. This campaign is a constant reminder that 'choices are there to be made, and to be imagined. Not just choices to turn back the clock, but to imagine something new. This can only happen after a cold look at where we are now and what has failed.' (Patel, 2007:18). So in this chapter I take a look at where South Africa is now and I highlight what has failed. Insight gained from this and the following chapter informs the chapter thereafter as I assess the role, successes and challenges of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign as they fight for a more food sovereign South Africa.

The main argument I develop in this chapter is that South Africa requires a fundamental change in its food system. This is because current strategies are not working as they do not address the root of hunger in South Africa. I also argue that the role of the state needs to be more pronounced. While its policies are certainly progressive in some respects (i.e. the promotion of small-scale farmers and a policy intent on land reform), they are dogged by mismanagement of funds, poor coordination of policy implementation strategies, and are all in some way or another linked to a strong focus on economic growth at the expense of people and the environment. In addition, coordination between progressive civil society movements and NGOs is required to build a strong base to fill government gaps, but more importantly to challenge government policy, implementation and put the constitution to work. I also show how and why it is necessary to deal with power in the food value chain. Policies and a responsive government is key, but it is only by dealing with power at the roots of the crisis, that we will be able to see real progress in the lives of the poor and in the condition of the environment.

## Crises, hunger and its causes in South Africa

Below I discuss some of the causes of today's inequalities particularly relating to the unjust agrarian structure – a key driver of hunger in the past – and some of the colonial state's responses to hunger, all in an effort to uphold free-market principles. Thereafter I discuss some of these brutalities and their roots in the apartheid regime and the post-apartheid corporate influenced South African food system. I do this to describe hunger, its brutalities and its causes, and to highlight where possible points of intervention are situated in order to deal with the roots of hunger. First I briefly discuss the colonial government's approach to national hunger.

### *Colonial government and apartheid*

During the nineteenth century, African small-scale farming comprised of peasant farmers, including thousands of black tenant farmers, who would grow fresh produce for markets in the cities (Du Preez, 2013:165). After the establishment of the Union of South Africa, and during the period between 1913 and 1948, a number of policies were established to disrupt this vibrant African small-scale farming sector (which was outperforming white farmers at the time) (Bundy, 1988:119), in favour of white commercial agriculture. These policies set the basis for the present dualistic agricultural structure we see in South Africa today (FAO, 1995:87-88). The Natives' Land Act of 1913 in particular, disadvantaged African small-scale farmers as it segregated Africans and Europeans on a territorial basis, restricting Africans to native reserves (Bundy, 1988:126). These reserves were allocated only about 7.8 per cent of the total land area (Du Preez, 2010:165; FAO, 1995:88). During 1926 the colonial government then established a Native Affairs Department. This department was tasked with overseeing African reserves. Some argue that the development of the Native Affairs Department was the colonial state's attempt to integrate free market principles with the aims of providing relief to and uplifting black people. The Native Affairs Department's desire to uphold free-market principles also influenced its decision to provide relief in other situations (Koch, 2011:1). Several additional acts served to ensure that African farmers would not join marketing cooperatives, would have limited access to markets, farm services and credit. While at the same time

measures were put in place to ensure that white commercial farmers would benefit from all of these things (FAO, 1995:88).

The National Party however had a different approach. After coming to power in 1948 it undertook successive acts and policies that significantly undermined the basic provision of food, particularly in segregated townships. One of these measures was to introduce drastic cuts in funding for feeding school children. This was the first in a series of racist government measures aimed at putting an end to food relief, which resulted in widespread hunger among Africans and later presented the need for the government to re-introduce relief measures to avoid projecting images of crises internationally. Other cuts in food relief occurred against the backdrop of deliberate dispossession of assets from members of the black majority, such as brutal seizures of land and livestock, forceful resettlement schemes into crowded townships and later into so-called homelands, while denying black people opportunities to develop, access markets, infrastructure and human capital (Koch, 2011:2,4). At the same time, white agriculture was still being promoted, especially expansive agricultural production. Up until the 1960s, white farmers were incentivised to scale up, purchase more land and labour, which were both available at low costs at the time. Thereafter, from the 1960s and even more during the 1970s, a shift toward mechanisation was promoted, and large farms using capital-intensive technology were created (FAO, 1995:89). The above policies systematically set the foundation for today's vast land and agricultural inequalities. In addition, during this time Apartheid further entrenched these inequalities as Africans were denied political rights and were excluded from participating in the mainstream economy.

*End of apartheid but not of hunger*

As part of a policy revolution after the end of apartheid in 1994, and influenced by the country's poverty and food insecurity, emphasis was placed on developing a comprehensive food security strategy to reverse the apartheid legacies and injustices by being more inclusive of all people (de Schutter, 2012:3; Koch, 2011:3,4). Until then the government had not acted on the constitutional provision of the right to food, and so the ANC government took up a range of regional obligations to evaluate and report

on the state of food security and ultimately address it (Koch, 2011:4). Yet despite advances and policies to address this inequality and hunger, harsh brutalities in the food system still exist. I discuss these brutalities and their roots below, which have been produced by both apartheid policy and the current neoliberal regime.

*Brutalities in the food system and their causes*

The first brutality, and perhaps the most symbolic and sensitive issue in South Africa is that of an *unjust agrarian structure*. A very unequal distribution of land is one of the most prominent legacies of apartheid (de Schutter, 2012:8). Furthermore, the current agricultural sector has been built on the back of dispossession of the African population (Greenberg, 2010a:1). A key driver of this dispossession is the Native Land Act and supporting legislation which, following 1913, led to some seven million people being dispossessed from their land, where more than half of these people were dispossessed after 1948 (Du Preez, 2013:165). What this also meant is that peasant farmers and thousands of black tenant peasants were stripped of their land and livestock, thus stripped of their means of subsistence and livelihoods. This is a clear contributor to hunger as people no longer had means to produce food for themselves. The Land Act was only repealed in 1991. What this unjust land structure has also contributed to is a very racially skewed picture of land ownership today, as 87 per cent of land is still owned by white farmers, and as a result, a more concentrated agricultural sector in the hands of a few. This paved the way for corporate control in the South African food system.

A key feature of the corporate food regime is *corporate control*, when national, multinational or transnational corporates dominate certain sectors of the food system. This corporate control is playing out in plain sight in the South African food system as the food industry is dominated by a handful of large corporate firms that control the availability, price, quality, safety and nutritional value of food consumed by all South Africans (Oxfam, 2014:24). For example, when looking at production of food, there are approximately 40 000 large scale capital intensive commercial producers, and around 1.3 million small-scale labour-intensive farmers in South Africa. These commercial farmers account for 91 per cent of agricultural production and are supported by a

powerful lobby group that actively influences government policy. There is similar concentration along different nodes of the food system, especially in the retail sector where four supermarket chains (Pick n Pay, Shoprite/Checkers, Spar Group Ltd and Woolworths) dominate the retail space with a 70 per cent market share between them (ACB, nd:6).

What is the cause of this? Liberalisation and deregulation had direct implications for downstream activities in the food system. For example, the concentration of power in the hands of a few in the food value chain in South Africa can be attributed to the ceding of the development path to the private sector that occurred in almost all downstream activities in the food system. This allowed for market forces to determine the development of the value adding sections of the agricultural economy with limited government intervention (Greenberg, 2010a:24; Pereira, 2009:19). During this time the wheat producers and millers who were cooperatively organised into Sasko and Bokomo merged under the umbrella of a private company, Pioneer Foods, following the amendments to the cooperative act in 1993. By the late 1990s Pioneer foods already held one-third of the wheat market (Greenberg, 2010a:24). Concentration occurred among other cooperatives such that today the chief millers include four companies, namely Pioneer Foods, Tiger Brands, Premier Foods and Foodcorp, jointly accounting for 98 per cent of milled wheat sales (ACB, nd:5). Furthermore, bakers of bread in South Africa are also highly concentrated, for example in 2010, only four bakeries held a 50-60 per cent share of the domestic bread market in South Africa (ACB, nd:5). Retailers in the food industry are also highly concentrated since becoming under the sway of free markets, as mentioned above.

On the other end of this power spectrum are those millers, bakers, food producers and suppliers who have been squeezed out of the value chain and who now have no bargaining power due to consolidation in the food system. Furthermore, new entrants to the sector are being crowded out, denied entry, or are facing an intensification of competition (Greenberg, 2010a:25). This also limits consumer choice in terms on non-GM alternative staple foods, as almost all of the main producers use GM ingredients (ACB, 2014:6). Furthermore, corporate control and concentration has also led to increased collusion, as I discuss below.

In a free market, although government can have full control over the market, it chooses not to intervene and by doing so, creates favourable conditions for markets to function freely, while still having in place some mechanisms to stop abuse of dominant market positions. Yet even with these mechanisms, abuse of these positions has become increasingly common as concentration in the value chain intensifies. In addition to bread price cartels, collusion has been found in fertilisers, storage, manufacturing and retail. Interestingly, however, the National Agricultural Marketing Council found that bread price increases for 2008 were not as a result of monopoly pricing in South Africa, but was rather due to economic fundamentals governing international markets. Greenberg (2010:24) suggests that this is a far bigger problem when the price rise is a structural feature of contemporary capitalism. Remedies for such problems lie out of reach of national governments as they are purely driven by international market forces

Thus with corporate control comes market distortions as well as *increased prices of food*, which both contribute to hunger. Satgar (2010:1) claims that food insecurity has been exacerbated in South Africa as a result of the globalised agro-foods complex, and this is because the price of staple foods is dramatically rising (De Wet *et al*., 2008; Satgar, 2010:1). Hunger is further exacerbated due to the fact that most people depend on purchases for food, even in rural areas, where it is believed that rural poverty is replicating urban poverty due to dependence on a cash economy (Oxfam, 2014:12). Another cause of hunger, and it was a key finding of the Oxfam report on hunger is that 'jobs and livelihoods do not provide enough to buy adequate food.' Here we see the failure of the food security paradigm, for while there is adequate food available in South Africa, livelihoods are not providing enough cash to purchase food at the household level. This brings in another dimension of the structural inequalities inherent in the food system, which are linked to the structure of the South African economy, namely vast inequality and unemployment. If South Africa has an economic system that still excludes 25,5 per cent of the population (StatsSA, 2015:iv), how will hunger ever be eradicated in a sustainable way? The grant system, which I discuss in the policy section of this chapter, cushions many people from hunger and has been praised for its reach, for without it there would be many more people suffering on a daily basis. However, the grant system is merely a band-aid approach that does not deal with the root cause of the problem. As such it continues to create dependency in a system where social grant increases are not keeping up with the food price increase

(SPII, 2015:4). A more sustainable solution to lack of purchasing power could be to improve working conditions of people so that they can actually afford food, particularly farm workers' conditions who currently earn far below the minimum wage, and who, over the first ten years of democracy have seen over 2.35 million farm evictions, only one per cent of these involved a legal process (Greenberg, 2010a:17). Furthermore, if the ability to purchase food is a key determinant of hunger, then creating jobs could prove sustainable. This could include the promotion of state-subsidised labour-intensive agriculture, or more sustainable climate jobs in the face of climate change. The National Development Plan of South Africa states that one million new jobs can be made through labour intensive forms of small-scale farming in communal areas and on redistributed land, especially in niche crops such as berries, nuts and olives. However, in order to achieve this, expanded access to land and water is necessary. But even these are not sufficient, and a wider structural change is still required (Cousins, 2013:116). Furthermore, the type of farming is also questionable for these proposals for more jobs, for if they make use of pesticides and fertilisers, there is potential for great ecological degradation, another stark brutality of the industrialised agriculture and food processing model, which is a key feature of the corporate food regime as I discuss below.

Large scale agriculture can further contribute to *ecological degradation and climate change*, another important brutality of the corporate food regime which requires attention. While corporations have been obsessed with producing as much food as possible, no matter the environmental cost, it would seem that the food system has been remarkably successful. However, from a sustainable development perspective, the food system is contributing to environmental stress and climate change which could exacerbate hunger in the long run. According to the world's leading authority on food policy, Tim Lang, sooner or later the food system will have to be radically rethought, and designed around what the earth can deliver and what human bodies need (Branford, 2011:24). This sentiment is echoed by the UN in their trade and environment review (2013), as it is stressed that "the world needs a paradigm shift in agricultural development from a green revolution to an 'ecological intensification' approach.' Currently however, the food system in South Africa is designed around what capital wants.

In its pursuit of economic growth, as a water-scarce country with little arable land and increasing dependence on coal-fired power and oil imports, South Africa's economy is testing the limits of its resource constraints (von Bornman and Gulati, 2014: 6). In particular, its agriculture sector is depleting resources and contributing to increased pollution, leading to problems such as loss of genetic resources, increased pest hazards, pesticide and fertiliser pollution, phosphorous, fossil fuel, water and soil depletion due to farming intensification of single crops on vast expanses of land to promote efficiency and uniformity (monocropping) and increased use of pesticides, continuous tillage and poor irrigation management (Swanepoel *et al.*, 2014:91) which together destroys the soil's vital organisms and ecosystems (Branford, 2011:22). The agriculture sector is also increasing the spread of water-borne diseases and salinization (Aihoon and Kirsten, 1994:127). The rate of this degradation is increasing rapidly as general household survey results show that in 2002, 15.5 per cent of households reported land degradation in their communities or on their own or neighbouring farms. This figure increased to 33.9 per cent in 2013 (McLaren and Moyo, 2014:10). In addition, while catering for capitalism's needs, agriculture has increased food miles, is heavily dependent on fossil fuels and pesticides, thus contributes to further ecological degradation and climate change. Interestingly, further along the food value chain, processed foods are contributing to greenhouse gas emissions as they have the highest freight carbon footprint (over 20 per cent) across the road corridors in South Africa (Branford, 2011:11).

These brutalities against nature in turn affect and exacerbate the challenges for the production of food in South Africa as climate change contributes to shifts in rainfall and temperature patterns, and as extreme rainfall events have increased in frequency, and mean annual temperatures have increased at least 1.5 times the observed global average of 0.65˚ (Ziervogel *et al*, 2014:605). Climate change has also led to increases in carbon dioxide levels, shrinks in arable land and shifting of available water supply. This affects food systems in several ways, but importantly it directly affects production as weeds, plant diseases and pests proliferate and drought or floods hamper yields (von Bormann and Gulati, 2014:10; Branford, 2011:10). In the event of increased climate change, the production of cereal crops is viewed to be of particular concern as irrigation demand will increase in the order of four to six per cent (Ziervogel, 2014:609). This puts increased stress on South Africa's water supply as currently 98 per cent of

South Africa's water supply is already allocated (von Bormann and Gulati, 2014:5). Mounting environmental degradation, stress and resource pressure further leads to increased food prices, and ultimately hunger. As such, in South Africa, environmental stress is increasingly becoming a key driver of hunger (Misselhorn, 2006:124).

All of the above brutalities, including dependence on purchases for food, and monocropping of the most economical genetically modified grains (yet still unaffordable for many), have contributed to a further brutality in the food system, a nutrition transition, as I discuss below.

A *nutrition transition* is described as a shift from a diet rich in whole grains, fruit and vegetables to one that is high in saturated fat, added salt and sugar (Zingoni, 2009:4). A nutrition transition is often accompanied by an increase in various nutrition-related non-communicable diseases. This transition is evident in South Africa and implications of the gradual nutrition transition are dire (De Schutter, 2012:17). These include a decline in the quality of food, nutritional deficiency, obesity (70 per cent of women in South Africa are currently overweight – a sign of malnutrition and bad health), stunting (26.5 per cent of children are stunted) and underweight children (Pereira, 2014:18; Chopra et al, 2009:6-9). The proliferation of supermarkets also contributes to this nutrition transition as it embodies a shift to an industrialised food system which jeopardises dietary quality and encourages a move from a more indigenous diet such as legumes and sorghum, to a nutritionally deficient diet highly reliant on processed meat and maize (Greenberg, 2010a:9; Pereira, 2014:18). Together, the above phenomena lead to growing health concerns for an increasing number of South African citizens, particularly women and children (Satgar, 2010:6; De Schutter, 2012:4).

Why are people turning to supermarkets and 'big food' (large commercial entities that dominate the food and beverage industries) in the first place? The answer is that they often provide cheaper, more convenient foods than those available from smallholders, and also because the various strategies to promote 'big food' and more 'modern diets', are winning customers over. These strategies include increased availability and affordability of these foods, coupled with marketing strategies to make products more acceptable and desirable. Success of the big food industry is evident in the increase of sales of almost all packaged food in South Africa (Igumbor *et al.,* 2012:1-2), but also

in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Big food has also won on the staple food front, and has contributed to the nutrition transition from not only traditional grains to more processed grains, but South Africa is the first and only country in the world to cultivate a genetically modified staple food. Genetically Modified white maize, and now wheat which has also been contaminated with Genetically Modified soya, leaves South African consumers with little choice but to consume diets with Genetically Modified foods. The safety of these foods for human consumption has not yet been proven, while the pesticides used on GM crops, such as Glyphosate, have been confirmed a probable human carcinogen by the World Health Organisation (ACB, 2015b:13).

'Small food' on the other hand, a healthier and safer alternative to 'big food', cannot compete with these expensive industrial agriculture techniques and marketing ploys and is thus being pushed aside, as are the farmers that produce local varieties of vegetables and fruit. A further reason why big food has been allowed to squeeze out the small farmers and producers is because of the lack of state support or favourable regulation for these small players.

The demise of *smallholder farmers and lack of smallholder farmer support* from government is another brutality of the corporate food system as a result of international trade policies (Windfuhr and Johnsen, 2005:6). During the 1980s, before the signing of the Marrakech agreement in 1994 (an agreement that would ensure worldwide agricultural deregulation), South Africa had already committed to deregulation in its agricultural sector. When this agreement was finally ratified and more states were on board, it had a significant impact on agricultural supply chains across the world, as it obligated states to reduce tariffs on agriculture. South Africa reduced its tariffs at a much quicker rate than required and proceeded to become a member of the Cairns group which supports the unilateral liberalisation of agricultural trade (Pereira, 2013:14). Since then the South African agriculture sector has been increasingly exposed to international market impulses and has more recently become a net importer of various agricultural products and food (Fukuda-Parr, 2012:8; Igumbor *et al*, 2012:4; Pereira, 2013:14). Furthermore, South African agribusiness is continually having to maintain competitiveness in order to survive in the new international competitive market. What this has resulted in is significant trends towards cooperation and coordination in the agribusiness supply chain of South Africa (Pereira, 2013:19),

which means that small-scale farmers, rural smallholder farmers' communities, pastoralists and fisher-folk are unable to compete and are continually squeezed out of the market. Furthermore, the opening up of agricultural markets for food imports has put many small and medium producers in developing countries in competition with competitors on the world market (Windfuhr and Johnsen, 2005:6,7). What this means is that in South Africa global commodity prices now dictate what local producers receive for their produce, regardless of the cost of production. As such, most farmers have no control over what prices they want to receive for their produce, they have instead become price takers (Greenberg, 2010a:27). What this has also contributed to is the necessity for the South African government to promote agriculture that can compete at a grand scale, thus we have seen government support for farmers skewed toward large scale farmers who are already successful, at the expense of support for small-scale farmers.

Above I have highlighted a few of the brutalities facing the South African food system which directly or indirectly impact the South African people, particularly the poor, marginalised and the small-scale farmers. From the above it is now clear that causes of hunger run deeper than access to food, but have their roots in colonial, apartheid and current neoliberal policies, and also in the international food regime where food has become a commodity to make a profit, where markets determine prices and producers and consumers of food are mere cogs in the food regime profit machine. This system has produced a range of brutalities, to which solutions cannot be one-dimensional, nor can they solely be local. To get to the roots of hunger, a more integrated response would be required to address the brutalities at every node along the food chain, but more than that, structural responses are required to challenge the power at play in the food system. In the recent past, the post-apartheid government of South Africa has sought to undertake integrated policy approaches to address hunger. Below I discuss these policies as well as other more sector specific plans and programmes of government departments, civil society and business alike.

## Strategies to address hunger

A range of strategies in South Africa exist to fulfil the right to food and address the abovementioned brutalities that emanate from the neoliberal regime and apartheid. These strategies range from state interventions and policies, for example land reform policy to address apartheid inequalities of land dispossession, or social protection interventions intended to address poverty and hunger of the poorest. In addition, a range of civil society actors, such as NGO's, religious organisations and even business pursue strategies or interventions such as feeding schemes, to cushion hunger. I discuss key interventions below, beginning with the state's policy strategies and obligations to fulfil the right to food in South Africa.

### *The South African government's mandate*

The adoption of the 1996 constitution was the first marked enactment of one of the world's most progressive constitutions that would guarantee everyone in South Africa the right to have access to sufficient food, social security, and appropriate social assistance. Section 27(1)(b) of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) states that 'everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water.' This obligation is extended in section 27(2), according to which 'the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation to each of these rights.' What this further means is that as the government seeks to ensure the right to food for its people, it ought not to take any actions that could result in increasing levels of hunger or malnutrition. It further suggests that a government ought to protect its people from actions of powerful actors who might violate the right to food. Finally, the government has the obligation to invest in the eradication of hunger (Koch, 2011:4). And while the constitution obligates the state to use its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation to the right to food, it has made some progress, but is falling short as still so many people, thirteen million, are currently faced with hunger (Oxfam, 2014:6). Nevertheless, I discuss the various policies and strategies of the state below.

*Government policies and strategies to address hunger*

Misselhorn (2006) outlines a typology of four food security interventions in South Africa. These include health and nutrition intervention programmes; early warning systems and disaster management; agricultural production interventions and; social protection interventions (Misselhorn, 2006: 75-71). This typology is useful to categorise various state interventions as there are many in South Africa which are carried out by a range of national, provincial and local departments. However, because these interventions are classified as food security interventions (as opposed to food sovereignty, which focusses on power in the food system too), the typology does not account for important and necessary policies that might address the governance structure in the food system, the trade policies affecting the food system, as well as the state of the environment when producing food, distributing it and attempting to alleviate hunger. What the typology also does not account for, and this is partly because of the integrated nature of some policies in South Africa, are the policies that make use of a range of interventions, thus spanning across more than one typology, for example the Integrated Food Security Strategy of 2002, and the National Food Security and Nutrition Policy. Nevertheless, these typologies are useful for categorising and presenting approaches to South African policy for hunger eradication (within each integrated policy, or more focussed individual policies), and for highlighting that a broad range of policies are in place in South Africa to deal with hunger. Because the more integrated policies cannot be categorised under one typology, below I first briefly discuss and comment on the four integrated strategies of South African national policy. Thereafter I turn to the typologies to categorise and describe various policies and strategies under each one.

There are four key strategies that have been established to coordinate national policy that addresses hunger. These include the Integrated Food Security Strategy, the Food security policy/Zero hunger programme followed by the Fetsa Tlala programme, various objectives within the National Development Plan and finally the National Policy on Food Security and Nutrition, implemented under the Food Security and Nutrition Programme. I discuss each one below.

The Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFFS) of 2002 is one of the first comprehensive policies created to address hunger. This policy provides a multidimensional, multi-sectoral strategy which is broadly developmental and is aimed predominantly at household food security in rural areas (Koch, 2011:4). The policy has five broad pillars, including production and trading; income opportunities; nutrition and food safety; safety nets and food emergency; and information and communication (Koch, 2011:5). The policy is coordinated by the DAFF and includes initiatives such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, support to vulnerable groups, school feeding schemes, social grants and a public works system. It aimed at eradicating hunger by 2015, which it clearly has not achieved. Its failures are largely due to lack of coordination, maladministration and poor targeting of initiatives at a local level. The policy also presented a range of gaps such as accessibility, comprehensive support to small-scale producers and environmental sustainability to name a few (Oxfam, 2014:30). In addition, by placing the responsibility of food security under the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, has implied and led to a common held belief that there is a bias towards food production to achieve food security, rather than physical and economic access (McLaren *et al.*, 2015:40). This is important because currently not everyone can produce their own food.

During 2009 another policy with various programmes to address hunger was drafted, namely the Food Security Policy/Zero hunger programme. This programme, based on a successful progressive Brazilian model, was anticipated to be a move in the right direction if implemented correctly. One of its important features was that it would develop market channels through bulk government procurement of food linked to the emerging agriculture sector (DAFF, 2012:19; Oxfam, 2014:30). The programme was to be undertaken by a range of actors including the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, to improve food production capacity of households and poor resource farmers, and also to develop market channels for emerging farmers to supply government channels. The Department of Social Development was tasked with ensuring access to food through cash transfers, food transfers, skills development and school feeding programmes with the assistance of the Department of Basic Education, while the Department of Health was to improve nutrition security by creating public awareness and nutrition awareness (DAFF, 2012:21). The programme would be overseen by cabinet and provincial legislatures, and at the same time the need for

national and provincial food security forums was stressed as an important means to provide ‘platforms for different stakeholders engaged in food security and nutrition issues in South Africa to participate in shaping the Government plan of ending hunger in South Africa’ (DAFF, 2012:17). The strategy was bold, but very fragmented. Departments were isolated in the implementation of the plan and the drivers of the plan, namely the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries did not have a good track record of delivering the minimum requirements of their grand plans. One member at the meeting where the DAFF presented their proposal exclaimed that ‘the department seemed always to have grand policies and plans, but these did not translate into real implementation’ (PMGa, 2012). Since the above meeting the suspicions came true.

The policy did indeed fail, but was also dogged by political controversy as stories of partnership or adoption of the president Zuma’s own NGO, Masimbambisane Rural Development Initiative. There were later allegations of the funnelling of 800 million rand of funds to Masimbambisane. Later the whole programme was scrapped and it was stressed that the project was only supposed to be a campaign. Documents and plans don’t suggest anything about a campaign however. This policy shows the blatant failure of a policy intended to assist millions of hungry people, based on a successful Brazilian model. While the policy writers were doing something right by learning lessons from other developing countries, the lack of reporting on progress, the lack of transparency and the inconclusive arguments coming out of the ministers (based on media reports – since policy progress on government websites is absent) suggest that even if South Africa did manage to create a progressive policy, implementation is still a challenge. While the budget gets misallocated, the hungry still suffer.

The National Development Plan that was developed during 2011 and implemented during 2013 is another example of optimistic government plans and policies to eradicate hunger. The document outlining the National Development Plan begins with a ten-page vision statement of the ideal South Africa in 2030. The statement is a story from the future that includes phrases like ‘we feel healthy’, ‘we are resilient’, ‘we are self-sufficient in community’, ‘we have food on the table’, ‘we live and work in it [our land], on it with care, preserving it for future generations. We discover it all the time. As it gives life to us, we honour the life in it’ and finally, ‘since 1994 we’ve changed our

laws to obey our constitution' (NPC, 2011:11-22). This is a picture of an ideal South Africa, but present reality and present government failure thus far makes it clear that this is just an ideal. An ideal that cannot be met especially if government lacks the political will, and more importantly, if inequality is still rampant, which it will be even if the targeted objective of reducing inequality from a Gini coefficient of 0.69 to one of 0.6 is met. A key problem with this plan is that it is trying the same strategy that has been tried in the past 20 years, with a less competent government (particularly the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries). Its objectives are also purely measured in economic terms, and it is argued that economic growth will radically reduce poverty, but does not take into consideration the implications of this on nature, a very big limiting factor.

Perhaps the strategy differs a little from previous ones, as it intends to 'realise a food trade surplus, with one third produced by small-scale farmers' (NPC, 2011), thus attempts are made at including small-scale farmers in the share of the pie. However, in promoting small-scale farmers, the report mentions nothing about the dominance of agribusiness and how to reduce their power – a key precondition stressed by food sovereignty proponents, to ensure that small-scale producers succeed. Furthermore, further along the report it becomes clear that economic growth is key for improving income and reducing inequality, at the expense of the environment. The report suggests that future prospects of increasing industrial agriculture would benefit the economy, but it does not mention how industrial agriculture might negatively impact the environment. It seems that whatever would increase growth takes priority over poverty and the environment, while policy makers can only hope that growth will trickle down to the poor and hungry and small-scale farmers, and environmental damage can be repaired with money. Another example is its plan to support small-scale farmers that follows the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) model (NPC, 2011:89). This plan, is one that will lock African countries in to accepting patented seeds, pesticides and fertilisers, which does not align with the vision 'we live and work in it [our land], on it with care, preserving it for future generations' furthermore, putting pesticides into the soil is certainly does not align with the vision that we 'honour the life in it.' The implications that the AGRA model will have on the food system, on farmers, indigenous knowledge and seed sovereignty is dire.

Perhaps the picture painted by the Southern Africa Food Lab (SAFL) (2015) is a more realistic one. Their report on the future of food in 2030 presents various scenarios of what might be likely if we continue on the path that we are on. They state that by 2022 there will be limited declines in overall soil fertility across the country, with Africa's Green Revolution being one of the compounding factors, and in 2030 average temperatures will be one degree Celsius higher than in 2005, which results in more extreme weather events (SAFL, 2015:8). As a result of compounding factors, by 2030 the inequality gap will widen between those who have resources to make a plan in such hot and dry weather conditions, and those who have no viable options. Furthermore, in 2030 'the income streams of small-scale farmers, subsistence farmers and farm workers are drying up' (SAFL, 2015:9). This picture is in great contrast to the cheery vision expressed in the National Development Plan, however I would argue that at the current rate of progress in government to act on its policy, and because of the current system's relentless drive for profit, at the expense of all else, the Food Lab's picture is a more realistic one.

A final policy, which was created to replace the Integrated Food Security Strategy, is the National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security. This policy is intended to serve as a common reference for all players in tackling the food and nutrition insecurity problem. It further emphasises the need for synergy in order to reduce duplication of effort and resources (DAFF, 2014:3-4). The strategy to implement this policy was approved in 2013 to continue responding to the hunger challenges in South Africa. The implementation strategy recognises that measures such as social grants, feeding schemes, fortification of staples, moderation of food prices and subsistence farming support to address household level food and nutrition are important, but further stresses that they are inadequate and should be expanded. This policy starts out well, is very detailed and picks up challenges of previous policies and strategies, and therefore stresses the need for better coordination and monitoring of responses to hunger. It also focusses attention on support for smallholder producers with capital, and seeks to link them under the government food purchase programme. Its objectives are very similar to the Zero Hunger Programme, however it differs in key ways. First it has a very detailed implementation plan, and second it recognises climate change and the associated risks for the hungry. As such it introduces a food and nutrition security risk management element, which includes increased investment in research and

technology to respond to the production challenges currently facing the country, and also to ensure that prime agricultural land is protected from being alienated by other activities such as mining, property development and game farming (McLaren *et al*, 2015:42). This is a good proposal, but why it doesn't specify that other farmers' (especially small-scale farmers) land can be protected from these activities too is an important question to ask. It differs in a third way from the Zero hunger programme and also from the Integrated Food Security Strategy in that it recognises the need for inclusive engagement of all the relevant actors and stakeholders in the various sectors, however this engagement is only nominal (RSA, 2014:7). In a joint civil society statement on the policy, organisations stress that the public has not been consulted in the drafting of the policy or its implementation, and where consultations had been planned, no public awareness was raised about these consultations (Section 27, 2015). As a result of lack of public consultation, not only is the policy revealing immediate failure to implement what it has promised (to consult all necessary stakeholders), but in doing so it is failing to engage with those actors who have been working on the ground and with the hungry. Neither has it engaged the hungry, themselves. Is also deficient in its identification of problems with the food system in South Africa (Section 27, 2015). Progress on the implementation of this policy cannot be commented on as it has not yet been implemented at the time of writing.

Before turning to additional strategies that aim to address hunger in South Africa, it is important to note that although some of the above policies and implementation strategies have sought to address hunger in ambitious and progressive ways, for example by integrating small-scale farmers into the food system, and initiating agroecology gardens in Durban to increase community self-resilience, recurring trends in the above four policies prevent them from dealing sufficiently with the brutalities in the food system. These trends include the lack of public consultation, lack of political will, poor implementation (or no implementation at all as in the case of the Zero hunger programme), and lack of coordination between national and provincial departments. These recurring trends in turn limit access to food to millions of people and contribute to the failure of the state in many respects to eradicate the brutalities from the food system. At the same time the brutalities are being exacerbated and have given rise to increasing responses from civil society and business as they recognise a need to fill in the gaps and supplement governments initiatives. In the following section I present

a range of additional policies and strategies to address hunger by government and these additional actors. These will be discussed as I draw on the four typologies of hunger as discussed by Misselhorn.

**Additional strategies and policies to address hunger in South Africa**

Further strengths and weaknesses of the above policies are addressed in relevant sections below as I turn to address Misselhorn's four typologies to address hunger as applied to South Africa. I also highlight additional policies and strategies under each typology, including the various civil society and business approaches intended to address hunger in South Africa to show the weaknesses, strengths and possibilities to combat hunger that exist in these sectors.

The first typology, *health and nutrition intervention programmes,* are designed to improve nutritional status. This can be done by providing nutritional supplements in the short to medium term to relieve nutritional symptoms of hunger, and can include health and nutrition education, micronutrient supplementation or fortification programmes, growth monitoring and supplementary feeding programmes.

A key strategy under this typology in South Africa is the Department of Health's Integrated Nutrition Programme. This strategy was implemented in 1995 and has guided the policy for nutrition in the health sector ever since (McLaren *et al.*, 2015:49). The department's recent publication, entitled the *Roadmap for Nutrition in South Africa 2013-2017*, details priorities for the five-year period from 2013-2017. It is a child-focussed approach, with a key goal of decreasing maternal and child mortality through improving infant nutrition during the first 1000 days of life (since it has been established that maternal and child under-nutrition are responsible for more than one third of all deaths of children under five) (DoH, 2013b:8, 10). To achieve these aims, various programmes, including food fortification programmes, vitamin A supplementation, breastfeeding promotion and nutrition education have been established.

The vitamin A supplementation programme is one of the flagship initiatives of the programme. It involves providing children age 6-59 months with Vitamin A capsules

periodically. This programme has proved to be somewhat successful as the uptake rate for children age 0-6 months has been 100 per cent nationwide, an increase from 62.8 per cent in 2003 (McLaren and Moyo, 2014:11). The intervention has not been as successful for infants aged 12-59 months, as the percentage receiving supplements was only 42.8 per cent in 2012 (DoH 2013a:49). This can be due to the fact that children are no longer required to visit clinics after 12 months once they have had their last required vaccination at 18 months of age and also as a result of lack of education around the importance of vitamin A supplementation. Furthermore, in terms of the impact of the intervention, the prevalence of stunting has increased from 28.4 per cent in 1999 to 36 per cent in 2012 while, the prevalence of vitamin A deficiency is high (still 70 per cent) despite the vitamin A supplementation programme (McLaren *et al.*, 2015:50). A further critique of the nutrition programme is that in reality it is a programme intended to support micronutrient availability in pregnant women and children (McLaren *et al.,* 2015:50), thus neglecting nutrition in school children, women who are not pregnant, and men. The staple food fortification however, is intended to address micronutrient deficiencies in the larger population, as I discuss below.

Another intervention to address malnutrition is the fortification of staple foods. This is a mandatory market-based initiative which requires that a combination of eight vitamins and minerals are added to all commercial maize meal porridge and wheat flour (Pereira, 2014:12; UNICEF, 2014:5). The success of this programme is difficult to determine since monitoring of the actual fortification of staples and of the impact of fortification on malnutrition is challenging. First, monitoring of the fortification process has been assigned to health and safety workers who do not see it as a priority nor a threat if foods are not fortified. As such, millers are not held accountable to fortifying staples. In terms of assessing whether fortification of the staples is having an impact on malnutrition levels, this has proven difficult too as a baseline study was undertaken, but only two years after staple fortification had been initiated. A such, follow up studies can only compare with data that existed after fortification was well underway. Further, the lax monitoring may mean that millers are not fortifying as much as they were in the initial years of the programme. Another problem with the initiative is that even if a child eats three 850g servings of maize meal per day, they will only receive 45.5 per cent of the Recommended Dietary Allowance for protein, 85 per cent for iron and only 31.2 per cent of vitamin A (Pereira, 2014:12). So even if meals are fortified, they are still

not sufficient to ensure adequate nutrition. Furthermore, fortification programmes have no impact on those who cannot afford food in the first place. Such people are however sometimes covered by social relief programmes that provide fortified food packages. For example, Stop Hunger Now, an NGO which provides meal packs consisting of rice, lentils and a nutrient pack, are other means by which nutrient deficiency is approached by the civil society sector in South Africa. However, the reach of these programmes is not far enough to cover all thirteen million hungry people.

While all of these programmes are beneficial and indeed necessary in the short term to alleviate inadequate nutrition and the range of conditions associated with it, such as malnutrition, stunting, blindness, and kwashiorkor, what they all fail to do is ask the question of why people are not consuming sufficient micronutrients in the first place. By not asking this question these programmes fail to address the problem of malnourishment at its roots. In the process those who are causing hunger, such as the bread price colluders continue to hold onto power in the food system, by adding 'fortified' to their bread as a marketing ploy, while the small millers, farmers and food producers they pushed out are barely managing to purchase their nutrient-stripped and then fortified staple foods. A more sustainable solution might be the promotion of more nutrient rich staples, such as indigenous crops like sorghum. These crops would not only ensure increased nutrition, but can also assist in times of natural disaster such as droughts as they are more resilient. I discuss the second typology, early warning and disaster management below.

*Early warning and food security monitoring systems, and disaster management*

Early warning and disaster management includes those interventions implemented to monitor food supply and demand, identify regions of severe food shortages and to quantify emergency food requirements. These are also interventions that provide timely and effective information, for example, in the period of approaching famines, to allow individuals, areas, farmers and communities to take action to avoid or reduce the risk and prepare for effective response (van Zyl, 2005:26). Disasters in South Africa include storm surges, wildfires, floods and droughts, while the latter three place agriculture at a high risk of vulnerability (DEA, 2015:22) and have significant

consequences for food supply and food security in different provinces (DEA, 2015:22; Gbetibouo *et al.,* 2010:181).

In the past it has been the government's responsibility to respond to disasters, however these interventions often proved insufficient due to lack of coordination, communication and corruption. The Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries sought to rectify past failures by instituting a disaster management Act (57 of 2002) and a National Disaster Risk Framework, 2005. This act (2002:22) notes that the failure of past response measures and interventions, particularly on post disaster relief instituted by government, international organisations, agencies and donors, were due to the lack of priority given to disaster relief in national policies, and this is what resulted in the defensive and reactive measures to the crises. Responses like these sometimes even further increase vulnerabilities by fostering and increasing dependency on internal or external assistance. To combat these past problems, the Act and the Framework seek to ensure that emphasis is placed on addressing agricultural risk management, particularly by strengthening early warning systems and by building resilient farming communities in order to 'reduce or prevent the potential losses from hazards, assure prompt and appropriate assistance to victims and achieve rapid and effective recovery' (DAFF, 2012:12). Furthermore, in the face of climate change, the act seeks to ensure that such interventions are supplemented by climate change-related policies and programmes (GCIS, 2014: 32).

A range of institutions, policy obligations and mechanisms are currently in place to forecast and respond to disasters. These include national, provincial and local government disaster management frameworks and plans. At a national level the National Disaster Management Committee is responsible for developing frameworks for government's disaster risk policy and legislation and facilitating and monitoring their implementation. At this level a National Disaster Management Information System was initiated to establish an early warning system, disseminate warnings and information and profile vulnerability. At a provincial level, each province is required to develop a Disaster Management Center and a Framework consistent with the national act and framework. At the local level, municipalities are also required to establish disaster centers, but there are no clear guidelines for establishing these centers (DEA, 2015: 25-28).

These institutional arrangements, the act, and the framework are comprehensive and encourage working with stakeholders to create partnerships. Importantly community participation and coordination between spheres of government and various departments is also encouraged. However various gaps exist in these policies, including lack of coordination between departments and inadequate capacity at provincial and local levels, while some district municipalities have not established disaster management centers, as such have no disaster plans in place. At the local level, disaster and risk management is not adequately funded or incentivised (DAFF, 2014: 43), showing that past gaps have not been dealt with as risk management is still not prioritised. While the act and the framework do well to mention the importance of climate change adaptation, the implementation of such policies requires assessment.

By looking at the response to the recent devastating drought caused by El Nino events during 2015/2016 in South Africa, where five provinces gazetted drought status, one can broadly assess the success of the implementation of the disaster management framework and find that the response by government was still defensively reactive, lacking resources and a coordinated plan. Furthermore, those plans in place to adapt to changing climates are questionable. For example, in a media briefing on the drought by the inter-ministerial national government committee set up to devise plans around the drought, it was stressed that government had not only woken up after the drought was in full effect, and that they had in fact been doing a lot in response to the drought. However, the range of programmes cited at the press conference were mostly delayed and reactive (as opposed to proactive). These include drought relief packages, the dissemination of water tanker and drilling of boreholes. Other plans cited included a range of plans from the framework which are still only a policy intent, these include a strategy to strengthen planning and implementation in order to anticipate and reduce risks to climate vulnerability and change, an intent to look at means by which water can be harvested, plans to rehabilitate springs and use alternative water sources (ENCA, 13/11/2015) and finally an intent to import 5 000 million tons of maize to cover the shortfall in South African maize production after hot weather and poor rainfall ruined a third of the crop. Maize reserves in South Africa are said to last until September 2016, as such, imported maize will only be needed thereafter and it is claimed that there is enough time to ensure this (ENCA, 15/01/2016). While the bases are covered in terms of maize supply (and the country will be food secure), it is still the

poorest who will be hit as food prices are expected to rise by 25 per cent (ENCA, 15/01/2016; Fin24, 18/01/2016). This shows that food security interventions are inadequate even (and especially) in times of crisis.

While drought is difficult to recognise, especially in its early stages, crisis management is often the response (van Zyl, 2006: 27). Government's response of crisis management is understandable, however it should be stressed that had all of the policy intent been translated into action prior to the drought, the impact of the drought may have been less devastating, for example if small-scale farmers had functioning boreholes, they could have planted their crops. However, because of poor infrastructure in areas like Limpopo, small-scale farmers have been hardest hit.

A further question to ask is why a drought resilient plan has not yet been implemented since the development of the framework ten years ago. One solution, boasted by government is the piloting of water efficient genetically modified maize in South Africa, in partnership with business like Monsanto. The goal of this project is to produce drought tolerant maize varieties for small-scale farmers, using genetically engineering and conventional hybrid breeding. Such a plan, would however only benefit a select layer of small-scale farmers, and further trap them into adopting hybrid maize varieties and their accompanying synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. Furthermore, evidence from the United States suggests that the seed will make minimal impact in drought prone areas (ACB, 2015a:5). Nevertheless, the South African government praises its own efforts, believing it has been assigned for a noble intervention. These efforts do not however present a sustainable solution to climate change in which all farmers can participate. Furthermore, the effect of the GM seed MON87460 on human health has not been proven to be 100 per cent safe for human consumption (ACB, 2015a:11). As such, the GM seed is not a sustainable risk management solution to climate change induced drought. More holistic, inclusionary schemes are required that will not only benefit those who can afford it, but all of the small-scale farmers, and ultimately the consumers. Despite lack of evidence of the safety of GM seeds, the South African government is still encouraging their use (along with pesticides) and in doing so depleting nature's resilience to withstand drought in the future. This plan is thus in contradiction to the need to avert risk during climate crisis. Similar contradictory policies are included in agricultural production interventions, which I discuss below.

*Agricultural production interventions*

Because the prevailing lexicon sees food insecurity as a crisis of agriculture, agricultural interventions are viewed as a key way of mitigating hunger (Misselhorn, 2006:62). These interventions often focus on ways in which farmers can increase production, become more competitive and ultimately supply export markets. In South Africa an additional focus for agricultural interventions is on rural areas and importantly land reform. This is particularly because agriculture in South Africa has been built on the back of dispossession of the African population. Furthermore, because agriculture is also built on extractive measures that deplete soil, water and natural vegetation (Greenberg, 2010a:1), policy tries to grasp these realities. As such, agricultural interventions include introducing high yielding varieties of maize and strategies to increase production or soil fertility enhancement for example, as well as rural development strategies such as land reform and support to small-scale farmers.

Policies in the agricultural space are mostly coordinated by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, while the Department of Rural Development plays some role, particularly in the area of land reform. There are a range of policies under this typology. In this section I discuss two government interventions, namely land reform and the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme.

Land reform in South Africa consists of three parts, namely the land restitution programme which allows those families who were dispossessed from their land after the 1913 land act to apply for the restitution of their land. The first round of applications for restitution closed on March 1996, by which 68 878 claims (individual or group) had been logged. The second leg is the land redistribution programme, established to assist previously disadvantaged people in purchasing land. This is done by allocating subsidies so that beneficiaries can purchase land at the market price (Anseeuw & Mathebula, 2008:2). Finally, the land tenure reform programme seeks to ensure that land rights of farm workers, labour tenants and residents in ‘communal areas’ under ‘traditional systems’ are secured (O’Laughlin, 2013:9). These various projects have run into a host of problems in the past. These include failure to meet its objectives, such as the initial target to redistribute 30 per cent of white owned agricultural land within the first five years (O’Laughin, 2008:8). It has been argued that insufficient

resources have been one of the reasons for this failure (Greenberg, 2010a:5), however, according to respected academics and Agri SA's figures, public expenditure on land reform since 1994 could have purchased 37 per cent of all farm land at market value. As such, millions may have been lost through bad management, bureaucratic incompetence and corruption (Du Preez, 2013:170). Another problem with land reform programme is the failure of government to provide post settlement support, including access to credit, skills, markets and infrastructure to the beneficiaries of land reform. As a result, the vast majority of the beneficiaries have been unable to use their land productively (De Schutter, 2012:9). In response to these failures, the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme arose. This programme sought to enhance the provision of support services to promote and facilitate agricultural development. The programme is targeted at the beneficiaries of land and agrarian reform and include the hungry and vulnerable, household food producers and those who are engaged in value-adding enterprises domestically or involved in export (NDA, 2004:1). There are six areas of support which the CASP seeks to offer, these include information and knowledge management, advisory and regulatory services, training and capacity building, finance, on-farm and off-farm infrastructure. This programme however has been dogged by delays in support to small-scale farmers, poor planning, lack of skills and inability to retain technical staff (PMG, 2012b). The programme has also benefitted only a few small-scale farmers with large capital injections (consisting in part of GM seeds) instead of a broader base, and has further not been comprehensive enough for those that have been targeted (Hall and Aliber, 2010:11). Furthermore, proper needs assessments have not been done for those receiving assistance, as Manana (Personal interview, 23 June 2015) recalls a group of farmers receiving tractors and farm implements, but still lack access to land.

Failure of government to implement successful land reform and small-scale farmer support has seen some resistance from civil society, but the response has not been as strong as it could be. This is because the National Land Committee, a land based network of NGO's established during apartheid, in response to forced removals of millions from white designated areas, was dissolved after the end of apartheid under the allusion that the ANC would take forward their struggle and would be truly committed to redressing historical injustice. As a result, many from the National Land

Committee joined the Department of Land affairs as government officials while others took it upon themselves to support the department (Ntsebeza, 2007:128).

Only once it became clear that land reform was not taking the route it was supposed to, did the Landless People's Movement, supported by some members of the National Land Committee, emerge. This movement, which brings together rural and urban landless people from all provinces marked the beginning of a new phase in the struggle for land. In 2002, the movement undertook a march on the World Summit On Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. This was the first substantial manifestation of a rural protest movement in South Africa in over forty years (Lahiff, 2003:39). However, the Landless People's Movement was rather short lived as by the end of 2003 it was in disarray and by 2004 it was formally disbanded as a network. While some affiliates continue to exist in an informal network (Ntsebeza, 2007:128), in rural areas there is still a low level of civil society organisation that is based on justice, active organisation and resistance to imposed power for reasons as stated above, namely the belief that the state will bring about the necessary transformation. Of those CSOs with land and agriculture as a priority, many are either products of their donor non-governmental organisations or of the government itself, while few exist that have a radical orientation and who are intent on building up change from the ground and making alliances with other grassroots movements (Greenberg, 2010b:15). I discuss some of these examples in Chapter six.

In terms of business support in the agriculture sector, various food retailers have initiated agriculture projects. For example, Woolworth's Farming For the Future initiative, requires that all of Woolworth's local suppliers use approaches that grow food sustainably and in harmony with nature, using fewer chemicals and integrated pest management. While this is a beneficial initiative for preserving ecosystem integrity for the future, for promoting climate resilience in the face of climate change, and ensures that consumers are eating healthier food (King and Thobela, 2014:165), the vast majority of South Africans are left out of this plan, as they can neither afford to shop at Woolworths, nor can they ever enter the supplier pool for Woolworths. Looking ahead however, Woolworths claims that it will be more accommodating and inclusive of secondary produce farmers and will also promote the development and inclusion of emerging small-scale farmers through the program (King and Thobela, 2014:166).

Spar's environmental programmes also provide examples of support to small-scale farmers. Their 2015 integrated report states that all its farmers in the emerging farmer sector will be trained in sustainable farming practices. As of 2014, 58 per cent were using sustainable practices. Furthermore, fifteen emerging farmers had already been trained in sustainable agriculture practices through one of their projects. Spar also allows for individual stores to source goods from local traders, while they are encouraged to buy through Spar (Spar, 2015). While these interventions too are a step in the right direction, there are a range of farmers who are not included in this plan. Furthermore, while Spar is squeezing out smaller retailers with its expansion plans (ACB, nd:17), those small-scale farmers who are left out of the plan will have fewer places to sell their goods. As such one cannot rely on retail sector to make a drastic impact on a great deal more farmers than it is already working with. I now turn to explore social protection interventions, of which business like Woolworths is a keen player too.

*Social protection interventions*

At a very basic level, the cause of hunger in South Africa is a problem of production, distribution and access. Because social and economic conditions shape vulnerability and the environment, social protection interventions do not only cover social-security transfers from the state to the vulnerable, but also include the creation of an enabling development environment so that people are able to meet their needs through a variety of means (Misselhorn, 2006:66).

The government has emphasised social protection in the form of grants to overcome problems of access and availability of food in South Africa. This social security system has been lauded and is said to be exemplary for other nations in the way that it benefits poor households (Koch, 2011:9, De Schutter, 2012:14). Social protection measures include social transfers, which comprise of social assistance in the form of child support grants, foster child grant, older persons grant, and disability grants. In addition, the state provides on a far smaller scale food parcels and school feeding schemes. These are the government's main initiatives to eradicate poverty and inequality-related issues such as hunger (Fukuda-Parr, 2012:8; de Schutter, 2012:13). While these

interventions show proven impacts on lowering poverty levels, especially in rural areas (Everatt & Smith, 2008:16) and also play a critical role in alleviating hunger for the beneficiaries (SPII, 2015:35), they do however keep the current system in place and do not challenge powers that created hunger in the first place. They further encourage dependence on the current systems to provide food that is created by industrial agriculture. In response to unsustainability and dependency of the above programmes, government programmes supporting the production of food gardens is expanding. For example, in 2008/2009, 80 000 food garden starter packs, comprising of seed, seedlings, fertiliser and pesticides, were distributed through the national household food production programme. During 2011-2012 the plan was to increase the provision of food garden starter packs to 140 000 households per year and ensure that 60 per cent of households meet their food needs through own production by 2014 (Greenberg, 2010a:29). This has not yet been achieved. Furthermore, although they are trying to reduce dependency on food aid, departments are now ensuring that households are becoming dependent on inputs for gardens, including the pesticides and seeds (which are usually hybrid or GM seeds for which saving seed becomes a problem). In response to this, the Durban/eThekwini Municipality initiated a peri-urban agroecology strategy to promote sustainable approaches to the way in which agriculture is planned and implemented. As of 2015, six agricultural support hubs had been established or were under development. Agri-support hubs include demonstration sites of agroecology techniques, training sites, a research and development centre on agroecology, a packing and marketing hub and a future seed bank (eThekwini Municipality, 2015:104).

Interestingly, other findings from meeting minutes within the Department of Social Development show that they did not abandon their mandate for the Zero hunger programme and during 2012 and 2013, and were able to link 735 households to income generating opportunities, while 183 179 households benefited from the Department of Social Development's feeding programmes and 14 955 food parcels had been distributed, however only 355 food gardens had been established by the department at a national level (PMG, 2012a). What this shows again is clear disconnect between national departments (while DAFF abandoned the Zero hunger programme, the Department of Social Development continued with it), and also that

provincial governments are perhaps more effective at implementing household gardens.

In terms of business' interventions in social support strategies, there are many which often form part of their corporate social investment. For example, Woolworths has sponsored the EduPlant programme which together with Absa and Engen assist South African schools develop permaculture food gardens. This programme was coordinated by the Non-Profit Organisation Food and Trees for Africa (WHL, 2010a). Many similar interventions exist in South Africa, including direct relief of hunger. A large number of companies have also started supporting the development of food banks. The aim of these food banks is to redirect food that would otherwise be wasted or recycled in order to give poor people better access to adequate nutrition (Pereira, 2014:29). Woolworths, for example gives away millions of rands' worth of surplus food that is past its sell by date to local charities (WHL, 2010b). Shoprite checkers and other retailers and business supports the South African Food Bank, which provides 12 717 279 meals per year at a cost of R1,19 each (FoodBank SA, 2015). Other NGOs like Stop Hunger Now have massive programmes to pack and distribute fortified food packages to early childhood development centers, schools, universities and households, and rely on donor support for sponsoring and packing the meals. The project claims that it is not just giving a hand out, but also assisting early childhood development centers with a hand up, by helping them develop their facility sufficiently to qualify for registration with the Department of Social Development (Stop Hunger Now, 2016). While all of these above initiatives are indeed necessary in a country where thirteen million go hungry and an additional fourteen million are at risk of hunger, for business, many of these are 'mandatory' as part of their corporate social and environmental responsibility or a choice of business strategy to satisfy consumers. What none of these approaches do, however, is challenge the roots of the problem. For Woolworths, Spar and Shoprite, it is a means of mopping up the mess that they are in part responsible for due to their market concentration and profiteering out of food. While in the civil society sector, more sustainable approaches such as assisting with planting food gardens that NGOs like Trees for Africa are doing, may prove more successful than merely providing food handouts. However they seldom go as far as challenging the corporate food regime. Yet in the face of increasing hunger and failed state policy to address it, all of the above schemes are welcomed and necessary in

the current food system as they provide immediate relief to hungry people. But they are not sufficient.

Government is also not in a position to challenge the corporate food regime regime as eighty-nine per cent of its Public Investment Corporation's investment capital is held on behalf of the Government Employees pension fund. It holds a 14,69 per cent share in Tiger foods, 13.96 per cent share in Woolworths holdings and 13.6 per cent share in Spar to name a few. Nevertheless, although ceding a lot of ground to capital, the government has imposed regulations that rely on self-regulation of private actors. Such regulations are not covered in these typologies by Misselhorn, but are indeed important as concentration of power in the food system is a key determinant of hunger as we have seen, as such I briefly discuss it below.

Greenberg (2010b:17) highlights four areas of meta-governance which shape the boundaries within which private actors can self-regulate, these include consumer protection, labour regulations, competition policy and Agricultural Black Economic Empowerment (ABEE). These regulations are however hampered by state weakness to realise its policies, and in the inability to monitor and enforce compliance (Greenberg, 2010b:17). These weaknesses have been evident in the bread price fixing which Mukaddam exposed, and further in the introduction of GM staples in South Africa. By allowing GM staples into the country presents a blatant undermining of consumer protection act whereby Section 61.1 of the Consumer protection act (No.68 of 2008) states that liability is placed on the producers, importers, distributors and retailers for inadequate warnings provided to consumers pertaining to hazards arising from or associated with the use of any goods. In the case of GM bread and GM mealie meal, no warnings are given to consumers, even though GM foods have not been proven 100 per cent safe (ACB, 2010:3).

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored some of the brutalities of the food system, these include the unjust land structure, corporate control, a nutrition transition and lack of support to small-scale farmers. I have revealed the roots of these brutalities, which are deeply

embedded in the corporate food regime and in South Africa's apartheid and post-apartheid neoliberal policies. I have further shown how approaches from government are failing in countless ways to respond to the needs of the hungry and to address the brutalities for reasons such as lack of coordination, poor communication, mismanagement and poor implementation of policy. Not only have these policies failed to be implemented, but they have failed the people at large, while at the same time, government has ceded more control to the corporates in the food regime.

In the more targeted approaches, such as dealing with specific brutalities like nutrient deficiency in the food system, government, civil society and business has done well to curb micronutrient deficiencies with their various interventions. The same can be said for hunger relief, although the reach of these interventions is not nearly sufficient. However, while vital assistance is being provided to the beneficiaries, there are still gaps in these policies as they fail to address the causes of malnutrition for example. One of the causes of malnutrition could be that people have been forced onto refined staples like maize meal and wheat bread. As such, a solution encouraging eating more maize meal and wheat bread that might have more nutrients due to fortification is not a long term solution to malnutrition and is further encouraging a nutrition transition further away from traditional and more nutritious food.

Failure of government to implement its plans, or to make changes in the lives of millions of South Africans has given rise to a host of strategies by business and civil society alike. While some of these interventions might be more realistic than government's and also more successful in implementing them, these interventions too fall short in various ways. Most importantly, these interventions do not do anything to change the deeply embedded power relations in the food system.

Some civil society organisations have tried and failed, for example the Landless People's Movement and at present there is a void in the agrarian and civil society space of a mass based rural movement like that which prompted food sovereignty alternative in Via Campesina. One reason for this weakness in civil society is the belief that the ANC government would take forward their struggles. This chapter has shown that they have not succeeded in doing this, and further, due to the complexity and embeddedness of capital in most of the food system's sectors, and the weakness of

the people on the ground, current strategies will prove insufficient. As such, eradicating the corporate food regimes brutalities in an attempt to end hunger is not a simple task. Alternative solutions are thus required.

Besides the failure of government to implement adequate policy in South Africa, coupled with a weak civil society and seemingly benign yet reformist business initiatives, there are other fundamental obstacles that stand in the way of ensuring that people have access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food. I address these in more detail in the next chapter as I turn to assess how food unsovereign South Africa is in terms of the principles and important principles to achieving food sovereignty.

# CHAPTER 5
# HOW FOOD UNSOVEREIGN IS SOUTH AFRICA?

## Food sovereignty principles in South Africa

In this chapter I discuss the principles of food sovereignty as applied to the South African context. The idea is to highlight policies, statistics and examples in the South African food system to explore the way in which food sovereignty initiatives would have to overcome issues of powerlessness and hunger in the South African food system. By doing so I aim to contextualise the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign's terrain of struggle in order to better understand the challenges, shortcomings, and possibilities of realising food sovereignty.

### *Food for people*

In terms of the first principle, a focus on *food for people*, the adoption of the 1996 constitution was the first marked enactment of one of the world's most progressive constitutions that would guarantee everyone in South Africa the right to have access to sufficient food, social security, and appropriate social assistance. In addition, section 20 of the Constitution guarantees children the right to basic nutrition, and as such, in order to fulfil this right, the state ought to pay special attention to children as a vulnerable group. However even with such a progressive constitution, state obligations have not translated into concrete realities for thirteen million people who are currently faced with hunger.

In a comprehensive survey on nutritional health, coupled with health examinations it was established that in 2013, only 45.6 per cent of the South African population was food secure. Of these, 26.5 per cent of all children were stunted, and 70 per cent of women were overweight. In terms of demographics, black Africans had the highest prevalence of food insecurity of 30.3 per cent, while an additional 28.5 per cent were at risk of hunger. Of the white population, the majority, 89 per cent was food secure (SANHANES-1, 2013). These statistics of fluctuating hunger paint the picture of a distorted national food system that is unable to feed its people even though it is highly

modernised in many respects. These statistics further point to the crisis of a hunger pandemic in the country which requires complex solutions, more so than what has or is currently being undertaken. In short, the fact that the right to food is enshrined in the constitution is a great achievement, and South Africa is among one of 20 countries in the world who have this provision (Fukuda-Parr, 2012:7). However, an urgent realisation of this right is necessary. This will involve promoting access to nutritious food, while realising that social assistance programmes are insufficient in the long run. Ensuring the right to food also involves protecting citizens from actions of powerful actors who might violate the right to food. A food sovereignty approach seeks to take into account these inadequacies of current practices, promote those that will ensure change and expose the real reasons why the right to food is not being met. Below I touch on agribusiness actors who potentially play a large role in violating this right, and show that the state is currently inadequately playing its role to protect consumers and small-scale producers in this regard. As such I argue that the state has a key role to play to ensuring the other preconditions for food sovereignty are met.

While the state is currently not playing this role adequately, even in the presence of a progressive constitution, a gap exists that the food sovereignty campaign seeks to fill, namely by putting the constitution to work, and holding the state accountable to its obligations in the constitution, especially to create and implement policies that would ensure the preconditions to food sovereignty are met. Arguably some of the government's policies do attempt to address the preconditions mentioned in the literature, for example land reform policies have been implemented to address the unjust agrarian structure. But once again the failure lies in the lack of state capacity and political will, and also in the distorted focus of policy on the poor instead of on the structure that causes the poverty and hunger. For example, on the domineering power of agribusiness which hinders those with a little land, without land and small quantities of fresh produce, i.e. small-scale farmers from ever entering the market, as I discuss below. As such, not only does the food sovereignty approach seek to demand better policies, it also has to continue to push for the sound implementation of those policies.

*Agrarian reform*

The second food sovereignty principle, *agrarian reform* is an especially important aspect in the South African food system where a very unequal distribution of land is one of the most important legacies of apartheid (de Schutter, 2012:8). Even with the range of policies discussed in the previous chapter, with immense budgets put in place in South Africa to address the land question, post-apartheid, the land picture is still very skewed, such that there are three different worlds of farming (de Schutter, 2012:8). In 2003, 35 000 large scale, predominantly white commercial farmers occupied 87 per cent of all agricultural land and dominated 95 per cent of all agricultural output. Today these numbers have barely changed, while 200 000 black emerging farmers have benefited from post 1994 opportunities and public support such as agrarian reform and BEE policies) and about a remaining 2.5 million households practicing small-scale subsistence farming exist representing the third world of farming. These households undertake farming predominantly as an activity to complement other income sources, such as temporary work-related migration, social grants, off farm employment and remittances (de Schutter, 2012:8; Fukuda-Parr, 2012:8).

In terms of policy to address land inequality, land reform was seen as key to bridge the gap between these three different worlds of farming, however it has not been very successful for reasons stressed above. It has also been disconnected from agricultural development initiatives that would ensure post settlement support such as finance, markets, water and extension services and its inability to contribute to poverty alleviation (Fukuda-Parr, 2012:9; Pereira, 2014:25). Furthermore, and importantly, there has been enormous support and pressure from across the agricultural and private business sectors for government not to interfere with property relations or production, but to rather continue the current pattern of ownership and use of land (Lahiff, 2003:37). This pressure is orchestrated by well organised pressure groups who find receptive audiences in government circles, while on the other hand millions of poor people and small-scale farmers have no voice at all, and continue to eke out an existence from agriculture in overcrowded and often degraded environments (Lahiff, 2003:38).

In short, there has been no pro-poor redistributive agrarian reform with extra supportive measures that would enable small-scale farmers to succeed. This would be the initial and necessary pathway by which South Africa could transition from the corporate regime toward a more food sovereign one. Moreover, land reform and additional farmer support on its own is not sufficient since it is clear that there are other preconditions that are needed to compliment successful land reform. Policy that addresses the needs of all food providers, those without land, and those with land, by providing certain secondary and vitally important steps is further required. In the face of failing government, a strong coordinated civil society is needed to take forward the land struggle. Past experiences have shown that they are not yet up to the task, but given the failure of land reform and small-scale farmer support and the lack of institutional channels for the poor to voice their concerns, Lahiff (2003:38) argues that 'it is likely that grievances will be expressed in informal and even extra-legal ways.' South Africa is waiting for these grievances to be expressed in unison, and a food sovereignty approach could fill this gap by providing coordination to these affected voices. However, their cry would be in vain if they do not also demand additional measures that promote and value the providers of food, another principle of food sovereignty. Such preconditions would place South Africa on a smoother path to achieving food sovereignty as I discuss below.

*Values food providers*

The extent to which different types of *food providers in South Africa are valued* can be viewed by the various support measures offered by government policy. Of the three worlds of farming discussed above, it is the first group of producers which is prioritised by agricultural policies. The second is prioritised with land reform policy, while few of the second and most of the third group are not considered or covered by any substantial agricultural assistance to promote food production. On the other hand, migrants, pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous people and other subsistence producers, receive no significant mention or attention in the various policies. For example, fisher folk have sometimes had subsistence quotas slashed without warning while commercial farmers quotas have been unaffected or even increased (Oxfam, 2014:23). This is a clear example of naked bias towards commercial farmers. Support

for the smaller farming groups of all types is largely lacking because of post-apartheid government's continued indulgence of agribusiness as it encourages a contract model of farming which seeks to integrate small-scale black farmers into the corporate value chain. While there has been some success in this regard, it has been largely unsuccessful and has left the fundamental agri-food structure still intact (Pereira, 2014:25). This agri-food structure, particularly as it is proliferated by supermarkets, no matter how many inroads for small-scale farmers, is one of the largest barriers to their success as I discuss below.

There is evidence that in South Africa the growth of supermarkets is leading to an increase of risks and reduction in rewards for local farmers, thus creating an environment much like that seen in industrialised countries with high levels of supermarket concentration. The fact that the small-scale farmers are not managing to survive in the agribusiness system is because first, policies are incomprehensive and second, a focus on incorporating small-scale farmers into the large retail scene is counterproductive. Improving the quality of production and the skills and asset base of small-scale farmers is important, but this is insufficient to guarantee access into modern supply chains. As such, the problem here is not of the small-scale farmers' capacity, but the unequal playing field farmers might enter (Pereira, 2014). The same can be said for small-scale producers. There is little scope for small-scale producers or food processors to compete with or be integrated with large-scale food producers supplying the South African food system. In fact, those small-scale producers and processors supplying rice, bread, meat, traditional beer and dairy products to traditional markets often undergo financial stress or pressure and under such conditions are not in any position to challenge large-scale food processors in supplying large supermarkets (Crush & Frayne, 2010b:9).

Because of the nature of the South African commercial farming sector which is characterised by large farming units, from which retailers have a large pool of big producers to choose from; and the nature of the food processing and retail sector, in which procurement practices and niche markets are being taken over by supermarkets, effective barriers to entry for smaller producers have been created. This is particularly important in South Africa given that the expansion of supermarkets is taking place at precisely the same time that policy is attempting to encourage the

integration of small producers into these markets (Pereira, 2014; ACB, nd:26-27). One may find that the expansion of local supermarket chains in South Africa is a means by which food systems can be localised, and Spar and Woolworths are leaders in this front as they attempt to source locally. However, the current system that favours the industrial farming model means that large farms, situated in areas far from shops will still supply Woolworths and Spar with the quality products they require. As such, *localising food systems and reorganising trade*, another precondition/principle for food sovereignty, is still difficult to achieve. It further becomes difficult to localise trade through supermarkets as local producers will always be competing with overseas products as long as trade relations with these countries exist. Thus, even though retailers like Woolworths and Spar encourage local sourcing, market conditions will still determine where they source their goods from, for after all, the food industry is all about profit. This precondition also rests on government trade policies as well as international relations which are deeply embedded in international markets, trade relations and the World Trade Organisation. As such, localising markets is as much a call to promote local markets as it is to tackle the power that the World Trade Organisation has over South Africa's food system.

This presents two avenues for the food sovereignty approach in South Africa to intervene in a corporatised national food system that values large scale, commercial and international producers of food. The first avenue is to again put pressure on the state to effectively restrict the internationalisation of the local food system by influencing international trade policies to prevent the infiltration of international corporations and supermarkets from entering local markets, and also restricting those actors who currently hold an unfair amount of power in the system already, such as Shoprite, Pick ń Pay, and even millers and bakers of staple foods. A second avenue for a food sovereignty approach to flourish is to showcase an alternative to the above. This includes creating alternative markets and promoting alternative ways of producing food ethically and sustainably, and thereby promoting localisation of the food system and reducing carbon emissions in the process. The food sovereignty approach in South Africa, as I show in the following chapters, even attempts to create a different economy, a *solidarity economy,* one based on values of democracy, solidarity and sustainability over profit. This alternative economy could be a useful way to start showing that a local food system is possible in South Africa.

*Democratic control and local decision making*

Food sovereignty proponents stress that *democratic control and local decision making* is required at every node in the food system, from input choice by farmers to consumer choice at retail, if food sovereignty is to be achieved. Currently, however, at almost every node, the majority (small-scale farmers, informal traders and poor households for example) who are those with the least power are also those with no voice at all. The wheat to bread value chain reveals the stark reality of this lack of power on the part of the most vulnerable in contrast to the all-powerful corporations and monopolies. From wheat production, storage, milling, baking and retail, the South African wheat to bread commodity chain has been globalised and is marked by a concentration of ownership and control (Cock, 2015). This is as a result of the deregulation of agriculture in 1996 and the repealing of the bread subsidy in 1992 in which state support to farmers and tariffs on agricultural commodities were dismantled. Since then local South African farmers have been left to compete with state-subsidised farmers in the EU and USA (Cock, 2015). As a result, the wheat market has become more concentrated, responsive to global trends, affected by the changing rand to dollar exchange rate as well as international wheat commodity prices and commodity speculation (Cock, 2015; Pereira, 2014:19).

Another way in which the choice of the locals is not heard in the food system is when one looks at the purchasing power of the majority of South Africa's poor. For Cock (2015), 'hunger is an aspect of poverty and powerlessness' and this is true when assessing the consumer end of the food system. Having limited income to spend on food ultimately leads to an insufficient and non-nutritious food basket which is highly dependent on the price of food. What makes this situation more dire is when food price increases are not consistent with inflation. For example, between January 2011 and January 2012, food inflation was 10 per cent, while the price of white maize increased by 90 per cent over the same period (Pereira, 2014:12). Furthermore, the openness of South Africa's market makes food prices even more volatile, and as a result the poorest households are even more vulnerable to food price increases as international food price shocks are transmitted all the way down to local wholesale and retail prices (Pereira, 2014:12; Greenberg, 2010b:7). Yet potential for forthcoming shocks remains unchanged, for since the 2002/2003 and 2007/2008 food price crises, no major policy

changes have taken into consideration the new recognition of the importance of domestic agriculture to act as a buffer to external market dynamics. Instead, South Africa's reliance on second class policy interventions has been reinforced, such as increase on welfare payments (Pereira, 2014:12). While these interventions can act as a safety net to the poor, and are vitally important, they fall short of fundamentally addressing the inability of households to afford food, and therefore do not contribute toward creating a more just and democratic food system. It is clear here how a more democratic food system would lead to a more food sovereign one as choices are made by those who most need food. But without an organised voice of the poor and small-scale farmers, that clearly articulates its concerns, and problems, that showcases the potential of their nature-friendly farming practices, as I discuss below, South Africa still has a long way to go in this regard (Andrews, 2007:218). This principle presents an important gap that a food sovereignty approach such as the SAFSC's can fill as it engages with the poor, especially during the initial and planning stages of campaigning, and as it is attempting to create a more organised group of activists and organisations, voicing the same concerns.

*Works with and protects nature*

I now turn to assess the extent to which South African policy and practices *protects or works with nature*, another food sovereignty principle. South Africa is on the frontline of climate change, as such supporting the ability of its farmers to adapt and cope with the combined effects of climate change and resource scarcity is vital (de Schutter, 2012). There is a common agreement among most actors, particularly the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as well as policy writers in South Africa, that sustainable use of natural resources is important to realise the right to food for all (Greenberg, 2010b:32), however there is little understanding of what sustainable use is and how it can be carried out. The National Development Plan, for example recognises that climate change is driven by emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, and that climate change in the form of erratic rainfall, droughts and floods have the potential to reduce food production (NPC, 2011:33). This plan does not give any practical suggestions through which emissions, particularly of large-scale commercial agriculture can be mitigated. The role of agriculture in the production of

greenhouse gasses is also not mentioned. Furthermore, government programmes or policies do not protect nature or build more knowledge on sustainable farming practices as they still endorse large-scale agriculture, AGRA's green revolution model that encourages pesticides, improved seed and fertilisers (NPC, 2011:89), and the use of GMO's and glyphosate, a chemical used in the production of maize which has harmful effects on biodiversity and humans. Here again the focus of policy is on the pandering of large corporates and agribusiness. While some hope does exist in the government's National Climate Change Response White Paper, this has yet to translate into policy that mainstreams adaptation in everyday practice and longer-term planning in all spheres and levels of government (Ziervogel *et al.,* 2014:605).

Nevertheless, the fact that South Africa does have some agroecology knowledge, which is growing in popularity with increased social and climate crises, is a positive factor for the state of the environment, however its reach is not yet sufficient. This knowledge is evident and utilised in small-scale agriculture programmes of civil society organisations, the Durban/eThekwini agroecology initiative and even in Woolworth's Farming For the Future initiative. These programmes share their knowledge and teach safe and sustainable farming practices. There are also a few seed savers in South Africa who are committed to saving heirloom seeds, to preserve South Africa's seed heritage. These types of initiatives serve as important examples of what can be done in South African urban, peri-urban and rural communities to protect and work with nature to provide food. Yet since their reach is still insufficient, this presents another gap in the food production sphere, which could do well with further promotion, by showcasing these alternatives. The SAFSC seeks to do this in two ways, by raising awareness about the dangers of the industrial food production system, and second, by sharing agroecology knowledge and skills between actors in the campaign, an additional principle of food sovereignty, as I discuss below.

*Sharing knowledge and skills*

In terms of *sharing knowledge and skills* of sustainable farming practices, barriers to transmitting this knowledge lie in the youth's unwillingness to learn, increased urbanisation and poor quality government training programmes. For example,

Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme's extension officers have proven insufficient, lack coordination and do not serve or reach those who need it most. Furthermore, the knowledge shared by these officers is questionable, as they have been convinced that the chemical model of farming is correct (Interview with Manana, 23 June 2015). There is also a clear gap in sustainable knowledge transformation and resilience, especially when it comes to implementing practices that could strengthen resilience in the agricultural sector, and thus serve as disaster management strategies in the face of looming climate change. Climate change and environmental stress can also increase pressure on the food system to provide adequate food, and this is bound to increase the severity and frequency of riots caused by food price hikes (UNCTAD, 2013:), as I discuss below in the next principle.

*Social peace*

*Social peace* is another key principle that has to exist before a country can become food sovereign, since marginalisation of communities along with growing oppression only serves to aggravate situations of injustice and hopelessness (Via Campesina, 1996). Stress on resources and increased food prices is ensuring the opposite of social peace in South Africa as xenophobia and social unrest ensues. For example, analysts have linked social unrest in recent years in South Africa's informal settlements, among farmworkers and in the mining sector to the rise in global food prices. As grains make up more than half of the food intake per capita in the country (of which 32 per cent was wheat and 57 per cent maize), mining riots in August 2014 coincided with record prices for maize and other basic food stuffs. Xenophobic riots in South Africa have also occurred at the same time that other food riots were taking place around the world and were attributed to anger about foreigners competing for limited resources – arguably exacerbated by high food prices (von Bornmann and Gulati, 2014:8). Another cause of social stress and violence in South Africa could be the breakdown of social fibre as people become individualised and less socialised and as critical connections between humankind and nature in the current system are lost (De Schutter, 2015:3-4). As Radebe (Personal interview, 23 June 2015) claims, 'capitalism has… taken away that moral fibre. If you talk about crime, you talk about rape, you talk about all these elicit things that are happening as a result of this system

that we live under. Because it's a dog eat dog. But [with food sovereignty], it would mean that now, no one will have reason to go and sin because they are hungry.' Thus social peace is both a precondition to food sovereignty, and also a positive product of it.

While government policy recognises the need to focus on the increasing pressure on natural resources, its implementation has still not dealt sufficiently with management of resources. This has been particularly evident during the 2015/2016 drought. However, these risks also provide an opportunity for food sovereignty to flourish as increased need is being placed on improving the domestic management of the links between water, energy and food. If this is done it can increase the resilience of the economy as a whole to withstand the risks of climate variability and economic volatility (von Bornmann and Gulati, 2014:7). But for this to be undertaken, a fundamental change in the common sense of South African's is required. This is another large gap that neither government nor civil society is stepping up to adequately expose, and a food sovereignty approach would do well to highlight the need for a new common sense. This new common sense ought to view humankind as interlinked with nature and also view conventional agriculture implicated in the climate crisis.

*A new common sense*

A final precondition, namely *a new common sense* is promoted by food sovereignty actors to debunk various myths propagated by conventional agriculture, in particular that commercial agriculture is the only real agriculture. Such myths exist in South Africa, as conventional farmers stress the strategic importance of commercial farming for not only food production, but also export earnings. This narrative serves to strengthen the organisational power of the commercial farmers. As such, countering the commercial agriculture lobby and its widely held beliefs will mean tackling their power materially and ideologically (Cousins, 2007:240). This is still a major challenge in South Africa, especially since government has shares in the corporate food sector.

Hope lies however in a myth that has already been debunked, and which is gaining traction as government continues to fail to protect its poorest people. This is the myth

that the current government in South Africa has the political will and capacity to meet the needs of its people particularly by ensuring the right to food. Since it has been established that this notion is merely a myth and further that in corporate South Africa, food is sold for a profit, not for people, a new common sense is gradually emerging. Until the preconditions of food sovereignty are met, this common sense promises to grow stronger. Sharing this common sense is a key step in tackling the ideological power that the government and corporations hold over the majority of the people. By promoting this new common sense, a food sovereignty alternative in South Africa has the potential to further bring various people together to challenge the food system, thus forming a new type of power, a power from below. I conclude this thought below.

**Consequences of these preconditions not being met**

The South African government has bought into the corporate food regime's myths, believing that without corporate agriculture, there would be inadequate food to meet the growing population's needs. However, the fact that one third of our food is wasted, that increased dependence on corporate agriculture is linked to the climate crisis, that the state of hunger in South Africa is not improving, and further that most of the food that is consumed has poor nutritional quality thus leading to increasing levels of malnutrition and obesity, is reason enough to reconsider the current model in South Africa. In addition, increasing inequality and poverty are giving rise to social conflict in the form of xenophobia and high rates of crime as people struggle to survive in unequal societies. Furthermore, a focus by government on protecting corporate interests and thus enabling high profits from high food prices, coupled with livelihood-threatening droughts which have already left vast amounts of land dry and barren, is only going to make the situation for the majority of the South African poor worse.

As a result of the abovementioned conditions in South Africa, and the negative impacts causing citizens' deepening unemployment and food insecurity, food initiatives are proliferating (Satgar, 2010:6). Some of these initiatives are critiqued by food sovereignty proponents because they merely reinforce the neoliberal agenda. These include various relief packages and business approaches as discussed in the previous chapter. While some of the approaches have had no real effect on food insecurity,

some have failed altogether and others have had relative success, none of them fully incorporate food sovereignty's ambition to challenge the neoliberal policy agenda and try transform the food system. As such, power concentration in the hands of corporates and government in the food system is left largely untouched.

Taking back the power in the food system will thus require additional initiatives and actions, from different actors who are opposed to the neoliberal food system. This is where great potential for a nascent food sovereignty campaign in South Africa resides. While, alternatives to the neoliberal project in South Africa are difficult to locate, they do exist in pockets, in various sectors and in practice. Some can be found in the grassroots solidarity economy movement, a movement 'grounded in the recognition that the crisis of capitalism is a systemic crisis expressing itself as a complete civilizational crisis' (COPAC in Satgar, 2010:8). Others can be found among civil society organisations, study groups, community forums and NGO's who pursue different agendas relating to food. These include land reform justice, climate justice initiatives, the promotion of sustainable farming practices like agroecology, slow food movements, biodiversity and anti-GMO, to name a few. However, separately these initiatives do not have sufficient power to change the entire food system. For Greenberg (2010b:24), an overall coordinated approach will be required to link up these isolated demands to change the food system. However, he stresses that the question of who will lead this coordination is yet to be answered.

In the following chapter I present a possible answer to Greenberg's question, as I introduce and discuss the actors, strategies and objectives of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign. A campaign that in various ways, by a range of tactics, seeks to fulfil some of the gaps that remain in different sectors of the South African food system. It is these gaps of an increasingly undemocratic system, social unrest, citizen disempowerment, a pro-business government and their failure to value small-scale producers, for example, that require filling before the hungry in South Africa can be fed. What this means is that a food sovereignty alternative (rather than a food security approach) is better equipped with solutions to promote the necessary principles to ensure that in a world of plenty, all people can have sufficient, nutritious and culturally acceptable food. This is because food sovereignty gets to the root of the systemic crisis of hunger and fills the fundamental gaps that a neoliberal state fails to see.

Ultimately, this is because a food sovereignty approach addresses the power imbalance in the food system. This process has gradually begun in South Africa as, fuelled by the crisis and brutalities in the food system, the SAFSC has sought to ignite a new kind of power in the food system, one that pursues food sovereignty and importantly, is inspired by people.

# CHAPTER 6
# THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ALTERNATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA

## Introduction

From the previous two chapters it is clear that in many respects, government strategy, implementation and policy is falling short in a host of ways to promote the conditions necessary to ensure that its people have sufficient and sustainable supplies of nutritious food, even though the country is food secure. Furthermore, business is merely trying to ameliorate the problems they are directly creating, while civil society is employing these same mainstream poverty alleviation tactics and is also weak organisationally and on the ground. In this chapter I turn to explore alternative approaches to the abovementioned ameliorative measures – approaches that instead focus on creating a more just food system in South Africa as they practice, advocate for and promote food sovereignty principles. While a range of approaches that embody various food sovereignty principles exist in South Africa, I have decided to focus on the nascent South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) as a case study. This campaign is comprised of progressive organisations in various sectors in the food system across the country and thus serves as a noteworthy case study to explore food sovereignty in South Africa.

I begin this chapter by first providing examples of food sovereignty alternatives that exist in South Africa. Before SAFSC emerged these organisations or initiatives were to some extent on their own, however today they form part of a loose network of organisations who are promoting the food sovereignty principles, sharing knowledge, ideas, struggles and solutions. This chapter serves to explain the genesis of the campaign to show how these organisations in the food space have come together in response to the brutalities in the food system, and with the aim of fighting for a more just food system together. In doing so I reveal the grassroots nature of the campaign to show how it differs from other approaches (especially government approaches), in that it promotes the sharing of knowledge, not only from experts, but also those affected by the food system. Because food sovereignty looks different in diverse contexts, I also explore activists' understandings of food sovereignty. These

understandings are shaped by the various actors' different realities, their positions and their struggles in South Africa, as such they cannot be claimed as universal for the campaign. Nevertheless, these varying understandings of food sovereignty have been used to shape the way SAFSC develops and undertakes strategies that have emerged from the campaign since its launch. I describe these strategies too, some of which include nurturing activists, holding events for campaigning, such as pickets and tribunals, encouraging learning exchanges and communicating with those on the ground, as well as bringing the second generation of food sovereignty to the table through social media, local markets and festivals. Importantly, one key strategy, which is somewhat unique to SAFSC in South Africa when compared to other national campaigns or movements is its links with the Solidarity Economy Movement. While not solely unique to SAFSC as links with the solidarity economy have surfaced in other areas, for example in Europe where it is recognised 'that agroecology and the solidarity economy are the logical vectors for the realisation of the right to food' (Ripess, 2015), the Solidarity Economy's potential and connection to the campaign are worth exploring. I now turn to explore some of the food sovereignty alternatives that existed in South Africa before the genesis of the campaign in 2015.

**Food sovereignty alternatives**

An important alternative action, formally defined as food sovereignty arose as a result of a popular education process undertaken by the Surplus People's Project during 2007-2008 in the Western and Northern Cape. This action was fuelled by the rural poor's feelings of exclusion and injustice because of privatisation and neo-liberal land reform (SPP, 2009:27). The campaign sought to raise awareness around the negative impacts of the food system, and around the benefits of ecological land use with a specific focus on organic food production. It also sought to mobilise for agrarian transformation and was later called the Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign (Interview with Naude, 24 June 2015). The movement made a few demands, but was confined to the Western and Northern Cape and since then no further actions have formally been documented by the SPP.

Nevertheless, Surplus People's Project is still functioning today, as is the campaign. They continue to promote popular education in order to emancipate the oppressed and expose the rural poor to alternative and critical ways of thinking and to develop activists. They also continue to focus on agrarian transformation to ensure secure access and tenure, ownership and control over productive land, water and national resources, and they also promote agro-ecological production for food sovereignty. All of the above is done to help ensure that communities have control over their food systems through local agro-ecological production, consumption of healthy food and local marketing and distributing (PESA, *Webpage*). Although government did not listen to the campaign's original demands, this did not hinder activists from being active in communities, and since then forums have been established in different municipal areas. These forums serve as a platform for farmers to share knowledge, their struggles, voice their concerns and work together to find solutions (Interview with Naude, 24 June 2015). This is an example of an important organisation with valuable activities in the agrarian and food sovereignty space, however its reach is restricted to the Western and Northern Cape.

Another land and agrarian reform organisation is Nkuzi Development Association, located in Limpopo. This organisation assists communities who apply for land redistribution and restitution, by taking them through the stages of application, helping them get post-settlement support and leading them to the right people if they don't get the support they need. They also assist labour tenants secure their tenure. This is an important job as displacement from farms, particularly as they are being turned into game farms for tourism is occurring more frequently in South Africa. Recently Nkuzi assisted twenty-two families by negotiating with government to buy a portion of the land for the farmers who would have otherwise been displaced when kicked off the farm as they were no longer needed on a game farm (Interview with Manana, 23 June 2015).

There are also those organisations who assist with development, but particularly as it relates to international development projects with supposed benefits for locals. For example, Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA) is an organisation that undertakes community awareness raising about environmental injustices that are caused by the presence of mining projects who enter into communities under the guise

of development. Often these companies uproot communities, damage ecosystems, soil and ultimately livelihoods, thus turning communities who were previously thriving by depending on the land, into communities dependent on aid, government support and handouts (Interview with Mahlangu, 23 June 2015). MACUA tries to organise these displaced communities so that they can fight for their rights in a coordinated manner. MACUA also engages with government to create a more inclusive and beneficial environment in the mining industry (Rutledge, 2015).

Besides campaigns, in South Africa there are organisations and farmers who practise agroecology, form into unions and engage in struggles to address challenges, particularly relating to land, water access and political issues; for example, Ilizwi Lamafama (translated as 'voice of the regional farmers') Farmers' Union, a union of more than 3 000 members in the Eastern Cape. Members of the union spoke up to support the repealing of the Black Authorities Act in 2010, an act which has led to division in villages as chiefs abuse power (PMG, 2010:1). This union is made up of cooperatives, for example one cooperative consisting of 15 women which has been growing food on a piece of school land that has been leased to them. The farmers practice agroecology, plant indigenous seeds and herbs and supply the nutrition programme at the school with nutritious food. In addition, members of the farmers' union have been taught agroecology and as a result most of the households in the nearby areas learn about agroecology at community meetings (Interview with Baloyi, 23 June 2015).

There are also organisations, like Ntinga Ntaba kaNdoda, a community organisation in Keiskammahoek South, which promotes development that is equitable, community driven, and ecologically sustainable, with a focus on education about the environment, ecology, conservation and sustainability (Ntinga, 2012:1). This organisation works with small-scale farmers to assist them in registering and forming worker cooperatives, particularly cooperatives that align to solidarity economy principles (Interview with Hugo, 24 June 2015), which leads to another type of organisation, namely social movements, such as the Solidarity Economy Movement.

The Solidarity Economy Movement is a grassroots movement that seeks to initiate an alternative type of economy in South Africa, one which is informed by ethical and social

goals and which is ‘organised through collective struggle and conscious choice to establish new patterns of democratic production, consumption and living that promotes the realisation of human needs and environmental justice’ (COPAC, 2010:2-3). In South Africa it is comprised of worker cooperatives, farms organised as worker cooperatives, the South African Waste Pickers Association, cooperative bakeries, education and communication cooperatives, and farming communities who form into worker cooperatives, as discussed below.

In South Africa there are also those farming communities who successfully form into cooperatives, realising their potential of collectivising as small-scale farmers. For example, with the help of Environmental Monitoring Group, rooibos tea farmers were able to set up the Highveld Cooperative and obtain an Organic and Fairtrade Certification (Missouris, 2012:17). In addition, there exist environmental NGOs in South Africa who promote food sovereignty by trying to protect seed sovereignty and biodiversity in South Africa. For example, the African Centre for Biodiversity, a non-profit organisation based in Johannesburg, campaigns against the privatisation and consolidation of African food systems by international capital and also against the proliferation of genetically modified food in South Africa and the wider African continent (Jones, 2012:12), fighting the imposition of GM of the food system. While Biowatch, on the other hand challenges industrial agriculture by demonstrating ecologically sustainable alternatives to ensure biodiversity, food sovereignty and social justice. Biowatch also works with small-holder farmers to ensure that people have control over their food, agricultural processes and resources (Williams, 2013:17).

Finally, there are also various academics and researchers, health practitioners, and food price activists like Imraahn Mukkadam who I introduced in the introduction to this research, as well as others who do research and advocacy into the power concentration in the food system.

What all of these organisations, actors and activists, with varying approaches and goals, have in common, is that they are fighting against an unjust food system, and are in some or other way seeking to fill gaps left by food security strategies pursued by government, business and Civil Society Organisations, as described in the previous chapter. For example, Nkuzi urges government to value small-scale farmers, to

provide additional support measures, and land reform, while the African Center for Biodiversity advocates for biodiversity as a vital feature of healthy food systems. Individually these organisations, farmers, academics and advocacy groups (and many others that have not been mentioned) are doing valuable work to support the hungry, communities and small-scale farmers to shift power in their specific fields and localities (whether national, provincial or local). However, given the many challenges in the food system, the entrenched power in the hands of corporates and the lack of political will from the state to respond to requests of communities, for example in the Surplus People Project's case, it was realised that these and other campaigns and initiatives needed to do so much more to elevate the voice of the powerless and challenge the injustices in the food system.

**The genesis of the SAFSC**

On 28 February to 1 March 2015, representatives from over 60 organisations met in Johannesburg to officially launch SAFSC at the Food Sovereignty Campaign Assembly. It should be noted however, that this meeting of dynamic forces from within South Africa's grassroots organisations, farmers, communities, students, volunteers, activists and experts in the food system did not arise out of nowhere. It was pre-empted by lengthy processes, relationships and strategies that were birthed years before this historic meeting. The idea had been discussed at the right to food dialogues which were conducted the previous year (during 2014) and culminated in an inter-provincial conference on the right to food in March 2014. These dialogues were undertaken to discover what issues farmers, workers, faith groups, NGOs and communities face in relation to food, farming and land (COPAC, 2014:1). The dialogues were integral to the development of the Campaign because they initiated ideas and built understandings of the right to food and food sovereignty. They served to educate attendants, and to encourage learning from those most affected by the food system about their struggles, and also to formulate ideas about what food sovereignty would mean for them.

During these dialogues the idea of a national campaign was born, but this was not the first time that the idea of a food sovereignty campaign was conceived among some of

these parties. For two years earlier, in 2012, the Solidarity Economy Movement initiated a similar food sovereignty campaign. As their newsletter states, ‘a decision was taken at the first South African international solidarity economy conference in October 2012 to launch a national food sovereignty campaign. This is an exciting prospect. The work to do this begins largely in local sites, where effort can be made at developing local independence in production and supply of food, as part of building the solidarity economy and addressing hunger’ (Bennie, 2012:7). Therefore, the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign is a product of both the Solidarity Economy Movement and the right to food dialogues, but it differs substantially from the former’s campaign because it is carried out at a larger scale, with more reach and with a larger mandate; to transform the South African food system from the ground up.

At the right to food dialogues it was realised that in order to achieve food sovereignty, communities, farmers and workers had needs that would first have to be met. These include some of the food sovereignty principles, which Akram-Lodhi further formulates into preconditions, and others specific to South Africa. For example, the realisation that a culture of pride in agriculture and food production would need to be rebuilt, farmers would need to be educated and they would need secure tenure and access to land for food production. Access to land would have to involve a process of land and agrarian reform. As such, it was stressed that organisations should work together with existing campaigns and initiatives for land and agrarian reform, a key principle of food sovereignty. Farmers would also require infrastructure for local markets – this is currently a challenge for small-scale farmers as they fail to access existing markets or find alternative markets. It would thus be a gap that the campaign must address to ensure that farmers are connected to households that need food. This, it was agreed, could be overcome by building Solidarity Economy institutions like producer cooperatives, food markets, bakeries and people’s restaurants that are cooperatively controlled. In addition, for food sovereignty to be achieved, it was strongly suggested that the state would have to play a supportive role. As such, an important action would entail challenging the state to ensure supportive government policies that enable active roles for small holder farmers, faster land redistribution, government support for agroecology, and protection measures for local markets, including protection from cheap imports and dumping (COPAC, 2014:16). It is clear that many of these preconditions are similar to those presented in the literature, thus revealing the extent

of co-optation by the corporate regime in South Africa. However, they do differ as they introduce the Solidarity Economy concept. The ways in which these preconditions would be met also differ significantly. This is because in South Africa there was no pre-existing national rural people's movement like that which had emerged in Latin America, as such something similar would have to be orchestrated to raise awareness about the food sovereignty alternative, thus a campaign was birthed, as I discuss below.

Since it was realised that the above preconditions to food sovereignty would not be met in individual pockets in South Africa, as somewhat isolated organisations worked on their own, it was agreed that a campaign and advocacy plan would be necessary to build food sovereignty, mobilise communities, put pressure on corporations who profit from food, and importantly put pressure on the state to protect its food system and create an enabling environment for food sovereignty (COPAC, 2014:15).

The right to food dialogues highlighted the need for a food sovereignty campaign to unite struggles on the ground and to promote preconditions for food sovereignty. Here it was also realised that many of the challenges faced by communities were interlinked and a key challenge for the campaign would thus be to knit the struggles together on common platforms where a united vision in the struggle for food sovereignty could be intensified. This would mean linking and amplifying those organisations already engaged in alternative forms of food production and distribution, with small scale farmers and with social forces who are not benefitting from the food system (including the thirteen million hungry). It was also stressed that those organisations currently fighting for food sovereignty alternatives should be linked together in a way that commonly advances such alternatives on a national scale (COPAC, 2014:15).

The idea for a campaign was well deliberated, researched and discussed throughout the process of the inter-provincial dialogues on the right to food. It is evident from the discussion documents that before SAFSC was initiated, challenges and preconditions were already thought through. The discussion paper reveals the outcome of the deliberations as follows:

> ‘What is clear, therefore, is that with this range of challenges experienced, a campaign that unites the struggles of farmers, communities, workers, faith groups and NGOs is necessary to advance a campaign for the right to food and food sovereignty, and that is able to tackle these issues based on seeing them as inter-connected’ (COPAC, 2014:2).

Therefore, a campaign would be appropriate because ‘it allows for grassroots forces to drive, shape and strengthen the campaign’ (SAFSC, 2015b:18). The need for a campaign was also addressed at the assembly and it was agreed that a campaign would be necessary to build power, to create a united force that challenges governments and corporations (SAFSC, 2015d:7). For some activists the campaign is a means to pledge solidarity with other communities in the country and to initiate a broader movement for food sovereignty, for they argue that once a movement is strong ‘we will overwhelm the government with our demands’ (Interview with Manana, 23 June 2015). And this is one of the reasons the campaign was launched, to overwhelm the government, the media, the corporations and all those who currently hold unequal power over the food system. By building unity, sharing knowledge and by showing that alternatives to the current system do exist, organisations under SAFSC banner hope to gradually take back the power collectively.

Engaging in these dialogues was an important first step in deviating from the process by which the government (and sometimes NGOs and business) might initiate a programme or policy. This is because the process involved in forming the campaign and in establishing campaign priorities was very participatory and it took into consideration the voices, experiences and knowledge of those most affected by the problems in the food system. By this it is evident that the SAFSC seeks to pursue the principle of *democratic control and local decision making* as it engages with various actors in the food system. By doing so, the SAFSC already shows that there are alternatives to the top-down approach, that these alternatives can work, that the poor and marginalised are fully aware of what is affecting them, and that they too have ideas of how their problems can be solved. As such, by ensuring that the process was participatory, the members present were able to gain a greater understanding of the issues that affect the poor, and in doing so, more relevant solutions to their struggles could be sought. One of which was clearly the establishment of a broad campaign to

challenge the injustices in the food system. Shortly thereafter, this idea was launched by the very same people who dreamt it up, and not only a small body of professionals.

*The launch of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign*

After this lengthy process SAFSC was launched, and participation with those most affected continued. A key aspect of any of the dialogues or activities involves learning from experts, activists, the hungry and farmers alike. The dialogues and thereafter, the assembly set the standard for this participation as both events allowed for many group discussions and plenary feedback sessions, as well as informative sessions to help educate those who are there around problems in the food system that they are not aware of, but may be affecting them. At the assembly, experts presented on the crises in the corporate food regime and also clarified that challenges faced in all communities in South Africa regarding hunger are as a result of a broken food system. An opportunity was also given to those activists, organisations and farmers who are already working toward food sovereignty to showcase what they had been doing and provide concrete examples of how food sovereignty is being achieved in local communities. The assembly had three objectives, first to educate everyone around issues of food and hunger and the broken food system, second, it sought to showcase alternatives and examples of solutions of food sovereignty in practice; and finally, it created a platform for all present to discuss challenges, solutions and importantly the strategy for SAFSC and partner organisations to take the campaign forward.

What the assembly and right to food dialogues also did, was deepen the understanding of what food sovereignty is, and what it means to different people in different food sectors and positions. Below I present some of these understandings of food sovereignty.

**Understandings of food sovereignty in South Africa**

Food sovereignty in South Africa takes on a range of different definitions and understandings. In this section I present these understandings in four themes. First, food sovereignty understands food as a right, second, it entails full and fair access to

land, farming inputs and markets. Third, food sovereignty means independence and freedom to choose all of the above, and finally it is an alternative to the individualism that governs the current food system. In this section I explore these four different understandings of food sovereignty according to different actors and activists in the campaign as gathered from discussion documents and interviews.

The first understanding of food sovereignty coincides with the first principle, namely that food is a right. This was stressed at the right to food dialogues, where it was further elaborated that food sovereignty involves reclaiming this right as a human need and not something to be sold for a profit on the market (COPAC, 2014:15). Food sovereignty activists and community practitioners also stress that food is a right (Interview with Hugo, 24 June 2015) and further that food sovereignty is an element of true democracy 'because community members play a role in determining that which they must eat, not that which is marketed to them' (Interview with Mahlangu, 23 June 2015). In addition, food sovereignty entails a right to producing that which people want to produce, not just for the sake of consumption, but for nutritional value (Interview with Radebe, 23 June 2015), and also to benefit the community and the environment (Interview with Hugo, 24 June 2015). Respondents did not specifically suggest who was responsible to ensure this right as they provided their understandings of food sovereignty, but answers to other questions made reference to the state. First, to the obstacle that the state can be in ensuring food sovereignty because it promotes a neoliberal agenda (Interview with Jali, 23 June 2015) and favours industrial agriculture over small-scale farmers with support that is given to them (Interview with Jali, 23 June 2015). This obstacle has been raised in the literature. Overcoming such obstacles were also stressed by actors in the campaign, as involving constructing alternatives outside of the state, such as the solidarity economy (Interview with Radebe, 23 June 2015; Interview with Jali, 23 June 2015).

In many areas actors and activists also recognised that the state is failing in a host of ways to promote the right to food. For example, the state is currently not fulfilling its commitment of budgeting ten per cent of their GDP to agriculture, and as a result small-scale farmers are suffering (Interview with Manana, 23 June 2015). As such, while actors do not directly address it in their definitions, in order to achieve food sovereignty, they do stress that it involves both creating alternatives outside the state,

but also engaging in a struggle with the state to ensure that it fulfils its obligation to the right to food. This can be done by unlatching the state from capital's hold, so that it stops supporting corporations who are profiteering out of food, and at the same time destroying the environment and exacerbating hunger. Activists also suggest that the state supports those who are producing food sustainably and ecologically.

Importantly, to achieve right to food, it entails ensuring a right for ordinary people to produce food, it involves supporting small-scale farmers who are practicing agroecology and supporting each other (Interview with Baloyi, 23 June 2015). For some, a precondition to achieve this right rests on better control and distribution of resources, particularly land (Interview with Naude, 24 June 2015; Interview with Mahlangu, 23 June 2015; Interview with Radebe, 23 June 2015).

This leads us to the second understanding of food sovereignty, namely that it involves access. In South Africa where the right to produce is constantly being eroded by mining companies, and by lack of access to land (as a result of apartheid dispossession), this understanding forms an integral part of food sovereignty, such that many farmers' understandings of food sovereignty focussed on control of means of production and inputs. While experts and community practitioners highlighted similar concerns, they stressed that those who want to participate in agriculture must be given a chance (Interview with Dube, 29 July 2015) and ought to be awarded the support they require (Interview with Manana, 23 June 2015). In addition, food sovereignty as restoration of land and production of food means restoration of dignity:

> 'When land is returned to the people who it has been taken from it would mean the restoration of our dignity, fundamentally because we have lost that and because it would mean once our land is returned to us then we will be able to live in harmony. If we can get our land back, and we do food sovereignty, then we can produce for the whole community and also for the country' (Interview with Radebe, 23 June 2015).

Actors and activists recognise that government is delaying the process of land distribution and further argue that support measures from government are not sufficient. In the face of a weakening political will of government, Naude (Interview, 24

June 2015) stresses that a strong activist group is key 'if we want to fight all the battles' for land and inputs. Others stress the importance of seeds and markets, highlighting the simple correlation between access to seeds and markets and the reduction of poverty (Interview with Molefe, 25 June 2016).

Food sovereignty therefore also means access to inputs and markets, which is in line with the food sovereignty principle of valuing food producers. Access to inputs for producing food is viewed as integral to food sovereignty, as is the choice to produce food by working with nature, not against it. For farmers, food sovereignty involves packing away the books of chemical farming and learning to work with nature (Interview with Naude, 24 June 2015). For activists and experts, it involves rejecting GMOs and protecting seed sovereignty so that farmers have access to appropriate seed (Interview with Ngwenya, 24 June 2015; ACB, 2012). Food sovereignty, for those facing issues of water, especially in the drought also means access to water (Interview with Dube, 29 July 2015).

> Food sovereignty is when you are a farmer producing agroecology, you are taking your own decisions about your own seeds, about your own market, about your own everything.' (Interview with Baloyi, 23 June 2015).

Access to markets for small scale farmers is another key concern as markets for them are currently unstable and unpredictable. In order to promote such access, activists stress the importance of building solidarity economy institutions, such as cooperatives in food production and distribution to help provide ways for local control of food (COPAC, 2014:15, Interview with Manana, 23 June 2015).

A third understanding of food sovereignty is independence. This was stressed by most respondents, farmers and experts alike. For them food sovereignty involves autonomy, freedom to choose, and is an element of true democracy (Interview with Mahlangu, 23 June 2015; Interview with Jali, 23 June 2015; Interview with Radebe, 23 June 2015). Independence can be ensured as people have freedom to choose, freedom to produce, and freedom to decide. This can only be ensured if there is democratic control of the food system, another important principle of food sovereignty stressed in

the literature. This principle can be promoted at both the producer and the consumer level. At the producer level, Via Campesina stresses that small-scale food producers should have direct input into formulating policies at all levels. It is clear that this does not happen when developing policies in South Africa, particularly with the latest Food Security and Nutrition policy. However, respondents did not make mention of this element when talking about their understanding of food sovereignty, neither did they make reference to the role of the state directly. Instead they commented what they are doing to ensure independence from the current food system, for example, by reviving indigenous knowledge systems, by providing agroecology training, establishing their own markets, sharing knowledge and resources, and by doing so creating their own form of freedom and democratic food systems on a smaller scale. One respondent did however allude to the ineffectiveness of government but did not state how to overcome this ineffectiveness. The reason for this could be because some have given up on the state due to its embeddedness in capital and unresponsiveness to small-scale farmers and the poor. Instead such activists find it easier and necessary to create alternative pathways first. Further, perhaps democratic control of the entire South African food system is something that individuals feel they cannot tackle on their own, and it is for this reason that they have established a campaign. Within the campaign at a national level, more democratic processes are envisioned as a participatory process of developing a food sovereignty act (which I discuss as a tactic in the following sections) is planned for 2016. This will be a symbolic means by which people can develop their own act through a democratic grassroots process. These processes and the act can serve as an important mechanism to fill the gap of the first precondition, namely the right to food for all people, as it has the potential (more likely in the long run – if it is adopted) to engage government, hold it accountable to meeting the needs of its people and ensuring a more food sovereign food system. This act will present the case for a food sovereign South Africa. Even if it is not adopted, the act will be created in a participatory manner, and will in effect create a democratic space for small-scale farmers, the poor and the hungry to voice their concerns, create policy, and thus fill an important gap that currently exists, in doing so it will serve as a tool that empowers people and communities.

In addition to recognising state failure to engage in participatory processes, actors also recognise the inadequacy of government to support small-scale farmers and this has

been raised at most meetings, such that a priority for 2016 campaigning will be to engage government to strengthen support for small-scale farmers (this initiative can serve as important in filling the current gap where small-scale producers are not valued).

At the consumer level, food sovereignty also means democracy, and doing away with dependency. It means not relying on handouts or bad food that is being sold at the shops (Interview with Naude, 24 June 2015). Ultimately it means that communities are able to consume the food that they have produced at a local level. While internationally the second generation is making great strides in ensuring that consumers have more choice to eat healthy food as it is produced by local farmers or by people themselves, the food sovereignty actors and activists in South Africa also see this as a key pathway to achieving food sovereignty, which for some is when 'communities are able to sustain themselves for years, without depending, they will be free to make choices. They will begin to enjoy life with dignity' (Interview with Mahlangu, 23 June 2015).

Finally, food sovereignty is about promoting the commons and a value system that embodies solidarity and Ubuntu. This is best summarised by a farmer, Dube (interview, 29 July 2015) as he claims that food sovereignty is Ubuntu, going back to old traditional ways of sharing and caring for community members. In the old days' people did not let their neighbours go hungry. What this means is that food sovereignty involves challenging the individualism that De Schutter talks about in the literature. This individualism has exacerbated since the penetration of market relationships into all areas of life, particularly food, and has accompanied the loss of critical relationships that humankind has with each other and with nature. Ways by which food sovereignty challenges this possessive individualism and consumerism is by sharing ideas, knowledge, land and seed, as well as traditional farming methods (Interview with Radebe, 23 June 2015). Sharing of knowledge is done simply by talking about issues of GMOs, and talking about the effect of chemical farming, as well as where our food comes from and what the quality of the food is (Interview with Ngwenya, 24 June 2015). In terms of sharing land, Mahlangu (Interview on 23 June 2015) states it frankly when talking about commonage of land, 'it is simple, no individuals must have control over hectares of land. Food sovereignty means there has to be communal ownership of hand. Then the community will feel a part of the economy and play a role. If this

happens then the number of hungry people will drastically reduce.' Thus food sovereignty proposes an alternative to the individualism present in the food system today, and stresses instead communal control over food production and those assets (land, community, knowledge, support for example) that give one access to produce and consume culturally acceptable, nutritious food in harmony with nature.

Interestingly, understandings of food sovereignty correspond with the role of the activist and their chief occupation. For example, food sovereignty for a farmer means land access and agroecology. Food sovereignty for a development practitioner in the land sector means equal access to land. While food sovereignty for development actors means democracy and independence (as opposed to dependence on supposed development interventions such as mines and hand-outs). As such, definitions of food sovereignty often align with the role of the organisations, for example those involved in saving seeds, or protecting seeds, it means seed sovereignty. Although there are varying definitions that emphasise different aspects of food sovereignty in South Africa, these variations expose the nature of the extent of the brutalities in the food system, and further reveal the need to coordinate efforts to fight against a system that disadvantages so many people. These broad understandings are in no way contradictory, but share the idea that the current food system is unjust, undemocratic and individualistic. The fact that people in the SAFSC have various definitions and understandings of food sovereignty also allow for various actors to converge under one umbrella of food sovereignty to attempt to pursue all of the food sovereignty principles.

Understandings of food sovereignty also determine bias toward actions and strategy that are be followed by the campaign. For example, during the national assembly in October 2015, the question was posed to groups of what the focus of the campaign should be for 2016. For farmers at one of the discussion tables the focus was clear, it should be agroecology, for that is the main way in which farmers promote food sovereignty. While agroecology was not agreed on as the key campaigning priority, it does however fall under the four key campaigning priorities that were decided on, these include GMO's awareness, support to small-scale farmers, climate change and a food sovereignty act, and finally a #FoodPricesMustFall campaign. Agroecology promotion is a concrete alternative that can address and inform all of the above issues

and is indeed integral to achieving food sovereignty as it forms one of the key principles for Via Campesina. As such, it is possible to incorporate all of these different understandings of food sovereignty into action plans and allow for those actors (like farmers promoting agroecology) and organisations to continue specialising in their area. However, because the nature of a campaign is to create awareness, it is also important that on a national level key priorities guide the campaigning initiatives through various strategies decided on collectively by the partners and thereafter by the National Coordinating Committee. These key campaigning priorities were thus duly accepted and thereafter the National Coordinating Committee was tasked with putting together a strategy and implementation plan. Before discussing these strategies, I turn to outline the structure of SAFSC and the various partner organisations involved. Importantly, I explain further who the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center, as the catalyst to the campaign is, and their role in initiating the campaign.

**Constituency and structure of the campaign**

As mentioned, SAFSC is coordinated by a National Coordinating Committee and is comprised of partner organisations and various supporters of the campaign. I describe the partners and the National Coordinating Committee in this section below, but first I begin by explaining how all the partners came together.

I have established previously that a portion of the partner organisations of SAFSC were invited to the right to food dialogues because of their affiliation to the Solidarity Economy Movement. However, interviews reveal that it was first through links with the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC), that organisations came to be involved in Solidarity Economy Movement and also the SAFSC. COPAC is a grassroots NGO that coordinates the Solidarity Economy Movement, undertakes activist training and schools and is also a research organisation that provides open access resources such as activist training guides on food sovereignty and worker cooperatives. In 2013, COPAC, in partnership with the Foundation for Human Rights undertook right to food dialogues in three provinces, Gauteng, Limpopo and North-West to understand people's experiences of the right to food (Bennie, 2013:17). Various organisations were invited to take part in these dialogues and thereafter in the

assembly. These organisations were those already part of the Solidarity Economy Movement and a host of others who would be seen as important partners in the campaign, particularly those working with food issues in South Africa. To ensure that all organisations had equal opportunity, COPAC paid for accommodation and transport of delegates to the assembly. At the close of the assembly, a list comprising of 66 organisations was drafted, these were officially recognised as partners of SAFSC (SAFSC, 2015c:2). COPAC has since taken on the role of the secretariat to SAFSC and has agreed to do this for two years. By doing so, they use their own resources to fund events, host national coordinating committee meetings and initiate communication and social media platforms. While there have been a few concerns about the nature of funding for the campaign and the campaign priorities, it is clear that COPAC does not dictate the direction of the campaign nor make final decisions. In addition, COPAC, as a partner organisation to the campaign makes its own funding contribution to the campaign, as all partner organisations are also encouraged to do. In this way, the issue of funding and accountability rests on each organisation and their funders, and no funds are handled by the National Coordinating Committee. While the campaign is exploring funding options, currently all projects are intended to be self-funded by the organisations leading them.

COPAC's role in the initiation of SAFSC is unique as there has never before been a campaign for food sovereignty at a national level. This thus leads one to ask the counter-factual question of what would have happened if COPAC had not initiated a national campaign? Would the Solidarity Economy Movement's campaign have achieved such media attention, would the activists trained have received the training elsewhere, and what would have happened to the farmers who were desperate for solutions and who were later approached by members of the campaign with agroecology solutions? While the impacts of the campaign thus far have been profound, I discuss these in the next section, some of the connections may have indeed been made without the existence of the campaign, and partners would continue their beneficial work, but the networks that have been formed, the solidarity forged and expressed between a range of different people and organisations in the food space would not have happened without the campaign or COPAC. As such, their involvement has been vital and impactful.

What this reveals is that in South Africa where grassroots movements and organisations are at times weak, a catalyst is sometimes required (even an NGO) to initiate these grassroots processes of sharing knowledge, networking and coordinating. COPAC has been that vital catalyst in the national food sovereignty space in South Africa. Even though there exists a National Coordinating Committee who is responsible for carrying out the campaign priorities, without COPAC, the meetings and coordination, which is still dependent on COPAC, would also not happen. COPAC has realised the importance of their role so has agreed to carry out the secretariat role of the campaign for the second year running. I now discuss the role of the National Coordinating Committee.

*National Coordinating Committee*

A National Coordinating Committee (referred to hereafter as the Committee) was elected by the members present at the first assembly to be representative of various sectors championing food sovereignty. The initial elected Committee comprised of fifteen people, and was representative of the Solidarity Economy Movement, small-scale farmers and cooperatives, the agrarian sector, environmental justice actors and a representative from the food price sector (SAFSC, 2015d:25). Later representatives from the youth and students were included in the Committee after the suggestion was raised at a national meeting. The Committee is tasked with the coordination of the campaign, facilitation of grassroots-driven actions, capacity building and communication. The Committee has also been given a mandate to develop and finalise the programme of actions for the campaign (SAFSC, 2015a:4). Since its election, the Committee has held meetings to discuss the campaign themes for the year, organise and promote the campaign. It has been transparent as it undergoes these processes and shares detailed minutes from its meetings with the greater food sovereignty community. In these minutes the Committee has been open with progress, challenges and finances.

While it was agreed that the Committee was to work in manner that ‘builds the alliance across the country, in various sectors and in communities in a bottom up and democratic manner’ (SAFSC, 2015a:4), the extent to which this has been achieved is

questionable since only two small-scale farmers are represented in the committee, and their views may not be representative of all farmers in the campaign, thus at the national level the campaign is not entirely grassroots driven. This is not to say that grassroots voices are not heard in the planning stages of the campaign. For at the assembly, where the plan was drafted, representatives from over 60 organisations were present and had the opportunity to provide input into the strategy. It was only after the assembly that the Committee met to fulfil their task of putting the ideas into a plan of action. The same process happened at the end of the first year of campaigning. From my observations at these assemblies and the Committee meetings, I have realised that because capacity on the ground in communities and community organisations in South Africa is at times weak, (for example, some lack financial and human resources, others lack organising capacity or campaign skills, such as skills required to draft documents) the Committee and COPAC as the secretariat have put in place extra measures to include grassroots voices in the planning and campaigning. They have done this well through various events focussed on engaging the marginalised. As mentioned, this began right at the beginning with the right to food dialogues, thereafter through the assembly interactions, and further through various capacity-building initiatives, such as activist schools and learning exchange visits. The Committee has also planned events which create platforms for the marginalised to share their stories, for example at a people's tribunal on hunger and landlessness. These and other inclusionary activities are discussed in more detail in the strategy section below. First I introduce the different types of partners in the campaign.

*Partners of the campaign*

Partners of the campaign include many of those progressive organisations introduced in the beginning of the chapter, such as Nkuzi Development Association, the Solidarity Economy Network and the African Center for Biodiversity, to name a few. These organisations can be categorised into three groups, each playing a vital role in the campaign. They include, first, organisations providing training and education for food sovereignty ends (even though some do not explicitly call it food sovereignty), second, initiatives at community level alternatives like farmers organisations and finally, initiatives promoting the right to food and food sovereignty. Below I discuss these

organisations and the activities they undertake to promote food sovereignty. Findings for this section come from observations from volunteering in the COPAC office and from campaign documents and interviews.

Organisations providing training and education for food sovereignty include those organisations involved in urban farming and knowledge building initiatives; agroecology training centers; research organisations, such as the African Center for Biodiversity, and relief projects working in townships to promote community development, such as organisations like the South African Slow Food network who work with the youth and promote food gardens to advance sustainable food production (COPAC, 2014:12). Through observations and interviews I found that most organisations or activists provided training and education in some form. Farmers and farming organisations all sought to share their knowledge at the community level, to raise community awareness about agroecology, while some organisations working in the land reform sector, like Nkuzi Development Association raise awareness and try assist people with land reform applications and post settlement support. COPAC is also one of these training centers, as they provide training materials and host activist schools to promote food sovereignty knowledge and practice, and worker cooperative training as part of their contribution to the campaign.

In addition, there are initiatives at community-level that also promote food sovereignty, including farmers' organisations, farmers' unions, farms that have shifted to agroecology, farmers' forums which promote only organic agriculture, seed banks that save indigenous and heirloom seeds; and even examples of land occupations, for example a pastor in Pretoria who has managed to legally occupy land for growing crops. All of these forms of initiatives and organisations currently exist in SAFSC. Furthermore, since the initiation of the campaign, forums have been promoted, and successfully so. For example, a forum on food sovereignty and climate justice at Wits University was established, initiated by COPAC and is now run by students. The forum creates awareness around food sovereignty and climate change among university students, has initiated a food garden on the main campus and has had talks with management to negotiate setting up a food forest and other initiatives to help eradicate student hunger at Wits. Farmer and community forums that already existed have

directed discussions towards agroecology, rejecting Genetically Modified seeds and promoting food sovereignty education (Interview with Molefe, 25 June 2015).

A final group of organisations or initiatives in the SAFSC include campaigns and processes such as land forums which bring together communities with similar issues: struggling for land and land reform; farmers' cooperatives working to establish cooperatives for member farmers with the aim of establishing economies of scale for African emerging farmers, such as the Rooibos tea cooperative; organisations for organising small-scale farmers into forums; and campaigns to fast-track land reform such as Nkuzi; and finally legal capacities who focus attention on legal and advocacy work around the right to food and food related issues – for example the African Centre for Biodiversity, as they initiate petitions to try ban the use glyphosate, a harmful chemical used in pesticides; and campaigns promoting collective control over the food system, such as the Solidarity Economy Movement (COPAC, 2014:14). The Solidarity Economy Movement is a movement of particular importance to SAFSC not only because it had an integral part to play in the initiation of SAFSC, but also because it could be a key avenue through which food markets for food sovereignty ends are achieved. I briefly touch on its importance below.

The Solidarity Economy Movement is viewed by its members and by SAFSC as an integral mechanism to promote food sovereignty because it aims to create new patterns of production, consumption and living that places human needs at the centre. In doing so it has the potential to provide institutions such as food producing worker cooperatives, producer cooperatives, consumer cooperatives and community marketplaces which, if functioning together, can promote a system that enables democracy over food (COPAC, 2014:14; Bennie, 2012:8). The potential of the Solidarity Economy Movement has been accepted and praised, particularly because it can provide alternative marketing structures for local economies and thus contribute to ensuring that preconditions of valuing providers and localising trade are met. However, in South Africa there exists a big gap in actual successful examples of solidarity economy initiatives, nevertheless it is one of their aims to promote worker cooperatives and alternative avenues for food production and retail. Some of these avenues do exist, for example the Ethical Co-op, an online shop for marketing and

selling products sourced locally from farmers and producers in South Africa, but more concrete examples are indeed needed to show that the alternative can and does exist.

Nevertheless, as the Solidarity Economy Movement and other partner organisations, campaigns and actors continue to undertake their main functions, they all continue to promote the preconditions to food sovereignty in various ways. The networks created in the campaign serve to encourage them in their beneficial work, and also to inspire partners to include food sovereignty campaigning in their planning, which many organisations agree to. For example, some have agreed to host activist workshops on agroecology, some do exchange visits to other partners to share agroecology skills and knowledge, while others are encouraged to pass on the good news of food sovereignty, as they have learned about it at various SAFSC events, in doing so, are informing and equipping ordinary citizens with knowledge not only about where their food comes from, but also how the corporate controlled food system is causing the vast brutalities that they might be experiencing. Organisations are keen to undertake these campaigning initiatives and are excited to give feedback on their campaigning progress at various national events. However, the onus is on each organisation to carry out what they have agreed to while no monitoring measures are in place to ensure that this gets done. This can be a challenge for the national campaign as it is difficult to know the impact of interventions such as activist schools, besides from feedback at various events and through the communication portals, for example the Google group and newsletter. Furthermore, because it is difficult to track organisations' activities, it is also difficult to track organisations' support of the campaign. As a result, some organisations have gradually lost interest in SAFSC.

Besides losing interest in the campaign, others have left the campaign for ideological reasons, for example, tensions with two partner organisations have evolved since the launch. The first was with an organisation who wrote an official letter to leave SAFSC because their principles did not agree with those of SAFSC. A second was with an individual from an organisation who tried to bring division into the campaign in order to secure funding for his own projects. In both instances the groups or individuals differed with the organisation, strategy and principles of SAFSC. Here Patel's words ring true when he suggests that initially movements may have a broad definition of food sovereignty, under which many can advocate, however as the concept is more

precisely articulated, it will likely lose some of its supporters (Patel *in* Clapp, 2012:176). These are issues which the National Coordinating Committee has had to deal with, but have done so in a collective and transparent way by sharing these challenges with the broader SAFSC community, and by choosing to part ways with those organisations who don't embody SAFSC principles. Below I give more examples of national and local strategies of the campaign and its partners.

**Strategy of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign**

A few of the objectives, strategies and activities initially planned for the SAFSC have been discussed above, these include the initiatives that individual organisations undertake to promote food sovereignty, such as the promotion of indigenous knowledge, training, agroecology, as well as placing demands on corporations and the state and creating a food sovereignty act. These and additional objectives and strategies at a national level are covered in this section below as I explain the strategy, and the achievements of the campaign thus far. Each of these strategies also attempt to fill various gaps that exist in the unsovereign food system in South Africa by promoting food sovereignty principles in various sectors and spaces. I draw on these links in the strategies below, but first begin by outlining the objectives of the SAFSC.

*Objectives of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign*

Coming out of the assembly, the objectives of the campaign were clearly articulated as:

i) To tackle the systemic roots of hunger and the climate crisis. To confront the state, capital and false solutions in South Africa;
ii) To advance food sovereignty alternatives from below to sustain life and survive the climate crisis;
iii) To provide a unified platform for all sectors, movements, communities and organisations championing food sovereignty (SAFSC, 2015d:3).

Already it is clear that these objectives are radically different from other organisations and policy we see in South Africa that try work within the current neoliberal framework without challenging it, but rather taking it as a given. Instead SAFSC aims to tackle the unjust root of hunger by confronting the state, capital and false solutions to hunger that they support in South Africa. How SAFSC intends to do this is alluded to in the second objective, by showing that alternatives are possible and advancing those alternatives that promote life in the midst of a climate crisis. And finally, it is evident from the second and third objectives that food sovereignty campaigning is also about taking back power, and this can only be done by putting power into the hands of the marginalised, the hungry, landless and workers.

To what extent the above objectives have been achieved is uncertain, however below I discuss progress and key activities that have been implemented to ensure these objectives and underlying food sovereignty principles are achieved by the national campaign and by partner organisations in their local communities.

*Call for a food sovereignty act*

As discussed, one of the preconditions to achieving food sovereignty according to SAFSC would be to develop a food sovereignty act to fill the void of legislation that specifically addresses the right to food in South Africa. The act would be drafted by the people and would include in it limitations on the corporate controlled food system, and affirm what is required for food sovereignty (Satgar, 2015b:3). As such, an act would serve to strengthen and support efforts from below while also give answers to questions around how to achieve food sovereignty to those on the ground. Such an act would serve as a basis to transform the food system and reposition the state in favour of food sovereignty as a systemic alternative (Satgar, 2015b:3). Importantly, this act would not serve as a way by which the SAFSC can gradually rid itself of its role, should government accept the act and try implement it. This would be a bold step as it was realised that government probably would not accept it. Rather, the purpose of the act is to serve as a campaigning tool to strengthen and support efforts from below. While the food sovereignty movement in Ecuador has managed to engage with the state to address policy around the right to food, the process in South Africa might

take a little longer as the SAFSC is still young. Nevertheless, developing an act is one step in the right direction toward creating awareness about food sovereignty and the responsibility that the state should be taking up to ensure its citizens have access to appropriate, nutritious food. This act could also be used at a later stage to engage the state and other progressive and non-progressive movements to promote the food sovereignty principle of the right to food. In the near future the process of developing the act and thereafter disseminating it also serves to create greater awareness about the food sovereignty alternative.

The idea to draft an act was discussed in the provincial dialogues at the food sovereignty assembly and was further deliberated at the National Coordinating Committee meetings. Not much has been done yet in terms of developing an actual act, while the topic has been raised frequently at SAFSC events, it has since been discussed as one of the four campaigning priorities for 2016 which will be led by COPAC and coordinated by the Committee. Developing the act will involve a participatory process once again, but also include legal advice and research on the South African food system.

Linked to the need for an act, SAFSC also tries to fill the democracy void in the South African food system by substantiating its requests with voices from the ground and with research. As such they have hosted various events to ensure that grassroots voices are heard, and thereafter have attempted to share the documents generated from these events with those in 'powerful' positions, such as government, corporations and the media. They have not always been successful though, and in such cases they have used the lack of the state or the media's interest in their activities as symbolic actions, as I discuss in the SAFSC campaigning tactics below.

*Campaigning*

Creating awareness in the broader public about issues of hunger is one of SAFSC's objectives. It does this by sharing information through petitions. For example, a petition on glyphosate has been shared with all SAFSC partners to take to their communities. Awareness raising on GMO's on climate change has also taken place as SAFSC

supports marches for climate justice, for example. Plans for 2016 include developing awareness raising tools, such as pamphlets, infographics and a short animation film on the climate crisis. Another key way in which SAFSC seeks to increase the reach of knowledge is through campaigning initiatives. Integral to its campaigning strategies are activities that engage the powers in South Africa that control the food system. As such, some of its campaigning activities are directed at confronting the state, media and capital. It is argued that while doing so, support for the campaign will be garnered and a greater support base will ensue.

Campaigning against state and corporations is encouraged at different levels. For example, local organisations and activists (who attend activist schools as detailed below) are encouraged to picket at their local supermarkets. In addition, partner organisations have represented SAFSC in national marches, for example against Monsanto – a march not affiliated with SAFSC but endorsed by them. Participants were encouraged to represent SAFSC in different regions of the country. Other campaigning is done at a national level, for example at the people's tribunal.

The people's tribunal on hunger, food prices and land was the first nationally coordinated event hosted by SAFSC after the assembly. It brought together twenty-one grassroots voices and ten experts from different parts of the country. Grassroots voices included women and men representing small-scale farmers, cooperatives, students, youth, the unemployed, retrenched workers, mining affected communities, waste-pickers and trade unions. The experts included researchers, academics and representatives from NGOs. 'Hunger' for those giving testimony was expressed differently, and included 'genocide of the mind', 'the thief of our dignity', 'an empty stomach', and 'what the politicians refuse to see' (SAFSC, 2015e:1).

The event was a success in many respects because it achieved what it intended to, namely to put corporations, the state and food corporations on trial and to then hear the testimonies of those experiencing the 'crimes' that the state and corporations were later found guilty of perpetuating. For example, food corporations were found guilty of perpetuating hunger through contributing to income inequality in South Africa, for treating food as a commodity, through profiteering from food, price fixing, using waste to make profits, controlling seeds, using the media to promote fast food and industrial

diets, to name a few. In addition, the state was held responsible and complicit in perpetuating hunger by advancing neoliberal economic policies, undermining water resources, supporting and promoting mining and not being committed to adapting the food system to climate change as a result of its failing land and food policies, among other crimes (SAFSC, 2015e:4-5).

The event can thus be regarded as a success because the guilty were put on trial and the voices from the ground were heard. However, the extent to which the guilty parties will serve their 'trial' and respond to the demands made to the state in the verdict document is still to be seen. But this was never expected. Rather a key objective of the tribunal was to highlight the moral bankruptcy of the state and corporations, and at the same time give more legitimacy to the food sovereignty struggle across the public. This legitimacy was achieved by inviting those with moral authority in society, such as representatives from faith based organisations, the Human Rights Commission, unions, advocacy campaigns and grassroots organisations to sit on the panel of judges and present the verdict. The tribunal was thus a symbolic act. This symbolism was further displayed in the empty chairs that were demarcated for the Media and government at the tribunal. Their absence which was evident to all symbolised the lack of concern that these actors have for the hungry. According to those involved, this just provides more reason to keep the campaigning alive and strong. Further, since the tribunal, the Human Rights Commission has taken up the issue of hunger as a strategic focus for future work.

What the tribunal ensured is that the plight of the hungry and the complicit role of business and media was exposed. Indeed, to achieve food sovereignty and its various principles it is important to understand that business and media are directly contributing to hunger. A tribunal was a unique way to reveal this at a national level. Further, the tribunal also served as an important starting point to usher in a new common sense. One that is necessary in a country where media continues to sell the benefits of fast food and processed diets, thus contributing to more non-communicable diseases. At the tribunal the SAFSC was able to paint the corporate food system as a villain, thus instilling a new common sense among those who attended the tribunal, and who read the tribunal report.

Some activity from the tribunal did garner media attention. For example, after the tribunal proceedings on the first two days, pickets at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and at Media houses were also held to campaign high food prices, hunger and landlessness. These were attended by many of the representatives at the tribunal, including the landless, the hungry, the farmers, and members from partner organisations. After the pickets, the group handed memorandums to these two parties, namely the JSE and the Media houses, but neither of the organisations received the memorandums. The pickets did still garner some media attention, as the next day an article was posted online from one of the media houses, entitled *South Africa's food system is broken – Protesters say.* In this article the pickets were detailed and demands of the campaign were explained, for example that the 'massive corporate cartels should be broken up' (*Times Live,* 7.08.2015). The article did not say anything about the demands that were made to the media houses, however. Nevertheless, the campaign still aims to garner increased media attention. At the time of writing SAFSC has received coverage in at least eight media articles, and representatives have had interviews with various radio stations and online news agencies (at least eleven of these have been documented), as a result of its campaigning and activities.

Another means by which the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign seeks to promote the campaign and food sovereignty principles, such as sharing knowledge, promoting agroecology and valuing providers, is by hosting food sovereignty festivals. Their first food sovereignty festival, which took place on 16 October 2015 world food day, celebrated food sovereignty alternatives and at the same time educated the public about food sovereignty. The festival included activities and learning sessions, such as creative campaigning workshops, agroecology training, climate change workshops and an exhibition to showcase food sovereignty alternatives where products, pamphlets, resources and pictures could be shared. The festival was open to the public and was attended by over 200 people. Feedback on the festival was shared at a Committee meeting the day after the festival, where it was highlighted that greater emphasis should be placed on profiling the festival the following year, so that more people could learn about food sovereignty. Nevertheless, feedback that people received from participants was that they thoroughly enjoyed the festival, that sessions were informative, especially about genetically modified seeds. Some people stressed that they would have liked to attend more sessions so suggested that the next festival

be held over two days (SAFSC, 2015f:7). Another way by which the SAFSC seeks to achieve its objectives, namely to bring attention to the brutalities of the current food system and highlight failed solutions, is to critique and challenge government, corporations and media as I discuss below.

*Critique and challenge government, corporations and media*

SAFSC and its partners have engaged government and policy at various levels. One example is of the pastor in Pretoria who approached the local municipality for rights to occupy unused land. He drafted a document with local government officials that entitled him to use the vacant land, and his actions have led to others requesting the same document for occupation of land for farming. At a national level, SAFSC critiques government policy and supports plans that engage government policy, for example civil society commented on the National Food and Nutrition Security policy. It has already been very critical of this policy for not addressing the structural roots of hunger and for not attempting to regulate food corporations who profit from food (SAFSC, 2015c:1). SAFSC has also critiqued the Plant Breeders Rights Bill and Plant Improvement Bill, which they stress, will 'commodify local knowledge around seeds and indigenous plant propagation.'

Plans for the second year of campaigning involve critiquing government inaction on support for small-scale farmers at a local and national level, and will also focus on petitioning against Glyphosate, as discussed previously. While critiques of national level policy usually involve higher levels of skill and technical expertise on the topic, it is usually handled by experts in the campaign. Data to support these critiques is often drawn from events like the hunger tribunal, or from research and experiences of SAFSC farmers and partners who are working on the ground in various communities or who themselves are affected by brutalities of the system. Another way to hear about people's experiences on the ground and to encourage the sharing of these experiences is to bring partners together at activist schools, as I discuss below.

*Nurturing activists through activist schools*

Activist schools are integral to campaign building. It was realised at a National Coordinating Committee meeting that the campaign should not draw organisations away from what they are currently doing, but it should rather complement their work, and bring more coordination, knowledge-building and knowledge-sharing into pre-existing attempts to bring about food sovereignty (SAFSC, 2015b:12). In order to do this, it was decided that each organisation should elect one representative to take part in activist schools. The idea behind this was that the activist would be trained to do the 'politics' and then return to their communities to 'dynamise' (SAFSC, 2015b:12). Two activist schools were initiated by COPAC during 2015. These were not novel ideas to COPAC as they hosted similar schools before the campaign was established, nevertheless the objectives of these schools did change in the context of SAFSC. COPAC planned, facilitated and funded the schools to ensure participation of activists from various parts of the country. The National Coordinating Committee and COPAC realised that if activists had to pay their own way, they would probably not attend due to lack of resources.

The first activist school was attended by about 40 activists. It focussed on food sovereignty and agroecology. This school was aimed at creating awareness about the food sovereignty alternative amongst activists in the campaign and included a section of teaching on the origins of food sovereignty, as well as a practical module on agroecology. The second activist school focussed on worker cooperatives and was also attended by about 40 people. At this school it became clear to the activists that the solidarity economy movement's institutions, such as cooperatives is a necessary precondition to the establishment of food sovereignty, as it offers alternative models for business, markets and sharing of profits. Attendees at the second school were convinced of the alternative, and were given the opportunity to run through the development of example cooperatives. Activities included developing plans for the initial start-up of farming worker cooperatives as well as strategising for worker takeovers of a factory. The programme for each school was guided by an activist guide which had been pre-developed by COPAC staff through a process of workshopping and feedback with grassroots actors, and was made freely available to the attendees.

The expected outcomes from the schools were thus to equip those who attended with skills, knowledge and resources to return to their communities and share and implement what they had learned, for example to share agroecology knowledge, food sovereignty principles, worker cooperative ideas, and to get their organisations and communities motivated around such ideas. In addition, the school served as a space for building networks and sharing knowledge between participants – this is a key component of the international food sovereignty movement as I discuss in detail in one of the sections following. Finally, the school served to equip activists with the capacity to return to their communities and host activist schools, and further create forums where they can keep the discussion going, promote the campaign and work on strategies in their communities that can ensure that food sovereignty principles are met, particularly at a local level.

The success of these schools can be seen by the number of activist schools and forums that have been hosted by activists who attended the schools. After the first school, no other local schools were recorded. While attendants did stress that they had shared their knowledge in other ways, for example, by holding community meetings and using existing forums and events to share their knowledge about food sovereignty. This is a key way in which food sovereignty has been promoted in the literature and by the SAFSC, which I touch on more in the section following. This section merely raises the point that perhaps some partners require more assistance in formally sharing their knowledge in activist schools that they themselves host.

After the second school some activist schools in local areas had taken place, however most of them occurred only with the assistance of someone at COPAC. This suggests that perhaps just attending one school is insufficient to learn all the skills required for facilitating and coordinating a similar school in one's community. More support and training might thus be required before a school can be hosted. The same can be said for initiating forums. The forum at Wits was initiated by COPAC and thereafter students could take over. While another forum in Mount Frere was also established only after a staff member from COPAC visited that area. Nevertheless, it does show that it is possible to see these forums and schools take place in communities, but more support is first required. I discuss community forums as a tactic for building the campaign in more detail below.

*Building community forums and drafting community declarations*

Community forums are viewed as integral to promoting food sovereignty in communities as they provide a means by which effective popular education can be conducted at the ground level. Forums are also viewed as necessary to localise the campaign and advance it in different communities all around South Africa (SAFSC, 2015b:12). Currently, existing forums that farmers are already part of have been used successfully to share the food sovereignty knowledge with the rest of the members in local communities. Other farmers and organisations have since established forums to discuss food sovereignty and the campaign, for example the Wits university forum. In addition, regional forums have been initiated for greater areas, such as the Western Cape, and similarly in Durban, to connect food sovereignty actors and advance the campaign regionally. The importance of forums goes further than to merely discuss and promote food sovereignty alternatives, but it is also an important mechanism for establishing social links and platforms by which people from various backgrounds, cultures, classes and nodes along the food system can sit together in a meeting and discuss their issues, thus forging closer social ties, establishing greater sense of community and solidarity. Forums are not only intended for food producers to sit and discuss production issues, but can include conscious consumers, community members, youth, students, farm-workers and all people affected by the food system. They are thus an important mechanism to establish and promote social peace and social cohesion around a common cause – a necessary condition for food sovereignty to exist. In addition, forums are spaces for sharing indigenous knowledge, and importantly for planting seeds of a different way of thinking, thereby gradually ridding people of their indoctrinated common senses. The Wits forum has drawn in people who merely want to learn how to grow food and help hungry people, but in the process these members have been exposed to the real causes of hunger and have each become food sovereignty activists in their own way. Forums, if used to their full potential, are thus spaces to inspire a new type of social activist.

It was realised by the Committee however, that not all communities currently have forums, nor do some partners have the capacity to establish forums in their communities. As such, it was agreed that a set of guidelines for setting up forums be created and distributed to SAFSC community. The document has been created and

circulated, however the extent to which the guidelines have been read is unknown as there are no monitoring strategies in place except to rely on feedback from the ground, which can at times be sparse. Establishing forums still remains a challenge for some communities who lack coordinating capacity, who lack resources, or are widely dispersed across an area of land, and logistics do not permit frequent forum meetings. Activist schools did address this problem to some extent as during the first activist school on food sovereignty, a session was set aside to discuss the creation of forums, and participants were asked to discuss who they could involve in their forums and what they would practically need to do to establish the first forum meeting, for example, find a venue, send an invitation etc. But even though activists have been 'trained' on how to start a forum, still very few have set up forums which suggests that there are stumbling blocks to establishing forums locally.

Once a forum is established, facilitators are encouraged to draft community declarations on food sovereignty. These declarations are to be used for local campaigning, and sharing with local newspapers and local radio. The progress here is also slow as only one declaration has been submitted to be included on the SAFSC website, and this is one from COPAC. Perhaps tighter coordination and monitoring could assist with obtaining more commitments to writing community and organisational declarations.

*Sharing and building knowledge*

Knowledge sharing is integral to building food sovereignty in practice. It is included in one of the principles of food sovereignty and is key to achieving the preconditions for food sovereignty as argued by Akram-Lodhi. Of particular importance is the sharing of indigenous knowledge. Since the initiation of the first activist schools where networks were formed and contacts were exchanged, the campaign has seen a proliferation of learning exchanges between different partners in the campaign. Learning exchanges are brief exchanges (of usually between two to five days) that involve members from one partner organisation travelling to visit another organisation in their location to observe, in most cases farming methods, but could include seed saving, organisation and cooperative models. Learning exchanges are intended to develop horizontal

learning in SAFSC, as such partners are encouraged to share with the rest of the campaign what they can offer in training. Those who require training in those areas can then request a learning exchange. Learning exchanges aim to be self-funded, but where organisations cannot pay for their representatives, COPAC has offered to pay for transport if it has the funds. The accommodation and food is usually provided by the host. For example, during September 2015, farmers from Dimbaza travelled to Nqamakwe in the Eastern Cape to demonstrate seed saving and conduct agroecology training. Farmers in the greenhouse project also travelled to assist Wits students with the initiation of the food garden on campus. The exchange involved teaching students how to create raised beds for permaculture vegetable gardening. The feedback from these exchanges has been encouraging and those providing the exchanges and attending training have expressed their gratitude for the lessons learned.

Other ways that SAFSC has promoted the sharing of knowledge is through hosting national events, for example the assembly, the activist schools, the food sovereignty festival as well as specific events coordinated to produce education tools, for example, SAFSC is in the process of developing a seed bank guide. This guide was developed as the need for seed-banking and seed saving became apparent, especially when it was observed that people are accepting government handouts consisting of hybrid and in some cases Genetically Modified seeds, in the absence of availability of traditional/heirloom seeds. This tool was initially drafted at a seed-saving workshop where, under COPAC's facilitation, various seed savers were brought together, these include grassroots activists who currently save seeds and have established community seed banks, seed savers who save seeds for a living and as a passion, as well as traditional seed savers. Seed saving methods, challenges and lessons were shared with all the participants. These methods included traditional methods of saving seeds, for example in clay pots, in ash and underground to keep them cool. The discussions were documented and are in the process of being developed into an activist guide that will show in simple terms and with pictures how to develop a community seed bank. This guide will be printed and freely distributed to communities to assist them set up alternatives to current seed models. It is evident, that in no way does the SAFSC seek to create dependency and provide unsustainable solutions. But rather, as it inspires new activists to adopt and support alternative food systems, it is indeed filling the gap that exists in South African policy, particularly as it encourages

going back to the old and more nutritious ways of growing food, saving food and sharing food. These activities seek to pave the way to a more independent food system for many communities.

There are however those people who do not join the activist schools and do not take part in workshops, events or learning exchanges. These are people who are not presently or noticeably suffering from the broken food system, such as those in middle class, who still want to fight for the food sovereignty cause. These individuals and organisations, referred to as the second generation of food sovereignty by de Schutter (2015) are gradually emerging in South Africa, and include some of the 900 people who have liked the Facebook page, or 300 people who have subscribed to the SAFSC newsletter. There are also those more established NGOs who would like to remain updated, share knowledge, learn about indigenous food practices and get involved in the campaign. SAFSC has an information and communication strategy to keep all of these people updated in this regard, for example the Google group or Facebook page which provide virtual platforms for sharing information, campaign and local updates and knowledge. I discuss SAFSC's communication strategy below.

*Communication and coordination*

At each national event COPAC staff ensure that a register documenting contact details of all the attendees is filled out. These email addresses and contact numbers are then entered into a database and the email addresses are also included on the campaign's google-groups emailing list. This google group serves as a platform for the National Coordinating Committee to share meeting outcomes and major events (SAFSC, 2015d:16). In addition, it is a platform for all those who are part of the campaign (individuals or organisations) to share information, events, knowledge and useful research. It is also a platform for people to give feedback to the wider SAFSC community on what they are undertaking to promote food sovereignty in their communities, and to send requests for training and skills development. So far the forum has been used for the above purposes and it has created an ideal space to share what has been going on in the grassroots with the rest of the campaign. However, not all who are party to the campaign have frequent access to the internet,

and some do also not have email addresses. One particular farmer who I needed to communicate with over email had to use the email address for the organisation she was affiliated with. When sending her an email it was imperative that I gave her a call on her cell phone to notify her that I had sent the email. Thereafter she would have to travel to the office to retrieve her email, this journey would sometimes only happen a couple days later. The National Coordinating Committee has recognised these challenges and tries to overcome them by providing training on setting up email and social media accounts. For those who do not have access to emails, the Committee makes sure that at each event, everyone is provided with the latest reports and newsletters in print form. Because of the challenge with internet (which I will address in more detail later), the chief way by which COPAC and the National Coordinating Committee communicate with actors on the ground for coordination and follow up purposes, is by cell phone.

The campaign also uses social media, such as Facebook and Twitter and has recently developed a South African Food Sovereignty Campaign webpage. The Facebook page is maintained by various people in the National Coordinating Committee who are encouraged to post information and events that pertain to the food system and SAFSC. The campaign has also developed a webpage for profiling organisations, activists, and sharing resources on food sovereignty, agroecology, land reform and climate change, for example. These methods of sharing information have been referred to as the 'cyber commons' in which information flows are used to build knowledge, share experiences, problem solve and promote popular education (Satgar, 2015b:3). This platform has been very successful in drawing in the second generation for food sovereignty and in sharing about food sovereignty alternatives and information. However, the extent to which those on the ground have access to internet is unknown. While statistics on internet usage in South Africa for 2013 suggest that 40.9 per cent of households in South Africa had at least one member who had access to or used internet either at home, work, place of study or internet café's, other findings suggest that there are however some households, 6.3 per cent who do not have access to landlines or cell phones at all (StatsSA, 2014:51). In the campaign there are a number of partners from communities who do not have access to all of the communication methods that SAFSC makes use of, particularly internet sources. This has been evident at activist schools when the question has been asked of who is on

Twitter or Facebook. Usually not more than a third of the people present raise their hands. This is why partner organisations, who are embedded in communities are integral to the campaign, for they can be the mouthpiece for the campaign in areas that the campaign's key communication methods do not reach. They can further serve as a mouthpiece for those affected by hunger who currently have no voice. As such, the cyber commons has the potential to be a vital platform for partners to tell the second generation the stories of those in South Africa who are suffering most from the brutalities in the system, but have no means to let their voices be heard.

*Growing the network and keeping the momentum going*

Currently each campaigning initiative is aimed at growing the network, as people in communities attend workshops and forum meetings, as partners continue their work, as individuals take part in dialogues for developing the food sovereignty act, or as they join in to picket at local supermarkets to campaign for #FoodPricesMustFall. All of these initiatives are aimed at creating awareness and garnering support for the campaign. Support for the campaign thus far has been positive, as is evident by feedback at assemblies and attendance at the food sovereignty festival. However, as crises in South Africa deepen, and as the brutalities in the food system become more pronounced, the campaign may potentially garner even more support. In the event that this happens, it is important that coordination is strong, that roles between the partners are clear and that partners or new members know how to get involved. This will also ensure that duplication of efforts is prevented. Further, it is important that through these processes more capacity is built on the ground so that exchange visits, which are currently very successful strategies of the campaign, can become the next tool for learning how to lead activist schools, initiate forums and start worker cooperatives. In this way it won't be the task of COPAC staff alone to support the start-up of such initiatives.

Communication and a media strategy is also a key for keeping the momentum going, both with the grassroots actors and with the second generation of food sovereignty. However, in order to keep this communication going, as stressed, follow up and feedback is key so that all parties can learn and be encouraged by activities that are

taking place. For example, sharing about a picket against food prices in Cape Town, might spur on people in Gauteng to do the same, and in turn encourage people in rural areas to follow suit. Such events and learning exchanges do not have to depend on the support from COPAC and will allow the campaign to take off in various local spaces across the country. Furthermore, growing the network also entails reaching out to other small-scale farmers, progressive organisations who are working in the food system, community forums and even trade unions, by introducing the campaign to these parties and inviting them to get involved. This task is not only the duty of COPAC or the National Coordinating Committee, but partners would ideally also be equipped to promote the food sovereignty principles in South Africa, share the knowledge food sovereignty and the importance of the SAFSC in their communities. As such, an important thrust of SAFSC, as it tries to build the campaign, is to educate and strengthen capacity of local actors and activists in SAFSC. Thereafter the campaign and various food sovereignty initiatives can grow organically among the first and second generation of food sovereignty actors and activists who, in their own, diverse and important ways promote the principles of food sovereignty, thereby dealing with the gaps that current solutions to hunger in a food unsovereign South Africa fail to address.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed what food sovereignty means to different actors in SAFSC. While it is clear that understandings between actors differ, they are nevertheless complimentary. Furthermore, there are a few understandings that make SAFSC's approach unique, such as emphasis on the solidarity economy and a large emphasis on land as a physical but also symbolic asset which can restore a whole community's dignity and independence. Just as food sovereignty understandings are unique in South Africa, I argue too that the two generations of food sovereignty proposed by de Schutter (the first, supposedly the rural actors and the second, the conscious consumers), have not taken the same course as in other countries. For example, in South Africa we have not witnessed the rise of the first generation of food sovereignty actors as it happened in La Via Campesina and we have also not seen groups of peasants and landless people taking back their land in swathes, nor have

we seen people challenging the government collectively from across the country to demand the right to food. What we have seen is both the first and the second generation of food sovereignty emerging together, in response to a brutal food system. Further, while pockets of resistance in South Africa have been documented, for example in the Food Sovereignty Campaign in the Western Cape, this action needed to first be initiated by an NGO, the Surplus People Project who, with experts and facilitators were able to undertake a popular education process.

In South Africa we have also seen the existence of organisations that offer support to communities through land reform processes, while others educate neighbours in agroecology and picket against Monsanto, these too have been initiated by community based NGO's who are investing in educating the people. These actions, while isolated to some extent have not garnered the necessary support to take back the power from the corporate food regime or the required support from government. Furthermore, these actions did not arise out of nowhere. They were often preceded by popular education strategies. Arguably, because of the conditions on the ground in South Africa, it was popular education that stimulated people to think about how to address their problems and thus march to government and demand land; it was a community practitioner sharing knowledge of agroecology that inspired the community to initiate agroecology household gardens. It was also possibly a post on Facebook about the unknown effects of GM maize that inspired a group of people to attend a local march against Monsanto.

In South Africa the brutalities of the food system have created an environment in which the people are suffering, but all people are not yet vexed. In many cases food handouts from the Food Bank which is supported by Pick 'n Pay and Pioneer foods (who I have shown and SAFSC partners argue, are key perpetrators of hunger) are keeping people from rupturing the very system that gives them the handouts. What research into food sovereignty in South Africa has shown, however, is that people require information to break the myths of the food system and make them aware that their problems are not unique to their situations, but rather that the structure of the food system in South Africa is ravaging more than thirteen million of its people, destroying the environment, causing a nutrition transition and pushing out small-scale farmers. It is for this reason that a campaign for food sovereignty arose and is necessary in South Africa, to

educate, encourage, and motivate grassroots activists and ordinary citizens. And while only a campaign for food sovereignty at a national level might not be able to achieve huge shifts in government policy or implementation for that matter (not that it cannot achieve this), it will be able to educate South African citizens, form networks of solidarity, and showcase alternatives as it already is doing. Through these three activities power will gradually be put back in the hands of the people, the hungry and the small-scale farmers. Perhaps together, the emerging second and first generation of food sovereignty in South Africa, if coordinated well, will be able to take back the power over the food system.

Some might remark that the SAFSC initiative has no place in grassroots food sovereignty movements because it was not initiated by the so-called first generation of landless peasants. However, I argue that while the campaign did not emerge as a grassroots action, initiated solely by peasants and landless communities, it was inspired by their challenges, their voices and their alternatives. Importantly the campaign was also inspired by a crisis ridden, unjust, unsafe and unsustainable South African food system, a system that creates vast brutalities to the South African population. The right to food dialogues and the Food Sovereignty Assembly ensured that the voices of those most affected by the broken system were heard. Furthermore, I argue that the SAFSC doesn't claim to be a movement, but merely a campaign, which is finite in nature, and which is making great strides in the radical food space (perhaps greater than some radical movements in South Africa have done since the end of apartheid). This is because, first it is directed at a national level and second, because as the principles of food sovereignty are followed, the preconditions are pursued, the gaps in the current approaches to hunger can gradually be bridged; gaps which were not evident by the food security framework in South Africa, thus gaps which might not have otherwise been filled. Furthermore, there is no fixed definition of what food sovereignty should entail, as such the campaign in South Africa is free to take on any form it wishes, driven by grassroots voices. This is one of the beauties of food sovereignty; it does not prescribe, but merely proposes principles. As the SAFSC is emerging in South Africa, I have shown how it is attempting to uphold and promote these principles.

At the outset of this research, literature stressed that in every context, the way in which food sovereignty is understood and practised is different. In this chapter I have outlined the characteristics of food sovereignty and I have also shown how South Africa is different. There is a final way in which South Africa differs, however, and it is in the way that the first generation did not inspire the second, but instead, international examples of movements in other parts of the world have inspired the need to educate both the first and second generation of food sovereignty activists and ordinary citizens who are emerging somewhat simultaneously as a result of the campaign and its partner organisations, but ultimately as a result of the worsening brutalities in the South African food system.

In this chapter I have shown how food sovereignty is emerging in South Africa, as a campaign, supported by various actors in the food system, employing strategies learned from food sovereignty movements internationally, while it experiments with and refines its own local versions too. Ultimately, and this is where its greatest links are with the rest of the international food sovereignty community, food sovereignty in South Africa is inspired by the desire to transform the current food system into one which is more just, equitable and sustainable for all. I now turn to conclude this research in the following chapter by highlighting strengths and challenges of SAFSC and its potential to fulfil the food sovereignty principles in a very food unsovereign South Africa.

# CHAPTER 7
# CONCLUSION

## A brutal and broken food system

The food system is broken, brutal and unsustainable. I have shown this in preceding chapters, in both the literature and in the chapters on the South African food system. The brutalities that the food system deals out to nature are harsh and debilitating, creating a habitat for further disaster in the world as we run out of years of farming in our soils, as we poison water systems and air, and as the industrial food system contributes to climate change. The brutalities that the food system deals out to humans are equally as harsh. Obesity, malnourishment and undernourishment are all associated with inadequate, modernised diets. These modernised diets and the systems that have created them have turned food, once a natural endowment, into an industry for profit.

This research has described these brutalities as they play out in the South African food system, highlighting too that the current policies and programmes in place to address hunger have not provided the necessary solutions to eradicate it. This is evident not only in the shocking figures that reveal that almost half of the population is either hungry or at risk of hunger, but also in the assessment where I have revealed where South Africa remains food unsovereign in many respects, particularly as power in the food system rests in the hands of a few. This powerlessness of the majority has given rise to not only devastating hunger, but has also necessitated a systemic alternative, one birthed out of crisis, namely food sovereignty. Food sovereignty, an alternative that is taking root in South Africa, has not been given sufficient attention nor study, and it is for this reason, among other rationales described in the introduction, that I chose to focus on the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign as a case study.

In this chapter I briefly discuss key findings from my study on food sovereignty in South Africa and further elaborate on the potential of the SAFSC to overcome systemic roots of hunger. As I have established in Chapter 6, the objectives of the SAFSC are broadly to tackle the systemic roots of huger, to advance food sovereignty alternatives and

provide a unified platform to champion food sovereignty and ultimately the preconditions of food sovereignty. Now that my first research question has been answered, and the food system in South Africa has been broadly contextualised and assessed (Chapter 4), and I have revealed that it does not realise principles of food sovereignty and thus that it is food unsovereign (Chapter 5), I seek to delve deeper into answering my second research question. I have shown what food sovereignty in South Africa looks like, in the form of the nascent South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (Chapter 6). However here I conclude this research by assessing how SAFSC is contributing to meeting its objectives and ultimately the preconditions to food sovereignty in South Africa. I do this to compare their approach and strategies in South Africa, with those in the literature, but also to draw out strengths and challenges of the South African interpretation and practice of food sovereignty.

**A brutal and broken South African food system**

In chapter four I described the causes of hunger in not only the corporate food regime, but also in the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. Together these legacies and the current neoliberal policies are inflicting a range of brutalities on the South African food system. As described above, these have dire impacts for the environment and for people. As a result of these brutalities facing South Africans, solutions to hunger are proliferating, in the form of relief packages, technical fixes, fortification of staple foods, food banks and social assistance, to name a few. What many of these solutions fail to address, however, is the marked power imbalance in the food system, and as a result hunger is exacerbated. Despite these attempts, still thirteen million people are hungry.

The effects of this hunger in South Africa include proliferation of suffering, hopelessness, despair, and loss of dignity. Ultimately an effect of hunger is powerlessness and is caused by a lack of democracy in the food system not only to access food, but also to protect oneself and those one loves. What this further leads to is social unrest, violence and division as individuals and communities struggle to fulfil their most basic needs, and resort to alternative measures out of desperation.

Solutions in South Africa are failing because they merely promote this unjust and brutal system by enabling the powerful agribusiness and corporations to remain in power. Many of these solutions are also one dimensional, looking to the condition, namely hunger and trying to ameliorate it, without exploring the deeper structural causes of hunger, such as the scarcity of democracy in the food system. In South Africa this system is undemocratic, as is evidenced by the government's support for corporate investors, industrial agriculture and ultimately for economic growth, at the expense of small-scale farmers, the hungry and the unemployed.

As such, the South African government, with its obligation to ensure that every citizen has the right to food, is doing the very opposite as it gives in to the powers at play in the food system, and as it further embeds itself in the neoliberal food policies, which are deeply connected to the international food system as Friedman and McMichael have shown. While some policies and programmes are important and necessary in the current broken food system, for example hunger relief packages for people who would otherwise be starving, or vitamin A supplementation for infants who presently have no access to alternative sources of vitamin A, other interventions are not as beneficial, and despite the proposed progress they boast, they will actually contribute to further hunger and environmental degradation in the long run. These include the promotion of the green revolution for Africa and drought resistant GM maize. At the same time certain policies are fundamentally lacking, such as those that might include adequate measures to police the food system, prevent corporations from colluding to profiteer from hunger, and promote a more equal spread of power in the food system.

Aside from the policy content, most policies and plans to address hunger are dogged by political controversy, maladministration, corruption, inadequacy, lack of coordination between departments and importantly lack of political will and public consultation. As a result of failing policy at the national level, scepticism about the government's will and ability to address pressing social issues is growing; as are additional solutions to address hunger proliferating. These include solutions by business and civil society that include many of the same strategies that government is employing.

When evaluating the South African food system according to food sovereignty principles and preconditions it becomes evident that there remain many gaps in policy and practice by both government, civil society and business. Despite these numerous efforts, brutalities persist, diseases proliferate, the land picture remains skewed, small-scale farmers lack support and disregard for biodiversity by the industrial agriculture model continues in pursuit of economic growth. Furthermore, the hungry still lack power and choice over their food, children continue to be undernourished, and social peace is increasingly being disrupted. After taking a stark look at where we are, it becomes evident that South Africa is still desperately food insecure, additionally it is food unsovereign, and there are many areas in which alternative solutions are required to address inequality in the system.

Therefore, in the face of the failure of government, and cynicism linked to their inaction, and in the face of failure of business and social movements alike, coupled with greater suffering and brutalities in the food system, alternatives to mainstream solutions are taking root. These alternative solutions do not look to the problematic food regime for ameliorative fixes, but instead seek to create a new regime, by fundamentally transforming the current unjust one. The corporate regime, as literature shows, has given rise to its nemesis, and this nemesis is emerging in South Africa too, where one of its embodiments is in the SAFSC.

**The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign**

In this research report I explored food sovereignty alternatives in South Africa and revealed how and why the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign emerged. The key triggers for its emergence thus include the range of brutalities and crises in the food system, while the key reason for its emergence is highlighted in one of its objectives, namely ‘to provide a unified platform for all sectors, movements, communities and organisations championing food sovereignty’ (SAFSC, 2015d:3), in the face of such crises. Besides the fact that it uses the food sovereignty framework to address hunger, there are a few other key characteristics that make the SAFSC’s approach to addressing hunger different from government and civil society. I discuss

these below and comment too on how these characteristics and strategies help achieve food sovereignty principles as described in the literature.

*The food sovereignty approach is different*

First, the SAFSC makes use of a participatory and grassroots approach to addressing hunger. This approach was implemented even before the campaign was launched at the right to food dialogues as representatives from across the food system were given the opportunity to discussed the main issues that faced them in relation to food, land and agriculture. This process continued at the launch of the campaign where group discussions on most issues were held for people to voice their opinions, concerns and key needs of a campaign. The hunger tribunal also gave voice to the hungry, landless, farmers and experts alike. Not only are voices heard in the campaign at an ideas level, but learning processes, activist schools and exchange visits led by grassroots activists in their communities are also a key approach. While the capacity of grassroots activists at some levels is missing, there has been tremendous growth in this regard as people share experiences and knowledge through learning exchanges. This is certainly unlike the top-down government approach that keeps people dependent on government support. Instead these approaches empower partners in the campaign, who thereafter empower people in their communities, with the aim of putting the power back into their own hands.

As the campaign promotes participation, they are able to address the problem of representivity and delegation of powers, for 'it is in participating that everyone represents themselves' (MST in Patel, 2007:207). And through the delegation of powers, the SAFSC begins to practice the food sovereignty principle of *democratic control and local decision making.* Democratic control in the food system, as alluded to in chapters 4, 5 and 6 means that people (particularly producers) have a say in the policies that govern the food system. A big barrier to achieving this principle is that government policies do not allow this participation and the prospects of them allowing it, or accepting alternative solutions outside of its neoliberal framework are dire. Nevertheless, what the SAFSC can do is provide alternative avenues through which the voices of the hungry, the farmers and other people in the food system can be

heard. It aims to do this in 2016 by developing the food sovereignty act through participatory processes. While it is expected that the act may not have any teeth to influence government, the act and the process by which it is developed is aimed at providing a symbolic and powerful example of what the people want, as opposed to what the state wants for the people. It further provides legitimacy to the food sovereignty act, as it will be developed by those who are suffering from the system.

By opening up the process to discuss the act and other campaign strategies, the SAFSC is attempting to meet an additional precondition, namely that food providers are being heard, valued and supported. Food providers currently do not receive adequate support from government. This is because their needs are not taken into consideration when policy is drafted, and also because policy is not carried out effectively (particularly land reform, support to small-scale farmers and post settlement support, for reasons I have discussed in the report). A prime example of uncoordinated and lacking government support is of the farmers who sought advice from a SAFSC partner when they had received farming implements from the government even though they lacked land to farm on.

The SAFSC approach thus differs from government's approach because it places value on small-scale farmers over industrial agriculture. The government's support goes the other way. The SAFSC further seeks to support small-scale farmers as a campaigning priority for 2016 as they engage with the state and highlight state failure. However, in this approach lies a major barrier to success, namely the state's fixation on neoliberal policies and their belief in industrial agriculture. Overcoming this challenge might require more bargaining power than what the SAFSC currently has, as such a key aim is to grow the campaign, both the first and second generations, as they expose the brutalities of the current farming model and the importance of sourcing locally and supporting local small-scale producers. At the same time the SAFSC is promoting alternatives and supporting small-scale farmers by encouraging the sharing of agroecological farming practices, knowledge, seeds and seed-saving techniques between the more successful farmers and those who lack skill, resources or motivation. Motivation for these farmers is indeed important in a system where they may have become despondent due to the lack of state support, lack of access to markets and increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns, for example. These farmers

often need to be shown that there is hope. Without this crucial step, food sovereignty will remain in isolated pockets across the country, not reaching its potential to change the food system at large. By promoting alternatives and supporting and motivating small-scale farmers, additional principles of food sovereignty are met, which I discuss below.

The food sovereignty framework differs from state and business' approach because it is not fixated on economic wealth and profit. While the state and even business approaches seek the most economical solutions to hunger, that either promote sales (for business) or require the least effort (like staple food fortification), or where approaches might contribute to economic growth, these are favoured over the actual needs of people, and over the biodiversity of the environment. The importance of economic development over protection of natural resources and human livelihoods is evident in the land grabs, mining agreements and the displacement of populations from these areas, as well as the environmental degradation of areas surrounding mining sites, all of which is endorsed by the state. The importance of economic development over protection of natural resources and human health is also evident in the state's support for large scale agriculture which uses genetically modified seeds and glyphosate, a potential human carcinogen. In effect the state and business are promoting an unsafe and unsustainable food system. The SAFSC on the other hand supports and practises a completely different approach as it works with nature by promoting and sharing the practice of agroecology among its partners and their communities, and as it promotes values of human solidarity, democracy, equality and further promotes the commons of land, food, seed and resources. Neither of these values or principles can be viewed by a state or a business embedded in a neoliberal system that is trying to uphold a food system that caters to profit, capital and international trade agreements to promote economic growth. It is for this reason that food sovereignty actors seek a fundamental change to the system too.

Finally, the SAFSC does not give handouts in the form of aid, or supposedly more 'expert' knowledge (except for popular education for example to debunk myths and share hidden information about GMOs and glyphosate). Rather, the SAFSC seeks to use the capacity that exists in communities and in organisations to strengthen them so that together, partners in the campaign can build alternative power from below in

the food system. This power is different from that of the government or business' because no elite minority or person has control over it.

The challenge in this approach, however, is that currently power is very deeply entrenched in the capitalist system, and everyone's (including the activist's lives) are implicated in it. Dealing with the state and corporates and taking back the power requires that alternatives must exist and be present, first to convince others that it is possible, but second to fall back on something, should the corporate food regime be dismantled (and when the years of farming in the commercial farms' soil run out). As such, the SAFSC recognises that building food sovereignty is a process. It is not a programme that can be simply implemented to achieve an ideal South Africa by 2030 as the Growth and Development Strategy aims to do. Rather it is a process of gradually taking back power, building social cohesion, bridging racial divides, and struggling for a common cause, by sharing knowledge and resources, and importantly building a new common sense.

The above characteristics of the food sovereignty alternative in South Africa, as embodied by the SAFSC and its partners are in many respects similar to the international movement as they promote the broad food sovereignty principles to some extent, while the barriers and context in which the principles are pursued do indeed differ. I turn now to discuss a few ways in which the SAFSC's approaches, strategies and practices differ from the international sphere. These differences are due to the SAFSC's context in time and place in South Africa.

*The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign is different*

The SAFSC's expression in South Africa also differs from the international expressions in key ways. First because it promotes the solidarity economy – to build alternatives to the state and the corporate profit driven model. While the solidarity economy has been recognised as beneficial for food sovereignty in other countries, the links and potentials have not yet been explored in the literature. Nevertheless, the solidarity economy has the potential to offer the much needed alternatives in the South African

contexts where expressions of Ubuntu have not yet been lost, and where individuality is plaguing societies and leading to outbreaks of xenophobia for example.

A second key way in which the SAFSC differs from international examples is that it was not inspired by a first generation of food sovereignty activists. Rather the first and second generation of food sovereignty activists are emerging somewhat simultaneously in South Africa, and supporting each other as they do so. The brutalities in the food system are partly the cause of this simultaneous emergence. This is because it is no longer only peasants who are feeling threatened by a more commercialised, globalised and industrialised food system, but entire populations too are increasingly being exposed to its brutalities. From the wealthy who are continually being marketed more modernised diets, to the middle class who feel the squeeze of increasing food prices, to the poor who are exploited in farms and supermarkets for a wage that hardly affords them GM staple foods, to the hungry, who are altogether left out of the system. Both generations are implicated too in a nutrition transition, the harmful effects of climate change and environmental degradation. The relation between these two generations is still in its early stages, nevertheless bonds are being forged and solidarity expressed as the second uses social media and other communication tools to share the struggles of the first generation, and as the first generation works in ethical ways to feed the second generation locally.

A final way in which the SAFSC version of food sovereignty differs from international expressions is the way in which it emerged with COPAC as the catalyst. While international examples, for example MST, emerged among rural peasants experiencing ongoing land dispossession in Latin America, in South Africa, first the SPP expression and then the SAFSC have seen external NGOs take on the responsibility of undertaking popular education, facilitating discussions (such as the right to food dialogues), establishing the need, and thereafter supporting the initiation of the campaign and maintaining its development. This SAFSC is further empowering both generations to take on the struggle for food sovereignty. Therefore, because of the weakness of social movements in South Africa, NGO’s like COPAC have had to take on a coordinating role, and may need to continue doing so until another organisation steps up to the task, or ultimately until forces on the ground are able to maintain the campaign on their own.

Above I have shown how food sovereignty is playing out in South Africa, in ways that are both similar and different to the international experiences. I have also shown how the SAFSC is trying to overcome challenges as they aim to achieve various principles and preconditions of food sovereignty. Finally, in this section below, I discuss the potential that the SAFSC has to transform the food system in South Africa. These potentials exist in two important strengths of the campaign and its ideology, namely unity in diversity, and the framework it uses to address hunger, namely food sovereignty.

*Strength and potential of the SAFSC*

There are many strengths of the SAFSC, however here I mention two of its key strengths and potentials to alter the South African food system. The first strength is in the ability of the campaign to unite various actors in the civil society, environmental, and food related spaces in South Africa. These connections break racial and class divides, encourage solidarity between different actors and facilitate a process of learning and sharing of knowledge and experiences. When asking actors and activists about any challenges they may perceive in bringing unity and vision to a campaign with so many different actors and organisations, they did not hesitate to answer that this was not a challenge, but rather a strength of the campaign as it is in unity that they are able to build power and challenge the current system; a system that is in desperate need of changing before it gains more ground and inflicts further damage. This leads to the second strength.

Second, and this should be clear from the literature, an important strength of the SAFSC is in the framework used to address hunger, namely the food sovereignty framework. As Bové and Dufour (2011:168) suggest, the strength of the food sovereignty movement is that it differs from place to place. Since conditions in the food system differ from place to place, as I have shown in my research, its solutions in South Africa also ought to be very specific to the context. The SAFSC is pursuing contextual relevance in its solutions as it ensures representativeness from people across the food system. Furthermore, and this is where the SAFSC is inherently similar with the broader international food sovereignty movement, in that it is not working

within the current unjust food regime, but is rather building a new one. Food sovereignty actors and activists in South Africa realise that the current food system is beyond repair, so in their activities, strategies and campaigning, they try forge a new way, imagining alternatives, demonstrating and teaching these alternatives, while at the same time exposing the myths maintained by the corporate food regime. In doing so they aim to bring an end to the food system.

I conclude the research with the following song, which was sung at the hunger tribunal. This song clearly and simply sums up the last point, the research and the mission of the nascent South African Food Sovereignty Campaign,

*What a system*
*what a system*
*what a system, what a crime;*
*We can't mend it*
*we must end it*
*End it now, and for all time* (Author unknown)

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APPENDIX 1 – Interview schedules

| INTERVIEW GUIDE for FARMERS |
|---|

| Name: _____ Occupation/position: _____ |
|---|

*Organisation and role:*

1. What do you farm, for how long have you been established here?

2. How did you/your organisation become part of the SA Food sovereignty campaign?

*Understanding of food system*

3. What are the biggest challenges you face as a producer of food in the current food system?

4. Why do you think you face these challenges?

5. Is the situation getting better or worse and why?

*Understanding of food sovereignty and the farmer/ organisation's role in promoting it*

6. What is food sovereignty, and what does it mean to you as a farmer?

7. How does food sovereignty challenge the way food is produced, distributed and consumed in your country and in your occupation/position in the food chain?

8. What are the most significant challenges or difficulties in your area in efforts to implement food sovereignty?

9. Who else is working towards food sovereignty in your area? Are there other farmers or organisations? Are some more successful than others? If so, why?

10. What are the most significant activities and strategies to promote food sovereignty that you/your organisation is engaging in? And which are most successful? Have you had failures, and if so, what led to these?

11. What kinds of conditions have to exist for the successful implementation of food sovereignty? How are governments, local and national responding to the call for food sovereignty?

12. What does food sovereignty mean for rural farming communities?

13. What does food sovereignty mean for the environment?

14. What does food sovereignty mean for health and nutrition?

15 What does food sovereignty mean for local economies? i.e. how does it promote feeding local communities?

16. What does food sovereignty mean for land issues and land reform?

17. A large number of organisations are represented in the food sovereignty campaign in South Africa, and each is working on the concept of food sovereignty in a number of ways. What are the challenges in working together, considering distinct cultures and agricultural practices? How do you work together considering this diversity?

INTERVIEW GUIDE for EXPERTS

Name: _____ Occupation/position: _____

*Organisation and role:*

1. What does your organisation do, and what is your role in this organisation?

2. How did you/your organisation become part of the SA Food sovereignty campaign?

*Understanding of food sovereignty and the organisation's role in it*

3. What is food sovereignty, and what does it mean to you/ your occupation/ your organisation?

4. How does food sovereignty challenge the way food is produced, distributed and consumed in your country and in your occupation/position in the food chain?

5. What are the most significant challenges or difficulties in your area in efforts to implement food sovereignty?

6. Who else is working towards food sovereignty in your area? And are some organisations more successful than others? If so, why?

7. What are the most significant activities and strategies to promote food sovereignty that you/your organisation is engaging in? And which are most successful? Have you had failures, and if so, what led to these?

8. What kinds of conditions have to exist for the successful implementation of food sovereignty? How are governments, local and national responding to the call for food sovereignty?

9. What does food sovereignty mean for the objectives of your organisation?

10. What does food sovereignty mean for the environment?

11. What does food sovereignty mean for health and nutrition?

12 What does food sovereignty mean for local economies? i.e how does it promote feeding local communities?

13. What does food sovereignty mean for land issues and land reform?

14. A large number of organisations are represented in the food sovereignty campaign in South Africa, and each is working on the concept of food sovereignty in a number of ways. What are the challenges in working together, considering distinct cultures and agricultural practices? How do you work together considering this diversity?