



Africa responds to the UN Food Systems Summit Let's reclaim our food sovereignty and reject the industrial food system

Please click [here](#) to sign on as an organisation, and share the link: <https://forms.gle/y55ccEmpVtwP9WMk6> for other organisations to sign on too. This form also allows you to sign on to African civil society's open letter regarding the African Union's "common position", which can be read [here](#). The list of organisations that have endorsed this position statement appear at the end of the document.

INTRODUCTION

African food systems are a rich and varied tapestry of production systems, crops, seed, territorial markets, cultures, biodiversity and ecologies. However, many of these systems have been weakened and systematically eroded by decades of state neglect, governance failures, public underinvestment, economic and political subordination, and corporate capture. These structural challenges have been intensified by the impacts of multiple crises, climate change in particular. Corporate hegemony of our food systems is encapsulated in the UN Food Systems Summit, which paints African food systems and food producers through the prism of deficiency and in need of western technology, productivity and competitive enhancement.

The global development consensus assumes that all that is needed to fix the problems of African agriculture and food systems is to bring capital to bear on these people and ecologies: through more synthetic fertiliser, corporate seeds, digitalisation, genetic engineering, and financialisation of small-scale farming/food production. To think that simple technical solutions to social and historical problems will fix the challenges in African agriculture and food systems is naïve at best, and politically, socially and ecologically destabilising at worst. In the existing neoliberal global division of labour, most African governments have accepted that their countries' development should be beholden to the requirements of the global economy for cheap labour and cheap raw materials, gained through low-wage factories, mining, and plantation and monocrop farming, which amounts to little more than agrarian extractivism.

Yet as these paths of capitalist development create more insecurity for a vast swath of rural and urban populations, and existing political systems seek to contain the fall-out rather than facilitate the agency of citizens for social transformation, in the interests of people and planet, people endure until they can take no more. Our continent has a growing youth population, but our economies and political elites have cared little to create space for them to thrive, or to support them to create a space for themselves. Instead, youth frustration with political systems that keep dragging them back into a past that never changes, combined with a political elite that seems hell-bent on outright looting, only holds for so long. In this context, strengthening African food systems is not about false solutions drawn up in undemocratic and corporate captured international spaces to suit the extractivist agenda. It cannot be separated from a fundamental re-crafting of social and political relationships on the continent, and our relationships with nature, and between the continent's working people and the rest of the world. In this regard, African food systems that serve people and planet need democratic deliberation that brings in the knowledge, experiences and voices of African food producers and movements must be elevated in the struggle to defend and advance food systems that are grounded in human rights, biodiversity and ecological integrity and broader socio-ecological wellbeing. To counter Africa's subordinate place in the global economy, the plans for intensified neocolonial, corporate looting of the continent, and the collusion of our elites with this global agenda, calls for a genuine people's pan-African vision for our food systems. The COVID-19 pandemic is unveiling both the structural frailties and inequities of the global market – as illustrated in the unequal and iniquitous distribution of vaccines – and the resilience of our own territorially-embedded food systems. Never before has it been so evident that Africa must proclaim and defend its food sovereignty! To this end we have joined together to craft and broadcast this declaration.

WHAT WE DEFEND: OUR VISION

Our vision is one of food sovereignty. We defend our right to healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and our right to define our own food and agriculture systems, taking into account the resources, needs, conditions and culture of our communities. We hold that the way forward is to support territorially-embedded solutions that integrate and enhance the rights of small-scale producers of all kinds – farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, agricultural workers – and safeguard the rights of all food consumers to access healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food .

These are the solutions that generate opportunities and dignity for women and youth; enhance relationships that increase the solidarity, wellbeing and prosperity of indigenous and local communities; and support the functioning of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. Our vision rests on the human rights of all: the right to food and nutrition, health, education, clean drinking water and social services,

the rights of women, workers, youth, and indigenous peoples. Our vision is grounded in family and community farming and peasant agroecology, sustainable small-scale fisheries, and pastoralism, going far beyond a package of techniques to put the control of seeds biodiversity, land and territories, waters, knowledge, culture and the commons in the hands of the peoples who feed the world.

Our vision embraces the richness of African knowledge systems, cultures, and traditions, and weaves together those who have been split apart by the extractive 'development' of our territories, first under colonialism and now under inadequately democratic and forceful independence. The realisation of our vision requires the full participation of the population in decision-making, particularly the most marginalised sectors, and in the implementation of policies and programmes and natural resource management. It ensures the right of civil society to organise autonomously and repudiates violence against rights-holders, particularly women. Our vision upholds the primacy of democratically decided public policies suited to our territories and our ways of life, and vehemently opposes the privatisation of public resources and functions.

WHAT WE DENOUNCE

We denounce industrial food production (including agriculture) with its unjust practices that include land grabbing, deforestation, eviction of people, and many others, which have contributed to climate change and resulted in widespread suffering of millions of people, mostly in the global south. We utterly reject forms of development that push people off their lands and undermine the pursuit of people- and ecology-centred food systems, and which lead to the massive growth of urban slums as the rural dispossessed seek a place to live. We deplore the privatisation of our waters under the slogan of the 'blue economy', which is corporate driven with the support of states and is threatening the food security and livelihood of small-scale fishers and fishing communities.

We deplore that the rapid erosion of Africa's culture coincides with the degradation of our soils, oceans and rivers and the draining of our lakes, which is affecting the livelihoods of many, while the exponential growth of the retail/supermarket sector is destroying and displacing local food systems and local markets, and are inherently extractive. At the same time, industrial ultra-processed foods and sweetened beverages have penetrated African markets – many of which are high in sugar, salt, saturated fats and preservatives – thus contributing to the spread of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer. This has also contributed to a major rise in excess weight and obesity, with the rate of overweight children under five having increased significantly since 2000 . And affected populations are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

We hold our governments to account for failing to put in place adequate fiscal policies and regulations to protect Africa's food sovereignty, while recognising that

such measures face strong opposition from large food companies and powerful trading partners and global finance that dominate markets.

We reject the idea that modernising African agriculture depends on single-crop, productivity-raising technologies, such as genetic modification (GM) technologies and value chain development, which are largely driven and controlled by the corporate sector. We see this massive push for the rapid industrialisation of agriculture and food production in Africa as part of a wider agenda, which is about deepening extraction from the continent – of labour, minerals, wood, water, food, fibre, genetic material and finance. This is being done to feed the desires of the world's wealthy consumers and the profits of corporations, but is being framed as a development pathway for Africa.

We argue that industrial food production deepens dependency; first, on projects that are fossil fuel and capital intensive, which are destructive to the environment, short sighted and short-lived. Second, reliance on global agricultural, forest, livestock and fisheries' value chains is strengthened, and this is creating conditions for extreme vulnerability to shocks, such as cyclones, droughts, locust infestations and pandemics. We hold that there is an inextricable interconnectedness between climate change, deforestation and ocean degradation, industrial food production and, generally speaking, agrarian extractivism and extractivist development. In their individual and collective roles, they are driving social and political instability and food insecurity on the continent, and these are then further fuelling the systemic, existential crises we face globally. We stand by our common position in defence not only of African people and territories, but of the world at large.

We denounce the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) for seeking to further reinforce the gross power imbalances that corporations hold over food systems. We deplore the failure of the organisers to address the legitimate concerns raised by civil society, which include: the excessive weight of multinational companies; lack of transparency and inclusivity; disregard for human rights; promotion of solutions that benefit companies and not populations, and the lack of clarity of the role of leadership by governments.

We condemn the FSS as an attack on the spaces and responsibilities of the public sphere, both globally and at national level. Globally, the FSS seeks to sideline the inclusive multilateral UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in which marginalised rights-holders have priority voice, and replace it with a “multi stakeholder” platform led by corporate actors, which obliterates government accountability and the human rights framework that underlies the UN system. At national level, the effort is to eternalise the cliquish and illegitimate national dialogues promoted by the FSS process and machinery, and transform them into policy platforms that ignore power imbalances and open the decision-making

rooms to multinational corporations that have no place in national policy design. Our legitimate and self-organised civil society organisations and networks denounce this attack on the already fragile democracy of our countries and our continent.

FOR THE ABOVE REASONS WE REJECT THE UN FSS AND CALL ON:

African governments, regional economic commissions and the African Union to:

- Support the vision of food sovereignty and the right to food laid out in this declaration, learning lessons from the experience of COVID-19;
- De-link development from extraction of our resources, our biodiversity, water, minerals and soil fertility. De-link development from the power of capital and the narrow demands of the economic elites, and place our ecologies and communities at the centre of democratic deliberation for the achievement of a viable future.
- Dissociate from the UN Food Systems Summit and its agenda of corporate capture of our food systems and governance. Oppose corporate capture of decision-making spaces, at all levels, as these are the domains of the public sector and must serve the interests of African peoples.
- Support the UN Committee on World Food Security and the vision of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism. Support the implementation of its policy outcomes, as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), and all other commitments entered into in democratic spaces that support food sovereignty, the preservation and promotion of biodiversity, and the inclusion and autonomy of women and youth.
- Reject the new Science-Policy Interface that the FSS is promoting, which aims at usurping the functions of the CFS High Level Panel of Experts and weakening the production of solid, valid knowledge based on a plurality of voices, which is essential for the formulation of policies that effectively promote sustainable food systems and the rights of indigenous and local communities;
- Adapt agricultural strategies to the terms of the UN Decade on Family Farming (UNDDF).
- Support the adoption of the International Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights.
- Fight for global regulation prohibiting illicit financial flows, rogue capital and tax evasion of companies operating in the Global South.

The United Nations, particularly the Rome-based agencies, to:

- Defend their impartiality, credibility and dedication to human rights by refraining from entering into partnerships and multi stakeholder platforms that put profits of multinational corporations and agrarian extractivism over rights-holders and ecological integrity.

African civil society to:

- Take to heart all the social, economic, spiritual, political, and cultural dimensions of food, and challenge the process and the predetermined outcomes of the FSS;
- Mobilise to defend the African people's vision and rights, seeking convergence among social movements, unions, and civil society organisations, to oppose domination of our food systems by multinational corporations;
- Fight against patriarchy, all forms of discrimination, and xenophobia, and fight for the rights of women;
- Take all necessary actions to enable young people to secure dignified and remunerative futures in their communities and family farms and spaces;
- Undertake advocacy action addressing their national, regional and continental authorities; and
- Circulate this declaration broadly for discussion and underwriting.

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This position statement has been drafted by a coordination group.

Organisations that endorse the declaration



A Growing Culture

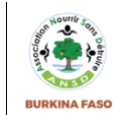


ACTU
Agroecology Research-Action Collective

African Centre for Biodiversity
AEMAPRI asbl
AEFJN
ADJMOR, Mali
AJEVODI/ ASBL

Alternative Espaces Citoyens

ASSOCIATION DOUNIA DES PROTECTEURS DE
L'ENVIRONNEMENT



Association Nourrir Sans Détruire (ANSDD)



Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa

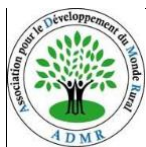
ALTERNACTIVA - Acção Pela Emancipação
Social



Asali Society



Association des jeunes de la commune
d'Essakane (ANMATAF)



Association pour le développement du monde
rural ADMR



Association pour la Promotion des Arbres
Fertilitaires, de l'Agroforesterie et de la Foresterie

Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD

APPUI SOLIDAIRE POUR LE RENFORCEMENT DE
L AIDE AU DEVELOPPEMENT

Bergen County Green Party

BioFarmers for Sustainable Agriculture



Biowatch

Cadre de Concertation de la Société civile de
l'Ituri sur les Ressources Naturelles



Centre congolais pour le droit du développement durable, CODED



CDA/ ASBL
CCPSC/ Kasai Central
Children's Environmental Health Foundation
CIRAD



Collectif culturel des jeunes pour le progrès social (CCJPS)
Collectif National des pêcheurs du Sénégal (CNPS)

Conseil National de l'Agriculture Biologique



COASP-Mali

Community Alliance for Global Justice/AGRA Watch



The Development Institute

Daani Youth Development Organization
DeepAgroecology.net
Disability Action Research Team (DART)
Dr Uzo Adirieje Foundation (DUZAFUND)
DSAP

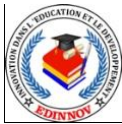


Ecological organic agriculture Initiative

Eco-hope



El Colegio de La Frontera Sur (ECOSUR)



Edinnov



ENDA PRONAT



ETC group



Fahamu Africa



Farmworker Association of Florida
Family Farm Defenders

FACHIG Trust



Fédération des Coopératives Maraichères du
Niger



FENOP



Fédération Nationale pour l'Agriculture
Biologique

Fédération des Coopératives Maraichères du
Niger

Food, Environment and Enterprise Trust (FEET)



Food Sovereignty Ghana

Friends of the MST (US)



Fian Zambia



FIAN Burkina Faso

FIAN Uganda



Global Environmental Trust

Good Health Community Programmes, Kenya



Groundswell International (West Africa network)

Hamisi Social & Wellness GBV Community Center

Habitat International Coalition

IDEL



Indigenous Peoples Global Forum for Sustainable Development



Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee



Initiative Tchad Emergent (ITE)

INITIATIVE POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT LOCAL



Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social: Inades-Formation Burkina

Justica Ambiental



JVE-Côte d'Ivoire



Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre



Kenyan Peasants League

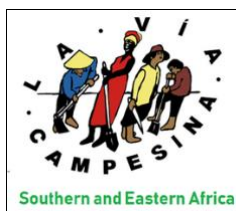


Kenya Small Scale Farmers Forum

"Konyana" (centre de formation en agroécologie paysanne (CFAP))



La Federation Nationale du Secteur Agricole, Maroc



La Via Campesina

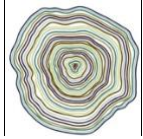


Masifundise/WFFP

Mau Community Forest Association



Mazingira Institute



The Movement in Africa



MVIWAKI



Mzuzu Young Voices organization



Navdanya International

National Family Farm Coalition



Never Ending Food, Malawi

Njeremoto Biodiversity Institute NBI-Zim

Nkhabele Marumo Psychologists

Nous Sommes la Solution



Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies



Indigenous Strategy & Institution for Development (ISID)



Occupy Bergen County (New Jersey)

Organic World



ONG CHIGATA

ORAM



Pesticide Action Network North America



PGS South Africa



The PHA Food & Farming Campaign



PLANT (Partners for the Land & Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples)

Plateforme Paysanne du Niger
Rastafari Cultural Collective
Right to Food South Asia



Rikolto

Reseau Nigerien des Defenseurs des Droits Humains (RNDDH)



Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest



Rucore



Rural Women Assembly Zambia



SEATINI Uganda



Slow Food International

SHIWAKUTA

Social Action Committee, Central Unitarian
Universalist Church



Tlholego Ecovillage

Tropical Sustainable Foundatin



Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic
Community



US Food Sovereignty Alliance



Ukuvuna

Who ever feed you control you.



Women on Farms Project



World Forum of Fisher Peoples



World March of Women

Women with Vision of South Africa
Youth Volunteers for Environment Ghana



Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and
Biodiversity

Zemljane staze

