



# FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

*Join the local, national  
and international movement  
to regain control of our food and farm system*

National Family Farm Coalition and Grassroots International

## Food Sovereignty: Putting People First

ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO DECIDE WHAT THEY EAT and to ensure that food in their community is healthy and accessible for everyone. This is the basic principle behind food sovereignty. If you want to support domestic food security through the production of healthy food at a fair price, and you believe that family farmers and fishers should have the first right to local and regional markets, then food sovereignty is for you.

The global food and farm system is broken. Even US farmers cannot earn a fair price for what they raise, despite their high productivity. Meanwhile, more than 1.2 billion people around the world go hungry every day. As corporate-controlled agriculture spreads across the globe, the social and environmental costs weigh heavily on our communities.

Profits for a few seed, agrichemical and food processing corporations seem to outweigh the needs of the rest of us. The system no longer values healthy, delicious food, productive and sustainable rural communities, or the people's right to make decisions about managing their communities and farms.

The National Family Farm Coalition, an advocacy group of family farm, fishing and rural organizations nationwide, is a member of La Via Campesina, the largest international movement of family farmer, fisher, farm worker, forester and indigenous groups in the world. Grassroots International is a public charity striving to create a just and sustainable world through grantmaking, advocacy and alliance-building movements with a focus on land, water and food as human rights. Together, they work on local, national and international initiatives to defend food sovereignty—the right of all people to choose where and how their food is produced.

***“We’re not just a little group in Wisconsin or D.C. We’re part of a global movement that’s going to have a say in setting fair food policy at the international level.”*** —JOEL GREENO, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN

RAW MILK PRODUCERS PRICING ASSOCIATION; EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, NFFC

## Food Sovereignty Starts With You

**NAME:** Joel Greeno, Greeno Acres

**HOMETOWN:** Kendall, Wisconsin

**OCCUPATION:** Family farmer—dairy (raw milk)

**FARMING:** 17 years. The Greenos were farming in Scotland before emigrating more than 100 years ago.

**ORGANIZATION:** American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association



**“FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IS ABOUT FAIR TRADE, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, ENERGY INDEPENDENCE, ALL THAT, BUT IT REALLY STARTS WITH YOU—WHERE YOU BUY YOUR FOOD, HOW YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR NEIGHBOR. IT’S THAT SIMPLE.”**

### *Earning a fair price*

Joel works to secure a fair price for raw milk producers in addition to facilitating seminars on sustainable bio-fuel and rotational grazing for farmers.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

Working toward food sovereignty means taking back local control of farms and seeds from corporations in order to ensure a life of justice and dignity for farmers, fishers, laborers and consumers. Fair trade, anti-dumping measures and new global agriculture policies must be established to achieve food sovereignty.

## Local Food for Local Markets

**NAME:** Dena Hoff, Sand Creek Farm

**HOMETOWN:** Glendive, Montana

**OCCUPATION:** Family farmer—sheep, cattle, edible dried beans, grains, alfalfa, farmers market produce



**FARMING:** 30 years. “I always knew I wanted to be a farmer.”

**ORGANIZATION:** Northern Plains Resource Council

**“MY FIRST RULE OF FARMING IS TO FEED YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY. FORGET NATIONAL PRODUCTION, FORGET EXPORT PRODUCTION. ALL THAT MEANS NOTHING IF YOU CAN’T FEED YOURSELF AND HELP FEED YOUR NEIGHBORS.”**

### *First right to markets*

Dena strives to put local food in its rightful, exalted place with people, not corporations. Farmers should have the first right to provide healthy, nutritious food for consumers in their local and regional markets.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

The local farm-to-table project supports the growing, processing and marketing of local food. Farmers earn a fair price, feed themselves and their community and reduce corporate control over the market.

## Farmers Around the World Working Together

**NAME:** Diamantino Nhamossa

**HOMETOWN:** Inhambane, Mozambique

**OCCUPATION:** Lawyer and land rights activist

**FARMING:** “My grandfather and my parents are small farmers. When I was young, we grew food to eat locally, not to sell.”



**ORGANIZATION:** União Nacional de Camponeses / National Peasants' Union (UNAC) and La Via Campesina

**“MECHANIZED AGRICULTURE, WITH VERY EXPENSIVE INPUTS, IS NOT SUSTAINABLE FOR SMALL FARMERS, UNLIKE THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY MODEL. IT USES RESOURCES FULLY, MAINTAINS AND PROTECTS BIODIVERSITY, AND SHARES KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE AND SEEDS.”**

### *Working with cooperatives*

UNAC was founded in 1987 by farmers to strengthen their fight for rights to land, credit and production, and to implement rural development projects.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

Unlike the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture, which hurts peasants and family farmers, food sovereignty policies support the well-being of people by respecting local resources, capacity and cultures.



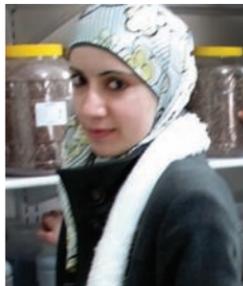
## Saving Local Seeds

**NAME:** Do'a Zaied

**HOMETOWN:** Hebron/Al-Khalil (Palestine)

**OCCUPATION:** Agronomist, farmer and food sovereignty activist

**EXPERIENCE:** Selecting and saving local seeds for one of the only two seed banks in the Middle East



**ORGANIZATION:** Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC)

**“TO HAVE YOUR INDEPENDENT VOICE AND YOUR INDEPENDENT THINKING YOU HAVE TO HAVE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, AND THAT STARTS WITH CONTROL OVER YOUR OWN SEEDS.”**

### *Building local seed banks*

Do'a manages UAWC's Seed Bank with the help of two volunteers. UAWC started the project to encourage farmers to preserve traditional seed varieties, increase food security and biodiversity. Since the project began in 2003 with farmers in 10 villages, it has expanded to include 21 varieties of local seeds.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

Seeds are the center of food sovereignty, and they are under threat as multinational corporations try to patent technologies, seeds and species, or genetically modify them to withstand toxic chemical fertilizers. To be sovereign is to have control over seeds and land, techniques and knowledge—everything necessary for food.

## Mobilizing Farm Labor and the Landless

**NAME:** Carlos Marentes

**HOMETOWN:** El Paso, Texas

**OCCUPATION:** Farm labor organizer

**EXPERIENCE:** Organizing farm workers for more than 30 years

**ORGANIZATION:** Border Agricultural Workers Project



**“THE CURRENT AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM DESTROYS RURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH, FORCING MILLIONS TO MIGRATE, RISKING THEIR LIVES AT THE BORDER. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IS OUR ALTERNATIVE. INSTEAD OF BUILDING WALLS, WE SHOULD FIGHT FOR HEALTHY RURAL COMMUNITIES, SO PEOPLE CAN STAY ON THEIR LAND, AND PRODUCE THEIR OWN FOOD.”**

### *Protecting the rights of farm workers and families*

As the director of a farm labor center on the border, Carlos organizes and advocates on behalf of farm workers on the local, national and international levels.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

Border Agricultural Workers Project organizes thousands of migrant workers to ensure them a living wage and fair working conditions. The tensions on the border underscore the connection between displaced farmers in the south and exploited workers in the north. Food sovereignty respects the rights of all people working in agriculture.

## Farmers Helping Farmers

**NAME:** Ben Burkett, B&B Farm

**HOMETOWN:** Petal, Mississippi

**OCCUPATION:** Family farmer—collards, okra, squash, cabbage, watermelon and timber

**FARMING:** 37 years, 4th generation farmer

**ORGANIZATIONS:** Mississippi Association of Cooperatives; Federation of Southern Cooperatives



**“I’VE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE A GOOD LIVING AS A FARMER FOR 37 YEARS, BUT THE CORPORATE CONTROL OF INPUTS (SEEDS, FERTILIZER, LABOR) AND PRICES HAS MADE IT MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO DO THAT.”**

### *Gaining access to land and local markets*

Ben increases access to nutritious, affordable food for low-income Mississippi and Louisiana residents by creating local market opportunities for family farmers. Cooperatives also keep minority farmers on the land and mentor new and beginning farmers.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

A Hurricane Katrina survivor, Ben and the Association worked with farmers across the country to provide relief to other storm survivors. They partnered with other nonprofits to rebuild Haiti’s agricultural economy long before the 2010 earthquake.



## Traditional Ways

**NAME:** Anthony Ciocco (Chako)

**HOMETOWN:** Grand Junction, Colorado. Now living in Okmulgee, Oklahoma

**OCCUPATION:** Communications Coordinator

**EXPERIENCE:** Student organizer and grassroots organizer in the local community

**ORGANIZATION:** Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative



**“WE KNOW THAT IN OUR TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE WE WERE HEALTHY PEOPLE – SPIRITUALLY, MENTALLY, EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY. MUCH OF THE TRADITIONAL WAYS ARE ABOUT MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BALANCE WITHIN OURSELVES, OUR RELATIONSHIPS, OUR FAMILIES, OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR LANDS.”**

### *Enhancing local markets*

Chako believes that enhancing local food markets is one of the most beneficial things we can do to empower, heal, and sustain our community. There is also a tremendous gain in ‘growing growers,’ achieving a sense of accomplishment and ownership over our own lives, as well as claiming the space to carry out and carry on our cultural practices.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

Food sovereignty is fundamental to every other kind of sovereignty. Not only is food sovereignty a prerequisite for cultural and political sovereignty, but it is also the enactment thereof – our agricultural practices are a major part of who we are. If we were really sovereign we’d be living in the Mvskoke way.

## Local Fishers Support Local Communities

**NAME:** Kim Libby

**HOMETOWN:** Port Clyde, ME

**OCCUPATION:** Fisheries Advocate

**EXPERIENCE:** Working with family fishers for 17 years, and fisherman's wife for 15 years

**ORGANIZATION:** Founding member of Midcoast Fishermen's Association and Midcoast Fishermen's Cooperative



**“WE NEED A LIVING WAGE, A FAIR WAGE FOR FAMILY FARMERS AND FISHERS. IF WE EAT LOCALLY, THEN WE CAN SUSTAIN COMMUNITIES AND SUPPORT OUR NEIGHBORS, INSTEAD OF CORPORATIONS. BUYING DIRECT FROM SMALL PRODUCERS, FARMERS OR FISHERS ENSURES BETTER QUALITY FOOD AT A BETTER PRICE. ”**

### *Enhancing local markets*

As a co-founder of New England's first Community Supported Fishery, Kim works to provide local, sustainably caught fish to her community and helps others along the New England coast do the same.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

Food sovereignty unites farmers and fishers for a common purpose, while raising broader public awareness about our food sources. Kim sees no difference between small scale farmers and small scale fishers that support the local community and respect the environment.

## Organizing and Advocating

**NAME:** George Naylor, Naylor Farm

**HOMETOWN:** Churdan, Iowa

**OCCUPATION:** Family farmer—corn,  
soybeans, apples

**FARMING:** More than 30 years,  
3rd generation farmer



**ORGANIZATION:** Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement

**“A SIGN IN IOWA READS, IOWA FARMERS  
FEED THE WORLD.’ IT REALLY MEANS  
IOWA FARMERS FEED CORPORATE PIGS.’  
WE NEED SOLUTIONS THAT DO NOT GIVE  
CORPORATIONS CONTROL OVER OUR  
FOOD, SEEDS AND HEALTH. THE WHOLE  
FABRIC OF RURAL LIFE—HERE AND  
AROUND THE WORLD—IS AT STAKE.”**

### *Making farm policy work for farmers*

George advocates at home and abroad for farm policy that strengthens diversified family farming and respects other countries’ Food Sovereignty.

### *How food sovereignty helps*

George’s voice at international trade and agriculture forums elevates the need for a fair price and a farmer’s bill of rights in international policy discussions.



## What You Can Do

*People around the world see firsthand the disastrous consequences of our current food system. They also lead the way in finding better ways to do things. From learning healthier ways to farm their own land to participating in the reform of national and international food and farm policy, there is an opportunity for everyone to be a part of the solution.*

**Building farm to cafeteria projects** to bring locally grown food into school lunch programs: It encourages children to eat healthily while buying from independent, small-scale farmers.

**Creating an alternative U.S. Farm Bill:** The NFFC's proposed Food from Family Farms Act is designed to ensure fair prices for family farmers and healthy food for rural communities here and around the world.

**Neighbor to neighbor:** Farmer-led organizations responded to the devastating earthquake in Haiti by raising funds and donating \$75,000 for seeds, tools and training for Haitian farmers.

**Each one teach one:** U.S. farmers travel across Africa, Europe, South and Central America, Asia and the Middle East and host family farmers from abroad to share organizing, policy and farming techniques.

**Farmers' voices shaping international trade debates:** Farmers, farm workers and fishers are demanding trade, agricultural and ocean stewardship policies that respect their rights and value their contributions to the food system.

**Join the movement for food sovereignty—call the National Family Farm Coalition at 202.543.5675 or email [nffc@nffc.net](mailto:nffc@nffc.net); and join Grassroots International's e-advocacy list: [info@GrassrootsOnline.org](mailto:info@GrassrootsOnline.org).**

## NFFC FOOD SOVEREIGNTY VISION STATEMENT

*We envision empowered communities everywhere working together democratically to advance a food system that ensures health, justice and dignity for all.*

*Farmers, farm workers, ranchers, and fishers will have control over their lands, water, seeds, and livelihoods [and] all people will have access to healthy, local, delicious food.*

For more information about how you can be a part of making this vision a reality, contact the NFFC at:

110 Maryland Avenue, NE Ste 307  
Washington, DC, 20002  
phone 202.543.5675



nffc.net



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*Supporting family farmers and food sovereignty around the world*

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