

The Bellingham Declaration

US Food Sovereignty Alliance

October 2018

The US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) held its IV National Assembly from October 12th thru 14th in Bellingham, Washington with the participation of 117 members, allies, and individuals from 71 organizations and 7 countries. The theme “Defending Mother Earth for an Agroecological Life: No Walls, No Capitalism” was enacted through art, drama, music, dance, organizing, debate, analysis, healthy locally-sourced food, and spirited “mística” ceremonies.

Anchored by the farmworker-led organization Community to Community Development (C2C), the assembly overflowed with a joyous, intelligent, and diverse rainbow of origins, identities, and organizers of all ages from various sectors of the food system, including farmworkers, food chain workers, fishers, family farmers, urban agriculturalists, food providers, and social justice advocates fighting for their livelihoods, freedom, and dignity through food sovereignty, and an end to patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial ways of thinking and acting. Building on regional assemblies in the Northeast, the South, the Midwest and the West, the IV National Assembly vibrated with an expanding and deepening energy!

Challenged by the current political and ecological moment—characterized by the rise of right-wing, racist populism allied with neoliberal, corporate economics, coupled with massive impoverishment and oppression of peoples, and the threat of climate catastrophe—our motivation intensified. Those assembled discussed and the Alliance’s national coordination proclaims the following solidarity positions of the USFSA:

* In solidarity with La Via Campesina, we call on the United States and other members states to support the Declaration of Peasants Rights being pushed forward at the U.N. The struggle for Food Sovereignty depends on the protection of the rights of peasants and small- and medium-sized family farmers.

* We oppose the expansion of the H2A visa guest worker program, particularly when used as a means of displacing farmworkers organizing themselves into unions. H2A workers tied to a single employer have not been able to unionize themselves, and are often subject to wage theft, extortion by labor contractors and foremen, and other abuses. We denounce in the strongest terms efforts to expand and weaken existing safeguards and housing provisions in guest worker programs by establishing a proposed H2C visa, which would spread and intensify the defects of H2A to food processing industries. We also support the boycott of Reynolds American Tobacco VUSE e-cigarettes until that corporation signs an agreement to guarantee the right to organize without retaliation to all farmworkers in the tobacco fields, whether H2A or undocumented.

* We denounce the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in implementing the racist policies of mass detention and deportation, and stand in solidarity with immigrant and refugee peoples currently residing and working in the U.S.

* We add our collective voice to the Call to Protect Food Systems from Genetic Extinction Technology and Call for a global moratorium on any release of engineered gene drives, which could contaminate ecological systems, species, and food webs with genetic traits designed to create species extinction.

* We denounce proposals in the Farm Bill that would increase work requirements for SNAP eligibility, end the Double Up Bucks farmers market program, defund critical conservation programs, and reduce support for beginning and socially challenged farmer programs.

* We reject the King amendment in the House Farm Bill, which would give agribusinesses greater control and restrict state and local governments from regulating agricultural products, and could nullify the Food Sovereignty Ordinances passed in Maine, as well as laws that curb pesticide use, regulate farmworker safety, prevent cruel livestock practices, and label GMO foods.

* We call for an expansion of agroecological practices and the protection of our agroecological biodiversity in food, fiber, forest and aquatic systems across the planet, as one of the essential solutions to the climate catastrophes humanity faces. We know that small farmers, family fishers and foresters all cool the planet. Agroecology cools the planet!

* Lastly, the USFSA stands in solidarity with our global allies, particularly members of La Via Campesina, suffering the overthrow or threat of overthrow of popular, democratic governments. Whether in Honduras, Paraguay, Colombia, Brazil, Nicaragua, Venezuela or elsewhere, these “soft coups” are a threat to democratic processes and to food sovereignty everywhere.

The IV Assembly debated and affirmed the formation of the following national Collectives: Political Education, Agroecology: Land and Water, Narrative Strategy, International Relationships, and Youth. These collectives together with the regional bodies will carry forward the work of USFSA, coordinated by representatives from grassroots organizations from the regions, with the help of grassroots support organizers.

With our collective strength, we shout “No!” to injustices in the food system everywhere and “Yes!” to the people rising up to radically transform unjust systems and practices, for the betterment and survival of humanity and defense of Mother Earth. And to the inspiring sister movements across the planet working for food sovereignty, we sing out a resounding ¡VIVA! WE STAND WITH YOU! WE ARE PART OF YOU!

During the Assembly, the winners of the Food Sovereignty Prize were acknowledged for their powerful work to promote food sovereignty. Here is the release:

* Grassroots Movements Celebrated for Building Solutions to Food and Climate Crises

Winners of the Food Sovereignty Prize

* *Black Mesa Water Coalition,*
* *Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica de Puerto Rico*

* FSP winners Jesus Vázquez and Dalma Colón from *Organización Boricúa;*
Sheldon Natoni and Roberto Nutlouis from *Black Mesa Water Coalition*

October 14, 2018 (Bellingham, Washington) – The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) honored Black Mesa Water Coalition and Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica de Puerto Rico on Sunday at the Tenth Annual Food Sovereignty Prize ceremony on Lummi and Nooksack land in Coast Salish Territory, in the city now called Bellingham, Washington.

Black Mesa Water Coalition, the domestic honoree, was awarded the prize for restoring indigenous food sovereignty and uplifting youth leaders among Navajo and Hopi communities. Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica de Puerto Rico, the international honoree, was recognized particularly for mobilizing Food Sovereignty Brigades to assist farmers recover in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Presented as an alternative to the World Food Prize, the Food Sovereignty Prize honors steadfast commitment of food sovereignty. Social movements, community organizations, and activists around the world recognize the importance of the prize.

“These grassroots organizations demonstrate how frontline communities most affected by social and ecological crises are the ones with solutions to society’s most pressing problems.” -

Doria Robinson, Urban Tilth (Coordinator of the Western Region of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance)

Black Mesa Water Coalition utilizes green economic development and other diverse strategies, rooted in indigenous knowledge, to address issues of poverty, hunger, and environmental injustices driven by extractive industries and centuries of colonialism. “We need to notify humanity that we need to drastically change the way we do things, especially getting away from fossil fuels, and the food system is one way to begin that transition.” -

Roberto Nutlouis, Black Mesa Water Coalition

Organización Boricúa organizes farmers to transition to sustainable agriculture and sovereignty in Puerto Rico. “Agroecology as Puerto Ricans, coming from a colonial context, has given us a space to organize and deepen our struggles. This work is a vehicle of transformation for a sovereign, free, and just Puerto Rico.”

Jesus Vázquez, Organización Boricua