



ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA



# AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS AND THE SDGs

SALY, SENEGAL 3 - 5 NOVEMBER 2018

**CONFERENCE REPORT**



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# Executive Summary

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is a broad alliance of civil society actors who are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. Its members represent smallholder farmers, pastoralists, hunter/gatherers, indigenous peoples, faith-based institutions, and environmentalists from across Africa. It is a network of networks, with currently 35 members active in 50 African countries.

From 3-5 November 2018, AFSA held its 2<sup>nd</sup> Food Systems Conference under the theme—“African Food Systems and the SDGs” in Saly, Senegal. The conference was built around five thematic areas:

1. Urban food systems
2. Food systems, climate change and soil
3. Policy change on food systems in Africa
4. The future of food systems in an increasingly complex world
5. African cultural food systems

The conference brought together 135 delegates, from 31 countries across three continents of the world, representing farmers, fisher folk, pastoralists, consumer associations, research and development institutions, government representatives, media, and nongovernmental organizations. A [dedicated conference website](#) was set up to promote the event and manage registration.

Participants were welcomed by AFSA Chairperson Mariann Basseby Orovwuje, and AFSA Coordinator Dr Million Belay. The conference was officially opened by the Guest of Honour, Monsieur Cheikh Diop, the Senegalese Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Livestock and Animal Production.

The conference was facilitated through art. This was a conscious move away from the typical PowerPoint presentations and panel discussions, in an endeavour to do things differently through creative activities. For one activity participants were challenged to make and discuss clay sculptures expressing their values and the struggle for transformation. They were also invited to generate ‘burning questions’ individually which were offered to a ceremonial fire for transformation. The burning questions were distilled down to a set of 11 core issues and constituencies, around which groups discussed, prepared and performed ‘parliaments’ reporting back in the form of drama, poetry and song. In addition to the development of strategic directions for the network, the innovative format of the event provided space for a great strengthening of the agroecology movement within Africa and beyond. Participants, each influencing change in their various spheres, interacted in one big networking platform. Alliances were built and strengthened among members and likeminded players. The conference hall rang out with loud and proud collective voices: Africa Unite! People Power! Women fighting for our rights!

To provide guidance, five renowned keynote speakers contributed their huge expertise and shared their latest thinking on the five key themes.

## **African Cultural Food Systems:**

Mariama Sonko broke down African Food Systems into their component key elements: production, distribution and consumption. She noted that local preparation and recipes in West Africa are rooted in local customs and traditions, but that culinary techniques are changing, giving rise to new pathologies. She asserted that there can be no sustainable development without a profound transformation of food systems.

## Agroecology, Learning and Agency:

Distinguished Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka explained that climate change is essentially about social change. As people are creating the problems, so people can also produce the alternatives. Heila presented the case for agroecology in the context of seven key 'A' themes: Africa Unite, Agroecology and Diversity, Agroecology and Equity, Activism, Activity and Culture, Art of Learning, and Agency to Transgress.

## Beyond Policy:

Pat Mooney asserted that what we need are the pathways to get to the point where the policies are working for us, where the policies are made for and by the people. It's not only the policies we have to change; we have to change who is making the policies. We need to think long term. We need to develop the pathways to get to where we want to be, but it's likely to be a 10 or 20-year process.

## Urban Food Systems:

Nnimmo Bassey reflected on some of the profound messages expressed in the conference. 'He who controls the seed controls the food' and 'Rural food production is dictated by urban food needs'. He was clear that the system itself does not support family farmers, and it does not support us. Nnimmo stressed the importance of AFSA stepping up to work with mass social movements to ensure that we achieve System Change.

## Food Systems in a Complex World:

Gertrude Pswarayi-Jabson challenged the audience to take a personal view and accept personal responsibility. She explained that each action an individual takes has a ripple effect on the entire ecosystem. Our ancestors understood this, and developed a way of life that helped to sustain nature, knowing that if they took care of Mother Earth, she in turn would take care of them.

Through a facilitated process of creative and inclusive interaction, discussion and debate, the conference generated key learning points in terms of the movement and its advocacy approach. These included the need to:

- Develop a long term pathway setting out how we are going to get there, and thinking not in

short project timescales but in a 10-20-year horizon.

- Influence the way that children and young people are educated, and bring agroecology, food sovereignty and cultural values into the mainstream curricula.
- Support the connections between farmers and consumers (citizens) by creating evidence based awareness and consciousness of the deep connection between the soil and all aspects of the ecosystem
- Promote agroecology as a way to reduce both the impacts of climate change and increasing human diseases, especially obesity and related chronic diseases (including cancers)
- Demand an end to the use of fossil fuels, synthetic fertilizers, synthetic pesticides and deforestation, on one hand and on the other, promote locally sourced bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides and integrated pest management.
- Develop a narrative to counter big agribusiness concepts such as Climate Smart Agriculture.
- Support members to understand the complexities of existing policy frameworks.
- Support actors to advocate for policy processes that are inclusive, participatory, transparent and democratic.
- Support communities to develop community food manifestos that can help them chart practical pathways out of the complexity.
- Look into the leverage points for unlocking transformative change in the food system and to conceptualize pathways of emergence from these.
- Transform the dominant narrative about food systems in favour of agroecology.
- Provide leadership in developing a food systems policy for Africa that is aligned to the achievement of the SDGs at all levels, from international to grassroot/community level.
- Position/package and link the revival of African Food Systems to improved health and nutrition outcomes (addressing both under-nutrition and over-nutrition) and find evidence based common ground between science and indigenous knowledge.



- Support the documentation of African food systems through the recording of oral narratives and practices as part of securing indigenous food systems and the knowledge therein.
- Prioritize the conservation of African indigenous genetic resources such as seeds and livestock, including ensuring that seed policies include and accommodate farmer based seed systems.
- Revive African rituals and practices as a pathway to the revival of African Food Systems.

A series of 11 'Parliaments' were developed around different topics and constituencies, as a means to create discussion around the most significant and concerning issues. The results yielded much learning, with many calls to action emerging. These fell into five key areas:

### Education:

There was a strong call to reform the education systems with the integration of traditional and Indigenous knowledge. To create a curriculum that includes cooking and food production focusing on diet. To educate on our norms and rights to food, our autonomy and women in leadership, and to strengthen technical knowledge on sustainable production, post-harvest storage, process and market.

### Evidence:

Delegates called for practical evidence of agroecology as an alternative solution, documenting good practices to influence policy change, calling on national research institutions to integrate indigenous agroecology, learning from and working with the farmers. AFSA to send recommendation to ECOWAS and AU for an African research institution.

### Governance:

We heard a call for political governance to include youth; to lift up our leaders and model other forms of leadership, advancing accountable governance around environment and human rights; and to assess laws, policies, institutions, and their impact on community rights, including right to food.

### Advocacy:

The call was to leverage the SDGs framework to promote agroecology for sustainable development, to change the mind-sets of our policy makers, and move from confrontational opposition to constructive engagement. We need to build a "business case" for agroecology, packaging agroecology as a reliable natural food system that feeds the planet and protects the environment while making sustainable profits.

### The Movement:

The conference called for unity across our different sectors and constituencies, because we are fighting the same fight. We, the people, have the power to change! We must be ready to take the risk! The call to action was to strengthen and sustain social movements at community, national and regional level, and actively involve CSO Alliances in AU/continental policy meetings.

After much discussion the participants agreed on a strategic campaign focus for AFSA; this being 'Agroecology as a Solution to Climate Change'.

For AFSA as an alliance, one of the critical outcomes was the strengthening of the agroecology movement within Africa and beyond. Over the three days, food sovereignty activists from across the world sang, danced and performed. They sat in collective meditation and contemplation. They worked through awkward social barriers together and in doing so got to know and trust each other more deeply as people.

Much of the conference was recorded on video and still images, prompting an [AFSA YouTube channel](#) to be created and an [online photo gallery](#) set up to share the videos and images. AFSA distributed a huge number of recent publications (over 150 kg) in both English and French, and launched a new publication: "Know Agroecology" a media guide to Agroecology for journalists and communicators. The conference also hosted the launch of a four-minute [animated film on Agroecology for Africa](#) which highlights the role agroecology can play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The conference addresses and key discussions were relayed to participants in English and French languages by a Senegalese team of five professional interpreters who not only provided essential translation services but also became personally very interested and involved in the whole process.

# Introduction

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is a broad alliance of civil society actors that are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. These include African farmers' organizations, African NGO networks, specialist African NGOs, consumer movements in Africa, international organizations that support the stance of AFSA, and individuals. Its members represent smallholder farmers, pastoralists, hunter/gatherers, indigenous peoples; faith-based institutions, and environmentalists from across Africa. It is a network of networks, with currently 37 members active in 50 African countries.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> conference represented the implementation of one of the decisions made at the first African Food Systems conference held in November 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, organised by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOAI), IFOAM – Organics International, the African Network for Organic Agriculture (AFRONET) and Mekelle University.

The AFSA network thus met for three days in Saly, Senegal, from 3 – 5 November 2018, and the focus of the conference was provided by five thematic areas:

1. Urban food systems
2. Food systems, climate change and soil
3. Policy change on food systems in Africa
4. The future of food systems in an increasingly complex world
5. African cultural food systems

## Facilitation through art

AFSA decided to do something different for this gathering, something that could give all those present a different way of meeting each other and share the vital knowledge that they come with. There was a strong decision to facilitate the gathering through the use of art.

Art has the power to inspire new thinking and action. Art encourages participation by creating a more democratic space, through allowing a diverse set of people (activists, policy makers, researchers, farmers and fishers) to be able to talk at a common, accessible level, free from jargon and “legalese”. Art provides a canvas to work on these issues, to think about them in different ways, and to imagine and paint a world in which no limitations and restrictions exist. Art can be a catalyst for innovation, simplifying the problem and subsequently leading to achievable, realistic solutions. Art in its essence is what can give imaginations shape, give them colour, texture and structure. It can inspire process and progress, and provide a simpler and clearer viewpoint on problematic topics.

The facilitators were: Injairu Kulundu-Bolus, a social practitioner, vocalist and lyricist who uses politics, drama, arts-based methodologies and music as part of her praxis. Dr. Makgathi Mokwena is a registered arts therapist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa, and centres her work on personal development. Dr Dylan McGarry, an ecologist, educational sociologist, theatre maker and multimedia artist. Dr Luke Metelerkamp is an artist, facilitator, and researcher. Tshego Khutsoane, a warm and passionate creative practitioner specializes in exploring complex human and social issues using theatre.

The facilitators were supported by several groups of local musicians singing, playing drums, kora and balafon (xylophone), who provided wonderful entertainment throughout the three days and supported many of the creative facilitated processes and performances.

Simultaneous translation between English and French was provided by a Senegalese team of five professional interpreters who not only provided essential translation services, but also became personally very interested and involved in the whole process.



# The Conference Proceedings

## DAY ONE



AFSA Chairperson, Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje, introduced the dynamic team of artist/facilitators, resource persons and Senegalese hosts, and welcomed the diverse participants from 31 countries. She set the scene, expressing hope that the conference will provide clarity and understanding of the history and dimensions of African food systems, show the implication of their erosion by the industrial food system, and develop strategies to counter it. Mariann noted that we live in challenging times. Africa has been presented with the poster image of a continent teeming with hungry, malnourished and poverty stricken people. Using this template, the industrial agricultural companies and their collaborating partners have made very determined efforts to take over lands, food systems, introduce their

propriety seeds, pesticides, herbicides, and GMOs into the continent. While agro-chemical and seed corporations are merging, small scale farmers, pastoralists, fisher folk, hunter gathers, consumers, climate defender, CSOs and academics should also work together to amplify our efforts and strengthen our voices. We, the people, not corporations are our best hope for restoring sanity to food and family systems. Solidarity is needed for joint work to stop corporate take over and control in Africa. Mariann concluded her introductory welcome address with a call to action: "We have one Earth. Our future is bound together. We must secure it! Let the Conversation Begin!"

AFSA Coordinator Dr Million Belay also welcomed

participants and introduced the content and structure of the conference. He noted that this conference is an implementation of the decisions made at the conference organized in November 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOAI), IFOAM – Organics International, the African Network for Organic Agriculture (AFRONET) and Mekelle University, Ethiopia. He explained that this 3-day conference on the future of food systems in Africa will promote the complexity,

diversity and nutritional value of African food systems and launch an action plan and declaration for change for better food systems geared towards the general public and policymakers. He explained the rationale for the decision to facilitate the conference through art, with very minimal presentation of papers, as social change is about reworking the ideas and realities of the current society and creating something that can change how people see the world, how they interact, and how they feel.

## FILM LAUNCH



To set the scene, the conference opened with the launch and screening of “[Agroecology for Africa](#)”, an animated short film produced by AFSA. The 4-minute film makes the case for agroecology from an African perspective. It shows in simple terms how transitioning to agroecology has a huge potential to meet almost all of the SDGs; to feed Africa’s peoples, to lift those in need out of poverty, to improve the environment, and ensure people have healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.



## BOOK LAUNCH



The conference hosted the launch of a new AFSA publication, “The Real Seed Producers”. This analysis of the role of small-scale farmers in saving Africa’s seed diversity was co-published by GRAIN

and AFSA, together with research partners from Ethiopia, Mali, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The report shines a light on farmer managed seed systems and their place on the continent and reveals that small-scale farmers are the real custodians of seed. The publication is [available for free download here](#).

The launch was celebrated by (from left to right) AFSA Programme Coordinator Bridget Mugambe,

Tidiane Kassé (Chairperson of Fahamu Africa), Cheikh Diop (Advisor to Minister of Livestock and Animal Production), Faydy Dramé (Journalist); Ange David (GRAIN), Sidy Ba (COPAGEN / CNCR).



## KINSHIP MAPS



The conference space centred on a global map marked out on the floor with the seating spread around the map. Participants were invited to place shells on the map to first mark where they come from. Then a second invitation for participants to place shells to acknowledge the people that they represent through their work. Participants then returned to place more shells on the spaces carried within the heart, paying tribute to those they represent and the networks within which they work.

This brought forth a lot of dialogue and exchange, joy and inquiry. Mapping creates connection. Physical mapping as a creative tool activates the mind and the body. There were passionate stories shared about where people were coming from, stories of the people they work with and why they do this work. Participants had the opportunity to reflect on the map and describe their place in the map and how it connected to other relationships they shared in their wider kinship. It also created a powerful image of unity and solidarity, for participants to visualize just how big their food sovereignty network/family actually is.



## OFFICIAL OPENING



Following the enthusiastic welcome and introduction to the event by AFSA Chairperson Mariann Basse-Orowuje, and AFSA Coordinator Dr Million Belay, the conference was officially opened by the Guest of Honour, Monsieur Cheikh Diop, the Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Livestock and Animal Production. M. Diop acknowledged that food systems are a global and immediate priority in the context of climate change, health and resilience.

M. Diop was pleased that AFSA has chosen Senegal to organize the conference and wished us every success. He encouraged



the delegates from the various countries present to do their utmost to offer sustainable solutions for food and nutrition while strengthening the productive bases of our lands.



Also officiating was Mr. Fallou Dieye, Agricultural Advisor to the Prime Minister, seen here being interviewed by the press.



## Keynote Address:

### Mariama Sonko – African Cultural Food Systems



Mariama Sonko, Chair of the international movement We Are the Solution, gave the first keynote address.

Mariama broke down African Food Systems into their component key elements: production, distribution and consumption. She explained that food production is dependent upon farmers' access to land, soil fertility management, seed selection based on traditional criteria, seed multiplication, and healthy practices such as crop rotation. In pastoral systems communities are challenged by climate change and inadequate policies. Food distribution requires postharvest care and transformation to protect against deterioration and loss of nutrition, safe transport and storage, with effective packaging, labelling and marketing to enable households to acquire healthy food.

Mariama noted that local preparation and recipes in West Africa are rooted in local customs and traditions,

with ingredients such as local rice, fonio, millet, sorghum, beans, root vegetables such as yam, taro, sweet potato and manioc.

She noted that West African culinary techniques are changing. In the past, people ate much less meat and used natural oils, nowadays, the diet is much heavier in meat, salt and fat. These changes in our eating habits have given rise to several pathologies that were previously

Mariama Sonko fights for the human and socio-economic rights of women and youth. Mariama's vision is One Africa where, in solidarity, the peasants are involved in decision-making, and cultivate, process, consume and sell the products of African family farming while preserving the environment.

We Are The Solution is a network of 800 Rural Women's Associations in seven countries of West Africa.

unknown in our traditional societies. She recommended that, given the gravity of the food and nutritional situation, it is urgent to develop strategies to revive old culinary practices by promoting local products, and that schools could raise children's awareness.

She asserted that there will be no sustainable development without a profound transformation of food systems. Food systems are not only essential for achieving the second SDG (Zero Hunger), they also concern the entire 2030 sustainable development agenda. With agriculture as the world's largest employer,

investment in this sector is considered twice as effective in reducing poverty as in any other area. Agricultural practices are closely linked to ecosystem health, natural resource renewal and diversity, and climate change. Finally, food insecurity and rural poverty are often the root causes of political instability, conflict and migration. Thus a complete transformation of food systems is required. We must move in the direction of facilitating access to and availability of the products we produce in our communities. We must draw inspiration from the organization of traditional food systems to see how to improve our current food systems.

## TRANSFORMING THE FOOD SYSTEM THROUGH SCULPTURE

For this reflection process, participants were firstly each presented with a lump of clay, as a vehicle for expressing their contemplation on the topic given. Participants were invited to play with the clay first, to knead and explore how it feels in the hands. The participants were then invited to continue working the clay, and to allow it to be shaped intuitively in their hands into a heart response.



At first there was the usual groaning about having to "create" a piece. However, delegates soon recognized the openness of the invitation. Excitement rose as they were invited to share the story of their sculpture in

groups, and the few that spoke into plenary were clearly impressed by how they had transformed the clay into a symbol of their thoughts and feelings.



## BURNING QUESTIONS



This session was an extension of the clay activity, where delegates were asked to listen out for any burning questions contained within the sculpture. The critical need was for the question to be big and audacious, even profound in its simplicity. Delegates were invited to jot their burning question down on a piece of paper, and keep it safe. We then reconvened around a fire at

the beach in the evening, with drummers. As we stood clapping hands to the drumming and singing, each delegate came forward one by one to read their burning question, which was then ritually burned in the fire. The day ended on a high, with every individual having been seen and heard. The conference had landed.

## Here are Some of the Burning Questions

How can we effectively raise consciousness of all farmers and consumers around agroecology and food sovereignty in Africa?

Who is responsible for changing our African food system and is not here to solve the problem?

How can we counter the power of large agribusiness that is holding us back from small-scale food systems?

How can we consume locally if the right to own land is denied to women?

How can we conserve our good food systems and pass them onto the next generation with new lenses?

What are the core messages that our food system movements need to win, and how can the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in the USA and AFSA work together to progress this?

How can men and women transform gender roles while preserving value of our communities?

Are men ready to help women in sustaining food systems that protect and promote organic agriculture?

How do we strengthen and sustain our unity to present a unified front to the world to say "this is what Africa needs"?

How do we raise a new generation of young people that will promote the fight for food sovereignty?

How can we make more people do the great work of our time?

What is my responsibility, what is your responsibility, what is our responsibility to make a sustainable food system in Africa?

What roles can food systems activists in the USA play to support the decolonization and solidarity of seed and African food systems?

How can we connect the different struggles that exist across Africa?

How can we protect rural women from the industrial food system?

How can we amplify agroecology within Africa with one voice?

How can we make sure African youth will be proud of their land, their roots, and their food and never have to take boats across the sea from which some will never return?

How can we as individuals from so many countries work towards a borderless socio-ecological transformation?

How do we culturally keep united in order to realize indigenous food production and soil conservation?

How can we obtain sufficient policies for food security?

Are we ready to go back to our roots in order to progress?

What are our core messages for food sovereignty?

How best can we support farmers to establish indigenous organic seed banks to fight GMOs?

As we go deeper into climate change, how and where should we dwell?

How can we get rid of the colonial regime and further acknowledge the ways of Africa?

How can men and women transform our gender roles while protecting our communities?



# DAY TWO

Day two began with a song to gather and centre the focus for the morning.

*Koura,  
Koura, Mbissa yaa diongoma  
Koura mbissa yaa matene'ilow*

This Senegalese song is a very old one with a special message and purpose. For those born before the advent of television or radio the melody of the song was used as a way to convey the message that there was important news to be shared. It was an invitation for those present to connect to Senegal through the music that is so much a part of its culture.

## Keynote Address:

### Heila Lotz-Sisitka - Agroecology, Learning and Agency



Author of 160 publications, Distinguished Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka is the Chair of Global Change and Social Learning Systems at Rhodes University, South Africa. The current focus of her research is transformative social learning and green skills learning pathways in areas of biodiversity, the water food nexus, climate change, social and environmental justice, and just sustainability transitions.

Heila explained that Climate change is actually about Social change. As people are producing the problems, so people can also produce the alternatives. Instead of just seeing it as a technical problem, we can see it as a social opportunity, to start new things in our societies.

Heila presented seven key 'A' themes:

**Africa Unite:** How do we create a united front? We need to unite and amplify the alliances.

**Agroecology and Diversity:** Africa is diverse, language, culture, place. An incredible richness.

**Agroecology and Equity:** How does agroecology help us make our communities more equitable.



**Activism:** We need to amplify activism for seed and food sovereignty.

**Activity and Culture:** The collective nature of food production. To transform society, you need to change activity.

**Art of Learning:** How do we get out of the Monocultures of the Mind? Africa is a youthful continent. We will have half the world's children by 2100. We need to build alliances at every level of education to ensure transformative learning for the next generation; alliances with schools, agricultural colleges and universities, the teachers, curriculum advisors, principals, lecturers. We need to give our children a chance.

**Agency to Transgress:** To crossover, to move into something new, away from the hamburger culture, the Me Me Me culture, to develop a new narrative. To know that the lock-ins (identified by IPES Food in From

Uniformity to Diversity, 2016) that keep the industrial food system in place can be entry points for change.

Let us Amplify African Alliances! to build a flourishing future for ourselves and future generations.



## Keynote Address:

### Pat Mooney – Beyond Policy



Founder of the ETC Group, Pat Mooney received The Right Livelihood Award (the “Alternative Nobel Prize”) in 1985. The author of several books on the politics of biotechnology and biodiversity, Pat Mooney is widely regarded as an authority on issues of global governance, corporate concentration, and intellectual property monopoly.

Pat’s keynote address opened with a provocative burning question, “Will we see the next fire? Will we see the fires of hope and the flames of destruction that are ahead of us, that are not easy to identify now.”

Pat’s address had two aims: one, trying to scare us about what’s next, and two, trying to suggest some of the pathways to get past the bad fires that are coming, and light some of the good fires along the way.

Policy is easy. We know what we want and what policies should look like. We have the practices. What we need are the pathways to get to the point where the policies are working for us, where the policies are made by the people. It’s not only the policies we have to change; we have to change who is making the policies.

Pat spoke at length about the danger of Big Data, particularly in terms of power and control. The Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI), the largest commercial gene bank in the world, is creating the largest genomic seed record that exists. There is a ‘dematerialisation’ of seed – as if we don’t need seed, we only need the digital map of germplasm, and we can download all the information from the cloud. In this brave new world, peasant knowledge is expendable.

It is the time of the data revolution and it is data, not seed, that controls farming. Cargill today is listening to fish feeding in the North Pacific and using the data to calculate the size of the catch, informing its investments around the world and defining global market prices. “They have the capacity to translate the sound of the

ocean in the North Pacific into the sound of money in Chicago.”

Pat’s prediction is that we will see another round of mergers in the next 3-5 years, whereby the major farm machinery companies will take over all of the agricultural inputs: seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, irrigation equipment. John Deere, the world’s largest farm machinery company, uses the machinery to compile a global database of global field inputs, field data conditions and yields. This immense database is very valuable to the industrialization of the food system, and can work at any scale, on both large and small farms. The new machinery can work on a field of hundreds of hectares, then split into smaller units to go into a small field, then re-aggregate afterwards. That is happening now. That means that peasants are a target, small fishers are a target, because they can manage the data to control them.

It may seem daunting to acknowledge the immensity of this but civil society does have much going for it, as [Pat describes in this short YouTube video](#):

- x We use money and resources more efficiently than anyone else.
- x We have time on our side. We don’t give up. We are here for the long haul.
- x Diversity – can build movements on multiple fronts, outflanking and sharing together.
- x We are right! We are doing the right thing.

Pat warned delegates that the struggle is a long one. “We don’t need a **slow** food movement nearly so much as we need a **long** food movement. We need to think long term. We need to develop the pathways to get to where we want to be. If we want to change global policy, or break up the corporations, we can, but it’s a long job, a 10 or 20-year job.”

## Keynote Address:

### Nnimmo Bassey – Urban Food Systems



A Nigerian environmentalist activist, architect, author and poet, Nnimmo Bassey is director of the ecological think-tank Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF). Formerly chair of Friends of the Earth International, in 2010 he was named co-winner of the Right Livelihood Award –the Alternative Nobel Prize– for opposing the practices of multinational corporations in his country and the environmental devastation they leave behind.

Nnimmo reflected on some of the profound messages expressed in the conference. ‘He who controls the seed controls the food’ (and now we see that they also control the Data), and ‘Rural food production is dictated by urban food needs’. The system itself does not support family farmers, it does not support us.

It is very important for AFSA to step up to work with mass movements to ensure that we achieve System Change. Nnimmo recited a poem he had written for the conference, entitled “We Can Plant a Seed.” This is also available as a [short YouTube video](#).

## We Can Plant a Seed

Way back yesterday  
 In the glow of night-time fires  
 We sat around steamy bowls  
 Carving up mounds of foo foo  
 Then dipping our hands in hot soups  
 Mouths long open awaiting the feast  
 With every bite our tongues knew the source  
 Jolly jolly bellies, happy happy hearts  
 We danced our way through the night.  
 These days we line up at the shops  
 Awaiting junk foods and maybe small chops  
 Bright coloured walls and blinding lights  
 We take selfies as we down deadly sodas  
 With loud music, we munch and munch  
 But hear no crunch from our plastic foods.  
 We can plant a seed  
 And not eat poison

These days we go to the farm  
 It could also be the harvests next to our homes  
 Straight bananas  
 Squared up squash  
 Cassava tubers that never ferment  
 Genetic engineers target our staple crops  
 Especially ones grown by women  
 With mythic tales they sell lies  
 Crops kill pests and innocent species  
 Like their ancestors sold beads, mirrors and whiskies  
 We are to be excited eating pesticides  
 And washed down with water  
 Packed in plastics and served like drugs.  
 We can plant a seed  
 And not eat poison

We live in the city  
 Streets blocked with cars  
 Every piece of land thoroughly cementified  
 The earth denied rain from the sky  
 You want some water?  
 Toxic drains send a deluge  
 We want some corn?  
 Go to the shop  
 You want some vegetables?  
 Go to the shop  
 Your farm between apartment blocks declared illegal  
 "This food is safe,"  
 That's what they say  
 Seeds by Monsanto, Syngenta, Dupont and BGI China  
 On the back of imperial neo-colonial agencies  
 But they cannot even say what they sell  
 All they yell is,  
 "Shut up and eat! A hungry man has no choice."  
 Genetically engineered food

Isolated from weeds with glyphosate.  
 We can plant a seed  
 And not eat poison

All around us seeds are sprouting  
 Along the rivers and streams through our cities  
 Every city block long abandoned  
 Day and night we sow the seeds  
 We labour all day to bring yet nothing to eat  
 Officials feed fat on our labours  
 Then loosen their belts  
 Call the bulldozers  
 Pull down our dreams  
 Level our fields  
 Destroy our homes.  
 "This urban space isn't for rats  
 Go back to the village unwanted migrants."  
 Our foods are imported, packaged  
 Some even come as aid.  
 We can plant a seed  
 And not eat poison

The food we eat must not eat us  
 Mother Earth warns: We are all her children  
 The plants, the birds, the beasts  
 The worms, the bees, the butterflies  
 In the soil and above the soil  
 On the seas and beneath the seas  
 Trillions of our relatives call to us  
 Globalize the struggle!  
 Globalize hope!  
 Globalize the people!  
 Not transnational corporations.  
 We can plant a seed  
 And not eat poison

Resilience  
 Solidarity  
 Hope  
 Power  
 Life  
 All are in the seed.  
 And if we care, we can touch the soil  
 In the village and in the city  
 We can plant a seed  
 We can water a plant  
 We can nurture life  
 We can raise a goat, fish  
 We can connect to the soil  
 And allow Mother Earth to feed us all.  
 We can plant a seed  
 And not eat poison

# A STORY OF SALT – ZAYAAN KHAN



Zayaan Khan told a story to take the participants to lunch where mushroom salt was waiting for the participants to add to their meals. Her story was inspired by Mariama Sonko's description of the importance of agro-processing. The product Zayaan made was fragrant salt prepared with mushrooms and refined into powder.

When we speak of Food Sovereignty, we mostly speak of farmers yet it is important to highlight the role of fishers,

foresters, the hunters, the pastoralists, the gatherers, the processors who develop these raw products. One area I wish to highlight is to the salt harvesters as an important part of food production.

Salt is found across the world, from the oceans to the deposits found within mountains, desert pans and hot springs that appear in rivers. Salt is so familiar that it is almost forgotten, so available that it is almost invisible. Salt is an ultimate contradiction, fully soluble in water as in our global oceans, yet presents itself as a solid as in a crystal or rock, constantly morphing and corroding but also a fundamental in food preservation. Salt has a unique sense of time, able to stretch and store time.

It connects us to the sacred, the mythic and those who have passed on to the realm of ancestors. Salt is imperative in understanding alchemical processes, and at the same time salt has created war, hierarchy and economy. Salt has been used to declare a sense of loyalty yet also signifies rebellion.

*Finally, as the saying goes, "The cure for anything is saltwater: sweat, tears or the sea."*

# Eleven Parliaments

An introductory session was held to identify what we mean by 'parliaments' and participants were encouraged to share words that mean something like 'parliament' in their home languages. Examples were Daara in Wolof, Baarlamaanka in Somali and igbimx-ijxba in Yoruba.

The 'Parliaments' were developed out of the [burning questions](#) as a means to create discussion around the most significant and concerning issues. Eleven key topics or constituencies were identified, and each one became the subject of a 'parliament of knowledge' as participants self selected into the group they wished to join. Each parliament group set about discussing their topic according to questions set by the keynote speakers:

- 1) What activities need to change, and what learning do we need in order to create change?
- 2) What alliances do we need to develop?
- 3) What is our long-term pathway in each of our assemblies? What is our 20-30-year plan?

The groups were given time to organize their processes and thoughts around their chosen topics and report back through performance. The results yielded much learning. Delegates were exposed to new, rich content about the works of their colleagues in different parliamentary groupings. There was a spirit of collaborative, solution-oriented interest, with many calls to action emerging.

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## PARLIAMENT 1: FARMERS AND PASTORALISTS

The group representing farmers and pastoralists presented a poem they had written, inspired by the late Bob Marley, entitled "Africa Unite!"

Africa Unite! Africa Unite!  
Farmers Unite! Farmers Unite!  
Pastoralists Unite! Pastoralists Unite!  
Farmers and Pastoralists Unite! Pastoralist and  
Farmers Unite!

Let us create diversity for survival,  
Let us secure our forestry, our crops, our  
livestock;  
Africa Unite!

Let us unite for we are each other's keeper;  
Africa Unite!

Let's unite by integrating Traditional and  
Indigenous Knowledge,

Revisiting the Past to inform the Future.  
Africa Unite!

Let's unite by passing on our Knowledge to  
young generations!  
Farmers and Pastoralists unite to secure your  
lands and resource tenure!  
Africa Unite!

Our women are the foundation of the  
realization of these dreams and aspirations.  
We can do all these through our own media  
and Information systems!  
Africa Unite!

Yes, we can feed the world!  
Yes, Africa can feed the world!  
Africa Unite!



Supporting farmers and pastoralists should be centred on reforms in the education systems, as follows: Integration of Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge. Acknowledging the past knowhow. Embrace production diversity in modern development. Targeting youth, Co-existence, Land tenure security, Integration of systems (Forestry, crops and livestock).

They created a Long-Term Pathway as follows:

1. Develop our own learning centres and curriculums
2. Develop our own media and information systems and use of mainstream media
3. Going back to basics - family responsibility
4. Use our own good and best practice; identify the good sustainable pathways
5. Preservation of genetic resources

## PARLIAMENT 2: FISHER FOLK

Fish can provide all of our food needs, because they are very rich in all the minerals and elements that we need. But the survival of our fish is threatened. The fish are a common resource, so we must solve the problems together. We are allied with others in our struggle against agribusiness, because we are fighting the same fight, and together we must win.

The group presented a poem they had written.

People use bad practices to fish: banned nets, explosives, pesticides.

Oh! Large industrial fishing boats!

Leave our fish so we can live and support our children.

There are no fish in the water and yet we have to survive!

Oh! As if all this were not enough, climate change has made everything worse:

It kills our fishermen, destroys our equipment,

kills fish, creates coastal erosion,  
Silt up rivers and streams, and finally prevents fish from reproducing.  
There are no fish in the water and yet we have to survive!

Ah brave women of artisanal fishing. They're so active.

They fish from canoes, process fish and sell them, cook good food for the family.

In addition, they educate our children, they take care of the health of the family.

And yet no one knows how many of them are in this sector in Africa.

There are no fish in the water and yet we have to survive!

Hey! You young people why don't you stay and fish?

Why are you risking your life to go far away?

There are no fish in the water and yet we have to survive!

## PARLIAMENT 3: RURAL WOMEN AND THEIR ALLIES

We are the women. This is the struggle. We keep on fighting for our rights

This is the song that the Parliament of Rural Women and their allies sang as they made their way to the centre of the stage, rhythmically bending and raising, hoeing the land and planting seeds with each movement. On arrival, they shared the following poem:

*I am a rural woman  
All burdens are on me  
Walking long distances  
There is a river for me to cross  
I cry for help, help, help but no response  
On my way I learnt a lot. Good and Bad  
And decided to seek solidarity, unity, and  
interdependence  
To carry the burden to the other side of the river*

*Let us bring solidarity, man and woman, boys and girls,  
Young and elders, urban and rural, north south east and west  
Let's work together, for political, social, cultural  
And economic autonomy of rural women.  
Better land for all. Better land for all.*

The group then shared indigenous seeds with the participants. "We are strengthening our relationship with all of you by sharing our indigenous seeds."

Here are some of the key points that they felt were important rallying points for rural women:

1. Learn and deepen our traditional systems
2. Get more knowledge about our soils
3. Educate our children on our traditional knowledge and culture beyond the informal - create a curriculum system that includes cooking and food production focusing on diet.
4. Technical knowledge on sustainable production, post-harvest storage, process and market.
5. Educate on our norms and rights to food
6. Focus on nutritional values
7. Educate on autonomy and women leadership

Two delegates from DR Congo shared a poem, written by a young Congolese woman activist working for the cause of rural women and young women, whom she helps to become independent and to take up agroecology.

## RURAL WOMEN

*I love them! I love them!  
They have a heart of gold  
Every morning they meet the dawn!  
Whether it's windy or rainy, they face all the conditions!  
Even under the blazing sun they are out there!  
Sometimes close to death*

*To give food to our bodies!  
Passionate about plants,  
With them Nature agrees!*

*They work the land with a lot of effort!  
Hoe in their hand, they never lose their way!  
They are focused on what brings them joy and comfort!*

*They don't have the best comfort.  
Vulnerability - they broke the record!  
They are marginalized on all sides,  
Never mind their rights or the sustainable development goals!*

*They sometimes see their crops destroyed by animals  
Climate change is degrading the state of their fields  
Often their products rot due to lack of transport  
Especially in a country where there is little thought of exporting!  
Despite this, they rarely feel sorry for themselves!  
Every day they are in their fields to achieve the best  
Always smiling and with a strong morale  
That's why I love them!*

*Rural women are real treasures  
Their work is a noble contribution!  
They need resources, our support  
For them to improve their living conditions  
May the chapter of hunger be closed,  
May our food security take off!*

*Rural women  
I love them  
Over and over again!*

-Nadège MITSHINDU BOPE

## PARLIAMENT 4: WHAT ABOUT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE?

We must recognize that technology is a tool, not a threat, but recognize that information is now received “as if it is true”. It influences a monoculture of the mind and culture - through media and education, that “youth thinking is deliberately shaped”. We must encourage and support youth to “attach at the roots” and grow where they need. The ‘urban/rural’ context is dangerous as it creates a binary which does not exist. This is much more connected and fluid than we give credit. We must nurture this new environment we find ourselves in.

### Opportunities:

- Education - learning is at the core and we must open up work experience! As much as learning is at the core, so is unlearning.
- Existing youth groups - for youth by youth. We recognize that youth are powerful and energetic. We need political governance to include youth.

- Build Alliances across disciplines, e.g. young producers and agriculture students

### The River Between

*As the river gives opportunity to the soil,  
So the youth connect the past and the future.*

*As the rapids in the river, mighty in their wake,*

*Untapped youth energy dissipates,  
Abandoned in the field like a rake.*

*Give us opportunities to prove our potency,*

*Lest we cross uncertain oceans*

*As the river to the sea*

*We constantly learn,*

*We must constantly unlearn,*

*And new we become*

*With the animals, the soils, the rains that nurture us.*

## PARLIAMENT 5: LAND RIGHTS AND INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

Land is everything to us. Land is our mother. Everything is land. Agroecology is land. Right to food is land. Are we going to leave our communities at the mercy of the corporates, grabbing our land? Land is our mother and we have rights. We need it for our existence. Farmers, pastoralists, fishers need rights to land. Our laws are not right. We need alliances with our leaders, to take up their responsibilities to care for community land rights.

### Get up, stand up, stand up for our rights.

We need to:

1. Assess land laws, policies, institutions, programmes, and their impact on community land rights
2. Inculcate community land rights education in our learning curriculum and traditional land governance system
3. Actively engage with regional bodies and governments
4. Popularize the community land rights narrative and influence policy change at national level
5. Document good practices to influence policy change
6. Scale up good practices domesticated to African context
7. Build information sharing platforms (knowledge centres) on themes: Land Rights, Agroecology, Climate Change
8. Strengthen and sustain social movements at community, national and regional level (global)
9. Regional trade fair to promote farm products and land rights as a factor of production
10. Actively involve CSO Alliances in AU/continental policy meetings

## PARLIAMENT 6: RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION

We, the people, have the power to change!

We must be ready to take the risk! To walk the walk! Continued intergenerational learning. Research towards convincing narratives. Practical evidence of agroecology as an alternative solution and data, valuation and practical cases such as is being done by AFSA. Move from

confrontational opposition to constructive engagement. Create strong alliances between and amongst farmers, consumers, academia, faith groups and business. Revitalize consumer organizations to stand up and say NO to false solutions.

## PARLIAMENT 7: HEALTHY SOIL

The Soil Parliament began with a rap song ([view on AFSA's YouTube Channel](#)).

*I am the soil  
Take care of me  
So I won't boil  
I will take care of all  
Forget the policy and the politics  
Focus on markets and the capital  
For only they have the power  
To put on me - destructive soil.*

They recognized Capitalism as the Big Problem, and the market, policy, politics, trade, money and power as the main elements of capitalism. The solution was:

- African and local knowledge: collect, collate, create an inventory and share

- Leverage the SDGs framework to promote agroecology for sustainable development
- Educate/Advocate/Explain/Lobby

They compared sick and healthy soils:

Sick soils link to Money, Climate Change, Poor economy, Monoculture regarding to colonization, Human illnesses such as cancers.

Healthy Soils are about Healthy climate and biodiversity, Healthy humans, producers, consumers and markets, Healthy cultures, Young people as leaders, African indigenous culture and seed diversity, Healthy economy "People, Planet, Profits", "Leaving no one behind"

## PARLIAMENT 8: SEEDS AND SEED CULTURES

We need to change the mind-sets of our policy makers. We do not want them to give us poison. We want them to understand the whole issue of farmer managed seed systems. And to understand that farmers are the knowledgeable people, and that we need that knowledge, with farmers at the forefront of research. We need legal recognition of the seeds used by farmers, research centres for indigenous seeds, community indigenous seed banks, participation by smallholder farmers in seed policy making process, and documentation of best practices of FMSS.

*Seed is our identity, Seed is shared,  
Seed is connectedness,  
Seed is spiritual, Seed is life.  
Plant the seed and do not eat poison!*

## PARLIAMENT 9: SOLIDARITY ACROSS CONTINENTS

The group created a performance without words, a mime about lifting a basket laden with treasures of local seeds and foods. Every member tried individually to lift it, but it was too heavy for each one. The final member approached and encouraged everyone to work together, not separately. United as one they lifted the basket easily. A simple concept with a huge message: Alone we cannot; Together we can.

People Power, People Power Now!

The performance ended with everyone in the room linked together in one enormous human chain.

The critical ideas generated in this parliament included:

- There is a need to decolonize the African mind, ending shame and valuing what we have.
- Lifting up our leaders and modelling other forms of leadership, re-defining leadership. Celebrating good leaders as models.
- Advancing accountable governance around environment and human rights.

- Complementing our different capacities.
- Empowering youth and women.
- Bringing people together. Working together to hold accountable corporations based in the US and Europe in order to prevent them from imposing their agendas.

And provided some key thoughts on the notion and benefits of solidarity

Solidarity is information sharing, Knowledge exchange, Building power to shift narratives, Media, Research, Education, Creative co-learning, Complementary capacity, Strengthening our agencies, achieving Critical mass, Lifting up our leaders, Advancing accountable and good governance that centres on people and environment.

*Solidarity is reaching out  
Into the bright unknown of unity  
Pouring power to peoples agency  
To seed the great work of our time.*

*Africa United!*

## PARLIAMENT 10: INDIGENOUS AGROECOLOGY

This group took the Parliament theme to its logical conclusion by convening a mock session of the 'Parliament of the Republic of Indigenous Peoples and Agroecology'. The 'Speaker of the Parliament' (wearing a ceremonial hat) invited the 'Parliamentary Secretary' to read the 'Official Memorandum' and called for its formal endorsement.

*Agroecology feeds the world  
As the corporations pollute the air  
Together farmers and researchers  
A heritage that provides meaning to our well-being.*

*Promote agroecology across Africa  
To restore and revive our cultural practices  
To close our spaces before they make us lose our faces.*

*Africa unite to illuminate the world  
Agroecology to feed the world  
To protect the environment and health.  
Agroecology will feed our future  
It is the hallmark of our healthy economy  
So salute Agroecology*

*But, the question remains the same  
Who is ready to walk with us in this noble course?*

What type of learning do we need?

- How to inspire young people - make it cool or profitable?
- Elders - intergenerational learning (stories, songs)
- It must be interesting

- Add technology/commercialize value addition
- Adaptation of traditional indigenous knowledge
- There is interest in reviving what has been lost
- Collective values - cultural, spiritual, economic
- Change curriculum from top to bottom
- AFSA to send recommendation to ECOWAS and AU for an African research institution
- National research institutions should integrate

indigenous agroecology, to convey information to the public and to work with farmers, learn from and work with the farmers?

Recommendation 1: AFSA establishes an African Indigenous Agroecology Network which builds upon, brings together and amplifies existing research

Recommendation 2: Package agroecology as a reliable natural food system that feeds the planet and protects the environment.

## PARLIAMENT 11: ENGAGING POWER

This group addressed the issue of engaging with the powerful – the corporations, and the governments that support them. They offered a manifesto for change.

### Manifesto

*Food, not poison.  
Food, not poison  
What we eat should not eat us  
Food is sacred  
Food is our right  
Protect our local seeds  
Protect our soils  
Protect our lands  
People power rising  
Alliances and partnerships thriving  
Corporate power dissolving  
United in our struggle for food sovereignty.*

The key messages this parliament wanted to share with the world were:

- We have to form and strengthen alliances.
- There should be a tax on “bad food”, Public Procurement - e.g. government buying “good food”, and developing regulations;
- Building a “business case” for agroecology, a socio-economic case that counters the ‘story’ of agri-business/TNC’s;
- Raising a new generation of social media influencers;
- We must have power analysis at multiple levels in each country to identify where we have influence (on multinationals, governments, elites);
- Real costing, including externalities,
- CSO’s strengthening each other
- Focussing on one campaign.

## REFLECTION

Every single parliament group that came up was challenged to share the core of what they had been discussing through the use of performance based art. What emerged was a space in which we radically shifted the dynamics around how we share knowledge with each other. The network as a whole found ways to cheer each other on and celebrate each other whether on stage or offstage in ways that opened up connections that helped us reflect on the power of each parliament and what they had to say.

What emerged in this session was a feeling around what the spirit of the network actually feels like. We learnt and sang songs and created dramas together in ways that created a visceral experience of the solidarity that we always speak so much of. Most of all the generosity and humour that was evoked was so much fun. It felt like we found a way to get to know each other, our personalities, concerns and cares in a way that got closer to the soul of what AFSA is.



# DAY THREE

## Keynote Address:

### Gertrude Pswarayi-Jabson - The Dance of Life



Gertrude Pswarayi-Jabson is the Country Coordinator of PELUM Zimbabwe and Coordinator of the Zimbabwe Seed Sovereignty Programme. She is the winner of the 2011 Kurt Schork International Journalism award and founder of an organisation working to advance women and communication rights in Zimbabwe. Currently, she is studying Earth Jurisprudence, an emerging field of law that encompasses both environmental and legal practice.

I see each of the people in this place as a custodian of life. The work that we are called to do in this dance of life is not just a job but also a responsibility that each being in this place has.

So I pose a question: Are you participating in the dance of life?

Each action you take has a ripple effect on the entire ecosystem. Our ancestors understood this. They observed, listened and learned the language of many beings that surrounded them. They understood the voices of birds, animals, insects and even rain. They observed the sun, moon, and stars to understand the rhythm as the seasons changed. Our ancestors hunted and gathered only what they needed. They developed a way of life that helped to sustain nature. They were participating in the dance of life. And they were happy. Mother Earth was happy. There was no climate

change debate; Sustainable Development Goals were unnecessary because our ancestors knew that if they took care of Mother Earth, she in turn would take care of them.

Something changed. Men became greedy. Men created laws that only benefit mankind. Men started to want to control, not to participate. Wilderness was unacceptable. Wild beings had to be tamed. Indigenous people who lived in harmony with nature were seen as wild and savages to be tamed. They asked, "How can we 'save' these savages? Let us create laws, and bring certain beliefs that undermine the old ways," they said.

Man is now disconnected from the dance of life. We abandoned the Wild Law, and we took a new form of law. Today, we are battling so many laws that try to control nature in order to promote human interests.

But there is only one law that works, the Wild Law. It connects us to who we are, to our deeper wisdom, to what makes us human. When we get connected to this Wild Law, we are able to use all ways of knowing to make sound decisions, to create a movement that is more than just NGO work—a spiritual movement. When we participate in the dance of life we are strong in our practice, we carry a lot of weight because there are many beings who will support us. We begin to live more authentic lives. We start to walk the talk!

One way that we can start to participate in this dance called life is to change our language by shifting the way we name things. There is power in naming. Language is powerful. An example: If we continue to describe nature

as ‘resources’ we will treat soil and seeds as resources to be used to benefit Men, but if we see life in everything we begin to respect all elements of life. So when we talk about soil, water, or trees (not resources) we talk about other forms of life that need to be respected.

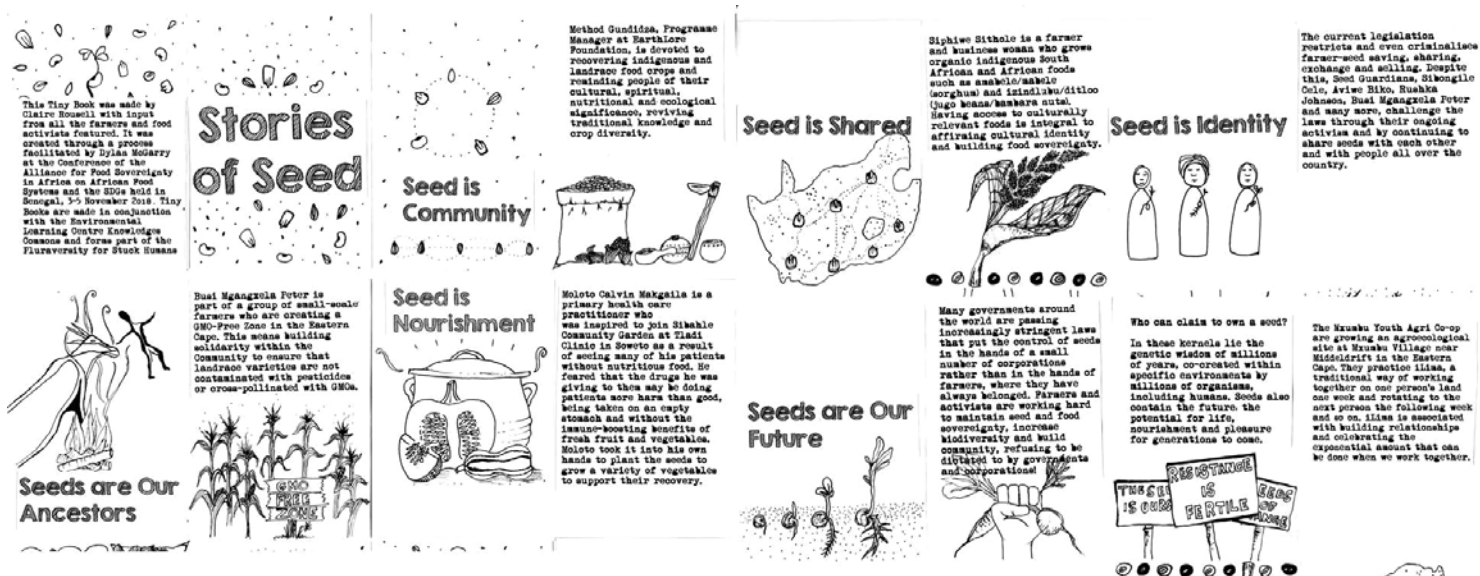
Another way we can shift the way we think and behave is to strengthen our practices when we participate in the dance of life. No movement is strong if the practitioners are weak. We will remain resilient if we deepen our practices, and connect with our authentic selves. That part of us knows how to live in harmony with nature. Each person brings a gift to the movement. When we honour that gift, the movement will grow.

## THE TINY BOOK PROCESS

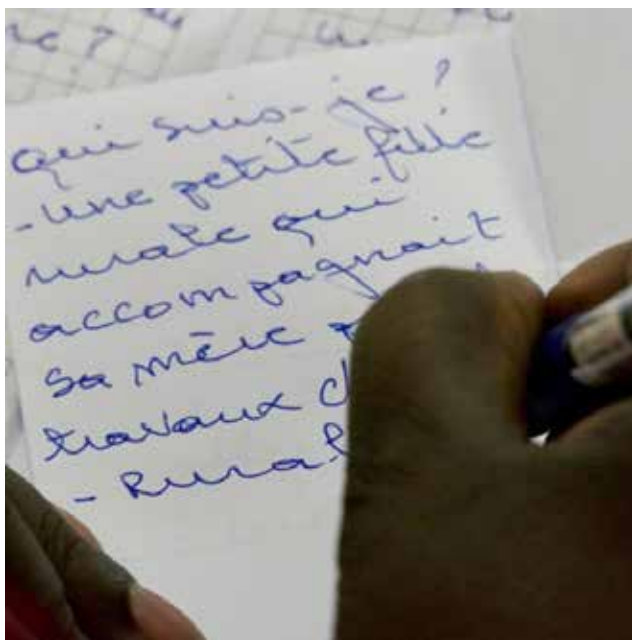
The [Tiny book project](#) aims to democratize knowledge, and open up new ways of being and doing in the world, that are accessible to everyone. Participants were given small A7 booklets (16 pages) that are made out of a single piece of A4 paper - essentially a pocket-sized booklet. Participants were then given a five-minute meditation to reflect on a single idea that had emerged for them from the conference and to capture it in their tiny books - they could write story, free-write, create a

poem, illustrate a fictional tale. Participants were given 40 min to sketch something out in their tiny books.

A few people volunteered to read from their tiny books: one, a tiny book on trees and their purpose in society, another was a manifesto for rural women and their struggle in establishing seed and food sovereignty in Africa.



Tiny books are printed on both sides and can be folded into a 16 page A7 pocket sized book.



## THEMATIC WORKING GROUP DISTILLATIONS

In the afternoon, the conference focused on the five thematic areas: Urban food systems, Climate change and soil, Policy change, the Future of food systems in an increasingly complex world, and African cultural food systems. Five breakout groups were asked to reflect on

the conference proceedings as well as experiences from their own regional work. From these discussions each group was asked to generate five key insights. Their responses are presented below.

## 1. URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS

### Aspiration

Food and procuring food is seen as “trendy” and chic. Marketing aims at perception of social status, directly affecting individual choices. Also the idea that “imported is better.” Indigenous and traditional foods are quickly being forgotten.

### Perception

The migration of youth from rural to urban, moving away from knowledge of the land.

### Accessibility

Understanding the context of land within an urban environment, and landlessness. Urban land is often polluted and within areas of high metal deposits or previous dumping grounds. Access to clean water is often not possible, or it is municipal water which is processed and costly. How do we understand agroecology productivity within this urban context?

### Education

Pollution is often hidden when decomposed and the necessity to check soils is paramount. This comes

down to education, as well as sharing and building the knowledge of producing agroecologically within urban settings. Aspiration also affects culture and the way knowledge is lost or abandoned, this aspiration affects children and education is key in conscientizing children to understand what food is.

### Support

Support is key to connect farmers and producers, but also sensitising producers towards good quality for consumers. There is need to create awareness among urban consumers of the dangers lurking in consuming foods grown in soils contaminated with synthetic fertilizers which contain residues of poisonous heavy metals, like lead and arsenic and harmful pesticides, on one hand and on the other, for them to demand for SAFE, diverse and nutrient rich agroecologically grown foods. These healthy foods are often grown (and reared) in the rural areas, by poor peasant farmers...this will trigger a “win-win” outcome by creating a “re-connection” between urban consumers and rural producers.

## 2. FOOD SYSTEMS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOIL

Seven critical action points were proposed:

1. Advocate for Climate Justice especially for those such as small scale farmers and the rural poor in Least Developed countries, who contribute the least to climate change but are most affected.
2. Promote Agroecology as a way to reduce the impacts of climate change by documenting and popularizing agroecology solutions from the ground.
3. Demand an end to the use of fossil fuels, deforestation, and other practices destroying the environment especially with the advancement of big agribusinesses.
4. Support wide adoption of Agroecology in African agriculture with more focus on women producers.
5. Support national adaptation plans. Almost all African countries have committed to developing adaptation plans these need to be supported at national and regional levels.
6. Develop a narrative around sustainable agriculture practices. This should counter big agribusiness concepts such as Climate Smart Agriculture.
7. Analyse the nexus between food, energy and climate change and highlight the centrality of healthy soils, from agroecological regenerative processes, which not only enrich the humus content of the soil, but also increase carbon sequestration from the atmosphere into the soils, through photosynthesis, resulting in both reduction of atmospheric carbon and enrichment of soil microorganisms, which in turn, enrich and restore biodiversity and resultant climate change mitigation.



### 3. BEYOND POLICY CHANGE ON FOOD SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

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It was clear from Pat Mooney's keynote that we had to look beyond the work we were doing, and so the "Policy change on food systems in Africa" discussion, became "Beyond policy change on food systems in Africa." Here the key points that emerged:

AFSA plays an important anticipatory role for its network partners, connecting local and country level actors to important emerging trends and threats. But more is needed and can be done in this arena. Connecting local actors to well-resourced, globally-connected thinkers such as Pat Mooney delivers real value to Network partners. This is because local level organizations, activists and rural people often struggle to stay abreast of the fast moving technology/political landscape. From a strategic perspective this kind of knowledge sharing and coordination is a key opportunity for AFSA to support its members to compete with the large-scale agri-food industry and get ahead of the game. A specific example was given of the need to become more adept in uncovering who the actors are behind long-term AU policies like Agenda 2063 and move towards setting the agenda rather than 'fire fighting'.

It is important to support members to understand the complexities of existing policy frameworks and unpack policy contradictions that exist across country

and regional levels. Supporting actors to keep policy processes transparent and democratic is often more important than trying to develop specific policy inputs and guidelines.

In other cases, there is real value to be had in supporting the development of clear policy frameworks and agendas. In this regard work at a national and Africa Union level is needed - particularly as AU policy around topics such as seed and trade become more influential.

The way that policy processes unfold in different countries differs dramatically across the region. AFSA's strategies for engaging with policy and supporting its member networks should reflect this. In some cases, governments are relatively reliable and transparent whereas in others they are deeply flawed and corrupt. Support local actors to negotiate their specific contexts.

Often governments receive highly sophisticated narratives from private sector interest groups promoting food policies which disadvantage smaller producers and poor consumers. There is a real need for coordinated efforts to counter neo-colonial narratives. In doing so, pulling data and resources from across member networks across countries is important contribution AFSA can make.

### 4. THE FUTURE OF FOOD SYSTEMS IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX WORLD

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The group recognized that complexity arises at all levels of the food system. However, we should also not become paralyzed by complexity but rather distil moments of simplicity in order to be able to take action. One of the important concepts within complexity theory is emergence, and to develop pathways of emergence we need to think carefully about agency and learning, and to support communities with practical ways of engaging with and reflecting on emergent processes.

To not become paralyzed by complexity there is need for systemically oriented actions and practical movement strategies such as supporting communities to develop community food manifestos that can help them chart practical pathways out of the complexity.

The group also discussed the IPES Food System Report

on Agroecology in which eight lock-ins were identified within the food system, such as path dependency, cheap food, measurement of success, narrow narratives, all of which are shaped by systems of power and control. Importantly we emphasized the need to look into the leverage points for unlocking transformative change in the food system and to conceptualize pathways of emergence from these. Critical here was to transform the dominant narrative about food systems.

This led to a recommendation for AFSA to lead engagement and work towards developing a food systems policy for Africa and/or policy guidelines to address fragmentation of policies in the food system. Such a policy initiative should recognize that the food system is complex and involves multiple actors, institutions and interests that would need to be critically

engaged. Going forward, there is need to engage with policy makers, using evidence based advocacy, at international level (UN – FAO, already happening), at regional level (AU-CAADP-NEPAD), sub-regional levels (COMESA, EAC, and other sub-regional blocks) and at national levels to “find space” and accommodation

for agroecology. This is critical as without anchoring policy frameworks, no agroecological strategies can be developed and without defined strategies, no resources, including budgets, for implementation of agroecological activities, can be undertaken.

## 5. REVIVING AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS

Western science gave us tools to help us understand the world, but we do not need to discard other ways of knowing. We need to link the revival of African Food Systems to the health and nutrition discourse and find common ground between science and indigenous knowledge.

AFSA needs to support the documentation of African Food systems through the recording of oral narratives and practices as part of securing indigenous food systems. AFSA should ensure that documentation of indigenous knowledge be documented in local language before translation.

ASFA should prioritize the conservation of African indigenous genetic resources such as seeds and livestock as these are critical for not only addressing SDGs no. 1 (poverty reduction) and no. 2 (hunger reduction) but also for addressing both under-nutrition (malnutrition) and over-nutrition (obesity) and related alarming increase of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) due to nutrient deficiencies.

There is need to revive African rituals and practices as a pathway to the revival of African Food Systems and to leverage these food systems to achieve some of the 17 SDGs.

## IDENTIFYING A CONTINENTAL CAMPAIGN AGENDA

Finally, in small groups, participants discussed seven alternative campaign ideas from which one campaign agenda was chosen. The seven were: Indigenous cultural food systems, Agroecology for climate action, Genetically Modified Organisms, Farmer Managed Seed Systems, Pesticides, Civil Society Participation and Plant Variety Protection (ARIPO/UPOV).

Following discussions and group recommendations the campaign topic was agreed:

AFSA Campaign Agenda for 2019/20: “Promoting Agroecology as a Solution to Climate Change.”

## CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony began with a water ceremony. Participants gathered in a circle to honour the process and their time together, and drank from a calabash filled with water brought from several countries. The process was intended to seal the conference with an experience of togetherness and to meditate on what holds us together in solidarity.

This was followed by an awards ceremony and celebration.







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