



Food Sovereignty in a Globalized Food System

Policy, Power, and Agroecology for Just Transitions

15–16 October 2025



Please join our *Mentimeter* space now—scan the QR or enter the code. We'll use it throughout for polls, rankings, and Q&A

Join at menti.com | use code **2996 1433**

Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

2996 1433



Or use QR code



Anna and Thomas, like every other individual in any local community,

Course Objectives

By the end of this intensive, participants will be able to:

- Understand **the foundations of food sovereignty and distinguish it from food security** and self-sufficiency.
- Diagnose **global food-system imbalances** (value chains, trade dependence, corporate concentration, crisis vulnerability, and access inequalities).
- Analyze the **role of public policies and institutions** (national/EU/international) and their contradictions for local agriculture.
- Explore and assess **sustainable alternatives** (agroecology principles, short supply chains, cooperatives, and civic innovations) and the conditions for scaling.
- **Design territorial food-autonomy strategies** (stakeholder mapping, local levers, governance, and an action plan).
- Work on a development project using a **logical framework**, including ethics, financing, indicators, and risk identification and mitigation.

What is “Food Sovereignty”?

- **La Vía Campesina** (Nyéléni, 2007): “Food sovereignty is the **right of peoples** to healthy and culturally appropriate food - produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and the right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”
- **FAO/UN** usage: FAO recognizes food sovereignty as a **holistic, justice-oriented approach** that goes beyond food security, emphasizing that “control over food systems” should remain with food producers and communities.



But the global COVID-19 pandemic has shown us once again that strong local economies are more resilient to shocks than previously thought.

What is “Food Sovereignty”? — Governmental References (France & Italy)

- France (legal definition, 2025): French law frames “food sovereignty” as maintaining and developing the **Nation’s capacity** to produce, process, and distribute agricultural and food products needed for everyone’s access to healthy food, while supporting **export capacities** contributing to global food security.
- Italy (policy usage, since 2022): The Ministry’s name includes “Food Sovereignty” (MASAF). National decrees operationalize a “**Food Sovereignty Fund**” (2023–2025) to support strategic supply chains and financing—there is no single statutory definition of the concept, but a policy focus on national agri-food capacity.

What is “Food Sovereignty”?

Vandana Shiva

“**Who really feeds the world?** Not industrial agribusiness but **biodiversity, small-scale farmers, seed freedom, and localization.**” Food sovereignty centers living soils, farmer agency, and the commons (seeds/knowledge).

Raj Patel

Food sovereignty means **democratic control** over food systems—challenging corporate concentration and policies that create “the stuffed and the starved.” It reframes hunger as a **power** problem, not a production shortfall.

Jan Douwe van der Ploeg

A **peasant-centered** vision: sovereignty emerges from the **autonomy** of peasant agricultures and their ongoing struggles with “food empires”; rebuilding **room for manoeuvre** in territories and value chains.

DON'T CONFUSE “FOOD SOVEREIGNTY” (NYÉLÉNI) WITH NATIONALIST “SOVEREIGNTISM”

Food Sovereignty (Nyéléni, 2007 — movements)

- People’s **right to define** their food and agriculture systems
- **Ecological** production; **culturally appropriate** diets; **community & producer agency**
- Emphasis on **justice, participation, and commons** (seeds/knowledge)
- Works through **solidarity** across local–global scales

Nationalist “Sovereignty” (state-centric rebranding)

- Narrows to **national self-sufficiency/competitiveness** and identity politics
- Frames “sovereignty” as **state control & market shielding**, often **decoupled** from justice/ecology
- Policy signals: symbolic bans, “tradition protection,” export push labeled as “sovereignty”
- Risks: **co-optation** of movement language, **protectionist drift**, exclusion, erosion of **rights & participation**

Why this distinction matters

- Nyéléni centers **who decides** and **how** (democracy & rights), not only **how much** is produced
- Nationalist uses can **invert** the concept—turning a justice agenda into **economic/cultural nationalism**

Food Sovereignty vs. Food Security

Food sovereignty: The **right** of peoples to define their own food systems. It centers **who decides**—democratic control, culturally appropriate diets, and **ecologically sound** production.

Food security: A condition where **all people, at all times**, have **access** to sufficient, safe, nutritious food. It focuses on **outcomes**—availability, access, utilization, and stability.



Module 1. Why Did “Food Sovereignty” Emerge?

- A political response to the **asymmetries of food-system** globalization
- **Liberalized trade** + global value chains → **concentrated market power**
- **Externalities** made visible: UPF diets, biodiversity loss, farm vulnerability
- 2007–08 **food price crisis** exposed import/export dependence
- **FS => From “how much food?” to “who decides and on what terms?”**



5

Why Did “Food Sovereignty” Emerge? - **Late-20th Century Triggers**

- **Trade liberalization** (WTO/NAFTA) restructured agri-food markets
- Global value chains → **price-setting power** shifted upstream/downstream
- Corporate consolidation in **seeds/inputs, trading, and retail**
- Financialization of commodities → volatility and speculation
- Diet transitions: rise of **ultra-processed foods (UPFs)** and branded retail
- **Environmental costs** externalized: soil degradation, water stress, biodiversity loss
- **Smallholder squeeze**: input **dependency**, higher debts, land pressure

Why Did “Food Sovereignty” Emerge? - **2007–08 Food Price Crisis: A Turning Point**

- **Prices spiked hard** (rice, wheat, maize) → unrest in 40+ countries.
- Exposed **import/export dependence** and thin global buffers
- **Policy** : export bans, panic buying, biofuel mandates questioned
- **Urban poor** hit hardest; **smallholders** faced volatile input/market prices
- Put **sovereignty** on the agenda: resilience, local control, public

procurement



Food Sovereignty — Quick History & Vision

1996: La Vía Campesina launches the idea. Goal: resist **corporate-led** food systems; support **local economies**; fight **hunger and poverty**.

The idea spreads worldwide—to **movements, governments**, and some **multilateral bodies**.

2001 (Havana): Farmers, fishers, Indigenous peoples, civil society, and scholars meet to set conditions for food sovereignty.

Activists oppose the **WTO farm deal** and call for **public support** to family, sustainable farming.

2007 (Mali): 500+ delegates from 80 countries build strategies. The **Nyéléni Declaration** sums up the movement's vision.

2015 (Nyéléni Agroecology Forum): Movements agree on a **common definition of agroecology**.

Core vision: New social relations **without oppression or inequality** (gender, race, class, generation, peoples).

Works for **rural and urban**, in **rich and poor** countries.

Purpose: Resist **neoliberal, free-market** harms; build **democratic, fair, and sustainable** food systems.

At the center: Small-scale food producers—peasants, fishers, pastoralists, Indigenous peoples, and rural workers.

Why Did “Food Sovereignty” Emerge?

Movement Origins & Nyéléni Principles <https://nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/declarationfinalmars.pdf>

- Roots in peasant, Indigenous, fisherfolk, and food-worker movements (1990s → today)
- Nyéléni Declaration (2007): **right of peoples to define** their food & agriculture systems
- Core principles: **ecology, culturally appropriate food, participation & rights, local control, solidarity**
- Centers **producer & community agency**; protects **seed/knowledge commons**
- Shifts metrics from yields alone → **justice, resilience, and dignity**

Why Did “Food Sovereignty” Emerge? - **Globalization’s “Double Bind”**

Whatever you choose, there’s a cost. You’re “stuck between two bad options.”

- 1 Open markets bring new opportunities — but also **new dependencies**
- 2 Farms tied to **imported inputs** (seeds, fertilizers, feed) and global prices
- 3 **Private standards** (retailers/certifiers) can set the rules over states
- 4 “Efficiency” gains VS **loss of decision power** for producers and territories
- 5 Thin, long supply chains → **volatility** and **low resilience** in crises
- 6 **Result: local actors carry risks, while value and control sit elsewhere**

Why Did “Food Sovereignty” Emerge? - **Who Gains, Who Loses? Power & Justice**

- 1 **Market power:** a few firms capture value; farmers and workers get thin margins
- 2 **Unequal impacts** by **class, race, gender**, and territory (urban peripheries, rural margins)
- 3 **Access gaps:** cheap UPFs vs. costly fresh foods; transport and time barriers
- 4 **Land & tenure:** concentration, land grabbing, insecure rights for smallholders and women
- 5 **Labor & care:** low wages, precarious migrant labor; unpaid care work shapes food access
- 6 **Environmental burdens:** pollution and climate risks hit low-income communities first
- 7 Sovereignty lens: shift from “calories” to **power, rights, dignity**, and **participation**

Why Did “Food Sovereignty” Emerge? - **Policy Arenas & Tensions**

- 1 **Who makes the rules?** States, municipalities, EU/international bodies, firms, standards setters
- 2 **Trade vs. local support:** liberalization and export goals vs. protecting small farms and short chains
- 3 **Subsidies & procurement:** where public money goes shapes markets (inputs vs. agroecology; local school meals)
- 4 **Private standards:** retailers/certifiers set specs that can exclude small producers
- 5 **Data & tech governance:** platforms, IP, and seeds—who controls information and genetics?
- 6 **Key tension:** “efficiency & growth” vs. **rights, participation, and ecological limits**
- 7 **Levers for sovereignty:** municipal food policy, land tools, seed/knowledge commons, fair pricing, co-ops



Alternatives rising within globalization

- **Agroecology:** diversity, circularity, co-creation of knowledge
- **Short food chains:** CSAs/AMAPs, farmers' markets, public canteens
- **Co-ops & territorial hubs:** shared processing, storage, logistics
- **Seed/knowledge commons:** seed banks, participatory breeding, exchanges, participatory training
- **Public procurement:** local, seasonal criteria; fair contracts
- **Scaling conditions:** enabling policy, patient finance, inclusive governance



7

Co-optations of “Sovereignty”

- 1 **Word capture:** governments/brands use “sovereignty” to mean **national self-sufficiency** or marketing slogans
- 2 **State-centric shift:** focus on **control & competitiveness**, not **rights, justice, ecology**
- 3 **Symbolic policies:** bans/tradition rhetoric with little producer/community agency
- 4 **Protectionist drift:** walls up; cross-border solidarity down
- 5 **Equity risks:** exclusion of smallholders, women, migrants; top-down decision-making
- **Keep the core:** Nyéléni = **who decides, commons, participation, ecological care**

Synthesis: Why Sovereignty, Now?

- Globalization created **power concentration** and **new dependencies**
- Crises (2007–08 and beyond) exposed **volatility** and **thin buffers**
- Movements (Nyéléni) shift focus from **yields** to **who decides & how**
- Justice lens: **power, rights, dignity** across race/gender/class
- Pathways: **agroecology, short chains, commons, public procurement**
- Measure success by **resilience + equity + agency (decision power)**, not volume alone

Item	€/kg	% of shelf
Farm-gate (producer)	0.88	4.7%
Processing & packaging	0.80	4.3%
Export logistics (inland, port, freight)	0.60	3.2%
Import clearance & compliance	0.20	1.1%
Certifications/quality (HACCP, lab tests, audits)	0.30	1.6%
Banking/FX & insurance	0.15	0.8%
Importer overheads & margin	2.30	12.4%
Wholesale/distribution	1.70	9.2%
Retail operations (store costs)	0.80	4.3%
Retail margin	7.61	41.0%
Promotions & shrink	1.10	5.9%
Waste/returns	0.44	2.4%
VAT (Italy ~10%)	≈1.69	9.1%
Total	18.57	100%



8 - 12

Food Sovereignty Concept Check

TIME PER ITEM: 20–30 S

CONSERVONS

LES

SAVEURS

PAYSANNES

BIO
DIVERSITÉ

=
VIE



Join at menti.com | use code 2996 1433

Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

2996 1433



Or use QR code

(Module 2) INTRO

- *Quick warm-up: share one daily food/drink habit*
- Today's aims:
 - Deconstruct preconceived ideas about food systems
 - Trace how everyday foods link to global networks & power



Practical Exercise: *The Journey of a Coffee Cup*

- Object : **moka pot** (smell • sound • sight)
- Elements to list: **beans • water • moka • energy • cup • spoon • sugar/milk**
- **Where from? Who made it? How transported?**
- Follow the money: **Who earns? Who sets price & availability?**
- Outcome: reveal **people, places, processes** behind one simple cup



How many people & countries are “in” one coffee?

Coffee beans (10 g roasted): ~90–200 people

(farmers/pickers → wet & dry mills → co-op/export → trucks/ports → ship crew → import/roastery/packaging → distributor → retail staff)

Water & energy: ~5–15 (utility/grid roles touching this use)

Retail checkout/logistics (this purchase): ~5–12

Embedded chains (the durable objects & add-ons)

Aluminum moka pot (once, not per cup): ~160–430

(bauxite mine → alumina refinery → smelter → foundry/die-casting → assembly/QC → packaging → logistics → retail)

Ceramic cup (once): ~65–165

Stainless steel spoon (once): ~140–360

Sugar (5 g, per cup): ~60–130

Coffee packaging (bag/film/label, amortized): ~30–70

Certifiers/finance/insurance/waste (shared): ~10–25

Order-of-magnitude totals

Per-cup operational touchpoints: ~120–250 people

Adding embedded objects (first time you use them): +~400–950

Grand ecosystem (cup + embedded): ~520–1,200 people

Countries touched (typical): 10–16

How many people & countries are “in” one coffee?

Total people involved: ~520–1,200

Countries involved: ~16–19

Globalized Food Systems: What's at Stake (Module 2)

- **Value chains:** who captures value? who is a price taker?
- **Trade dependence:** exports/imports, staples & farm inputs
- **“Big Food” effects:** consolidation, UPFs, land & processing power
- **Crisis exposure:** prices, logistics chokepoints, climate shocks
- **Access inequalities:** malnutrition ↔ waste, “food apartheid” patterns
- **Our task today:** diagnose risks → pick levers for change

Globalized Food Systems - How Global Value Chains Work

- **Longer chains, tighter contracts:** standards, specs, certifications
- **Upstream power:** seeds, agrochemicals, machinery, finance
- **Downstream power:** traders, processors, brands, retailers
- Farmers/workers as **price takers**; margins captured in **coordination & branding**
- **Switching costs & lock-ins** (inputs, platforms, buyers)
- Result: efficiency claims, **concentration of value & decision power**

Globalized Food Systems - Export / Import Dependence

2 **Staple & input reliance:** wheat, maize, soy, fertilizers, fuel

3 **Export specialization:** few products → **exposure to price swings**

4 **Trade balance risks:** FX needs, debt, policy shocks

5 **Logistics chokepoints:** ports, corridors, cold chain

6 **Metric to watch: Import Dependency Ratio (IDR)** for staples/inputs

=> **Sovereignty question:** what must we **import** and what must we **export** to cope?

Join at menti.com | use code 2996 1433

Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

2996 1433



Or use QR code

“Big Food”: What Changes?



19

Big Food = *the large, powerful companies that make, trade, market, and sell most of our food and drinks (from seed and grain traders to snack/beverage brands, supermarkets, and fast-food chains). They shape what we eat and how it's produced through their market power, branding, supply chains, and lobbying.*

- **Consolidation** across seeds/chemicals, grain trading, processing, retail
- **Shelf power & marketing** shape diets → rise of **ultra-processed foods (UPFs)**
- **Standards/specs** can exclude smallholders; private audits add **costs**
- **Territorial shifts**: contract farming, land grabs, processing hubs
- **Price formation** moves upstream/downstream; farmers stay **price takers**
- Net effect: **concentrated value & decision power** along the chain

“Big Food” - Land, Labor, Territory

- **Land concentration** and **insecure tenure** (especially for women and smallholders)
- **Contract farming** and **vertical integration** reshape who controls production
- **Migrant & seasonal labor**: low wages, precarity, housing and status issues
- **Export enclaves** vs **local provisioning**: divergent pathways in the same region
- **Environmental spillovers**: water use/pollution, soil loss, biodiversity impacts
- Territorial question: who controls **land, labor, processing, and logistics**?

“Big Food” - Vulnerabilities to Crises

- **Price shocks:** food, energy, fertilizers → fast cost/pass-through
- **Logistics fragility:** ports, corridors, trucking, **cold chain**
- **Single points of failure:** one buyer, one supplier, one route
- **Climate extremes:** heat, drought, floods, pests → yield & storage losses
- **Financial stress:** FX, debt, interest rates tighten farm cash flow
- **Cascade risk:** long chains + concentration = rapid system stress (??)

“Big Food” - Access Inequalities: Malnutrition ↔ Waste

- **Cheap UPFs, costly fresh foods:** price, promos, shelf placement drive choices
- **Place & mobility:** transport/time barriers in peri-urban & rural areas
- **Income & gender:** low wages, unpaid care work constrain diets
- **Racialized geographies:** “food apartheid” patterns, safety/quality gaps
- **Paradox:** undernutrition & obesity coexist; surplus & **waste** at many nodes
- **Sovereignty lens:** shift from calories to **power, dignity, participation**

Introduction - Quick Diagnostics

- 1 **Import Dependency Ratio (IDR):** % of a staple/input that comes from **imports**
- 2 **Concentration proxy:** share of market held by **top 3–4 suppliers/buyers**
- 3 **Food environment scan: UPF exposure,** price basket (fresh vs UPF), shelf placement
- 4 **Shock map:** find **single points of failure** (one port, one route, one buyer)
- 5 **Labor/land check: seasonal labor reliance, tenure security** for smallholders/women
- 6 **Pick 1–2 tools** for your territory/product today

Join at menti.com | use code 2996 1433

Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

2996 1433



Or use QR code

From Diagnosis to Levers

- If **IDR (imports)** is high → **diversify sources**, local **substitution**, **buffer stocks**
- If **market concentration** is high → **co-ops & local processing**, **fair contracts**, **antitrust watch**
- If **logistics chokepoints** → **route diversification**, shared **storage**, **contingency plans**
- If **UPF exposure / access gaps** → **public procurement**, **price baskets**, **retail zoning**
- If **energy shocks** → bakery **efficiency upgrades**, **collective purchasing**, **time-of-use**
- Always check **equity** (who benefits) and **feasibility** (12–24 months)

Wrap & Bridge to Cases

- Globalization → **power shifts, dependencies, shocks, inequities**
- Your toolkit → **IDR, concentration proxy, food environment scan, shock map**
- Next step → **apply** to a product/territory and pick **one lever** to test
- Measure success by **resilience + equity + agency**, not volume alone



Grazie

