



# Growing Food Sovereignty

Healthy Food,  
Ecological Sustainability,  
Democratic Control



# Food Insecurity in Canada Can be solved

Canadian farmers produce plenty of food. Canada exports nearly \$45 billion worth of food annually. [AAFC data, 2011]

But a growing number of Canadians are food insecure. 900,000 Canadians – 38% of them children and youth – use food banks every month. [Food Bank Report, 2012]

**Hunger is not a problem of food scarcity.**

*“Canada has long been seen as a land of plenty. Yet today one in 10 families with a child under 6 is unable to meet their daily food needs. These rates of food insecurity are unacceptable, and it is time for Canada to adopt a national right-to-food strategy,”*

- Olivier De Schutter, quoted in The Toronto Star, May 16, 2012

## The key problems are systemic and political :

- A handful of corporations (mostly transnationals) control the food system - seeds, agricultural inputs, technology, land and markets.
- Current policy treats food as a commodity, farmers as expendable and land, water, seeds and animals as resources to be exploited for corporate profit.
- Trade agreements remove democratic control over food from citizens and communities, giving it to corporations and investors.

The National Farmers Union and other family farm/peasant, indigenous and rural workers organizations work within the global movement, La Vía Campesina, to resist the global trade agreements and the WTO, stop the destruction of communities, cultures and environments, and build an alternative : food sovereignty.



# Food Sovereignty Values

## Equality

- Food is a basic necessity of life and a right.  
*Everybody has the right to food – not just those with money and power.*
- Women are central to food production.

## Democracy & Local control

- Canadians have a right to determine our own food and farming systems, locally, regionally and nationally.
- Elected governments must regulate industry, ensuring food safety, environmental protection and market fairness.  
*Unelected transnational agribusiness corporations cannot be given control over our vital food system.*
- Farming and non-farming communities must be reconnected to build food systems that work for all.

## Sustainability & Diversity

- Care of the land and animals, protection of seeds and biological diversity, respect for traditional and indigenous knowledge, working with nature to produce healthy food.  
*Chemical and genetic pollution (GMOs), intensive livestock production and over-exploitation of land and water, undermine the long-term sustainability Canada's farms, forests and fisheries.*



## Justice

- Support and respect the rights of small-scale farmers, fishers, gatherers, and workers who produce and process food and care for land and waterways through fair agricultural prices, policies that value and allow them to make a decent living and access to productive resources.  
*The hard work of farm families and food workers should not result in displacement and exploitation.*

# A Growing Food Sovereignty Movement

The international movement for food sovereignty began when the international peasant and farm movement, La Vía Campesina, first introduced it at the World Food Summit in 1996. From the International Forum for Food Sovereignty, called Nyéléni, held in Mali in 2007, to the Peoples' Food Policy Project here in Canada in 2010-2011, the global vision of food sovereignty continues to grow.

*“Food sovereignty is a key part of the fight for social justice bringing together many sectors from the countryside and the city. Food sovereignty is the fundamental right of all peoples, nations and states to control food and agricultural systems and policies, ensuring every one has adequate, affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. This requires the right to define and control our methods of production, transformation, distribution both at the local and international levels. [...] Our vision for our world encompasses an agricultural revolution as well as socio-economic and political transformation. Food sovereignty articulates the crucial importance of local and sustainable production, respect for human rights, fair food and agricultural prices, fair trade between countries, and the safeguarding of commons against privatization.”*

—The Jakarta Call, La Via Campesina, June 20, 2013



# A Commitment to

Keep productive resources (like land, seeds and water) in the hands of those who produce food. Ensure the viability of farming communities through supporting young people in agriculture.



## WALDEGRAVE FARM

Waldegrave Farm is 100 acres of field and forest, ponds and trails in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia. The land is held in trust by the Tatamagouche Community Land Trust. Based on the philosophy that land is a common good, like air and water, the land can never be bought or sold. It is held in trust in perpetuity for the good of the community. There are currently six leaseholders at Waldegrave. Each lease includes a two-acre house site and access to the common land, farmhouse, barns and a retreat cabin. The leases are based on a renewable 99-year term offering leaseholders both security and affordability.

About nine acres of the land is devoted to an organic market garden (owned by one of the leaseholders), produce from which is sold through the farmers market, Community-Supported Agriculture and wholesale. Though this is a separate business, the land trust has provided both opportunity and support to the market garden in many ways including: affordable and secure access to land, a machinery co-op, willing hands, and shared skills.

# Transforming Agriculture P

Safe, healthy, affordable food and a resilient env

## Financial Stability

Ensure stable production-generated farm income

Strengthen farmers' power in the food chain

Provide appropriate tools, technology, market and regulatory support for small and medium-sized family farms

Ensure public ownership and control of genetic resources and seeds

## Domestic Food Policy

Focus on fair trade instead of 'free' trade

Focus on high quality food instead of 'cheap' highly processed food

Focus on small and medium-scale production and processing for local and domestic consumption

Reduce importation of foods that can be grown domestically

Source: Adapted from *Farm Women and Canadian Agricultural Policy* (NFU 2006) t

**A sustainable farm and ru  
strong social and community in  
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# Policy for Food Sovereignty

Environment grow in sustainable farm communities

## Strong Social and Community Infrastructure

Encourage young farmers by providing technical support and financial incentives to new farmers as well as facilitating the generational transfer of family farms

Improve local access to professional and community services (eg. child & elder care)

Improve working conditions and respect the rights of those working in the food system

Foster consumer education to rebuild food-farm relationships

Support women farmers' and youth leadership development

## Safe, Healthy Food and Environment

Acknowledge the benefits of and support for small to medium-scale agro-ecological production systems

Establish environmental accountabilities

Strengthen farmer-directed research initiatives and programs

that was developed through five workshops across Canada with rural women.

Rural community is built on infrastructure, farmer-driven productions, and financial security.



**Collective action and organizing can change the food system and put farmers and local communities in control of their food supply.**

## **ORGANIC MEADOW CO-OPERATIVE**

**Organic Meadow Co-operative began in 1989 as a coop of 30 organic grain farmers.**

**It was formed to provide an opportunity for organic farmers in Ontario to collectively store, process and market organically grown products. In 1996, organic dairy farmers joined the co-op. Today, Organic Meadow is one of the most successful organic farmers' co-operatives in Canada, with over 160 members including over 100 family farms. Offering a full line of organic milk, dairy products, eggs and grains, the goal is simple: organic farmers across Canada supplying locally raised organic products to Canadians. The co-op's mission is to work to build unity among farmers based on the principles of co-operation, and will affirm their right to self-determination and the maintenance of a strong rural heritage.**

## **SALT SPRING ABATTOIR**

**In 2004, the Meat Inspection Regulation came into effect in BC, which stated all publicly sold meats must be killed in a licensed abattoir. Farmers on Salt Spring Island then had to take their livestock to Vancouver Island by ferry – both costly and time consuming for the farmers and stressful for the animals. A group of people, called the Salt Spring Agricultural Alliance, were concerned about the decline of livestock production on the island after the implementation of this new regulation, and so they began the long and arduous process of building a licensed abattoir on the island. Today, Salt Spring Island farmers are able to take their livestock to the abattoir. There is also a mobile component to the abattoir, which can travel to surrounding smaller islands.**





# **Food sovereignty relies on ecological food production**

*“[Food Sovereignty is] diverse and sustainable food production that minimizes use of fossil fuels, contributes to the recovery of exhausted soils and is geared to local and regional markets.”*

—Ontario farmer at NFU Food Sovereignty Workshop, 2011

## **NFU SAVE OUR SEEDS CAMPAIGN**

Farmers' rights to save, reuse, exchange and sell seeds is an important part of ensuring ecological diversity. Farmers have selected and improved seed varieties for hundreds of generations and losing these rights through trade agreements that concentrate the ownership and control of seeds in the hands of transnational corporations poses great risk to the natural environment as well as to farm families. The NFU's Save Our Seeds Campaign calls for the protection of farmers' rights to seeds and for a well-funded public, not-for-profit plant breeding program in Canada.

**Those who control the seeds,  
control the food we eat.**



# Women

take a key and equal role in decisions on food and agriculture policy

*“Our activism and engagement as women in the movement often demands that we add yet more work to days already filled with food production, family and household care, cooking, waged labour and many other demands. But, speaking from my experience, our activism and solidarity also gives us more energy, encouragement, confidence and happiness.”*

—Nettie Wiebe, Saskatchewan organic farmer, La Via Campesina 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Indonesia, 2013



# Food Sovereignty IS POSSIBLE!

## Food sovereignty is for everyone

Rural and urban citizens and organizations, working together, can make big, positive changes:

- Take back local control over food policy and production decisions
- Create local food markets, supporting local, small-scale, ecologically sustainable farming
- Build real democracy and social justice, erasing food insecurity and hunger in Canada
- Reverse the corporate-led, neoliberal, ecologically destructive industrial model of agriculture



**You can help in forging strong, effective alliances and solidarity between urban and rural communities.**

- Learn more about your food.
- Join a food sovereignty oriented organization.
  - Participate in campaigns supporting a fairer, healthier food system.
  - Resist policies and strategies that privatize and corporatize control over food and food resources.

*"Food sovereignty is about creating community and building alliances. It is about cooperation between producers and consumers."*

—Saskatchewan farmer at NFU Food Sovereignty workshop, 2011

Do you care about healthy food?  
A resilient environment? Vibrant communities?  
Biological diversity? Justice?

# Join the movement for Food Sovereignty

NFU members believe that the problems facing farmers are common problems, and that we must work together to advance effective solutions. The National Farmers Union is unique among farm organizations in working for people's interests against corporate control of our food system. **If you farm, your family may join as a Farm Family Member.** Every member of the farm family - including children, ages 14 to 21 - are full voting members of the Union. The NFU recognizes that every family member contributes to the farm by working on it directly or indirectly through off-farm employment. **If you are not a farmer and would like to support the NFU's work, you may join as an Associate Member.** Associate Members support the goals and work of the NFU but because they do not farm, they do not vote in the organization.

**Family Membership - \$195.00**

**Youth Membership - \$40.00**

**Associate Membership - \$65.00**

**To join the National Farmers Union, send a cheque or money order to:**

National Farmers Union

2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6

For more information on the NFU or to join online,  
please visit [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca)

For information on La Via Campesina,  
please visit [www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org)

