

INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY (IPC)



IPC HANDBOOK



SEPTEMBER 2017

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PURPOSE



This handbook is intended to provide a brief synthesis of the history of the IPC and a description of its present organization and ways of working in its interface with international intergovernmental processes relevant to food sovereignty. The purpose is to provide useful background information to people from IPC member organizations who are called on to serve as spokespersons in international processes. This first draft of the handbook has been prepared by two persons who have been associated with the IPC throughout the three decades of its existence. They take full responsibility for its contents, which are expected to be enriched and improved by others over time.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IPC

ORIGINS - 1996

The origins of the IPC are rooted in the mobilization of rural peoples' organizations around the world, reaching up to the global level, in reaction to the devastating impacts of structural adjustment and liberalization policies on rural livelihoods and societies. A key stimulus was the advent of the World Trade Organization in 1995, subjecting agriculture to global trade liberalization rules for the first time and further opening up markets in the Global South to unfair competition with products from abroad with a strong impact on small-scale food producers at global level.

A group of social movements and NGOs from all regions came together to reflect on a common alternative strategy to build their capacity to influence the global policies that were doing such damage. The FAO was felt to be a politically interesting intergovernmental forum for social movement advocacy and an alternative to the WTO and the World Bank/IMF. There were several reasons for this: more democratic governance with universal membership and - formally - a one country-one vote decision-making process, specific focus on food and agriculture and a mission to eliminate hunger, a mandate that includes a strong normative role, and relative openness to engagement with civil society and rural people's organizations.

An occasion to test this idea and to promote global networking was provided by the FAO World Food Summit (WFS) held in Rome in November 1996, whose organization was strongly pushed by FAO's first African Director-General over the objections of powerful governments who were backing the trade liberalization agenda. The 1990s was the decade of global UN summits, starting with the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, each accompanied by a parallel civil society event.



The Rome civil society forum(1) held in connection with the WFS, however, was the only one in which a deliberate political choice was made by the organizing committee(2) to put social movements in the majority among the delegates. They had the deciding voice in determining the statement that was to be adopted, which highlighted the autonomy and self-organization of civil society as principles. The forum gave the newly established organization La Via Campesina its first global opportunity to present the principle of food sovereignty. The forum also pushed for the recognition of the "right to food" in a dedicated legal initiative. In effect, civil society advocacy's greatest success in influencing the outcome of the official Summit was the identification of freedom from hunger as a fundamental human right. Over the objections of the US delegation, the WFS Action Plan requested the UN Commissioner for Human Rights to coordinate a process of developing guidelines for the 'full and progressive realization of this right as a means of achieving food security for all'.

BETWEEN TWO WORLD FOOD SUMMITS: 1997 - 2000

The forum did not establish a formal overall mechanism of global civil society networking on food and agriculture issues in the form of a liaison committee or some other representative body, and quite likely the time was not ripe for this to happen. The WFS was followed by a period of informal dialogue, - facilitated by the group of organizations that had overseen the forum - among those actors who had attended it, building up a better common understanding of what food sovereignty could involve as an alternative proposal to green revolution technology and neoliberal policies. This was accompanied by a process of clarifying the different types of civil society actors and their different roles in global policy processes. The direction was towards a deeper understanding of issues of representation - who has the right to speak for whom - and a search for complementarity between the political legitimacy of peoples' organizations and



1 The NGO Forum on Food Security held in Rome from 11 to 17 November 1996 adopted a resolution entitled 'Profit for Few or Food for All?'

2 The International Support Committee (ISC), a precursor of the IPC.

the analytic and communication capacities of NGOs. During this period the civil society unit of FAO took advantage of the momentum created by the WFS to develop internal FAO policy guidelines concerning relations with civil society, with the participation of all of the technical divisions and regional offices. For the first time within the UN system the guidelines, adopted in 1999, made a clear distinction between membership

organizations representing producers and consumers and NGO of various kinds. Responsibility for monitoring progress in implementing the WFS Action Plan was assigned to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Respecting the spirit of the WFS and the new policy guidelines, a cautiously more open attitude was adopted regarding the participation of civil society actors in CFS sessions and FAO Regional Conferences..

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT - FIVE YEARS LATER: 2000 – 2002

In 2002 the Director-General of FAO proposed the holding of a WFS/five years later conference (WFS/fyl). As this proposal started to take shape, the IPC began to emerge as the platform charged with preparing the civil society participation. Over the few intervening years rural social movements had continued to strengthen their organizations with, for example, the West African peasant network ROPPA seeing the light in 2000. Contestation of neoliberal policies had acquired new visibility with the protests against the WTO Ministerial meeting in Seattle in 1999. Within the UN system, a clash was developing between two models of civil society representation and interaction with intergovernmental processes: the autonomous network of organizations model championed by the IPC and the 'Major Groups' model interfacing with the Rio follow-up, which was dominant within the UN system³. The WFS/fyl was an opportune moment for the emerging IPC to fight for its approach since the politically aware FAO Director-General understood the importance of allying with social movements and civil society to help generate political will for the fight against hunger, and his support staff was

well-placed and determined to champion the opening up FAO to civil society voices.

The Civil Society Forum held in Rome, in June 2002 in parallel to the WFS/fyl consecrated food sovereignty as the umbrella for the IPC platform and the dominant voice of peoples' organizations as compared with NGOs. The forum defined food sovereignty as:

'the RIGHT of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies.'

In addition to a political statement, Food Sovereignty: A Right for All, the forum adopted an Action Agenda aimed at translating into practice the principles contained in the Statement. The four thematic pillars of the action plan were: a rights-based approach to food security and food sovereignty, local peoples' access to, control and management of, resources; mainstreaming family-based .

³ The MG mechanism contrasted sharply in several important ways with the IPC approach. The MGs had been predefined by an intergovernmental forum, whereas the IPC emerged from an on-going civil society process of self-definition. The MG approach assumed that broad categories like 'farmers' would be able to come up with consensus positions on issues on which, in reality, different components of the categories often had widely different interests. Thirdly, the MG consultation process was orchestrated by global focal points, whereas the IPC process was strongly rooted in regional and local consultation. Finally, the MGs included business and industry as one component within a single process of stakeholder dialogue, whereas the IPC definition of civil society excluded the private sector.



Photo by Terra Nuova

farming and agroecological approaches; and trade and food sovereignty. A fifth section dealt with access to international institutions. The forum formally constituted the "IPC" and charged it with taking forward the Action Agenda.

Interaction between the civil society forum and the official FAO event was significant. In contrast with the '+5' Summits held elsewhere in the UN system, the experience of the WFS:fyf marked an intensification in civil society interaction with multilateral governance, both quantitatively and qualitatively, creating the basis for forging an innovative relationship that give space to social movement to move beyond the global conference moment to invest FAO's overall mode of conducting its business.

RELATIONS WITH FAO: 2003 - 2007

Shortly after the WFS/fyf, the FAO Director-General made it known that he wished to sign a formal agreement with the IPC. Following intensive preparations on both sides, a meeting was held in November 2002. The formal agreement, signed in early 2003 contained the important statement that

'FAO accepts the principles of civil society autonomy and self-organization on which the IPC bases its work and will apply them in all of its relations with NGOs/CSOs.' The agreement also noted that **'both parties concur with the need to distinguish between the interests of social movements/non-profit NGOs and those of private sector associations, and to make separate interface arrangements for these two categories of organizations.'**

FAO committed itself to undertaking a certain number of steps to enhance the institutional environment for relations with NGOs/CSOs, and the agreement established a framework for a programme of work in the four IPC priority areas.

Over the following years significant progress was made also in the area of the right to food. Voluntary Guidelines for the application of the right to food at national level adopted by the CFS in 2004 with strong IPC participation. Regarding access to and control over productive resources, the IPC championed and won the introduction of the idea of collective rights to seeds. The preparation and organization of the jointly sponsored FAO-Brazil International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICAARD) in 2006 was an important milestone, putting the agrarian reform as a crucial element to fight hunger and poverty and opening the way to the negotiation of guidelines on responsible tenure to land and other natural resources in the reformed Committee for World Food Security in 2010-2012. Work began on IPC-FAO collaboration in the field of agroecology with field experiences in some African countries. Efforts at dialogue regarding trade were also initiated, but this was the area in which alternative proposals were weakest on the IPC side. The IPC participated actively in the FAO Regional Conferences, organizing civil society events in parallel, and in the CFS's monitoring of the outcomes of WFS/fyl.

At the same time, the voice of agrifood corporations began to resound more loudly in FAO halls, backed by powerful member governments, and clashes between the IPC and FAO emerged over initiatives such as an issue of the FAO flagship publication, *The State of Food and Agriculture*, dedicated to biotechnology. FAO's field programme and the work of its country offices remained relatively closed to social movement/civil society participation.

No progress was made in obtaining recognition within FAO of the concept of food sovereignty.

In FAO's normative work, on the contrary, during the five years following WFS/fyl the IPC facilitated the participation of over two thousand representatives of rural peoples' organizations in different FAO meetings, such as intergovernmental technical committees in which they had never set foot before and built their capacity to defend their positions. This accumulated networking and capacity building would place the IPC members in a good position to take advantage of the political opportunity for change provided by the world food price crisis (2006/2008).

NYELENI 2007

In the meantime, the idea of organizing a world forum on food sovereignty had been launched by La Via Campesina and adopted by the IPC general meeting in November 2005(4). Guided by a steering committee composed predominantly of peoples' organizations(5), the forum was intended as an occasion for reflection by some 500 delegates representing farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, women's groups, workers, environmentalists, consumers, NGOs, youth groups from around the world who had subscribed to the concept of food sovereignty and were taking action to put it into practice in their different settings(6).

The objective was to build up a common understanding of what food sovereignty entails, starting from the concrete practices of the participants and to develop collective strategies and action plans. The venue was a village in

4 See www.nyeleni2007.org for information on, and documents of, the forum.

5 Via Campesina, World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers, World Forum of Fisherpeople, Friends of the Earth International, World March of Women, Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes-Mali, IPC, Food and Water Watch, Development Fund-Norway.

6 The forum adopted the practice that had been pioneered by the IPC of applying quotas for different constituencies and regions.

southern Mali and the name given to the forum – Nyéleni – was that of a legendary Malian peasant woman who had farmed and fed her peoples well. The forum, which took place from 23 to 27 February 2007, adopted a Declaration and an action plan covering seven themes: 1) Trade policies and local markets; 2) Local knowledge and technology; 3) Access to and control over natural resources—land, water, seeds, livestock breeds; 4) Sharing territories and land, water, fishing rights, aquaculture and forest use, between sectors; 5) Conflict and disaster: responding at local and international levels; 6) Social conditions and forced migration; and 7) Production models: impacts on people, livelihoods and environment.

THE FOOD PRICE CRISIS AND THE REFORM OF THE COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY: 2007-2010

The eruption of the food price crisis in 2006/2008 opened another phase in IPC-FAO relations. For the first time in years the governance of food and agriculture and food policy were at the top of the official global agenda. The IPC and social movements organized a civil society conference, Terra Preta, in June 2008 in parallel to an official FAO conference addressing the crisis. The civil society conference called for

'a paradigm shift towards food sovereignty and small scale sustainable food production which, unlike industrial agriculture, can feed the world while making a positive contribution to 'cooling' the climate' and for a fundamental restructuring of the multilateral organizations involved in food and agriculture'.

Over the succeeding months, the IPC and social movements sided with the G77/GRULAC and FAO/Director-General Diouf against donor and bureaucracy-driven responses to the governance vacuum unveiled by crisis. The IPC/FAO/GRULAC proposal was the only one that sought a political response to the causes of the crisis: a profound reform of the CFS to turn it into an authoritative, inclusive forum for ensuring policy coherence in the name of food security and the right to food. The confrontation came to a head at a conference organized by the Spanish government in Madrid in January 2009 which, it was expected, would sideline FAO and put the UN/G8 alliance strongly in the saddle of world food governance. An IPC delegation was there, give statement, opposing the UN G8 proposal (HLTF and G8 guidance). Much to the surprise of the apparently more powerful line-up, the proposal to reform the CFS won out.

The reform was negotiated from April to October 2009 with very strong participation by IPC delegation, along with Argentina (Chair of the CFS Bureau) and Brazil, which helped to shape the outcome. It was an institutionally difficult process which took advantage of the window of political opportunity opened by the crisis, a better organized global

social movement for food sovereignty and the conjuncture of political and economic synergies between BRIC countries and a group of 'developed' countries. In the end, despite their diversity, the majority of the participants came to feel a sense of ownership of the core proposal to the point of collectively resisting a last minute effort on the part of the U.S. and a few other developed country delegations to downplay the political significance of the reformed CFS. The reform was adopted by the CFS in October 2009.

THE REFORM OF THE CFS: SOME IMPORTANT FEATURES FOR WHICH THE IPC FOUGHT

- Recognizes the structural nature of the causes of the food crisis and acknowledges that the primary victims are small-scale food producers.
- Defines the CFS as “the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform” for food security, based in the UN system.
- Explicitly includes defending the right to adequate food in the CFS’s mission.
- Recognizes civil society organizations – small-scale food producers and urban movements especially – as full participants, for the first time in UN history. Authorizes them to intervene in debate on the same footing as governments and affirms their right to autonomously self-organize to relate to the CFS through a Civil Society Mechanism.
- Enjoins the CFS to negotiate and adopt a Global Strategic Framework (GSF) for food security providing guidance for national food security action plans and global policy coherence.
- Empowers the CFS to take decisions on key food policy issues, and promotes accountability by governments and other actors through an “innovative” monitoring mechanism.
- Arranges for CFS policy work to be supported by a High Level Panel of Experts in which the expertise of farmers, Indigenous Peoples and practitioners is acknowledged alongside that of academics and researchers.
- Recognizes the principle of subsidiarity and urges that strong linkages be built between the global meetings of the CFS and regional and country levels. Governments commit to establishing national multi-stakeholder policy spaces in the image of the global CFS.

CFS (2009)

The exercise of autonomously designing a Civil Society Mechanism was carried out over the months following the adoption of the reform. Here too the IPC was very strongly involved. The CSM took inspiration from the IPC in important features such as ensuring priority voice for social movements. The CSM founding document was adopted by the CS Forum in October 2010. The IPC played a dominant role in the first session of the reformed CFS that month. It helped to set the agenda for the coming biennium, particularly by helping to push through the proposal that guidelines on tenure be negotiated in the CFS.

SINCE 2010 – REORGANIZATION OF IPC AND REORIENTATION OF ITS ENERGIES TOWARDS FAO OBJECTIVES

From 2010 to 2012 the IPC continued to play a leading role in the negotiation of the tenure guidelines. The CSM working group responsible for this activity was essentially the IPC land working group enlarged to include other interested CSM members (IPC+).

In general, however, the IPC as such has tended to disinvest its energies from the CFS and reorient them towards objectives on the FAO agenda although many of the IPC members have, of course, continued individually to be very much involved in the CSM Coordination Committee (CC) and thematic working groups. The IPC's disinvestment from the CSM was motivated by issues of limited resources, (strong reduction of financial support for the IPC work program) the concentrated fatigue of the CFS reform process, and the need to clarify the different spaces for social movement engagement and the different responsibilities. The FAO-targeted areas of work that have been pursued by the IPC during this period include small-scale fisheries, plant and animal genetic resources, agroecology, implementation of the tenure guidelines, as well as civil society participation in FAO Regional Conferences. The election of José Graziano as FAO Director-General in 2011 gave an important stimulus to FAO-IPC relations given Graziano's previous support to the Latin American food sovereignty movement as FAO Assistant Director-General for Latin America. In 2012 the IPC coordinated civil society participation in a consultation launched by FAO to develop a renewed strategy for collaboration with civil society(7), and in May 2014 a new Letter of Agreement between the IPC and FAO was signed. During the same period there were extended discussions and consultations within IPC on how to reorganize its work most effectively.



Photo by IISD/ENB | Kiara Worth

7 FAO Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society . <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3443e.pdf>

ORGANS AND FUNCTIONING OF THE IPC



THE INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ALLIANCE OF SMALL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCERS, PEASANT FAMILY FARMERS, ARTISANAL FISHER FOLKS, PASTORALISTS, NOMADS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS, THE LANDLESS, URBAN PRODUCERS, ALTERNATIVE CONSUMER MOVEMENTS, RURAL WORKERS AND GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS, WHOSE AIM IS TO ADVANCE THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AGENDA AT THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL.

MEMBERS

The international organizations participating in the IPC are: La Via Campesina (LVC), World Forum of Fishers People (WFFP), World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers (WFF), World Alliance Mobile Indigenous People (WAMIP), Mouvement International de la Jeunesse Agricole et Rurale Catholique (MIJARC), {The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations – (IUF)}, URGENCI, International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), Habitat International Coalition (HIC), World March of Womens and International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements (FIMARC).

The IPC Regional Processes include regional organizations participating such as ROPPA, PROPAC, Movimento Agro Ecologico Latino Americano (MAELA), Enlaces Continentales Mujeres Indigena, Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas, Coordinadora de Organizaciones de productores Familiares del MERCOSUR (COPROFAM), Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, US Food Sovereignty Alliance.

ORGANS

The General Meeting

The General Meeting is the biannual space where international and regional organizations and representatives of regional processes and working groups update the working plan and agree on the political lines developed around Food Sovereignty. During the meeting, the actions and achievements of the Facilitating Committee, Secretariat and Working Groups are evaluated. In the General Meeting all international and regional organizations and representatives of all regional processes participate; invited NGOs participate only as observers. The last General Meeting took place in Gujarat, India from 30 August to 3 September 2015.

Regional Processes

IPC sets up regional processes on all continents. They should follow the general principles and lines of actions agreed upon at the General Meetings. Regional organizations and all regional formations (branches) of the international organizations organize the process by setting up a coordination structure of all the different organizations at regional level. The regional processes define the regional priorities and also facilitate a full participation of the regional organizations in the IPC working groups and their participation in all institutional regional processes where IPC is involved, such as the FAO Regional Conferences.

Facilitating Committee (FC)

The FC composed of 5 to 9 representatives of international/global and regional process organizations, with constituency, gender and regional balance. The Facilitating Committee has the political mandate to organize internal communications, prepare the meetings, control and monitor the allocation of funds, facilitate the IPC process, initiate (if needed), coordinate and monitor the working groups, and take on formal responsibilities. The Facilitating Committee is accountable to the General Meeting. The FC is supported in carrying out its functions by a Support Group (SG) composed of a representative from each organization participating at the international level of the IPC which is not represented in the FC and a representative of each regional process which is not represented in the FC.

Secretariat

The Secretariat can be shared between different regions according to the decision of the General Meeting. It is an operative structure that is mandated to organize communications via the web site, mailing list, etc. and to fulfill an administrative role for financial issues related to the General

Meeting, resource mobilization, support to working groups, etc. The Secretariat prepares the IPC General Meeting. The Secretariat is currently ensured by the NGO Crocevia and the Rome office of LVC.

Working Groups

The IPC Working Groups (WG) are endorsed by the General Meeting. They have the legitimacy to operate with the full support of all the IPC organizations on a specific priority theme. WGs are open and flexible structures, formed on an ad hoc basis and with an open working methodology. The WGs are led by the social movements (at least 2 different IPC organizations). All the IPC organizations are invited to actively participate and the participation of youth and women is encouraged. The WGs work in coordination with the Facilitating Committee. Each WG selects a supporting NGO to facilitate the daily implementation of the working plan.

Additionally, other NGOs can support the activities of the WG. The WG can also be open to other organizations that are not part of IPC, on the basis of a decision by the Facilitating Committee, ratified by the General Meeting. These working groups are denominated “WG IPC Plus” (IPC+). Currently IPC WGs are dealing with the following substantive areas: land and territories, small scale fisheries, livestock and pastoralism, indigenous peoples, agricultural biodiversity, agroecology, trade and markets. The report of a technical meeting of the Working Groups held in Rome in June 2016 (attached in annex) provides an updated profile of the objectives and strategic plan of each working group. The last General Meeting decided to allow establish an IPC4CSM working group in order to strengthen coordination at and input into the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) through active participation in the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM).



WHY AND HOW TO DEFEND THE CFS

THE IPC AND THE CSM/CFS IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT



Photo by ©FAO/Alessandra Benedetti

The present political context is very different from the far more favorable one in which the reform of the CFS took place in 2009. We find ourselves in a phase characterized by attacks on democracy, austerity, virulent nationalism and right-wing populism. Governmental allies on which social movements could count, such as Brazil and Argentina, are in serious political and/or economic difficulties. The EU, on which social movements have relied to constitute a 'pro-human rights' counterweight to the US and its allies, has been weakened by internal contradictions among its member states and a stronger conservative line. At the same time, less and less funding is available in support of social movements and their allies, particularly for tackling contentious issues. In this context the CFS remains a unique global policy forum in which social movement can defend their spaces and support their struggles at all levels. It is

important to be careful in strategizing about how to use this space given the conjunctural parameters of the rise of right-wing power, corporate power, the economic crisis, the war economy. Agriculture is one of the important source of corporate profits. Africa is the focal point for corporate appetites since it is the only region that will double its population - and increase its food demand - before demographic stagnation sets in. At an institutional level, the present FAO Director-General will finish his mandate in 2019 and this will undoubtedly have an impact on the CFS and, more generally, on FAO's work, orientations and culture. The space that social movements have built over the past 20 years could be rapidly eroded. For these reasons it is extremely important to develop an overall strategy and mutually supportive practices between the IPC and the CSM/CFS.



FURTHER READING

IPC website: <http://www.foodsovereignty.org/>

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www.foodsovereignty.org