



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY REPORT FOR INTERNAL USE

Written by the Food sovereignty Working Group of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples



FORO MUNDIAL DE PUEBLOS PESCADORES
WORLD FORUM OF FISHER PEOPLES
FORUM MONDIAL DES POPULATIONS DE PÊCHEURS

RESOLUTIONS OF THE WFFP 7TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2017) ON FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND AGROECOLOGY

1. *We believe that to confront the global threats and challenges to fisher livelihoods, environments and culture, food security is too simplistic. We need to look more deeply and say that food sovereignty is the alternative paradigm that we want, it is one of the answers to ocean grabbing. The way we arrive there is through agroecological activities. This is new language, but it is already deep in our hearts. Because this is a young discussion within our movement, we need now to give greater depth to it and unpack it more. We need to be sure we translate it into all of our local languages. We need to shift to an ocean based approach instead of a land centric approach, oceans are our commons and it is to be the base of food sovereignty.*

2. *To open up space for food sovereignty and agroecology we must take a stand against industrial fishing, by-catch and lobby to regulate destructive gear. We must fight against the unjust subsidies and predatory lending schemes that trap fishers in poverty.*

3. *The slogans that we raise should not just be shouted, but also implemented. Therefore in order to build and strengthen food sovereignty in a concrete way at the local level we should explore opportunities to sell directly to consumers and local markets in urban and rural areas in order to cut out the middlemen; form and strengthen fisher cooperatives; Make connections with institutions like hospitals or schools to use their public purchasing power; demand state financing for small scale fishers instead of industrial fishing; pursue alternative sources of energy for our activities.*

4. *Water, land and sea are interconnected in many ways. Many fishers are also farmers. And small scale fishers, peasants and other small scale food producers are all threatened by the corporate controlled global food system. Building food sovereignty requires working in solidarity. WFFP should continue to pursue and strengthen its alliances with other small scale food producer organizations, with cooperatives (including transport cooperatives), and workers to support the development of a social and solidarity economy.*

5. *WFFP should explore opportunities for coordinating and/or participating in events and workshops about food sovereignty and agroecology with other groups like peasants, academics and students to build perspectives and skills.*

6. *While WFFP has worked on food sovereignty extensively, we must still work to deepen our knowledge by sharing the stories and struggles for food sovereignty among members. Resources like toolboxes that WFFP members contribute to and learn from will help develop a common goal and vision that all WFFP members can work towards: healthy food from the people, for the people.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In November 2018, some WFFP members met in Thessaloniki, Greece, to take forward the GA7 resolution on Food Sovereignty. In this meeting, it was agreed that, in order to deepen the Food Sovereignty agenda in WFFP, it is necessary to establish a dialogue process. The objective of this internal report is to initiate such dialogue to provide a basis for the development of a methodological toolbox for WFFP members, through connecting the existing practices of fishing communities to Food Sovereignty, as a strategy to advance towards the common goal of providing healthy food from the people, for the people. To do so, the report briefly outlines the history of Food Sovereignty in the WFFP context, provides some initial questions about Food Sovereignty for WFFP members to consider and to help identify the next steps for the WFFP Food Sovereignty dialogue.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN WFFP CONTEXT

WFFP has been involved in the Food Sovereignty movement for a long time. In fact, WFFP was one of the social movements present at the Nyeleni Forum in Selingue, Mali in 2007. This was an historic gathering, in which some 500 representatives of peasants, fisherfolks, indigenous people, women, youth, and consumers from around the world came together to build a common understanding of what Food Sovereignty is, starting from the concrete practices at the grassroots level and to develop collective strategies to advance the struggle of small-scale food producers against threats to their territories and to their rights. It is during Nyeleni Forum that Food Sovereignty was articulated in six pillars: Focus on food for people, value food providers, localize food systems, put control locally, build knowledge and skills and work with nature ¹.

Since then, WFFP remained engaged in the Food Sovereignty movement, through the involvement in the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) and in the Nyeleni Forum. In the following years, much of the work of WFFP focused on the development of the International Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines and the struggle against ocean grabbing. The SSF Guidelines can be seen as an international tool that fisher people can use in their fight for food sovereignty.

In 2015, WFFP participated in the International Forum on Agroecology ³, which took place at the Nyeleni Center in Mali. In this forum, the first joint vision of Agroecology as a tool to achieve Food Sovereignty was developed by all the small-scale food producers and their social movements. As a result of the ongoing engagement in the Food Sovereignty movements, WFFP identified the need to develop a fisheries perspective of Food Sovereignty and Agroecology. Thus, during the WFFP Coordinating Committee (CC) meeting held in Pondicherry, India, in 2015, it was decided to establish a working group on Food Sovereignty and Agroecology. The mandate of the Working Group was to locate agroecology principles within the SSF principles and to identify convergences and similarities from pre-harvest to post harvest.

In 2016, the CC endorsed the proposal of the working group to conduct an exchange trip in Indonesia, which took place in November 2016. During the exchange, WFFP leaders visited Jakarta Bay and West Java, engaging with the local fishing communities about traditional practices and challenges within the

¹ <https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>

² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4356en.pdf>

³ <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/forum-agroecology-nyeleni-2015-2/>

fisheries sector in Indonesia, and about the political strategies used by the local small-scale food producers and their social movements to work towards Food Sovereignty. As result of the exchange, the “Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in small-scale fisheries” report was produced⁴. In this report, Food Sovereignty is proposed and articulated as the political agenda in defense of fishing communities’ territories, cultures and traditions, as well as small-scale fishers’ capacity to feed the world with healthy and abundant food, in opposition to the neo-liberal capitalist commodified food system.

WFFP’s political position on Food Sovereignty was further strengthened at the 7th General Assembly (GA7), through clear resolutions, quoted in the introduction to this report. demanding that states financially support small-scale fisheries instead of industrial fishing. The GA7 gave a strong mandate to the Food Sovereignty Working Group to deepen the understanding of Food Sovereignty as a political project, by sharing stories and struggles for food sovereignty and developing resources that could be used at the national and local levels to advance the discussion on food sovereignty and fisheries. As a result of the GA7 resolution, an initial meeting was organized in Thessaloniki, Greece, in November 2018. In this meeting, the next steps on how to deepen WFFP Food Sovereignty agenda were discussed. As mentioned above, it was agreed to initiate an internal dialogue process on Food Sovereignty within WFFP. In the next section, we will dig deeper into the meaning of each pillar of Food Sovereignty, based on the discussions in the WFFP meeting on Food Sovereignty in Greece, and ask some questions for WFFP members to connect their local struggle to the global struggle for Food Sovereignty.

3. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CONTEXT OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

During the Nyeleni Forum in 2007, the vision of Food Sovereignty was articulated in 6 pillars, focus on food for people, value food providers, localize food systems, put control locally, build knowledge and skills and work with nature. While all interconnected, each pillar provides a framework connecting the concrete practices, knowledge, experiences and demands of fishing communities on the ground to the Food Sovereignty political discourse. By discussing each pillar independently, it is possible to make connections between the local experiences, struggles and solutions of fishing communities and the Food Sovereignty vision.

A. FOCUS ON FOOD FOR PEOPLE

“Inland and marine small-scale fishers are at the centre of fisheries and related policies, and ensure that food production is not harming the next generation. Food must be considered as a universal human right and not as a trade commodity. The right for fishers to eat their own fish is very important: first communities must have food, and then they have the choice to sell to other markets.”(WFFP, 2017)

Small-scale fishers provide healthy, affordable and nutritious food to people. Traditionally, small-scale fisher people catch fish first and foremost to put food on the table for their families and communities. Conversely, industrial fishing corporations consider fish a commodity, a means to make profit. In the current economic system, fishers have to sell their catch to pay for housing, electricity, school fees, etc. In the cases of “high valued” species, for which there is a profitable export market, fishing households are not able to consume the fish themselves but are forced to sell everything.

The case of West Coast rock lobster or crayfish in South Africa is a good example of this issue. As crayfish is considered a high-value and profitable commodity to be sold in the European and Chinese

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http://worldfishers.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/WFFP.Food_Sov_web.pdf

markets, industrial corporations are exploiting it intensively, to the point that the crayfish stocks are now overexploited and this fishery is extremely endangered. The amount of crayfish allocated to small-scale fishers has been significantly reduced, also due to pressure from the World Wildlife Fund, a big conservation NGO, who sued the South Africa government to dramatically reduce the total allowable catch (TAC) for crayfish to protect the species. This has consequences:

1. The fishers have to sell all their catch, to be able to pay for household costs.
2. The price of crayfish is now on the rise, making it difficult for local communities to afford this fish.
3. Crayfish, which was traditionally consumed during important cultural and religious events, such as Easter Sunday and weddings, is now out of reach for many communities, and the traditions around its consumption are being lost.
4. In South Africa, crayfish is only available in expensive restaurants, which the vast majority of the population cannot afford.
5. Most of the crayfish harvested in South Africa, is shipped to European and Asian markets, where it is considered a delicacy accessible only to the rich.

As seen in this example, the struggle for Food Sovereignty is the struggle to stop this process of commodification and consider fish as food for people. However, this does not mean that fisher people should not earn a livelihood from fishing activities, as explained by Erdogan Kartal, president of Birlik, a small-scale fishers cooperative and Turkish member of WFFP:

“When we talk about [focusing on] food, not for money but for people, even though I agree, my job is also to earn money in order to make a living. There we have to frame it well, of course fish is a very important food, and we need to clarify if it is about profit or livelihoods. The ambition of making more and more money leads to collapse of stocks. In this way we undermine the resource and our own livelihoods. We have to avoid treating fish as a commodity, it is about food and livelihoods in a balanced way. Those who want to get rich from fishing should leave the scene, that is not the idea.”

QUESTIONS FOR LINKING THIS PILLAR TO LOCAL CONTEXTS:

- ⇒ In your local context, which fish species are traditionally consumed by communities? Are they still available to them? Are they the same with the most commercial ones?
- ⇒ What are the consequences of regarding fish as a commodity at the community level? And at national level?
- ⇒ How are fishing communities fighting against the commodification of their food and loss of their fish-related traditions?

B. VALUE FOOD PROVIDERS

“The human rights of all the small-scale fisher peoples who are involved in the entire value chain of small-scale fisheries (pre-harvesting, fishing and post-harvest activities), including youth, women, men and indigenous fishers, have to be respected and protected.” (WFFP, 2017)

Small-scale fisheries have a central role in providing nutrition to the world. Indeed, the world’s fish intake depends on the 50 million of people in fishing communities that are involved in fishing and related activities (FAO 2018)⁵. More than being a protein intake, small-scale fishing provides jobs, strengthens local economy, and contributes to poverty alleviation. But most of the time, small scale fishing communities are marginalized, with poor access to basic services, such as health and education, and they are not consulted on matters directly affecting their livelihoods, for example when projects are developed on their traditional fishing grounds, or whenever marine protected areas are established in traditional fishing territories.

The important role of small-scale fisher people in providing their society with local, nutritious and culturally appropriate food must be recognized and valued. Food Sovereignty is about recognizing and defending the individual and collective human rights of small-scale fishing communities. As human rights-holders, fisher people must be involved by the states, that have the duty to protect the human rights of fisher people, in the decision-making process that are likely to impact their livelihoods, and their needs should be prioritized over the demands of other stakeholders—especially representing private sector—, such as industrial fishing companies, touristic enterprises, and mining corporations.

This pillar also refers to and highlights the role of women in the fishing households and throughout the value-chain. Even though women play a central role in small-scale fisheries, as they are often responsible not only for the social reproduction and care work in the household and the community, but also for the pre/post harvesting activities. As a result, women often work longer hours than men, but they usually receive very little or no pay for their work and are marginalized, and their central role in the fishing activity is not recognized. Recognizing, valuing and supporting women is an essential element of Food Sovereignty, and fighting for gender equity is key to the struggle for Food Sovereignty, as well as recognizing the human rights of other marginalized social groups, such as youth, indigenous people, LGBTQ communities, ethnic and religious minorities, that face oppressive dynamics every day.

QUESTIONS FOR LINKING THIS PILLAR TO LOCAL

CONTEXTS: ⇒ Are fishing communities involved and properly consulted by government and/ or companies before decisions impacting their livelihoods are taken?

⇒ What strategies are fishing communities using to fight against developments affecting them and their livelihoods? What is the role of women in these strategies?

⇒ Are the rights of women, youth, indigenous people, LGBTQ communities, ethnic and religious minorities recognized and protected? If not, what actions can be taken to change the status quo?

⇒ What strategies can be used to build solidarity within the broader society for fishing communities and especially marginalized groups within the fishing communities?

⁵ FAO (2018) State of Fisheries and Aquaculture

C. LOCALIZE FOOD SYSTEMS

“Fishing communities [...] can decide independently on their own food system. They are at the center of decision making in terms of processing of fish products [...]; using aquatic products for medicine and cultural traditions [...], direct sales at local and regional markets; and use of traditional and new technology. In the localized food system, communities resist unsustainable policies and practices” (WFFP, 2017)

The globalized, neo-liberal food system is threatening the survival of small-scale fishing communities. In many instances, middlemen (in other words, intermediaries and commissioners) and marketers control the small-scale fisheries' value-chain and profit from it, as they take advantage of fishers' low bargaining power, often due to lack of conservation facilities and access to markets, which urge the fishers to sell their fish, even if the prices they receive are low. In many instances, fishers take out loans from the middlemen in order to fix boats, pay for school fees of their children and other households' needs before the fishing season, provided that they will sell their fish only to the middleman they are in debt with, for a fixed, low price, making them unable to save money and therefore stuck into a debt cycle.

The industrialized food system also pushes for the fish-processing and marketing activities to be taken from the hands of the community, and particularly from women. Instead of fishers transforming the fish themselves by using traditional methods, fish-processing is delocalized by industrial companies. Thus, fish processors, mostly women, have to carry out alienating activities for a low salary, losing all the benefits they could get from owning the means of production in the fisheries value-chain, as well as their traditional knowledge.

In the current globalized fish trade system, fisheries products are exported from communities, to far away markets. People in rural fishing areas that traditionally consumed fish, don't have access to fresh fish anymore. In urban areas, only middle and upper classes have access to fresh fish, while lower classes have access to processed fish products. Thus, fish consumers are also deprived of their food sovereignty by the globalized, neo-liberal food system.

To counteract this global trend, we must localize food systems. This entails building and strengthening direct links between the fishers and those that consume the fish. From a Food Sovereignty perspective, these direct links are built on solidarity, and on the ideal of mutual support. In order to disrupt the neo-liberal logic dominating fish trade, links can be built between fishers and the local public social services, such as schools, hospitals, and elderly homes, with fishers being organized in fisher associations or cooperatives. These legal entities can also be built to solve credit issues directly by collectively bargaining for better prices for the fish and developing collective saving schemes. They can also be a tool to re-localize fish processing within the communities if fishers collectively own the facilities to transform fish.

QUESTIONS FOR LINKING THIS PILLAR TO LOCAL CONTEXTS:

- ⇒ What is the impact of globalization of fish trade on fishing communities in your local context?
- ⇒ What is the understanding fisher people have about the globalized seafood system?
- ⇒ What are the strategies adopted by fishing communities to counter-act the negative impacts of this delocalized food system, if any?
- ⇒ Should community-based studies be developed to better understand the seafood system networks, and detect opportunities for fisher people to localize it?
- ⇒ Are community-based fisheries' legal entities a solution to localize the food system?

D. PUT CONTROL LOCALLY

“Access to fishing grounds [...] is a fundamental right of fishing communities. Territories and resources are governed and managed locally as common goods for the benefit of communities at large. Governance and management practices leading to privatization of territories and fish resources are rejected. The rights of women and Indigenous Peoples are fundamental for protecting and promoting local control over territories and resources in small-scale fisheries.” (WFFP, 2017)

Fisheries laws and management arrangements often disregard the human-rights based approach. Often small-scale fishing communities are not included in the decisions affecting them and their natural resources. When fish stocks are assessed, the traditional knowledge of fishers is also often ignored and not taken into account by fisheries scientists and governments, who then take decisions about the management of stocks without consulting the fishers. When fisheries are discussed at all levels of governances, from local to global, often “experts” like scientists, economists and big companies are consulted, while the fishers are not even in the room.

The Saami indigenous people from Northern Europe are currently struggling to keep control over their traditional fishing resources, which are being privatized by the colonial Finnish and Norwegian governments. For example, recreational fishers buy licenses for 60-80 euros a day, when traditional fishers don't have access to the resource because their traditional fishing gear has been prohibited, based on the recommendations by scientists that refuse to acknowledge the traditional, indigenous fisheries management system of the Saami people. As explained by Aslak Holmberg, from the Saami Council:

“It is actually relatively new that the government manages fish stocks. There has always been a customary law to wait one hour between every boat that is fishing in one place. I think it would be beneficial to clarify our alternative way of limiting the fishing.”

The human rights-based approach to fisheries implies that those whose livelihoods depend on fisheries should have control over their fishing grounds and be part of their fisheries management. Such control should be exercised by fishers at local level, through democratic practices. This approach developed by WFFP, WFF and their allies is at the core of the International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines, 2014). The SSF Guidelines became the first international instrument protecting the rights of small-scale fishing communities, and were developed collectively, by small-scale fisher people, in a consultative and participatory way, and adopted by the UN member states during the meeting of the UN Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2014.

Food sovereignty puts small-scale fishers at the center of decision-making on issues that affect fisheries and communities supported by fisheries. In cases where fisher people seek to take back control over natural resources, the SSF Guidelines are a powerful tool to mobilize fishing communities and to build food sovereignty and assert fishers' rights.

QUESTIONS FOR LINKING THIS PILLAR TO LOCAL CONTEXTS:

- ⇒ What are the current customary/community-based management practices in your local context?
- ⇒ How can the SSF Guidelines be used as an advocacy tool for the recognition of local, traditional and customary management systems to be recognized and implemented?
- ⇒ How can fishing communities communicate about their customary fisheries management practices and their traditional knowledge that keeps their fishery productive?
- ⇒ What strategies can be developed to struggle against other interests trying to get control over fishing resources?

E. BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

“Small-scale fishers have built their traditional, customary and/or Indigenous knowledge and skills over many generations. The role of Indigenous fishers and women are of particular importance for protecting and promoting the knowledge and skills in small-scale fisheries. The Food Sovereignty agenda rejects practices and technologies that are harmful to fishing communities, their territories and natural resources.” (WFFP, 2017)

The knowledge and culture of fishing communities is not only related to the act of fishing, but also to all the traditional practices of the community, which strongly relate to the intense relationship fisher people have with the sea, rivers, and lakes. This knowledge is passed on orally and through traditional practices such as festivals and rituals. Importantly, women in fishing communities maintain knowledge on different uses of natural resources, such as the medical uses of mangrove fruits and fish oil, and of traditional fish recipes.

Small-scale fishing communities all over the world are custodians of a wealth of traditional knowledge and cultural practices. Traditional knowledge and culture are essential in defining peoples’ collective and individual identities and at the same time, each culture is unique and constantly evolving. Local knowledge and cultures are maintained and transmitted from generation to generation, but they also evolve.

Food Sovereignty values and defends the culture and knowledge of fisher people. Through their practices, fishing communities are preserving their local biodiversity and defending their natural resources, territories, and their practices. Youth and women in fishing communities play an important role in the evolution of and innovations in the communities’ knowledge and practices.

Although practices occur in many different ways, fishing and related activities are also what unite fishers at the global scale. In the words of an Indonesian fisher:

“When we are at sea, there is no religion, fishing is the religion”.

This shared identity is what gives fisher people the power to organize collectively, in order to stand for Food Sovereignty, and struggle against the threats they face. Through the sharing and exchange of knowledges, techniques, strategies, from fisher to fisher, the collective power and knowledge of fisher people is constantly evolving and strengthening globally.

QUESTIONS FOR LINKING THIS PILLAR TO LOCAL CONTEXTS:

- ⇒ What are the local cultural practices of fishing communities in your area?
- ⇒ What are the traditional uses of the natural resources, beyond fishing? Who holds this knowledge?
- ⇒ How can these practices be documented to value the cultural importance of fisheries?
- ⇒ How are local fishing practices evolving? What is the role of youth and women in this process?
- ⇒ How can the local knowledge and culture be enriched through exchanges with fishing communities from other regions, countries and continents?

F. WORK WITH NATURE

“Small-scale fishing communities have a long history of working with and respecting nature. The interconnectedness between fisher people and nature is deeply rooted in traditions and customary practices, and especially so for Indigenous Peoples. Small-scale fishers use low technology fishing gear; consume all the fish landed; use very little fuel per volume of fish caught; and use integrated (extensive) fish farming systems with no chemical inputs. The inter-connectedness between small-scale fishing communities and the natural environment provides the best possible safeguard against environmental destruction and constitutes a real solution towards stopping climate change.” (WFFP, 2017)

Working with nature means being aware of our actions with respect to nature, in other words, adopting sustainable fishing practices both in environmental and social terms. As detailed by the FAO in a 2016 report, several fishing stocks are over-exploited mainly due to industrial fishing, pollution and climate change. These are directly connected to the neo-liberal logic of commodification of natural resources, in which oceans, rivers, lakes, mangroves, and nature in general, are seen as something to exploit for profit making, not as the basis for peoples’ livelihoods and culture, traditionally and for future generations.

For small-scale fishing communities, fishing represents much more than making money to generate profits at the expense of the current and future communities and peoples, or at the expense of the environment in which they live. Traditional and customary fishing management practices are the way fisher people interact with the ecosystem: taking just the fish they need to support their community and letting go the fish that the ecosystem needs to recover, to support future generations. Small-scale fishing communities practice their activities in harmony with their environment, working within nature’s cycles and respecting it as it sustains our livelihoods. Food sovereignty recognizes such practices, and it is about carrying out fishing activities while taking care of nature.

QUESTIONS FOR LINKING THIS PILLAR TO LOCAL CONTEXTS:

- ⇒ What are the local practices and management arrangements used by fishing communities to ensure the maintenance of their natural resources for the next generations?
- ⇒ What are the strategies used by fishing communities to expose and oppose the negative impacts of industrial fishing, extractivist industries, and coastal developments on their natural resources?
- ⇒ What are the practices used to reverse climate change?
- ⇒ How do small-scale fisher people engage in the debates around “sustainable fishing”?

4. CASE STUDY: ISTANBUL BİRLİK ASSERTS THEIR CONTROL OVER THEIR LOCAL FISHERIES ECONOMY

During the meeting in Thessaloniki, the case of Istanbul Fishing Cooperatives Association (Istanbul Birlik- WFFP member in Turkey) was discussed to illustrate how fishers on the ground are already taking actions towards building Food Sovereignty, even if it is not expressed in these words exactly.⁶

The Istanbul Fishing Cooperatives Association (Istanbul Birlik), which was established in 1980, consists of 34 fishing cooperatives with 2500 members in Istanbul, most of them being coastal small-scale fishers. The Association is working with local municipalities and other government agencies to organize trainings and workshops for small-scale coastal fishers in the Istanbul region, to improve livelihoods of small-scale fishers and their families, to establish cooperation and solidarity among them, and to defend them against the economic power and exploitation of commissioners (middlemen) in the supply chain. Istanbul Birlik is also taking initiatives to deliver (produce or import) suitable fishing equipment for its members. Istanbul Birlik strongly believes that supporting small-scale fisheries is of great importance for sustainable fishing practices in our seas. With this in mind, the Association is organizing awareness campaigns and works with local NGOs and scientists in Turkey. Istanbul Birlik is also one of the 14 regional associations of SÜR-KOOP, the Central Association of Fishing Cooperatives in Turkey. Istanbul Birlik closely collaborates with social and marine scientists in Turkey, which is enabled by a formal Scientific Support Committee of Istanbul Birlik. These scientists voluntarily provide training, qualitative or quantitative analysis and organizational support to Istanbul Birlik.

To address the shrinking incomes and the threat of disappearance of small-scale fishing, a local marketing model, with the objective of selling fish directly to consumers, is currently proposed by Istanbul Birlik. After consultations with scientists, and several meetings organized among cooperatives, the Board of Istanbul Birlik has decided to establish this direct sales model. Around twenty of the 34 cooperatives under Istanbul Birlik have expressed their support and changed their constitutions accordingly. The idea is to open Direct Sales Shops in 25 central districts of Istanbul so that fishing cooperatives can reach urban consumers directly without any middlemen. According to their calculations, this system will increase the pay for the fish off-the-boat by about 25%, and annual profit distribution will further improve livelihoods at around 10%. Eliminating the middlemen is seen as a way to break the debt cycle, as small-scale fishers will receive a fairer ex-vessel price and will save on the transportation costs when these are overtaken by the Direct Sales Shops. The new model will create employment for family members (especially women and the younger generation). Consumers will also benefit since they will have access to high quality seafood for a fair price.

Moreover, the proposed model has the potential of re-instituting the prestige and social status once enjoyed by small-scale fishers by establishing closer interactions between urban consumers and fishers via “know your fisher” campaigns, fishing festivals and other measures of advocacy and awareness raising. Istanbul Birlik is also emphasizing the reduction of ecological impacts via the new model as small-scale fishers usually adopt more sustainable fishing practices as opposed to industrial fishers.

This example highlights how, even if the term Food Sovereignty is not used, fishers at the grassroots level are already putting food sovereignty in action. By carrying out consultations among the fishing cooperatives and also with scientists and local governments, fishers are **building their knowledge and skills** to build **localized markets** that aims at providing nutritious, ecologically viable and affordable **food for people**. By developing this model through the existing fishing cooperatives systems, **control is**

⁶ This case study on the Istanbul Birlik’s strategy to regain control on their fisheries has been written by Pınar Ertör, who is supporting Istanbul Birlik.

exercised locally. Through the implementation of this marketing model, fishers are also re-asserting their **value as food providers**, and creating additional opportunities for their communities, in particular **women and youth**. By establishing a fish marketing model that is not based on big profit making, but on the reduction of ecological impacts of fisheries, Istanbul Birlik is **working with nature**.

5. ARTICULATING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERS: THE WAY FORWARD

A. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY EXCHANGE IN 2019: BUILDING A METHODOLOGICAL TOOLBOX FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN FISHERIES

Food Sovereignty is a strategy to further the SSF struggle at local and national level, but also at the global level, in spaces like FAO, as one of the objectives of Food Sovereignty is to open the decision-making processes to small-scale fisher people. Joining the Food Sovereignty movement is also a way to create alliances with other movements and small-scale food producers and consumers. To summarize, Food sovereignty is a way to articulate a political program, by identifying concrete priorities on the ground, and push these priorities in political spaces, to get concrete results that have a positive impact at the grassroots level.

All over the world, fishing communities are impacted by climate change and governments, international institutions and the private sector are now presenting Blue Growth/Blue Economy strategies⁷ as a solution to mitigate climate change and achieve sustainable development, by expanding large Marine Protected Areas and intensive aquaculture, in parallel to growing extractive industries, in which deep sea mining for oil and gas is the new frontier. Making our food systems more resilient is becoming more and more urgent and Food Sovereignty is the political alternative and the tool fishers can use to counteract the Blue Growth and ocean grabbing, and to propose real solutions to climate change, based on their traditional knowledge and grassroots strategies, as the Birlik case study shows.

For the next WFFP exchange on Food Sovereignty, to be held in 2019, the objective would be for the working group to develop and conduct an appropriate methodology, which can help understand the situation small-scale fishers face on the ground, in order to build their capacity and develop advocacy tools to enforce Food Sovereignty. Participatory action research tools⁸ are needed to build Food Sovereignty and raise awareness on the ground, using the SSF Guidelines to support the methodology.

When mobilizing small-scale fisher people on the ground, the concept of Food Sovereignty needs to be strongly linked to the local context. Referring to the 6 pillars, posing the questions proposed above, sharing and discussing case studies from different local realities, is a good way to start a conversation on Food Sovereignty. Indeed, the interconnection between the principles in these pillars is what makes Food Sovereignty. Therefore, the next Food Sovereignty exchange will be an opportunity to discuss all the questions raised in this report and to build a toolbox to advance the Food Sovereignty agenda at the local, national, and international level.

While the resources to carry out the exchange have been secured, date and location of the next exchange have to be confirmed yet, as new members of the Working Group will have to be involved in these decisions.

⁷ <https://www.tni.org/en/bluegrowth>

⁸ https://www.tni.org/files/publication/downloads/a_toolkit_for_participatory_action_research.pdf

B. JOINING THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY WORKING GROUP

The Food Sovereignty Working Group is the space within WFFP where the discussion on Food Sovereignty is taken forward. This is not a decision-making body of WFFP, but it is where the work of Food Sovereignty is developed, and a space where support for building the capacity of WFFP members and organisations is coordinated.

The Food Sovereignty Working Group calls on WFFP members to join the working group by nominating a leader from their organisations, preferably youth and women leaders, to participate in the working group. This implies committing yourselves to the work, and to be actively involved in the Working Group activities. This entails participating in the organisation of the next exchange, the writing of the next report and all other activities, including skype calls and email exchanges, chairing meetings and taking minutes, participating in Food Sovereignty related events when necessary and reporting back to WFFP.

If you are interested in joining the WFFP Food Sovereignty Working Group, send an email to WFFP General Secretary Nadine Nembhard (nadine_nem@yahoo.com) and to Masifundise (carmen@masifundise.org.za).



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FORUM MONDIAL DES POPULATIONS DE PÊCHEURS