



Food Systems Transformation Through Feminist Climate Justice

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Feminist Climate Justice Think Pieces

No. 4

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1. Introduction

Capitalism... represents the socio-historical driver of climate change, and the core institutionalised dynamic that must be dismantled in order to stop it. But capitalism, so defined, is also deeply implicated in seemingly non-ecological forms of social injustice – from class exploitation to racial-imperial oppression and gender and sexual domination. And capitalism figures centrally, too, in seemingly non-ecological societal impasses – in crises of care and social reproduction; of finance, supply chains, wages, and work; of governance and de-democratisation.

*Nancy Fraser, *Climates of Capital**

In their attempts to make visible and challenge historical and contemporary forms of extraction, exploitation, violence, and dispossession, struggles for climate and gender justice are fundamentally anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal. This is not to equate women with nature, but to draw attention to the control and domination of the life producing capacities of nature and women by patriarchy and capitalism (and indeed by certain models of state communism). Capital accumulation, capitalist value creation and patriarchal social structures have predatory relationships with nature and women, viewing them as limitless sources of extraction of raw materials, natural resources, knowledge, labour and biophysical and social capacities, as well as dumping grounds for the absorption of fallouts including carbon, material

waste, ecological destruction, unemployment, hunger, sickness, and family and community care. Not surprisingly, both “source and sink”¹ functions are monetized (as in carbon offset schemes and so called “nature based solutions”), generating revenues for large businesses but dispossessing local populations from life sustaining territories.²

Nowhere is this parasitical relationship more evident than in global food systems and industrial agriculture. Our planet’s numerous biomes are home to a huge variety of life forms that humans and animals depend on for sustenance. But the relentless expansion of a globalized food system, long supply chains, and industrial agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries have released vast amounts of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs), poisoned land and water through agrochemicals, degraded or entirely destroyed natural ecosystems, shrunk agrobiodiversity, and endangered or wiped-out thousands of species.³ Industrial agricultural production and processing present some of the most unsafe and exploitative working conditions for workers, a large proportion of who are women from the global south, migrants and impoverished communities. The costs and dangers of the global industrial food system are obscured by narratives of modernity, progress and well-being through scientific advancement. The value of nature as a complex system of life processes is replaced by nature as a collection of materials and functions to be controlled by objective science for the greater common good – producing cheap food to feed a growing world population. Modern scientific and technological advances have enabled the alienation of food from nature, presented as a triumph of emancipation of food

1 Canavan, Gerry; Klarr, Lisa; and Vu, Ryan. “Embodied Materialism in Action: An Interview with Ariel Salleh.” 2010. *English Faculty Research and Publications*, 193. https://epublications.marquette.edu/english_fac/193.

2 Dunne, Daisy and Yanine Quiroz. Mapped: *The impacts of carbon offset projects around the world*. <https://interactive.carbonbrief.org/carbon-offsets-2023/mapped.html>. Accessed 19 December 2023.

3 Benton, Tim G; Bieg, Carling; Harwatt, Helen; Pudasaini, Roshan; and Wellesley, Laura. *Food system impacts on biodiversity loss: Three levers for food system transformation in support of nature*. February 2021. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021-02-03-food-system-biodiversity-loss-benton-et-al_0.pdf. Accessed 15 November 2023.

production from the unpredictability of climate change which ironically, industrial agriculture and global supply and value chains contribute to significantly.

Patriarchy, as an ideology and system of power, runs very deep. Despite multilateral commitments to eliminate gender discrimination and inequality, far too many policy makers are resistant to feminism as a framework for social, cultural, economic and political transformation, and to the concept of intersectionality as a way to understand and tackle gender inequalities and discrimination in food systems, access to justice and the realisation of human rights. Testimonies and proposals calling for radical overhaul of structures that perpetuate gender discrimination and disadvantage are often dismissed as emotional rather than rational, and idealistic rather than viable.

A feminist approach to climate justice demands that the causes and drivers of the oppression of women and anthropogenic climate change, i.e., patriarchy and global capitalism, be interrogated as intersectional systems and practices, and that policies and strategies to address climate change do not reproduce the same oppressions, extractions and destruction. In the realm of food and agriculture,

feminist climate justice must make visible the ways in which patriarchal capitalist economic systems colonize and dominate food systems, identify strategic actions for decolonization, and build support for food systems that nourish the world through systems and practices embedded in human rights and respect for our planet's carrying capacity.

As shown in the report *Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action*, recognition, redistribution, representation and reparation are necessary, reinforcing dimensions of a multi-layered strategy of structural and systemic transformation of the global food system that has at its centre the confrontation of power asymmetries in all spheres, and liberation from all forms of oppression.⁴ Liberation has to be individual, collective and intersectional – straddling class, caste, race, gender and sexual identity, culture, history, society, politics, location and knowledge. Liberation must build the agency and autonomy of women, particularly those whose communities and networks of support are geographically dispersed because of climate disasters, forced evictions, distress migration, refuge and asylum seeking, and the violence of military occupation, armed conflicts, and war.

2. Gender and Climate Change

Anthropogenic climate change and its elaboration as a global crisis are gendered. Depending on their race, class, geographic location and other social factors, women and men experience the impacts of climate change differently in terms of their responsibilities, work burdens and abilities to respond to crises. Like climate change, gender discrimination is a systemic, multi-dimensional and inter-generational issue: it starts at an early age and unless corrected at every point of occurrence, it traps women into entrenched conditions of

marginalisation and inequality that cannot be rectified by diverting cash here and there. Persisting gender discrimination and equality are deep structural defects that diminish individual and collective potential for half of the world's people, and shape power relations within and among societies. Addressing them effectively demands significant redistribution of financial resources and political power.

At the same time, the understanding of much of the world about climate change is shaped by an epistemic

4 Turquet, Laura; Tabbush, Constanza; Staab, Silke; Williams, Loui; and Howell, Brianna. 2023. "Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action." Conceptual Framework prepared for the Progress of the World's Women Series. New York: UN-Women.

framework and body of knowledge that is masculine: there have been too few women in the building of this science and its translation to policy discourse. And despite naming causes and drivers, the scientific rational approach to address the climate crisis continues to foster a capitalist worldview. The bedrock of this epistemology is positivism, which allows little room for heterodox, situated and lived experience knowledge. When such knowledge is allowed into policy discourse, it is more often than not presented as anecdotal and /or pertaining to contextual particularity rather than given due recognition as knowledge that can transform our understanding and thereby forge radically different courses of action.

Knowledge production is always subjective and embodies the class, gender, race, social and cultural character and situatedness of knowledge producers. In positivist epistemology, however, knowledge produced by modern (western) well financed science is universalized as objective truth; and diverse lived realities must bear the burden of proof to initiate meaningful policy responses. Although its causes and drivers are well established, agreement on the science of climate change even at

high levels of policy making does not automatically recognize the human and economic interests behind these drivers, nor does it garner the political will and capacity to make them change course.⁵ The domination of nature, of women, and of life bodies and life conditions are intrinsic to patriarchy and capitalism, and makes possible the generation of profits, and accumulation of wealth, economic and political power at multiple levels – local to global. These are not interests that are given up easily.

Mainstream scientific and policy discourses frame the causes, processes, impacts and strategies regarding climate change in transactional and utilitarian terms, more as numerical and individual scientific facts rather than as systemic disruptions, upheavals and violence. While such numbers and facts are certainly important to gauge the extent of the crisis, they conceal the actors and interests that most benefit from and drive the actions and processes that perpetuate the crisis. They also make it difficult to identify the deep transformations in social, economic and governance systems needed to address climate change and injustice, that go beyond individualised habits and preferences.

3. Problematizing the Climate and Food Systems Nexus

Bringing the above discussion to food systems, we need to confront the carbon footprint of food and agriculture, as well as inequality and discrimination in the availability of and access to sufficient nutritious food, especially for poor and working classes many of whom are engaged in food and agriculture. Despite significant increases in food production, almost

750 million people faced hunger in 2022. Hunger and malnutrition have been on the rise since before the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting females more than males overall.^{6,7} Discrimination and inequality in access to food are intersectional, and made worse by land conversions and dispossession, natural resource depletion, food price fluctuations and precarious

5 See <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change> and <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change>. Accessed 28 November 2023.

6 FAOSTAT Analytical Brief 41: Agricultural Production Statistics 2000-2020: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9180en/cb9180en.pdf>. Accessed 10 December 2023.

7 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2023. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural-urban continuum*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3017en>.

employment. Globally, one third of GHG emissions come from agriculture and food systems and these need to be drastically reduced.^{8,9} But all agriculture and food systems are not the same: they vary widely in their conditions of production, use of fossil

fuels and energy, impacts on the environment, climate, biodiversity and people engaged in food production/provision, the safety and nutritional quality of the food produced, and the social and economic benefits to food producers, workers and society.

4. Women and Small-Scale Food Provision

Small scale food producers (including peasants, fisherfolk, herders, workers and Indigenous Peoples) nourish the majority of the world's rural and urban poor and working classes through territorially situated (local, sub-regional, national) food systems. Much of this small-scale provision comes from the labour and time of women and girls, who perform an astounding array of tasks for food and economic production, family maintenance, different kinds of care work, and sustaining the social fabric. In the global South, rural women make up at least half of the agricultural work force – working on family and community plots, and through formal and informal employment elsewhere.¹⁰ Women produce crops, and raise and manage poultry, fish, dairy animals and other livestock for household consumption and sale. Despite their centrality in food provisioning, women experience tremendous discrimination at household and societal levels that are not recognised and adequately addressed by policy makers.

Responsibilities of family care hinder women's access to education, concentrating them in lower rungs of the labour market in jobs that require less formal training. As agricultural workers, women are responsible for the least mechanised tasks which are most easily displaced by the introduction of new technologies. Although women earn incomes and manage domestic consumption, they have far less agency than men in making economic decisions, accessing external

financing, and in secure tenure over land and agricultural resources. As local agricultural production becomes more market driven and integrated into global value chains, women are increasingly alienated from their lands and territories, and marginalized from access to and control over all types of resources. Climate change induced disasters and displacement aggravate gender inequalities, greatly increase women's workload and exposure to hazardous conditions, and undermine their agency, especially in situations where women rely directly on the natural environment for food provision, water, fuel wood, subsistence and income.

This disempowerment and marginalization of small-scale women food providers are closely linked to broader macroeconomic policy changes that were set in motion more than three decades ago. The structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and austerity measures imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on indebted developing countries demanded trade and financial liberalization, privatization of all essential sectors, and new regulatory regimes that favoured the entry and operation of foreign corporations in domestic economies. This resulted in huge rollbacks of public spending on health, education, water, sanitation, energy and other essential services, drastic cuts in social protection and subsidies for low-income and poor populations, weakening of labour and environmental regulations, and the provision of market access to agri-food corporations leading in turn to

8 Turquet et al. 2023. "Feminist Climate Justice".

9 United Nations Environment Programme. "10 things you should know about industrial farming." 20 July 2020. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/10-things-you-should-know-about-industrial-farming>. Accessed 10 December 2023.

10 FAO. 2023. *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*. <https://www.fao.org/3/CC5060EN/online/status-women-agrifood-systems-2023/chapter1.html>. Accessed 25 March 2024.

food import dependencies, as well as disinvestment in local-national food systems. Small scale food producers lost much needed state support for production inputs, water, energy, marketing, insurance, and risk protection, and many fell into debt traps, mortgaged their lands, and were compelled to seek off farm work. Today many developing countries remain trapped in vicious debt cycles, without the resources to address climate disasters and vulnerability, and unable to undertake the measures needed to rebuild domestic food provisioning capacity and meet their right to food obligations. Climate change disasters are major causes of debt, poverty and hunger, and industrial agriculture and the global food system are key components of this nexus.¹¹

In most societies, female family members are responsible for providing the crucial care functions that ensure the welfare of their families and communities. In times

of economic crises, women's multiple roles as food producers, care givers and wage earners acquire heightened importance in ensuring the economic and physical survival of their families. However, because the public and private sectors are monetized but care work provided by family members is not, the transfer of costs from the state and market onto families and women, usually remains hidden and unacknowledged. Conventional accounts of how economies work and how crises are managed do not recognize the centrality of care work in ensuring family welfare and well-being, and how women's work subsidizes the state and markets. Consequently, state-led processes of crisis management have been more or less blind to the specific needs and contributions of women, thus wearing away their capacities and rights to balanced, dignified and improved lives.

5. Transnational Corporations and Food Systems

Research points to the global agri-food system as the main culprit of the climate, biodiversity and food crises the world is facing because of its heavy reliance on fossil fuels for production, processing, storage, packaging transportation and distribution, the deforestation and land use changes it entails, and long supply chains.^{12,13} The global agri-food system is based on industrial food and agriculture production, long supply chains and global export markets, dominated by transnational corporations (TNCs) and finance capital, and shored up by subsidies, tax breaks, intellectual property rights protections, and neoliberal trade and investment agreements. It is largely immune from social and environmental responsibility, often operating outside national legal systems through chains of subcontracting firms that make up global supply value chains.

The negative impacts of industrial agriculture and global food systems go well beyond their direct contributions to GHG emissions: the high use of antibiotics, hormones, pesticides, herbicides and other agrochemicals make industrially produced food dangerous to human and animal health, and contaminate water sources and lands; they are high energy and water consumers, and generate huge amounts of waste that destroy natural ecosystems and biodiversity; they promote ultra-processed foods that are calorie dense, high in sugar and salt but low on nutrients, triggering malnutrition, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, etc.; they occupy more than 60% of the world's arable lands¹⁴ and continue to edge into the territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; their supply chains operate largely

11 IPES-Food. 2023. *Breaking the cycle of unsustainable food systems, hunger, and debt*. https://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/DebtFoodCrisis.pdf. Accessed 20 June 2024.

12 United Nations Environment Programme. 2020. "10 things".

13 Clapp, Jennifer. 2021. "The Problem with Growing Corporate Concentration and Power in the Global Food System." *Nature Food* 2 (6): 404–408. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00297-7>.

14 United Nations Environment Programme. 2020. "10 things".

through a poorly paid labour force, often in unsafe and precarious work conditions, many of who are unprotected migrants. The relatively low monetary cost of industrial foods is made possible because it does not include the costs of waste disposal, environmental protection and clean-up, treatment of food induced health conditions and diseases, living wages, safe working conditions, social security and addressing numerous impacts that are written off as ‘externalities.’

Central in this scenario is the increasing power of TNCs over the economy, society, politics and governance. Horizontal and vertical concentration of the agri-food sector by large private firms armed with advanced digital technologies are entrenching industrial food production in our food systems as never before with profound implications for national and global food governance.¹⁵ A small number of TNCs exercise a high degree of influence within and over the global agri-food food system (from agricultural inputs to global trade), forming giant companies through mergers and acquisitions and profoundly reconfiguring the world economy.¹⁶ Although the involvement of corporations in food and agriculture dates back centuries to the colonial era, neoliberalism and financialization since the 1980’s have greatly boosted market rule in food systems and enabled a global corporate food regime.¹⁷ In recent decades, financial actors have become increasingly involved in agri-food supply chains through complex financial instruments.¹⁸ Finance corporations and asset management firms have invested in and own significant proportions of shares in agri-food companies (including seeds, agrochemicals, machinery processing, trading and retail) and digital

technology firms, and are frequently the hidden faces behind land, water and resource grabbing.¹⁹

A critical component of corporate power in food systems is their role in food and agriculture governance, which is both, enhanced by and contributes to multilevel and multisectoral market concentration.²⁰ Corporations have a long history of influencing governance through visible and less visible strategies including voluntary certification schemes, public-private partnerships, corporate philanthropy, multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs), political donations, research sponsorships, lobbying policy and decision makers, influencing trade and investment agreements, financing governance fora and sponsoring official participation in key international fora. Operating in concert, they insert corporate friendly content into governance mechanisms as well as build the perception of legitimacy of corporations engagement in global food and agriculture governance, including in United Nations settings.²¹

Recent research shows that MSIs are rife with conflicts of interest, prioritise ‘stakeholders’ (for example, corporations) over ‘rights holders’ and obscure the obligations of states to uphold the rights of people.²² MSIs are non-transparent in agenda setting and disregard power asymmetries among participants (for example, between peasant women and agribusiness representatives), effectively excluding affected peoples from shaping policy decisions. MSIs avoid rules that contradict commercial interests and that can hold corporations legally and financially accountable for the harm that they cause, furthering

15 HLPE. 2020. *Food Security and Nutrition: Building a Global Narrative towards 2030*. A Report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Rome. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf>.

16 Clapp, Jennifer. 2021. “The Problem with Growing Corporate Concentration”.

17 McMichael, Philip. 2013. *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

18 HLPE. 2020. *Food Security and Nutrition*.

19 IPES-Food. 2023. *Who’s Tipping the Scales? The growing influence of corporations on the governance of food systems, and how to counter it*. https://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/tippingthescales.pdf. Accessed 20 June 2024.

20 Guttal, Shalmali. “Pro-Corporate Multilateralism and Food Insecurity” in *The Global Food Crisis, this time*. Focus on the Global south. 9 November 2022. <https://focusweb.org/publications/globalfoodcrisis2022/>. Accessed 10 December 2023.

21 Canfield, Matthew C; Anderson, Molly D; and McMichael, Philip. 2021. “UN Food Systems Summit 2021: Dismantling Democracy and Resetting Corporate Control of Food Systems.” *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 5: 103.

22 Chandrasekaran, Kirtana and Shalmali Guttal. *Exposing Corporate Capture of the UNFSS Through Multistakeholderism*. 23 September 2021. <https://foodsystems4people.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/UNFSSreport2021-pdf.pdf>. Accessed 12 November 2023.

corporate impunity and denying effective remedy for those who have been harmed.²³ As such, MSIs, like the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in 2021,

are entirely incompatible with the four domains of feminist climate justice, recognition, redistribution, representation and reparation.²⁴

6. Moving Towards Transformation and Justice

Capitalism is primed to freeride on nature and human capacity, often threatening to destabilise societies and economies and precipitate crises. Scientists studying global warming and climate change have long warned of the dangers of over dependence on a fossil fuels-based economy, the destructive manifestations of which have been evident over the past several decades. The world is in the grips of the third global food crisis in the past 50 years and like previous ones, it promises to be a multi-year crisis with knock-on effects affecting hundreds of millions of people around the world. But instead of seeking genuine course correction, new frontiers of extraction and exploitation continue to be invented, ignoring the reality that nature does not have a limitless capacity for regeneration, especially if the necessary conditions for regeneration are themselves destroyed.

With each global economic, financial and food crisis, governance has not addressed the root causes of the crises, but instead, has allowed production and markets to be dominated even more by corporations and markets, and without commensurate accountability and liability: supply and value chains have become even longer, with larger climate, environmental and social footprints, and shocking increases in the exploitation of nature and women's work, all written off as externalities. Instead of actually cutting GHG emissions, new frontiers for carbon offsetting are being proposed based on converting agricultural soils and coastal and marine areas into carbon 'removals' that companies claim will sequester carbon

and generate new carbon credits. These technologies will infringe on the territories of small-scale farmers, fishers and Indigenous Peoples, and pose new threats to land and marine food systems, furthering the marginalization of small-scale women food providers.

The biggest obstacles to climate and gender justice in food and agriculture are the concentrated market and governance power of the global corporate, industrial food system underpinned by patriarchy. The current conjuncture underscores the urgency of a global paradigm shift away from this unequal, exploitative and destructive system, and towards territorially embedded, cooperative and accountable food systems and markets. Such a shift is possible through food sovereignty, agroecology, territorial markets and public interest economies – based on values of equality, justice, dignity, human and collective rights, social protection, grassroots feminism, and respect for nature.²⁵

Food sovereignty, agroecology, territorial markets and the local/regional food systems they shape encourage us to carefully consider the issue of scale, and its relationship with resilience, autonomy and agency. A critical flaw in industrial food systems is its massive scale, which amplifies its destructive impacts across regions, sectors and biomes. Successful examples of food sovereignty, agroecology and territorial markets can be found all over the world, but their strength lies in being effective at scales that do not destroy the social, economic and environmental conditions of their

23 IPES-Food. 2023. *Who's Tipping the Scales?*

24 Turquet, et al. 2023. "Feminist Climate Justice".

25 Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism. 2016. *Connecting Smallholders to Markets: an analytical guide*. <https://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/English-CONNECTING-SMALLHOLDERS-TO-MARKETS.pdf>. Accessed 18 December 2023.

existence, deplete water and biodiversity, and alienate food providers from consumers and other actors in the food system. All of them require official (state) and public supports to expand and flourish, but scaling up and out need to be done within limits that do not undermine the resilience of these systems, and the autonomy and agency of women food providers.

The transformation of the global food system for climate and gender justice must avoid replicating its current negative characteristics in any shape or form. This calls for processes and collective will towards dismantling destructive structures, practices and systems, and making space and redirecting resources and support towards systems and practices with proven potential for positive transformation.

Presented below are recommendations based on proposals developed by organisations of small-scale food providers and workers, and allied research and civil society organisations.

6.1 Invest public resources and infrastructure to support food sovereignty, agroecology and territorial markets

Food sovereignty elaborates a food system centred on human and collective rights, and social, gender, economic, environmental and climate justice. It emphasizes ecologically sound production, distribution and consumption, and territorially embedded food systems as ways to tackle hunger and poverty and assure sustainable food security for all peoples. It advocates trade and investment that serve the collective aspirations of society, and publicly provided social infrastructure for healthcare, education, water, sanitation, energy, transportation, etc. It promotes participatory democracy, community control of productive resources; agrarian reform and tenure security for small-scale food producers; protection

and regeneration of water sources and biodiversity; situated knowledge, innovations, and technologies; and social relations free of gender, race, class and inter-generational oppression and inequality.²⁶

Food sovereignty was publicly launched in 1996 by La Via Campesina and has since then grown into worldwide movement supported by social movements, unions, food policy experts, and many governments and multilateral institutions.^{27,28}

The operationalisation of food sovereignty involves four pillars, each of which shows ways forward for food systems transformation through the framework of feminist climate justice.

- a) Respect and realization of human rights and justice for all peoples, especially small-scale food producers, migrant and waged workers, Indigenous Peoples, women and youth, recognizing and addressing the intersectionality and inter-dependence of discrimination, rights and justice.
- b) Agroecology as a science, system of knowledge, innovations and practices, and an eco-social movement with recognition and support for women as innovators, producers and holders of knowledge.
- c) Redistributive agrarian and aquatic reform, protection of eco-systems and water bodies, and ensuring the rights of Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolk and local populations to land and territories, emphasizing the rights and autonomy of women in making decisions about land and resource use.²⁹
- d) Distribution, exchange, commerce and strengthening local economies through territorial markets, recognizing and boosting the agency of women as economic actors.

26 Declaration of Nyeleni. 27 February 2007. Nyeleni Village, Selingue Mali. <https://nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/DeclNyeleni-en.pdf>. Accessed 18 December 2023.

27 See <https://viacampesina.org/en/media-and-publications/publications-publications/>. Accessed 18 December 2023.

28 See <https://nyeleni.org/en/all-editions/>. Accessed 19 December 2023.

29 See <https://viacampesina.org/en/what-are-we-fighting-for/agrarian-reform/key-documents-land-water-territories/>. Accessed 17 December 2023.

However, the acceptance of the principles and pillars of food sovereignty does not automatically lead to gender equality and justice. Over the past decade, women in La Via Campesina have built a manifesto of grassroots peasant feminism that calls for food sovereignty to not only break with capitalist agricultural models, but equally with patriarchal systems that oppress women and gender diverse peoples.³⁰ In a transformative framework, food production must take into account how food is produced, by who, where, and under what conditions, and commit to changing oppressive, discriminatory, unjust and destructive conditions.

6.2 Deconcentrate and dismantle corporate concentration to advance governance of food systems in the public interest

Advancing the rights and interests of women food providers is sine qua non to public interest. Learning from history, feminist transformation in food systems and agriculture must shift from the logic of concentration to the logic of diversity, dismantling structures and systems that are hard wired to perpetuate crises and injustice, and making space and freeing up resources for different paradigms to be able to flourish.³¹ Operationalizing such a transformation entails unraveling the power relationships between corporations and states; enacting regulation to deconcentrate corporate power and dismantle corporate monopolies and oligopolies, and; redirecting financial, institutional, and political support towards paradigms and systems that enable the praxis of feminist climate justice.³²

Specific action points include:

- a) Create clear public-interest based mechanisms for assessing, disclosing, monitoring and addressing conflicts of interest in food systems governance for corporations and their partners in all sectors
- b) Reduce the market power of corporations through anti-trust legislation, competition policies, regulating food prices, reducing/stopping food commodity speculation, and reviewing and reformulating trade and investment agreements.
- c) Enact strict rules on transparency and limits on lobbying and corporate financing of political and civil society campaigns.
- d) Create public awareness to counter the shaping of science, and public discourse and narratives, and prevent corporate influence in shaping research, narratives, and regulatory guidance.
- e) Redirect government resources and services to support and boost small-scale food provision and public rather than corporate interest; such policy agendas and budgeting much emerge from dialogues with small scale women food providers and be accountable to them through regular audits.
- f) Develop participation modalities for governance spaces and measures that are underpinned by human rights and proactively support representation by women from small-scale food producer, Indigenous Peoples, workers and migrants organizations and movements.
- g) Push for the for the adoption of a United Nations Corporate Accountability Framework shaped by human rights instruments such as CEDAW, UNDROP, UNDRIP and ILO conventions, and operationalized by a legally binding treaty in the United Nations Human Rights Council, to keep the United Nations free of undue corporate interference, and be able

30 La Via Campesina. 2021. "The Path of Peasant and Popular Feminism in La Via Campesina." <https://viacampesina.org/en/graphic-book-the-path-of-peasant-and-popular-feminism-in-la-via-campesina/>. Accessed 18 December 2023.

31 Clapp, Jennifer. 2022. "Concentration and crises: exploring the deep roots of vulnerability in the global industrial food system." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2022.2129013.

32 IPES-Food. 2023. *Who's Tipping the Scales?*

to hold corporations accountable for the impacts of their activities.

6.3 Build women’s agency and autonomy through justice and reparations

Feminist climate justice must address both, historical and contemporary systems and structures that are at the root of, and continue to perpetuate social, cultural, economic, financial, environmental and political injustices. A key component of this justice is reparations for past and ongoing wrongs and violations.

Tackling patriarchy is no small feat. Experience shows that targeting the material scaffolding of patriarchy and global capitalism is crucial to lay bare and address the barriers to women’s agency and autonomy. A pivotal strategy here is the democratisation of food systems. In practice this means that the voices of small-scale food providers – the majority of whom are women – and those most affected by hunger, poverty, discrimination, climate vulnerability, and social-economic-environmental policies – again mostly women – inform decision making about policies, laws and regulations regarding food and agriculture. This is important at all levels – national, regional and global – where agri-food firms, financiers and their associates exercise influence through public-private partnerships, MSIs and direct financing, and where micro and meso level gender discrimination and climate change impacts are obscured by corporate techno-fixes and market initiatives to address climate and food issues.

The extent to which corporations, finance capital and elite interests have insinuated themselves in governance make such a project of “emancipatory democratisation” a seemingly formidable endeavour. But it is necessary, and possible through targeted actions.

a) Develop and adopt legally enforceable mechanisms and remedies for correcting past wrongs and injustices, and structures and

processes for preventing future injustices, including a United Nations wide corporate accountability framework, as outlined above (see 6.2 g).

- b) Climate justice must include debt justice and freedom from crippling debt repayments and debt traps. The debts (public and private) of chronically indebted countries need to be cancelled so that they can redirect finances to rebuild domestic food systems and put in place measures that protect small-scale food producers – especially women – from climate, financial and economic shocks. Wealthy nations (that are the largest polluters and former colonial powers) should provide adequate financing for loss and damage, mitigation and adaptation that is additional, and free of policy conditionalities to avoid future debt traps. These payments and debt cancellations should be viewed as reparations, without quid pro quos.
- c) Develop and enact international regulations for tax justice, including closing tax havens and imposing windfall taxes for agri-food corporations. These would generate significant financial resources to support territorially embedded food systems, public procurement and distribution, social protection, and affirmative measures to tackle gender inequality and discrimination.
- d) Hold agri-food corporations legally and financially accountable for violating the rights of workers, including women workers employed informally and without contracts, sexual harassment and abuse of women workers, and the use of slave labour in agri-food systems. This should be accompanied by robust labour laws that protect women workers’ rights to living wages, equal pay, social protection, safe and healthy work environments, and to form their own unions as needed.
- e) Hold agri-food corporations legally and financially accountable for their climate footprints, environmental pollution, and destruction of eco-systems and biodiversity. Such accountability should be linked with broader campaigns for reparations

and repayment of the ecological debt from colonialism, and disproportionately high energy and material consumption by wealthy nations. A big challenge here is calculating adequate monetary amounts for environmental damage and plunder, and ensuring that payments are not captured by ruling elites who reproduce extractivism and dispossession in the guise of national development.

f) Prioritize the creation, long-term viability, and recognition of autonomous processes and spaces for voices, claims, and proposals of people's organizations and social movements emphasizing

processes that build the agency, autonomy and voice of women, Indigenous Peoples, and constituencies whose voices and needs have been and continue to be marginalized.

g) Enact and enforce laws to stop land grabbing, conversion of land and forests for industrial agriculture, and the concentration of land in the hands of elites, agribusinesses and other firms. Make redistributive agrarian reform, and community-based protection of marine, forest and land-based commons a reality, ensuring legal security of land and resource tenure for women food providers.

7. Conclusion

The care work that women food providers perform is production-of-life work (as articulated in ecofeminist thought) that depends greatly on nature and publicly provided services such as healthcare, education, energy, water supply and sanitation, etc. Under neoliberalism and global capitalism, production-of-life work has become much harder: the destruction of nature's cycles, water sources and bio-diverse eco-systems, privatisation of goods and services, destruction of local livelihoods, all result in systemic violence against women and diminish their capabilities. At the same time, continuing patriarchal values and structures deny women the policy support and measures they need to confront the deepening climate crisis.

Feminist climate justice must confront all forms of injustice and make common cause with all struggles for liberation, equality and justice. Feminism cannot be an elite project: it must seek to end oppression and discrimination for all women, while simultaneously developing strategies for women in particular contexts of vulnerability, exploitation, and oppression.

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