

# Food First NEWS & VIEWS

INSTITUTE FOR FOOD AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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photo by Eric Holt-Giménez



*The U.S. Working Group on the Food Crisis strategy meeting in Des Moines Iowa, October 2009*

## Diverse groups unite around campaign to build a just and sustainable food system

**T**he global food crisis has motivated diverse U.S.-based groups—including progressive labor, faith, indigenous, community food, farm, environmental, and trade justice—to join forces. The U.S. Working Group on the Food Crisis was formed in 2008 when a number of groups representing different areas of the food system came together. The goal of the U.S. Working Group is to bring attention to the underlying causes of the crisis and to promote transformative solutions to fix our broken food system.

The Working Group is planning an inclusive and unifying campaign to end the ongoing food crisis that has become a daily reality for 39 million Americans (nearly one in eight) and just over one billion people (nearly one is six) worldwide. This campaign aims to counter the well-funded propaganda of the corporate agrifoods industry and advance the shared goal of a just and sustainable food system. A unifying theme of ending poverty by rebuilding local food economies, with specific campaign strategies, was agreed upon at an August 31/September 1, 2009 meeting of representatives from over 50 organizations.

The campaign builds upon grassroots strengths and existing food justice movement work, while seizing the unique political moment in Washington and internationally. The campaign will focus on the poverty and injustice that the dominant food system creates—and on the potential for communities, regions, and nations to build just and prosperous food economies from the ground up.

A two-tier approach has been identified—addressing corporate control of the food system as the primary cause of damage to people, communities and the environment, *and* ending poverty by rebuilding local food economies.

The campaign will confront monopolies in the food system by taking advantage of the U.S. Department of Justice/U.S. Department of Agriculture joint [listening sessions on anti-trust](#) which begin in early 2010. The Working Group will share stories from the grassroots and present research and analysis to these sessions. Those hurt by the anti-competitive structure of the corporate food system will raise their voices in the sessions and organize creative community actions to highlight the current injustices of the food system and showcase the positive alternatives that could be scaled up. Washington DC-based groups will reinforce the call for anti-trust legislation by working with Congress.

Working Group members also agreed to organize for food systems change at the [U.S. Social Forum](#), which will bring together as many as 20,000 people in Detroit, Michigan on June 22-26, 2010. This will involve building a delegation of urban and rural farmers, farm and food workers, and other food system leaders who are creating today's solutions to the food crisis. These new food system leaders will organize a series of workshops and activities focused on strengthening food systems through peer-to-peer training.

An October 13, 2009 meeting in Des Moines, Iowa recruited additional participants, continued the dialogue, and refined campaign plans. If you are interested in participating, contact Tristan Quinn-Thibodeau (Tristan@whyhunger.org). For a list of some of the groups participating in the campaign, go to <http://usfoodcrisisgroup.org/>.

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The Institute for Food and Development Policy - known as Food First - is a member-supported, nonprofit "peoples' " think tank and education-for-action center. Our work highlights the root causes and value-based solutions to hunger and poverty around the world, with a commitment to establishing food as a fundamental human right.

## Oakland Food Policy Council is seated, sworn in, and makes its first decisions

The Oakland Food Policy Council (OFPC) held its first meeting on Wednesday, September 30, 2009. This meeting, open to the public, was held at the offices of the Alameda County Public Health Department in downtown Oakland.

The OFPC, a 21-seat council, is made up of representatives from each sector of the food system (production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste recovery) who work with each other and the Oakland community to study the Oakland food system, and devise creative ways to make the food system sustainable. Members were selected after an open application process. They will make recommendations on how local government can help make the food system more equitable and just. To learn more about each member of the OFPC, please visit [http://www.oaklandfood.org/home/council\\_members](http://www.oaklandfood.org/home/council_members).

As introduction to each other, each new member brought along a symbol that embodies their reasons for wanting to work as part of the OFPC team. These symbols ranged from a rubber band symbolizing making connections to photos of elders who grew their own food symbolizing self-reliance and hard work, and from Oakland schoolchildren (many of whom receive their only meal of the day at school) to a traditional Zulu headdress (a gift from a friend whose parents perished because of hunger). The symbols chosen and the stories told emphasized the group's deep commitment to food system change, and the creativity, wisdom, and energy that we hope will characterize the OFPC's work.

Next, the group made a formal commitment to the work of the OFPC with a swearing-in by reading the OFPC oath aloud. The oath and other organizational documents can be found at [http://www.oaklandfood.org/home/org\\_docs](http://www.oaklandfood.org/home/org_docs).

After members were sworn in, the group discussed its purpose for the coming year. The OFPC is expected to produce a yearly strategic plan for transforming the Oakland food system. This will be structured around at least three focus areas, or "levers of change:" Public-private partnerships (including such things as providing a forum for institutional procurement manag-

ers to talk to producers and wholesalers); City innovations (involving a study of all Oakland's departments, agencies, policies, and regulations to see what changes could be made to support the OFPC's goals); and Regional and State innovations (similar to Oakland's innovations, but at different jurisdictional levels). The group suggested adding a fourth focus area: Neighborhood innovations (involving a study of actions that could be taken at the neighborhood and individual levels to support the OFPC's goals). Recommendations for each focus area will be linked to measurable indicators, and they will all contribute to the ultimate goal of fostering the establishment of an equitable, sustainable food system.

After agreeing on the group's general direction for the year, the next task was to agree on an organizational structure and decision-making style. The group agreed to meet as a full body five times each year, with smaller work groups meeting more frequently. These work groups are organized around the work the OFPC needs to complete, with three or four primary work groups aligned with the strategic plan focus areas, plus three supportive work groups.. The supportive work groups are Development/Outreach; Fundraising and Financing; and Data Management and Research.

The group chose to make decisions using "modified consensus," with the group first seeking consensus, but if there is no consensus, the group will vote. Disagreeing votes will be classified either as "can live with it" or "strong disagreement." If more than 1/3 of the group strongly disagrees, the issue will be reopened for discussion until a compromise can be reached that works for at least 2/3 of the group.

Finally, PUEBLO (People United for a Better Life in Oakland), a local group that will assist the OFPC with community outreach, engagement, and organizing gave a presentation.

The OFPC's next meeting will be in November 2009. Each year the group will meet in January, March, May, September, and November; all meetings will be open to the public. Meeting times and locations will be posted on the OFPC website: <http://www.oaklandfood.org>.

# First Annual Food Sovereignty Prize presented at the Community Food Security Coalition Annual meeting in Des Moines

photo by Eric Holt-Giménez



Edgardo Garcia of the Nicaraguan Rural Workers Union accepted this award at a packed plenary session at the Community Food Security Coalition's annual meeting on October 12, 2009. The Award was presented to La Via Campesina who introduced the concept of food sovereignty at the World Food Summit in 1996.

In front of hundreds of delegates from the United States and other countries, Dena Hoff from the North American region and Edgardo García from the Central American region were awarded the prize. Introducing the prize, Molly Anderson, President of CFSC, highlighted the international leadership of La Via Campesina in the movement that aims at creating a more democratic food system to solve the growing problem of hunger in the planet.

Dena Hoff, farmer from Montana and head of the National Family Farmers' Coalition (NFFC), speaking on behalf of the millions of peasants, women, indigenous people, migrant rural workers and young people, accepted the prize and the distinction bestowed upon them, repeating the pledge of La Via Campesina to keep working for Food Sovereignty in all corners of the world.

Edgardo read a message from Rafael Alegría, leader of La Via Campesina in Honduras and also the National Front of Resistance against the Coup, calling for concrete solidarity from the North American people with the heroic struggle of the Honduran people. "This prize, said Edgardo García, will accompany the peasant and popular struggle in Honduras."

It is symbolic that this prize awarded to La Via Campesina, should be given only days before the opening of another event in the same town: the World Prize for Food awarded to individuals for their notable contribution to biotechnology in agriculture. This prize was first established by the Nobel prize laureate Norman Borlaug also known as the "Father of the Green Revolution."

Communities achieve food sovereignty when they democratically control what they eat, how it is raised and by whom, and how profits in the food system are distributed. Food sovereignty encompasses the rights to food, adequate nutrition and resources necessary for each person to be able to feed him or herself with dignity and in culturally appropriate ways. Fulfilling these rights requires community action to overcome barriers imposed on some people because of gender, income, race, religion and class. Under conditions of food sovereignty, food is produced using sustainable practices and never used as a weapon or denied because of social conflict.

To learn more about Via Campesina, the international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers, go to [http://viacampesina.org/main\\_en/](http://viacampesina.org/main_en/).

The Food Sovereignty Prize was designed by artist (and Food First Fellow), Leonor Hurtado. Honorable mentions were awarded to three organizations: [Community Alliance for Global Justice](#) (U.S.), [International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology](#) (Kenya), and the [Toronto Food Policy Council](#) (Canada).

*The many ways that you support Food First, including your donations, make it possible for Food First to continue to analyze, publish and publicize materials that are used by activists and scholars around the world.*

Thank you for joining with us as we work with international, national and local organizations to transform the way food is grown, delivered and consumed. Thank you for supporting the idea that every human being on this earth has the right to sufficient food that is both healthy and culturally appropriate. And thank for helping to publicize food sovereignty.

At Food First we have been fighting to reform our food systems from the bottom up and from the top down since 1975. It is paradoxical that at the same time that there is expanding interest and momentum building toward growing and consuming more food locally, we are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of hungry people both here in the U.S. and worldwide. Achieving food sovereignty hinges on taking food out of the commodity-traded global economy.

Thank you so very much for sticking with us for the long term. Transforming our food systems won't be easy or fast. But today there are hopeful signs in communities all around the world. You can take pride in contributing to that change.

**oakland  
FOOD POLICY  
COUNCIL**

promoting an equitable & sustainable food system

Meetings are open to the public.

Check the website for details.

[www.oaklandfood.org](http://www.oaklandfood.org)



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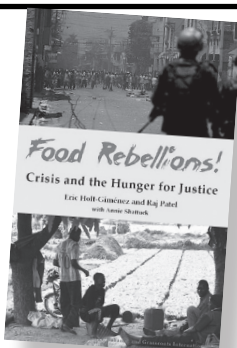
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### ***Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice***

by Eric Holt-Giménez and Raj Patel, with Annie Shattuck. Today there are over a billion hungry people on the planet, more than ever before in history. Why, in a time of record harvests, are a record number of people going hungry? And why are a handful of corporations making record profits? *Food Rebellions!* tells the real story behind the global food crisis and documents the growing trend of grassroots solutions to hunger spreading around the world. Official plans to solve the world food crisis call for more free trade and technical fixes--solutions that have already failed. *Food Rebellions!* is a trail marker on the journey to end hunger and build food sovereignty. \$19.95

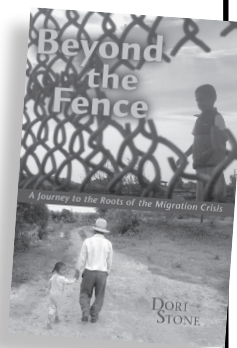
To book one of the authors for a college or other community event, contact Martha Katigbak-Fernandez at (510) 654-4400 ext. 221



### ***Beyond the Fence: A Journey to the Roots of the Migration Crisis***

by Dori Stone, informs the immigration debate in the U.S., which is highly controversial, emotional, and often confusing. She explores migration issues that are largely unnoticed by the public in the U.S. and the mainstream media - the stories and surprising possibilities that get lost in the debate over fences and undocumented migrants exploited at below minimum wage. They are the tales of people's desperation and irretrievable loss, but also their growing visions of hope.

They are the stories of farmers, politicians and activists on both sides of the border. "The book is ideally suited for students, but I can think of few people who would not benefit from reading it." - Angus Wright, author of *The Death of Ramon Gonzales: The Modern Agricultural Dilemma*. *Beyond the Fence*, \$16.95



## NEW BOOKS FROM FOOD FIRST

***Agrofuels in the Americas*** edited by Richard Jonasse, explores the impact of agrofuel production in the Global South, where the rural poor and indigenous populations are losing their access to land, and with it, the ability to feed themselves coupled with rising food prices due to the diversion of land to fuel crops.

Authors include Miguel Altieri and Elizabeth Bravo, Eric Holt-Giménez and Isabella Kenfield, Gretchen Gordon and Jessica Aguirre, Richard Jonasse, Maria Luisa Mendonça, Laura Hurtado, Annie Shattuck, and Rachel Smolker and Brian Tokar. \$18.95



### ***Camino: The Immigrant's Trail***

The companion 20-minute documentary DVD, suitable for classroom use, includes a study guide. \$20.00

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