



Food First Talks Story with the Australian Food Movement

By Eric Holt-Giménez

At the end of October, I was nearing the end of my two-week tour ‘Food for Thought and Action,’ organized by Australian activist-writer, [Eva Perroni](#). It had been quite the trip, with a dozen events in Victoria, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales. I met with permaculturists, environmentalists, organic and conventional farmers, community groups, academics, and journalists, presenting passages from [A Foodie’s Guide to Capitalism](#), “talking story” and swapping strategies.

During these events I described how our food system and global capitalism co-evolved. I argued that we can’t change one without changing the other—and that these big, structural transformations require a strong food movement dedicated to [reconstructing the public sphere](#) and dismantling patriarchy, white supremacy and class oppression. This made for lively debates!

The trip began in Sydney, but I became aware of my *journey* in Canberra, Australia’s capital, where Eva and I were met by the indomitable farmer-activist [Michael Croft](#). From there, I attended an event organized by Slow Food Canberra Capital and Country Convivium. I was on a panel with Meg and Meg (two local women who established a food forest and manage it as a Commons), Charles Massy (Australia’s answer to Wendell Berry and author of the acclaimed *Call of the Reed Warbler*) and Tyrone Bell, a [Ngunawal](#) man and founder of the [Thunderstone Cultural and Land Management Services Aboriginal Corporation](#). Tyrone welcomed us and spoke of indigenous plants and landscapes. He knew his subject—his people have lived in this region for over 21,000 years.

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Food First is a “peoples’ think tank” and education-for-action center. Our work highlights the root causes and solutions to hunger and poverty, with a commitment to fighting racism and establishing food as a fundamental human right.

Contrary to Western myths depicting them as only hunter-gatherers, Australian native peoples were the planet’s first agroecologists, living in permanent settlements surrounded by vast, richly textured landscape mosaics of intensively-managed agriculture, pasture and forests. Australia’s indigenous landscape—with its tuber and grain-based agriculture, thick forests, vast grasslands, and highly diverse hunting and gathering practices—was thinly stretched over nutrient-poor soils on a continent that was largely dry. Human habitation was only possible because of a complex, co-evolution of landscape and aboriginal peoples that steadily built up the continental store of nutrients in the extensively-managed biomass (soil, plants and animals). But as Charles Massy points out in his book, “[Australia’s particular ecology] meant the continent was a disaster waiting to happen if the wrong land-use technologies and worldviews were applied to it.”

While Aboriginal peoples thrived over 60,000 years on the Australian landscape, today, capitalist [settler agriculture is in crisis](#) after 200 years. Climate change is pummeling Australian farmers. Global markets are devastating them financially. Dairy farmers pour milk down the drains in a last gasp to raise prices before going bankrupt. On television, a “Buy a bale for a farmer” campaign is in full swing, as NGOs attempt to keep rancher’s stock alive during the latest drought.

As the agricultural crisis unfolds in Australia, the traditions, practices and politics of the commons, agroecology, permaculture and indigenous landscape management are converging in a widespread effort to transform not just the food system, but society. I saw it expressed on panel after panel in which I participated.

During these panels, I was struck by the complimentary, but very different perspectives on agriculture, nature, and society. What I experienced throughout these events with panelists of indigenous and non-indigenous activists was what La Via Campesina has called, “[un diálogo de saberes](#).” Literally “a dialog of different wisdoms,” it refers to our efforts to communicate across different ways of knowing. What struck me in this dialog was the difference between European approaches that concentrat-

ed on sustainable farm *management* and “commoning” within communities, and the indigenous way of irretrievably *belonging* to a landscape.

The Australian food movement is grappling with the history and ongoing trauma between these ways of *knowing* and of *being* in the world and the politics grounded in the historical inequities of their food system. Many seek an honest acknowledgement of this collective trauma as well as a genuine commitment to the inclusion of different voices and knowledges—including those of recent immigrants—when discussing the future of food and agriculture.

The dedication and the difficulties of this dialog reminded me that western efforts to transform the food system almost all take place on indigenous ancestral lands. I came away with the feeling that this engagement could inform social movements globally—as well as determine the future of the Australian food movement.

Please visit foodfirst.org/welcometocountry to read the full, unabridged article.

Building Land Trusts, Collectives, and Hope

By Alyshia Silva and Erik Hazard

This October, we all took another step forward toward food sovereignty. The fourth national, bi-annual Assembly of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) was hosted by [Community to Community](#) (C2C), an organization fighting for farmworker and immigrant rights. The Assembly brought together over 140 US organizations and international allies committed to ending hunger, rebuilding our local economies, and democratizing our food system.

Plenaries featured frontline farmers and farmworkers who are fighting neoliberal capitalism and building food sovereignty. During one of the plenaries, C2C’s Rosalinda Guillen spoke clearly of the dire situation we face, as “the crisis of capitalism is becoming cannibalistic, creating desperate behavior by corporations to dig even deeper into the wealth of poor communities and poor workers.” Fausto Torres of [La Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo \(ATC\)](#) in Nicaragua remind-



USFSA Protests Bellingham's Unwillingness to Protect Immigrants from I.C.E.

ed us that we “can overcome these crises with social mobilization.” Joan Brady of the [National Farmers Union](#) in Canada highlighted how food sovereignty serves as a “framework for change. It gives us a picture of what the future can look like.”

The issue of land — its inaccessibility and inequitable distribution — was prevalent throughout the assembly. Doria Robinson of [Urban Tilth](#) in Richmond, CA, posed this question early during the assembly: “What does democratic governance of land look like? How can we create a fund to allow communities to control land? We talk about needing a just transition in agriculture, but what does that look like?” On the final day, the alliance eventually resolved to create a “Land, water, and agroecology” collective to explore the potential of a USFSA National Land Trust.

Our weekend ended in celebration as the USFSA awarded the US Food Sovereignty Prize, honoring two grassroots organizations: [Black Water Mesa Coalition](#) (BWMC) and our good friends, [Organización Boricúa](#). At the ceremony, Roberto Nutlouis of BWMC made clear to the audience that “We need to notify humanity that we need to drastically change the way we do things, especially getting away from fossil fuels,

and the food system is one way to begin that transition.” During the award ceremony, Jesus Vazquez of Boricúa stated how Boricúa’s work, which keeps farmers and activists connected to each other and the land through agroecology, can “serve as a vehicle of transformation towards a sovereign, free, and just Puerto Rico.”

As a people’s think tank we value the Assembly because we learn directly from frontline struggles and can mutually reflect on the ways we can support the movement for food sovereignty in the United States. With our mission to “end the injustices that cause hunger,” we constantly ask how best to amplify the voices of grassroots leaders, communities, farmers, and food workers to combat injustices in the food system? How do we imagine a food system in which people and communities can determine how their food is produced, distributed, and consumed?

The US food sovereignty movement builds community power to counter the capitalist food system that treats food as a weapon, squeezes farmers, exploits workers, and marginalizes communities of color. A structural analysis that explains the root causes of why people go hungry in a world of plenty helps inform the strategies and actions of the growing

food movement. Sharing and amplifying the stories and actions of frontline communities—the real experts in social change—are necessary to forging counter-narratives to market-led, corporate solutions to our food system’s problems. Ultimately, transformative structural change towards food sovereignty can only come from the ground up by a deeply informed, broadly-based social movement.

Please visit foodfirst.org/landtrustscollectivesandhope to read the full article.

We Need a Different Narrative on How to Feed the World: Food First Provides It

Nearly a third of the world’s population already suffer from hunger or malnutrition in a world of plenty. Feeding them—and the projected population of 10 billion people by 2050—has generated many initiatives to double food production within a generation.

The monopolies at the Global Economic Forum recently claimed new technologies from the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” will end hunger, poverty and environmental destruction. In his upcoming book co-published by Food First and Polity Press, *Can We Feed the World Without Destroying It?*, Food First Director Eric Holt-Giménez

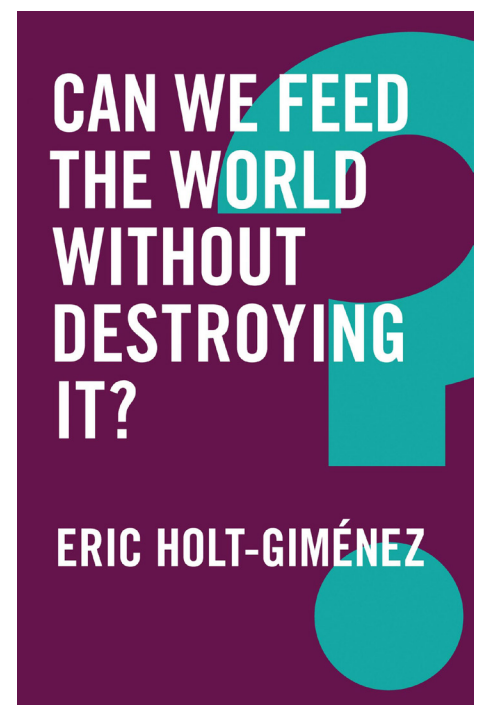
Food First’s Upcoming Speaking Events

Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin: 88th Annual State Convention of the Wisconsin Farmers Union—January 26, 2018

RAFI 2019 Come to the Table Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina—March 12-13, 2019

University of Southern Maine in Portland, Maine: 2019 Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit—March 14-15, 2019

Please visit our <https://foodfirst.org/events/> to see an updated schedule of events.



debunks technological silver bullets by looking at the root causes of the crises of our food system—and the homegrown, agroecological innovations that are already doing the job.

We are excited to announce that [Can We Feed the World Without Destroying It?](#) has just been released in the UK and will be available January 2019 in the United States!

Making Research Work for the Public Again

Miguel Altieri, a Food First Fellow and Professor Emeritus, recently wrote an article discussing the betrayal of UC Berkeley's agricultural legacy. As budgets allocated by the state have dwindled, UC Berkeley has moved closer to industry, allowing for Berkeley's agricultural research to become dominated by the bio-technology industry which pursues profits rather than solve our environmental and agricultural problems.

Miguel argues that as multinational corporations increase their control over the food system in light of climate change, failures in industrial agriculture and more, the restoration of the public mission of the land grant University and its public resources is critical for preparing the next generations to tackle the challenges facing our food systems.

Read the article here: <https://foodfirst.org/betrayalofanagriculturallegacy/>



Miguel Altieri Speaking at Occupy the Farm: Photo by Leonor Hurtado

Fighting for Justice Against Monsanto

On November 15th, Dewayne Johnson, the groundskeeper who successfully argued in court that Monsanto's Roundup had caused his cancer, joined a panel of Bay Area experts to discuss the fight against corporate agriculture's effects on public health. Tyrone Hayes is a scientist who exposed the health effects of Syngenta's own herbicide, Atrazine, and faced corporate backlash with threats made on his and his family's lives. Diane Williams of Planting Justice has been part of a movement to stop Bay Area cities from using Roundup in local public schools. The event was titled "My Fight for Justice with Dewayne 'Lee' Johnson."

Dewayne shared how he ended up taking his groundskeeper job which paid him

more if he utilized pesticides and herbicides, therefore exposing himself to the herbicide Roundup. Dewayne remarked upon how unlike so many of the leaves and trees that are killed by the herbicide, he himself was the "leaf that didn't die. At least for now." He spoke of how the fight against Monsanto has become much larger than himself, and that at least his case may bring to light what has been hidden for so long.

Diane Williams ended the night reminding us to also think globally and consider the ramifications this corporation and its herbicides have on thousands of farmers not only in the US, but around the world. People around the world are counting on us to take Monsanto on right here in the US.

Please visit <https://bit.ly/2DMKB1z> to view the recorded livestream of the event.

Grassroots Leaders Need Practical Resources

Liz Henderson is a force to be reckoned with. She's a NY organic farmer and works with the Agriculture Justice Project to ensure that organic standards include fair prices for farmers and fair wages for farmworkers. She'll be the first to tell you that she works with practical people who don't have time to argue over ideology, which is where Food First's clear and concise resources come in:

"Food First has helped me in my life long quest to make sense of such mysteries as overproduction of food as a problem while so many people are starving. Food First provides the

clear analysis of how the global capitalist food system functions that is so badly needed by our movement for a more just, equitable, and sustainable way to grow and share food. Without this understanding, we will not be able to figure out what to do and how to bring about this transformation."

Food First supports our friends on the frontlines of our social movements to end hunger, poverty, and climate change with justice-centered research & analysis. Your support is vital, especially during this financially slow time of year. Please consider stretching your gift or donating again this year at www.foodfirst.org/support.