

WhyHunger

Through Her Eyes:

The Struggle for Food Sovereignty



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Preface by WhyHunger

Industrial agriculture is the dominant form of food production in the United States and, increasingly, around the world. The impacts of industrial agriculture on our health and our living environment are well-documented: pesticide toxicity, water pollution, processed food, antibiotic resistance, worker injustice.

Women, who are arguably the most responsible for food moving from field to table, have the most at stake. Women are responsible for 60 - 80 percent of food production in the Global South. And the share of U.S. farms operated by women has tripled in the past three decades. Official reports tell us that there are nearly 1 million women farmers in the United States – a vast underreporting when small-scale, subsistence and urban farms are added to that pool. We also know that women represent more than 43% of the agricultural workforce in the Global South and that 50% of food chain workers in the U.S. are women. And, according to the United Nations, women and girls around the world disproportionately suffer from hunger and food insecurity. Conservative estimates indicate that 60% of chronically hungry people are women and girls.

The statistics are important in understanding the vast impacts of industrial agriculture on women and their families, as well as the role women play in resisting those impacts. But it's the stories that women tell – their words and images – that bring to life the ways in which industrial agriculture and international agribusiness are structural forms of violence against the Earth, all peoples, and especially women. It's not only the contamination of their bodies by agrochemicals – it's also the forced displacement, the division of families and the loss of loved ones that results from migration and land conflicts. It is the denial of the right to food – food that is accessible, both economically and physically, adequate in nutrition, affordable and sustainable in both production and consumption. It is the denial of the right to healthy soil and clean water for food production. It is the denial of the right to sustain one's family with dignity.

It is imperative, therefore, that women's voices are at the center of the debate about how to dismantle the current food regime and replace it with food sovereignty and agroecology. Though not yet mainstream concepts or practices, the work of grassroots organizations is beginning to result in a scaling out of agroecology in both rural and urban areas. This publication aims to highlight the leadership of women in making that possible.

Through excerpts of interviews and dialogue with women organizers and food producers from the United States and globally in response to the question "what are the impacts of industrial food and farming on women and how are women organizing to build an alternative," this publication amplifies the voices of women who are on the frontlines in the ongoing struggle for land, water, localized economies, and a world free of violence and hunger. It emerges in a moment when arguably a new world order is beginning to take shape. In the face of economic and social systems in crisis and deepening inequality the world over, the struggle for food sovereignty, agroecology and climate justice is a struggle for more than just the right to food. It is a struggle for a new world order that centers the rights of women to live freely and safely, and to lead in envisioning and crafting a world void of hunger and violence. WhyHunger is committed to standing in solidarity with women whose lived experiences are forging the path to food sovereignty.

In addition to the millions of women worldwide who are farmers, farmworkers, food chain workers, child-rearers and food preparers, WhyHunger dedicates this treatise on women's struggles for food sovereignty to the memory of Kathy Ozer, the Executive Director of the National Family Farm Coalition, who left this world far too early in January 2017. Kathy's unwavering support of small farmers throughout North America for several decades, especially as an advocate for policies and appropriations that would have a lasting impact on rural communities, was exceptional. Known for her brilliance and humility, Kathy was an empathetic listener and consummate student who first took into her heart the reality of farmers' daily struggles to protect their sovereignty and then took it to Capitol Hill and fiercely lobbied for U.S. food and farm policies that would challenge and rectify gender and racial disparities within the Farm Bill and the many injustices against family farmers around the nation.
jKathy Ozer, Presente!

A woman is powerful.

She is Mother Earth who provides; she is the farmer, the chef and the server who nourishes the children and the family. She creates, she nurtures, she sustains. She is the heart and soul of the community.

Yet, millions of women and their children throughout our world are hungry. Even as they grow, pick, process and serve food to our world - the women are the last to eat. As you will read in the stories of the women who fill these pages, it is women who are building a future where everyone has nutritious food to eat, clean water to drink and good soil to plant.

These women are leading the way forward by growing food to nourish the body in a way that respects and sustains Mother Earth. They are planting and harvesting in harmony with nature to grow healthy food and to nurture the land, water and each other.

My late husband John Lennon and I have always believed that together we can imagine and build a world free from hunger, poverty and suffering. Let's follow in the footsteps and wisdom of these inspiring women and change the world!

Yoko Ono Lennon

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Greg Kadel @ Yoko Ono



**Grassroots
Voices:**

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Agrochemicals are Poisoning Our Lives

Yesica Ramirez, Farmworker Association of Florida, USA

Elvira Carvajal, Farmworker Association of Florida, USA

Kathia Ramirez, Farmworkers Support Committee – CATA, USA

Yesica Ramirez is a former farmworker and is currently an organizer with the Farmworker Association of Florida. She conducts trainings for farmworker women on the reproductive health risks of occupational stress and exposures.

Elvira Carvajal is a former farmworker, and has been a staff member of the Farmworker Association of Florida for the past twelve years working as an organizer and formerly as a board member. She is the Area Coordinator for the organization's office in Homestead, where, she conducts pesticide health and safety trainings for farmworkers as well as organizes the community in a Campesinos' Garden to learn about how to produce food, herbs and medicine without toxic chemicals.

Kathia Ramirez is an organizer and the Food Justice Coordinator for the Comité de Apoyo de Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA). She is responsible for CATA's Food Justice Program, including the community gardens, representing CATA in national organizations such as the DFTA- Domestic Fair Trade Association and The US Food Sovereignty Alliance and doing trainings for farmworkers including workers' rights, pesticide exposure and health and safety at the workplace.

Kathia: All agricultural workers are exposed to pesticides that damage their health. In the area where we work, I have observed how women use different layers of clothing to protect against chemicals, and though all workers who work directly in the fields are at risk, I think women take more serious risks – especially if they are pregnant. The baby will be at high risk and may be born with health difficulties like a deformity or perhaps a mental problem. Or possibly the girls, who in the future would like to have families, will sometimes not have the joy of being mothers because these chemicals can cause infertility.

Elvira: Not only agricultural workers – but all of us – even those who do not work in agriculture – are exposed to chemicals, mainly in our water. Not only does it damage the water we drink, but all the animals that live in [the water], and so we're affected again when we consume fish. Farmworkers are also affected mentally and physically; their bodies are poisoned, but also their minds and hearts because of the verbal and physical abuse they often have to deal with. The short-term symptoms [of pesticide exposure] are skin rashes, hives, itching and redness of the skin. In the medium term, it is bone pain, sometimes dizziness and a



YESICA RAMIREZ



ELVIRA CARVAJAL



“All agricultural workers are exposed to pesticides that damage their health.”

KATHIA RAMIREZ

continuation of the short-term symptoms. There was one case of a woman who had just started the job and she said her knees and feet really hurt. She went home and went to bed and then began to vomit. She is still suffering from joint pains.

Yesica: I remember when we came here to the United States we started working in the plant nursery without knowing anything about chemicals. So, we wore long-sleeved shirts because we saw other people wearing them, but we did not know why. Fast forward to 2010 when I was pregnant with one of my babies.

I was working in a nursery mixing chemicals while pregnant. All I did was cover my mouth when I mixed the chemicals because instinctively I was afraid to breathe it in. They did not provide us gloves and did not provide us any face masks — nothing to protect ourselves.

But then I heard of the Farmworker Association and I took the training they offered. I learned how to protect myself and the importance of doing so. When my child was born, she was born with many health problems. She had an underdeveloped skull, sleep apnea, and eczema. I was always at the doctor and deep down I knew this happened because of the chemicals. So, when I speak to women about the importance of protecting themselves and their children, I speak from the heart because of what happened to me. I do not want them to go through the same thing. So when I hear testimonies of women who come to me and tell me, "Look, I'm protecting myself. And now they give us water at work," you see the results you have sown. It gives me great satisfaction that the community responds in that way.

Elvira: Personally, when I worked in the fields, I lost a baby at six months. Afterwards I was informed that it was because of the chemicals I was exposed to daily at work. Right now, we know of a family living in a very large commercial nursery. It has about 6,000 employees. We sometimes find families with children, and sometimes couples who do not have children, living in the nursery. We have seen children hanging clothes outside, and about 50 or 100 feet from where they are playing is the greenhouse with the pesticides. All around them [inside the nursery] are the plants that are being treated with chemicals. So, the families and children are directly exposed and affected. We are trying to document all this information. We also remember a time when there was a hurricane here. [The Farmworker Association] visited some farms and found families living in animal stalls. We started legal processes which ended with the families being removed. So, in one way, we help people [to get out of dangerous living conditions]. But then they may no longer have housing. But if they stay in those places they are endangering their lives, so we also sometimes feel powerless to help.

Kathia: I think that in industrial agriculture everything is based on money. Farmers compete to see who makes more than the other. Agriculture is based on the model of getting rich, and not necessarily focused on the model of feeding the people, as it should be.

Elvira: I believe that the interest of industrial agriculture is to produce quantity over quality; they do not care about anyone's health. What matters to them is production and profit, and we are now trying to raise awareness that people want *quality*. We know that if you're eating a carrot like the ones we grab from our garden, they may not be thick or large like those sold in the store, but the taste is so different — better.

Yesica: I remember back to the time in my childhood, when we were living in the countryside. As a child I could enter the field to work and there was no danger because there were no pesticides at the time. People sold food locally or exchanged food between them. For example, someone went by in the market and said "I'll exchange peaches for guavas or tomatoes for onions." So, that was a good thing and we had much access to food. Even though we were poor, at least we could have healthy food. Today, farmworkers have little access to healthy food. It's cheaper for you to buy a *maruchan* (junk food) than to buy a kilo or a pound of some fruit because healthy food is expensive.

Kathia: CATA (Farmworkers Support Committee – CATA) participated in the public comment period for the rules protecting workers as a part of our work to reduce the use of pesticides in agricultural products. As a follow up to this initiative, we started a campaign for food justice. We think the conditions [for farmworkers] will not improve just by changing some rules. The food justice campaign is based on the need to improve our food system — not only for workers but also for consumers and farmers. Pesticides are destroying not only our people but also our planet. CATA, along with three other organizations, initiated an interest group to develop fair standards for people involved in sustainable and organic agriculture. Through those standards, we created a label of approval, a kind of certification for "just food." It's called Agricultural Justice Project. Part of our food justice campaign has been to expand the label and certify more and more farms to follow these rules, to produce organically using no chemicals and, more than anything, to protect and treat workers fairly. So, not only do we want to raise awareness about the label within businesses and farms, but we must also educate workers, communities, individuals, consumers and other organizations involved. Our goal is to grow the campaign and at the same time, get the support of friends and allies so that we can work together to create a fair system, especially for workers who are essential to the whole process.



As another initiative within the campaign for food justice, we have community gardens that are for the low-income community and agricultural workers to help them to eat healthier. Organic food that is free of chemicals is expensive and, with a minimum wage that is not enough to live on, low-income communities have no other option but to consume cheap and unhealthy food. So that's why CATA offers space, seeds, tools, and water for the community to grow their own organic produce. They take home the food they harvest in exchange for their time in the garden. For the rest of the community, these foods are available to buy at low prices. Our community gardens have become a place of learning and working collectively. Now we're thinking of including trainings about making compost, growing in small spaces, increasing production, and saving seeds.



Elvira: It is sometimes difficult to do outreach to farmworkers to raise awareness about the hazards in their work areas. We use workers' rights trainings as a way to identify different types of workplace violations, but also to provide follow-up to specific cases. We need to convince workers to make a complaint to the agency that is responsible for enforcement and encourage them to stick with it until the end, which we know will be long and hard. At first when they are in the workshops they'll say, "Yes, we are going through with this." But when we identify violations and want to document them, sometimes the workers no longer want to. They want to change the conversation and do not want to follow-up on the case, for fear of job loss or other retaliation. It's our job as organizers, to convince them to continue in order to stop such violations for everyone.

Kathia: I think many grassroots organizations and organizations of agricultural workers are doing a lot of organizing around the conditions of workers. Therefore, I think personal narrative and testimony is very powerful and perhaps could be a method of communication to consumers. Friends and allies can become aware of the situation from the first person point of view of someone who is facing these realities every day. Also, it helps us to start delving into how many people do not really think deeply about where their food comes from and helps us bring awareness about how essential agricultural workers are so that we can feed ourselves.

The term agroecology is a term that most agricultural workers do not use in their daily lives, yet they are familiar with the practice. Agroecology is a technical term that has emerged and is being used more often. But agroecology is what many farmworkers know as natural and organic planting, using the basic tools that do not depend on large machinery or chemicals for the growth and maturity of the plants. Some agricultural workers who were farmers and had access to land in their countries of origin used ancestral practices, and one of those

practices was natural and traditional medicine. More than anything women have knowledge of natural medicine and they often prescribe certain herbs or plants for different injuries or illnesses. Last year CATA began a series of activities related to traditional herbal medicine since we know that many people who do not have legal status in this country also do not have access to good health insurance. Even though they won't always be able to treat a disease with natural medicine, it is a relief to many in the community. As these skills are related to agroecology, they can be a source to share and connect with other organizations and other people who know about this and have the same wisdom.

Elvira:

I think that women play an important role in agroecology. The woman is the engine of everything. We are the ones making sure our families are fed and healthy.

I think all mothers want our children to be well fed; we seek the best for them. I think that agroecology is a movement with principles and values for all those who care for and protect the earth. This is what we practice in the Campesinos' Gardens with many farmworker families. The Campesinos' Gardens were started by farmworker leaders in the community of Fellsmere in 2010, and have since expanded to three additional farmworker communities. The gardens serve as agroecology demonstration sites to reclaim traditional growing knowledge, to reconnect to the natural elements in order to inspire people to live differently and better, and to exemplify potential small-scale farm economic development opportunities. The garden sites have not only increased the availability of healthy, fresh, chemical-free foods among farmworker families, but have also provided the opportunity to deepen mutually-beneficial relationships with local governments and a sister non-profit organization through collaborative, productive use of underutilized lands.

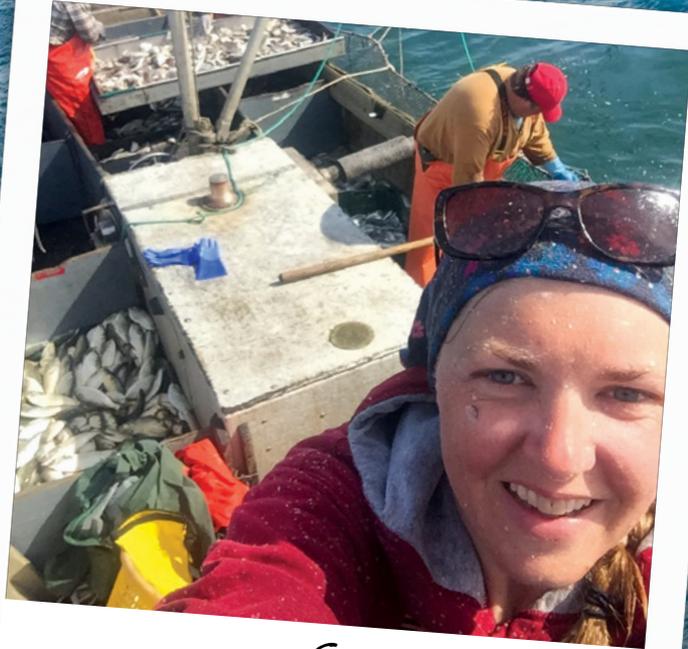
Yesica: We are mothers and as mothers we will care for our children. We are the ones that do most of the food shopping and cooking. We therefore play an important role. And there's that phrase that says 'we are what we eat,' right? Earlier, we mentioned that before people lived longer and were healthier and now children are born sick or get sick a lot. We see it every day with people who are not that old but tend to have more health issues than people who came before them. It is good to grow healthy food but also to grow awareness in the community and make the community stronger and united. Also to capture the wisdom and pass it to the next generation. This is one of our roles as women.

Kathia: There is an urgency about passing on that wisdom – everything that our parents and our grandparents shared with us. Specifically in terms of working the land, many farmers leave their home countries because of poverty and, as a result, those towns that have a wealth of culture are disappearing. And today, it sometimes seems that young people have no interest in continuing to learn who they are, right? And the question becomes how can we come together to ensure it does not end there, that it does not die there. ■

Who Fishes Matters: The Impacts of Industrial Fishing on Women's Lives

Shannon Eldredge and Niaz Dorry

Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA), USA



SHANNON ELDRIDGE

Shannon Eldredge is the President of Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA), a fishermen-led organization in New England dedicated to improving the lives of small and medium sized fishing communities. She also serves on the board of Women of Fishing Families in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Shannon continues her family's 50+ year tradition of fishing and holds a Master's degree in Early American History with a focus on Women in Maritime Communities.

Niaz Dorry is the Coordinating Director at NAMA and has worked on issues related to fisheries and fishing communities since the 1990s when she served as a Greenpeace Fisheries & Oceans Campaigner. Niaz was named a "Hero of the Planet" by Time Magazine and has been cited in numerous publications. She currently resides in Gloucester, Massachusetts where she works with a variety of organizations in addition to NAMA, including the National Family Farm Coalition.

Shannon: My mom was a fisherman alongside my dad, and on her own as well. So she kind of set the stage, and set the bar, for me. I was following in her footsteps. She started fishing with my father, which was very common back in the 70's. Wives would jump on boats with the crew or help shuck scallops or do a lot of shoreside support work for their husbands' businesses. And throughout our history in the Northeast, it was never unusual for women to be out there. Across the Northeast Coast of the United States, Native American women – long before settlers arrived – were collecting and harvesting shellfish along the shore while their husbands were hunting.

Niaz: The job of selling, cleaning, preparing the fish – doing everything post-catch – has been done by women in many countries and in the U.S. They're the ones who are often wheeling and dealing the catch of the small-scale sector. And in the marketplace they're marginalized because the industrial sector is what determines the lowest price. But of course we all know that a low price always comes at a pretty high cost.

“If you want to save the ocean, then you need to pay attention to who's catching the fish.”

NAIAZ DORRY

Women have often played a really critical, but unseen, role in fishing operations.

Shannon: In our area of New England, the shift towards consolidation of the fishing industry into fewer boats on the ocean has been underscored by industrial fishing efforts. What that ends up looking like is these big, capital-heavy industrial scale fishing fleets on the ocean essentially raping it, and squeezing the small and medium scale fishermen out of business. In my role doing support work, I hear these stories, especially from wives because they're coming to us in need of help applying for health insurance or they need financial aid. They come in telling their stories, all based on a foundation of stress. Sometimes, the fishery can't afford crew because their bottom line is being jeopardized so they'll have their wife come on board, which stresses the family out and might put stress on the relationship. There's tension in the household because of the uncertain income. You never know what you're going to make in a given year. There's no consistency because the price is unstable. We've had families come to us who are on the verge of divorce. There have been suicide attempts, substance abuse, alcoholism, depression and other mental health issues that are just plaguing these fishing communities. And the wives are the ones trying to pick up the pieces in their households. This paints a picture of how the globalized, industrial food system — by just having so much control over the price and so much control over how they resource and manage — causes strain on women and families in fishing communities.

Niaz: Most of the women that I know who fish — with a few exceptions — are women who are fishing in a non-industrial fashion, fishing on a small-scale, using a diversified approach to their fishing operation, and yet the laws aren't written to protect them. So for us it's really important to be able to translate all of this into the basic message of "If you care about the fish, then who fishes matters." Other organizations that are pushing for the neoliberal agenda, which has largely taken over the fishing industry, promote the message that, "A dead fish is a dead fish; it doesn't matter who caught it."

Shannon: A lot of NGOs and big environmental groups are supporting the concept of consolidation and privatization of the resources. They believe it will make it easier to manage marine conservation if there are fewer companies, but that's not what happens.

The ocean is a public resource and fishermen are the first line of defense out there. We are the scientists. We are the biologists. We are observing it every day. The concept of privatizing the ocean is something that most small and medium scale fishermen are completely against.

Niaz: We've been able to show that there is an ecological impact of privatization, and an ecological impact of industrialization. If you want to save the ocean, then you need to pay attention to who's catching the fish. The idea that ownership equals stewardship doesn't wash. We have to come up with a different model.



Shannon: As humans we're part of an ecosystem. The current system of consolidated management doesn't recognize that. Marine conservation is a top down approach. Excluding the fishermen from decision-making means there's a negative impact on the community. Women play a really integral role in [managing the impact on the family and community] in New England specifically. There are all these meetings with policymakers, scientists, environmental groups, who are all at the table but what's absent are the fishermen. Women have been playing a role speaking on behalf of their families who are out to sea and can't make these meetings. But they're often not taken seriously. And the [male] fishermen — even if they are at the table — they're not taken seriously either. "Oh, they're fishermen, what do they know?" or, "It's the fisherman's wife, what does she know?" These policies are made without any consideration given to our voice. But who fishes does matter. We matter in the ecosystem. We matter in the food system. We matter at the policy table. But we're not included.

Niaz: As we see our movement grow, we see more and more women that are leading these various efforts. On the policy front we see people like Shannon and others stepping up and adding their voice as people who actually fish and happen to be women. Raising the profile of women in the fishing industry or fishing communities would be a good way to start, and adding value to what they're dealing with and allowing them to bring forward issues that we can organize around.

Shannon: There are traditional roles between men and women in small-scale fishing communities, and as the global food system expands, those roles are being compromised. In Maine a half century ago, the coast was dotted with community processing plants. Every single coastal community had a processing plant, like a cannery for sardines and lobster. Those factories, those processing plants, those canneries were populated with female workers. Over the last 50 years, the herring market was consolidated into a very few fishing businesses. During that time, canneries have slowly shut down, displacing a source of jobs and incomes for coastal community families and especially women. So, what's happening — either because of the loss of jobs in the fishing industry or the inability of the small fishermen to compete price-wise, we are also losing the opportunity to feed ourselves and our own communities. In any community where food is produced, you should be able to feed your community first. For instance, we fish from the middle of April and go as late as September. We could feed our entire community in Cape Cod every single day and very inexpensively. If you wanted to buy our fish whole, it's \$1 or \$2 a pound. Fish on the market right now, like cod imported from Iceland is \$17.99 to \$21.99 a pound. You can't feed a family of four at those prices. ■



Low Wages and Food Stamps: Agribusiness' Impact on Women in U.S. Cities

Dawn Plummer, Pittsburgh Food Policy Council, USA
Chef Pearl Thompson, Elijah's Promise, USA

“We need to go back and think about how we address Mother Earth if we want it to be around forever.”

DAWN PLUMMER

Dawn Plummer is the Director of the Pittsburgh Food Policy Council and has worked in research, advocacy, and organizing in a wide range of contexts, including with the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil. She holds a BA in Urban Studies and an MA in Political Science. Dawn's work with social movements and community organizations both in the U.S. and abroad focuses on building just and sustainable food systems.

Chef Pearl Thompson is the Director of the Promise Culinary School at Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The culinary school is one of the organization's many programs, along with a soup kitchen and a community garden, dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Chef Pearl teaches and mentors aspiring chefs and bakers to continue to transform the food system as she has herself.

Pearl: The issues around food and industrial agriculture lean towards the production of cheap food and the perception that cheap food is healthy food. The realities are that these folks think that's all that's available to them, because that's all that's promoted to them. Issues around food quality lead to problems in health care and the environment, which are primarily faced by marginalized people. But food is the most obvious. For example, a mother gets \$132 in food stamps a month that's designed to feed three people. We know that's darn near impossible. The systems that are in place are not designed to promote good food, because our philosophy in this country is that you deserve what you get because you are not seen as somebody who is valuable.

Dawn: Organic food is essentially a luxury in this country and not a right. It is accessible only if you can grow it yourself or you can pay for it. Something that always strikes me when I'm in various conversations with food professionals, which I'm always offended by, is that poor people don't know how to cook. We constantly want to blame the individual for poor choices.

Pearl: You're absolutely right about that and there's glaring racism in that whole dynamic. It is a model designed to keep people marginalized and to reinforce that whole idea of "you don't know how or what to cook."



CHEF PEARL THOMPSON



Dawn: In my experience these kinds of comments are often made in an urban setting by a young, white person who may come from some other background where they grew up eating vegetables, so it seems to be very race-based. However, I come from a poor, working-class white background and we didn't eat any vegetables. There's a lot more factors involved, and I think it gets quickly characterized as true of people of color, particularly in urban centers, when it's actually a more universal issue.

Pearl: As a culinary educator of people who are economically depressed, I want students to go out and look at the farms in the area. I want them to build relationships with farmers. I want them to know where farmers markets are. I want them to know that there are places within the New Brunswick, New Jersey area where, even if you have food stamps or if you are low-income, you can get real food. We also spend a lot of time in the educational process of giving them information for things that would empower their lives. Where is the organizing happening to raise the hourly wage to \$15? What's the difference between farmed fish and fish that has been caught in the wild? What foods are native to our region? Education is the key, and trust me, people take that information and they use it. They make different decisions even with that small dollar that they have. It's just a matter of getting information in their hands and showing them where they can secure the products that are going to enhance their life.

Dawn: Our Food Policy Council in Pittsburgh is a place for bringing together people who might not otherwise talk to each other. Part of what I'm trying to do is help facilitate relationships and help create conversation that might not otherwise happen, be it a city official with a community gardener or a culinary workforce training program talking to a community organization. So I think Food Policy Councils are an interesting place where input on food – what kind of food we have and why, and what are the systems that bring food to our plates – can have an impact at the local level. For me, agroecology is the growing of food in a way that's in balance or in harmony with nature's system, instead of a process that is going for the biggest scale at the cheapest cost and ignoring all of the human, environmental, social and political ramifications of that kind of system. I think that if we don't think about food and agriculture as a system, then we'll be in trouble, and I think that is why Food Policy Council work is so interesting.

We look at the whole food system. It's a starting point to think that hunger is connected to environmental sustainability which is connected to organic food which is connected to ... and the list goes on. These things are all interrelated and part of the system.

Pearl: The way our system has become so industrialized has left out the human element and treated the land as if it's some economic entity that's only there to produce money. The practices that were used prior to the industrial age are not necessarily obsolete. We need to go back and think about how we address Mother Earth if we want it to be around forever. If we don't start seeing ourselves in this cycle then we are definitely a doomed population.

Women have been the major producers of food on this planet. We need to be at that table, because the people who have been making these decisions are not the people who are feeding our children. Everybody has a right to decent food.

Dawn: I often think the market-based way of thinking in our country has sort of replaced the understanding of citizenship, which I know is a complicated term. You get what you're *able to buy*, and that's what it means to be a human being. That's actually where human rights really come in. At the end of the day, whether you're a consumer, a producer, a processor, or a part of the food chain, you're a human being first and foremost and that right to food is universal. When I'm on a panel talking about these issues, I end up talking about the workday and time. Because I think if we want to talk about behaviors or the realities that lead people to make poor choices, let's look at the kind of labor conditions that people find themselves in. We used to have a more available path to the middle class through an eight-hour workday that was hard-fought for and won, and as that kind of labor has declined along with a decrease in unionization, we have the rise of low-wage work and the fast-food economy where you can't really maintain the family on one job. When you stack that all up on top of other things like poor public transportation and a whole host of problems, it really isn't about access to healthy and nutritious food. It's also about how in my current middle-class family life, I hardly have the time to cook good food because I'm exhausted when I get home from work.

Pearl: It's a time issue, it's absolutely the fact that we are completely exhausted. Part of the reason why we're so exhausted is because when we live in a society with capitalism at the heart; everything becomes commodified. Even people are commodified: how much work can we get out of them, how much can we get them to produce, and how little can we pay them to make that happen?

Dawn: We need to make sure that in the conversations we're having, those most impacted are being the ones defining the solutions and providing the leadership for the direction forward. I find in my Food Policy Council that I'm mostly convening people who speak for other people. But how do small-scale farmers organize themselves? How do SNAP (formerly known as the food stamp program) recipients organize themselves to participate in these discussions? How do students who receive school food participate in setting policy priorities? At those three layers – the immediate needs, the policy questions, and a larger systems question – how do we engage people? ■

Hogs, Community and Hope in Iowa

■ **Barbara Kalbach**, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, USA

Barbara Kalbach is a fourth generation family farmer from Adair County, Iowa, raising corn and soybeans. She is a member of Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (ICCI) fighting against the corporate takeover of farming, as well as a registered nurse at a small county hospital. Barbara has three adult children, 4 grandchildren and a husband.

Replacing the Family Farm

I think most people are familiar with the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) that produce the eggs, chickens, turkeys, and pork that is eaten throughout the world. CAFOs and big farms represent the industrialization of farming, which is driving the small family farmer from the land and pushing livestock production into fewer big producers. Farming is increasingly consolidated, putting the production of food into the hands of big business in the long run.

Another kind of consolidation that I've recently seen signs of in Nebraska is in the insurance industry. A merger by a larger insurance company concentrated 133,000 acres of land into their management, and then a second merger took place with two other smaller companies which concentrated 53,000 acres of land into their management. So you can start to see that as my generation leaves the land, the people coming onto the land are not farmers. They are businesses taking over the land and its operation. And as technology becomes more and more effective, they can hire somebody off the street, just like the CAFOs do, to walk in and push the feed button and make sure the water is working and let someone know if there's a sick animal. They don't even have to have any particular knowledge of animal husbandry.

When I walk outside and I see a certain cloud formation coming or I feel a wind shift, I know what the weather is going to do – I have that instinct, that knowledge. And I know how the soil will move if it's not tilled in a certain way and a big rain comes. And I'll have an idea of what to implement to prevent the soil from moving. It comes from a lot of experience, those are things you learn over a period of time.



OBAMA
#NoDAPL

“I've been told before that it's no good to protest. ...Speak out and try to change it.”

BARBARA KALBACH

As family farms die out in this next generation, we stand to lose the ability and the knowledge of how to produce food. Do you really want to hand food production over to a computer?

Changing Community

A lot of the stores are now closed in the small towns. There used to be a lot of life after dark, especially in the summer. In a small town, people would be up on the square socializing, they'd be going in and out of the stores, there'd be a movie theatre, and there'd be cars cruising around town. There'd be a lot of socializing between the young people and the older people. Today, the streets are empty. Now people are driving from our little town to Des Moines to work, or to other large towns where there are jobs. So while they're in the big town, that's where they get their groceries, where they spend their money, that's where they buy their clothes and then they go home. So now you have what you call "bedroom communities" and that's becoming the norm in rural Iowa.

Then a factory farm moves in – as one is attempting to do a quarter of a mile up the hill from my house. They are planning to put about 7,000 adult hogs 1,900 feet from my house. And these hogs will have to be fed a lot of grain and water which will be hauled up and down my road – a demand that wasn't there before. And we will have hogs producing 10 million liquid gallons of waste every year that would also be hauled up and down our roads to be distributed on fields that surround our home. If you happen to have upper respiratory problems or be allergic to the smells and the odors by the air pollution put on by such a concentration of animals, then your life and health is impacted. You can't have your windows open. Sometimes people have to leave their homes at certain times of the year when the air pollution is particularly bad – they have to go to town and stay in a motel because if they stayed in their home they'd become ill. No one is compensated for that; you just put up with it. There's nothing beneficial to your community

from these CAFO farms. All the money that's made is concentrated in the hands of one person. And that one person is not going to support the feed stores, and the equipment stores and the veterinarians that used to visit multiple farms. There's no new revenue generated for the counties.

Losing Local Control

Those bringing in the CAFOs want to concentrate the control of our food supply and they want to produce it at the cheapest rate possible – and it's not so they can give you a good price and it's not so we can feed people.

When they concentrate the market, you don't have individual farmers controlling the price. We have to take the price that is offered to us. And if you have four companies controlling all the pigs that are grown, can you imagine what they can say about the price of pork? It's the same principle that works for Monsanto or any monopoly.

For example, the price for soybeans is going down, which means there's too much being produced. Wheat has bottomed way out from where it used to be, so that would indicate too much wheat is being produced. So, how can you tell me on the one hand "you need to produce more," yet we have so much of everything that you can't give us a price to compensate us for growing it? The price of corn is about half what it was three years ago. We've taken a fifty percent cut in tax revenue here in Iowa in farm communities, so there's much less money to spend which impacts the economy throughout.

Hope

I've been told before that it's no good to protest. I just wish there was some way to get people to understand that you have to try to speak out for what's right, and you have to try to make changes. You can't just stand back and say 'Well, this is the way it is and there's nothing you can do about it anyway.' If enough people try, good changes can happen. When I was involved in the farm crisis and speaking out and fighting back in the 1980s, my father who was a farmer looked at me and said 'It's not going to do you any good.' And I said to him 'Dad, you have to try.' If I could change anything it would be to get people to try when they see that something that is wrong. Speak out and try to change it. ■





“Without any government oversight or regulation, it is easy for ecologically criminal corporations to thrive here.”

MAGHA GARCIA



ANNE FREDERICK

Far From Your Eyes, Close to Our Home: GMOs and Agrochemicals Testing in Puerto Rico and Hawaii

Magha Garcia, Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica, USA
Anne Frederick, Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA), USA

Magha Garcia is an eco-farmer and environmental activist in Puerto Rico. She is a member of Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica, a grassroots group of farmers and allies who advocate for agroecology and are members of the Latin American Chapter (CLOC) of La Via Campesina. Magha also challenges agribusiness with the group Nada Santo Sobre Monsanto, a collective of multiple organizations, representatives of civil society that includes farmers, students, consumers, scientists, professional associations, teachers, and lawyers who have come together to defend the right to healthy food, free of transgenics.

Anne Frederick is the Executive Director of Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action which works to catalyze community empowerment and systemic change towards valuing `āina (environment) and people ahead of corporate profit. She farms on a homestead on Kaua'i. She is also the co-founder of Hester Street Collective in Lower Manhattan, New York, where she worked alongside communities on issues of urban planning and public spaces.

Magha: Due to their tropical climate, Hawaii and Puerto Rico are ideal places for the biotech seed companies like Monsanto. They can get three to four cycles of seed breeding per year. Location, shipment system and infrastructure, educated and well trained workers, and no government oversight are all factors conducive for GMO crop proliferation in the Caribbean. In Puerto Rico we have a long history of all sorts of experimentation since the U.S. invasion in 1898, but more intensively after the 1930s. Our status as a “non-incorporated territory” or colony allows the U.S. government and the corporations it supports, especially the biotechnology industry, to use us as they please. Monsanto first came to the island in 1983 when they bought the AgroSeeds Corporation. Then in 1996, Monsanto officially changed their name to Monsanto Caribe and since have grown tentacles that are woven into our communities, the public and private educational system, academia, the private sector and especially our local government. The two main functions of Monsanto Caribe are agricultural biotechnology and plant breeding experiments. The main crops they are experimenting on are corn, cotton, soy, rice, papaya, tomatoes, tobacco and sunflower. As “territories” Hawaii and Puerto Rico experience more experimentation than any of the other U.S. states.

Anne: Hawaii is particularly appealing to agribusiness because of its 12 month growing season so we have the greatest concentration of test sites, compared to the mainland. In 2014, we had 1,387 field test sites, compared to California which has around 75. Since 1987 Hawaii has hosted more cumulative genetically-engineered (GE) field trials – 3,243 – than any other state. In 2014 alone, 178 different GE field tests were conducted on over 1,381 sites in Hawaii. And the seed industry's footprint here is 24,700 acres, so that gives you a sense of the density. The area planted in seed crops has grown tenfold since 1982 while land growing vegetables and fruits, excluding pineapples, has declined more than 50% since the late 1990s. Often those test fields are directly adjacent to residential communities and we've had cases where a school has had to be evacuated because all the kids got sick. The seed companies would claim it was something else. They'd say it was a weed called stinkweed here that made people sick. Multiple EPA scientists have said there's no way it could've been the stinkweed.

Magha: As in most countries worldwide, the main chemical used to control weeds here is RoundUp. It is used by companies, municipalities, landscapers and homeowners to "resolve" the constant growing of weeds. Since Monsanto stated that it is "safe" for people, it is used freely and without any concern by most people. Despite an overwhelming amount of contrary evidence, their false propaganda is still working well.

Today, we not only have Monsanto in Puerto Rico but also 10 more agricultural biotech companies including Pioneer, Syngenta, and DuPont. Without any government oversight or regulation, it is easy for ecologically criminal corporations to thrive here.

In our case, those experiments are in open fields and our government fully supports them, facilitating privileges like free water and tax breaks, while small scale farmers can barely survive. In the last 10 fiscal years the biotech industry received \$519.7 million taxpayer dollars from our government. In addition, they received unique tax rates, exemptions, incentives and wage subsidies.

Anne: Hawaii currently imports, anywhere from 80 to 90% of its food, and we're particularly vulnerable on Kauai because we have one port where all the food comes in and if that port were to shut down, as it has in the past due to a hurricane or a dock worker strike, that's it. We have a limited amount of food on the shelves. Food security is a real issue here and we have huge swaths of agricultural land that's been used to test chemicals rather than grow food. There is a major need for increasing our food sovereignty here. There are people who are interested in farming but the industry and the landowners have such a hold on our local government that it's been really hard for anyone to make headway over on the west side of the island.



Magha: In the last four years, the main initiative to confront and expose Monsanto or related companies in Puerto Rico is publicly expressed by the annual "Millions Against Monsanto" march. The collective *Nada Santo Sobre Monsanto* (NSSM), as an umbrella organization, is inviting the public to collaborate on improving effective strategies against Monsanto & Co. This year their efforts led to the rescuing of public land to create gardens. They also showed documentaries to address related topics like transgenic crops, health risks, agroecology, and food sovereignty amongst others.



Anne: The issue area where HAPA has been most active to date is in fair and sustainable food systems – in particular, advocating for better protections for the people and the environment here on Kauai from the impacts of pesticide use. We do organizing, advocacy and education work – trying to educate the community about decision making processes, about opportunities to weigh in to effectively advocate. We sent a delegation of communities – spokespeople – to Switzerland to meet with and speak to the Syngenta

shareholders. Gary, our board president, got the organization we work with over there to buy one share of Syngenta stocks so they could get Gary into a shareholders' meeting. He delivered a very powerful message to the shareholders there about what's happening and what they're supporting in Hawaii and specifically on Kauai. We brought over another board member who is a Hawaiian mother living in the homesteads directly adjacent to where Syngenta sprays, whose daughter's hair has tested positive for 36 different pesticides, including 9 restricted-use pesticides.

We've been doing a lot to try to advocate for the governor to mandate and fund data collection and coordination of government agencies on the impact of pesticides. We brought a group of mothers from impacted communities to the governor's office to meet with him and make a case for implementing the findings in his own report. We continue to provide public education about what's going on right now with the court cases. We had hearings at the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals here in Hawaii. We were able to raise awareness about that and livestream it, continuing to work with our partners to identify other areas where we think we can have some wins. So one of our campaigns is to try and ban chlorpyrifos, which is one of the chemicals the EPA has already said it's going to ban and is heavily used here.

Magha: There's still a lot to do but there is an increasing number of people who are helping spread the message. Organizations like Boricuá, CLOC, Via Campesina are in a continual educational process, spreading the message. On a personal level, I believe that it is best for people to grow as much of their own food as possible in order to boycott and avoid the GMO industry.

Anne: We are continuing to organize and develop our community leaders who are on the frontlines of impacted communities and find opportunities for them to develop their leadership. That led us to develop another area of our work which we call 'reclaiming democracy' because what we found is that the industry has such a hold on our local government and elected officials, that it's almost impossible to pass any legislation regulating the industry at all. There's a tremendous need to get fresh blood into our local government and to encourage people who are not part of the status quo to step up and run for local government. So we started a candidate's training program that includes leadership development, campaigning skills, some community organizing skills. So again trying from another angle – how do we encourage people that want to make a difference in their local community to step up and enter local government and try to run for office? It is a nonpartisan program and we can't endorse any of the candidates but we can at least provide skills and training.

Magha: Puerto Rico needs allies outside of our island to help us denounce the atrocities, abuses and severe risks of the agro-biotechnology industry. Puerto Rico is in the middle of a complex financial crisis. The current debt is \$73 billion. The U.S. Congress and the U.S. Justice Department decided that we have to pay a debt that was created by our government. Since we are a non-incorporated territory we cannot claim bankruptcy. In order to find a solution to this "crisis," they imposed a Fiscal Board that will govern our country. This board has absolute control over the finances and many other financial and business issues. Their main purpose is to make sure that the investors will get their money back by all means possible. Meanwhile the only ones investing in Puerto Rico are the biotechnology corporations. Last week, Bayer of Puerto Rico announced that they are investing \$17 million to remodel their main branch and create a new one. Monsanto is also consolidating and investing more in their facilities located in the South of the island. We have no doubt that the 11 biotechnology corporations will be fully protected by this board.

Anne: The most heavily impacted communities happen to have the highest density of Native Hawaiian residents.

A lot of mothers who live in these frontline communities have stepped forward and said “This is not okay for our children to be doused in pesticides. This is unacceptable.”

I think they have been some of the most powerful voices, especially Native Hawaiian mothers like Malia Chun on Kauai who's been a really vocal critic of the industry and a very powerful voice. A lot of companies claim to be these major job providers but actually it's a pretty small amount. You talk to plenty of Hawaiians over there and they all just say that [the jobs that are created] are not worth the contamination of our land; we have to look more long-term at the future of āina.

The seed company has been really successful in using this issue to drive a

wedge in our community and there's this 'don't rock the boat' mentality – “don't threaten your jobs, don't make waves.” That's why voices like Malia and other mothers who are Native Hawaiian are so important in the movement. And stepping up in our small communities is really challenging. I think here is where relationships are so important. People don't like to jeopardize relationships or talk out against their neighbor, so people are very reluctant to speak out about the industry publicly. The ones who do put themselves out there become exhausted and it takes a toll. Also, there have been cases where people have stepped forward and shared their stories and were not happy with the media's use of their story.

I believe that it is best for people to grow as much of their own food as possible in order to boycott and avoid the GMO industry.

On the north shore of Kauai, we have a lot of organic farms and generative farming practices and then the west side is literally like a food desert. So there are folks on the west side – like one of our board members, Josh Morre, and some of his partners who are trying to start a youth farming initiative. Similarly there's an organization on Oahu called Mao Farms which has a similar mission of youth leadership development, growing the next generation of farmers, and trying to create pathways in local agriculture. There's definitely work happening; it's just hard because those projects tend to be relatively small and we don't have the political will to incentivize them or to get them on state land. So even though there's discussion at our county and state level of increasing food production, it seems like the policy has to catch up to our goals of increasing food production. Meanwhile, there are a lot of people just kind of doing it – just trying to create the solutions outside of working with government. I think we could be doing a lot more to incentivize that here. For instance, last year we hosted a food justice summit, with the help of the Pesticide Action Network, where we brought together four women working on food sovereignty projects and battling the impacts of the agrochemical industry in their home countries to speak about their struggles and lessons learned and to share and exchange with Hawaiians and with the local food movement here. That was really powerful. I think that it's helpful to share what's happening in Hawaii because people think of Hawaii as this tropical paradise where you come for your honeymoon. Yet we are ground zero for pesticide testing. Pesticides are actually going into the water here, this pristine beauty that we think is Hawaii is actually not the case; our ecosystems are in distress and sharing that message is really important. ■

We Have a Responsibility to Voice What's Going On: Women Farmworkers Organizing

■ **Mily Treviño-Sauceda**, National Farmworkers Alliance, USA

Mily Treviño-Sauceda has been organizing women farmworkers since she was a teenager. She has worked with United Farm Workers and the California Rural Legal Assistance Migrant Project, in addition to co-founding Mujeres Mexicanas and Líderes Campesinas. Mily has been recognized nationally for her work by the likes of the Ford Foundation and People Magazine.

We didn't know that we were harming our health

I come from a migrant farmworker family of ten children in Mexico where my dad's family had land, but they did not use any kind of chemicals. The economy is what kept bringing the family to the United States. I was 8 years old when I started working in the fields of Idaho. It was hard labor; I started working with my two older siblings alongside my mom and dad moving irrigation pipes. During those years DDT pesticide was being applied but we didn't know that it was harming our health or affecting my mom's health, especially her reproductive health.

Despite putting in more and more hours, we didn't see enough money coming in – not as much as we thought we would. We worked before going to school very, very early in the morning and then after school. My parents would continue working in the fields after they put us on the bus to go to school, pick us up and go back to the fields to continue working. We ended up in California working in the citrus industry. We worked for different companies harvesting lemons, oranges and grapefruits – very, very heavy work. The task was to fill a van of fruit, which meant 16 or 17 sacks of fruit. It was very, very hard work and there was a lot of dust – white dust and yellow dust that would make us cough.

Once I was working with one of my brothers. We were picking lemons and I was on top of a ladder and my brother was on top of his ladder several trees away – and a plane goes by. We heard it and we didn't think it was coming our way. Apparently it was a mistake, the company shouldn't have sent it at that time. But it ended up spraying our whole crew. The only thing I remember at the time was thinking 'Where can I get out?' You're in the middle of the orchard – hundreds of trees – and you could not see that far away. It looked very foggy and people were coughing and trying to call for each other. We were able finally to get out of the orchard. And when we got out I do remember there was no water, nothing we could use, and



“The more you learn, the more you want to know.”

MILY TREVIÑO-SAUCEDA

Matt Roth / Earthjustice



our eyes were very irritated, watery, itching. Our skin started itching and we started getting strong headaches. It was very frustrating and I could see my fellow workers going through the same. The crew leader arrived eventually with water. We tried to pour it on our faces and in our eyes, making sure we didn't rub our hands in our eyes. The more people would rub their eyes, the more they were having reactions to the chemicals. At the time we didn't know and understand what was going on. Those kind of situations happened to us again and again.

The Lideres Campesinas is an organization of farmworker women that we helped create in the 1980's in California. We did an assessment and two of the main issues that came out were pesticide exposure and violence against women. We wanted to change things and we understood that we needed to organize as women. We created a small group called 'Mujeres Mexicanas' in Cuyama Valley, California and we did bring about a lot of change. We got people in elected office, we got people out of elected office. We did many different things in the school district and in the city, including organizing conferences in Spanish, doing things that hadn't happened before.

Through Lideres Campesinas, its own statewide organization of farmworker women with 11 chapters around rural California, we began working across the state, organizing with women who have the same issues. We learned a lot during the years we organized with Lideres Campesinas and traveled through different parts of the United States. We learned that women in other states were going through the same issues we were going through in California.

One of the main issues has been the effects of exposure to pesticides for us, especially on our reproductive health, and our families. We wanted to organize something nationally to become more civically involved and talk about health issues and to press for better regulation. But it was not until 2011 that the National Alliance of Farmworker Women evolved. I had done a study with the Southern Poverty Law Center about sexual harassment in the workplace and other abuses of farmworker women. I interviewed around 100 women and months later, we started talking about creating a coalition or an alliance of farmworker women. Because Lideres Campesinas was one of the organizational founders of this national alliance, we felt it was important to get farmworker women involved from different organizations around the country. That's how we were able to develop what we have now with the National Alliance of Farmworker Women.

Our children have so many health issues because of industrial agriculture, like asthma and other kinds of congenital problems that they didn't have before coming to the U.S. We're finding out that the majority of our families are having more health issues than those that are not farmworker families.

We have found that we have a voice. We have a responsibility to not be silent, to be involved, to voice what's going on in our communities and to be the ones to press for change.

There are clusters of families, where they're surrounded by agriculture, that have children with special needs. We're talking about reproductive health – the women have worked in the fields and their children are born with special needs. It took us 20 years of organizing and talking to these women about these issues and now some of these women are coming to us and saying, 'We need to do something because more and more we see that our children are being born like this. It's not just my family, there are more families like this.' People are smart, it's not that they don't know that there's an issue. What they don't know is that they have rights.

So our members try to share what they are learning about how to prevent people being poisoned. What we're finding out is that airplanes and tractors go by and spray them, and sometimes the fields are sprayed before they go in. We show that they have rights and can talk with the authorities, the agencies, and the government that's supposed to be monitoring and implementing the regulations. Therefore, we get involved in different ways, from pressing with local authorities to pressing for more studies to be done or pressing to put better regulations in place.

Resolve

**The more you learn, the more you want to know.
The more you know, the more you realize that you can do things together and create change.
The more we talk about the roots of the problem and deal with the issues that have harmed our community, like violence against women, we know it's becoming easier for us to organize.**

We have found that we have a voice. We have been able to speak up and say things and advocate to politicians. We organize ourselves and we campaign to get people elected so that we can have a voice.

We have a responsibility to not be silent, to be involved, to voice what's going on in our communities and to be the ones to press for change. It's a long haul getting people to see that they have the power to create change. You can create change on your own, but if you do it with more people involved, it creates more of an impact. Organizing is not just 'Let's talk about that issue,' but 'Let's talk about the context in which our people live and in what way people are looking at themselves, their families, their values, their beliefs, etc.' We can be respectful of that and be able to organize based on the ideas of what they think needs to be done to create change. That's what has kept us here for so long in California, and that is why we formed a national alliance. It's not only about what we're doing in California but what is happening in other states – what we can learn from and what they can learn from us. ■

La Via Campesina's Global Campaign Against Agrochemicals and for Life

Nivia Silva, Landless Workers Movement (MST), Brazil

Perla Alvarez Brites, National Organization of Peasant and

Indigenous Women (CONAMURI), Paraguay

***Nivia Silva** is a member of the Landless Peasants Movement (MST) since 2000 as part of their Production Sector. Agronomist by training, Nivia contributes as one of the national coordinators of the Global Campaign Against Agrochemicals of La Via Campesina in Brazil.*

***Perla Alvarez Brites** is a member of CONAMURI, an organization of indigenous peasant women in Paraguay. Her organization is part of CLOC (Coordinating Body of Peasant Organizations in Latin America), la Via Campesina Paraguay and the South American region.*

Nivia: *The Global Campaign Against Pesticides and for Life in Brazil is now five years old. It is a result of a collective effort in the struggle against one of the principal expressions of agrarian reform in the country. At the root of the problem, it is a structural issue in the way that agribusiness has re-organized life in the countryside and how it has impacted life in the cities. The National Agency of Public Health (ANVISA) was formed in 2005 out of a series of debates related to pesticides and health. In 2008, ANVISA started a program about pesticide residue in foods. They spread the word through public debates about certain foods that are contaminated with active ingredients found in pesticides.*

So, pesticide exposure is not only a problem for those who are applying them — that is, not only a problem for farmers and those who work in the fields — but also a public health problem as it impacts the health of those who consume foods that are treated with pesticides.

In 2010, La Via Campesina held a national seminar at the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes in Sao Paulo, Brazil. More than 70 individuals participated representing 30 national organizations. It was in that moment that La Via Campesina, along with other organizations, began to promote what we now call the *Global Campaign Against Pesticides and for Life*. In October of 2010 in Quito, Ecuador, the 5th Congress of CLOC (*Latin American Coordination of Rural*



Pablo Vergara

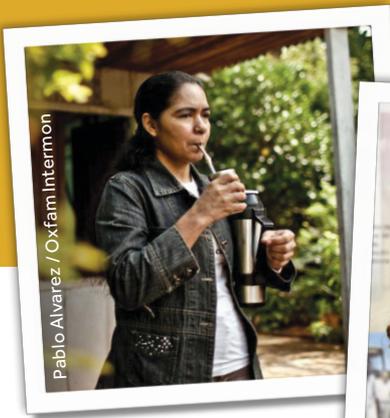
NIVIA SILVA



Pablo Alvarez / Oxfam Intermon

“There is an effort to unite organizations, movements, and NGOs.”

PERLA ALVAREZ BRITES



Organizations) took place and there La Via Campesina spoke about the need to push for a global campaign. The campaign was launched on April 7, 2011 on World Health Day. In every country, of course, there have been organizing efforts that came before this global campaign, because the struggle against pesticides and GMOs is not a new struggle – it is an old struggle. Therefore, [this campaign] is really a matter of building alliances across struggles to put more pressure on the capitalist model of farming that is playing out in the fields.

Perla: In Paraguay, the struggle against pesticides and GMOs emerged strongly after the death of Silvino Talavera in 2003, an 11-year old who was enveloped by a cloud of Monsanto's herbicide RoundUp on his regular walk home from school, was rushed to the hospital as he gasped for breath and died 5 days later. CONAMURI, the National Organization of Peasant and Indigenous Women, rallied behind the Talavera family as they pressed charges against the landowners. A national organizing effort, expressing solidarity among many environmental organizations, launched the campaign against the use of pesticides, particularly against the production model that implies the use of pesticides. It was a very strong campaign to call attention to the effects that pesticides have not only on health but also as a model with negative consequences for our society in general. This campaign started in 2006 and coincided with the clandestine entry of GMO seeds into Paraguay.

Around the year 2013, CONAMURI, which is also part of CLOC of La Via Campesina, organized a resistance action against the use of pesticides. People put themselves in front of tractors in very strong actions that ended up being criminalized. There are several colleagues who are being punished for participating in these actions. Our organization understands clearly that the use of pesticides is part of the structural model of agribusiness based on grain exportation and growing mono-crops with GMO seeds. Yet in Paraguay we do not have a clear manifestation that echoes the 2010 CLOC and La Via Campesina congress. We do outreach campaigns in our mass media interventions, but there is no central point in an on-going campaign.

In 2014, we held an international seminar that included doctors, researchers, and agronomists that were working on pesticides and GMOs. A scientific debate was generated about the use of GMOs and the technological package that includes pesticides as inextricably linked with GMOs, and a production model that seeks endless profits. I presented this debate and for the first time, I spoke at a national university about the use and impact of pesticides and the possibilities of genetic disorders, in a way that citizens could try to investigate and become more involved in this matter. I showed that Monsanto is a transnational entity deeply implicated in this model that includes GMO seed production, pesticide production, and the plan to drive from the fields those who use indigenous and peasant production models. So this campaign takes different forms and is called different things at the national level in Paraguay. There is an effort to unite organizations, movements, and NGOs. Some people are even reaching out, with the idea of the "Ban Monsanto" platform, to work on all issues concerning pesticides, GMOs and agribusiness transnationals. There are some interesting initiatives – for example the commission on pesticide victims made up of people with pesticide related illnesses and who pushed for awareness on pesticide issues in a way that facilitates authorities gathering information. But that has been unable to prosper. We are trying to form a campaign based on the structures that Brazil and Argentina have and one that is based on our reality that affects our organizations.

Nivia: It is clear that sometimes the goals and objectives of the campaign are intertwined with the goals and objectives of the campaign in other countries and on different continents. Today in Brazil there are more than 100 national and regional organizations. It is a campaign that really became an action network in the struggle against pesticides. In creating a network, social researchers of diverse public research institutions focusing on public health and diseases such as cancer became a part of that social movement, alongside unions and student movements. It is a wide, diverse and dynamic network. Today we have two principal missions. The first is denouncing pesticides and emphasizing the connection with GMOs. The second mission is promoting a different kind of agriculture such as agroecology. Not only is this a struggle against pesticides and GMOs, but also a struggle for building another kind of society and another way of organizing in the fields. ■

Objectives of the Global Campaign Against Pesticides and For Life in Brazil:

- (1) Ban the pesticides that have already been banned in other countries worldwide because of their toxic effects on human beings.
- (2) End fiscal tax incentives for the marketing of pesticides.
- (3) End aerial spraying.
- (4) Ensure the right to clean water free of pesticides.
- (5) Ensure the right to freely decide what and how to produce, to defend healthy produce free from pesticides and GMOs.

Our Way Forward: Women and Food Sovereignty

Message from the World March of Women, Mozambique

It wasn't by chance that the World March of Women (WMW) emerged out of inspiration from the historic "Bread and Roses" march, in which working-class women in Quebec marched against the precarization of jobs and salaries, the deterioration of living conditions, and the violence that intensified as a result of the impact of the neoliberal policies that were being introduced in various countries, forcing privatization and austerity measures and pushing people into extreme poverty and vulnerability, both in the global south and the global north.

Women perceived early on that the problems they faced were not local, much less by chance, but they were structural problems of the patriarchal capitalist system and because of that women around the world needed to unite in a common struggle. Thus emerged the call that gave rise to the large global action "2000 reasons for women to march against poverty and *machista* violence" in the year 2000. Local actions in more than 150 countries and territories culminated with actions at the IMF and World Bank headquarters in Washington and a presentation of demands at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. After that action, the women decided to remain as a permanent movement, in resistance and in struggle, to change the world and to change the lives of women. Every five years WMW organizes an international action as a way to visibilize the struggle of women.

Food Sovereignty is a women's struggle!

In 2015 we held the 4th International Action of WMW, in which we focused on the construction of a map of resistances, reflecting the ills that women want to see changed in their lives and territories and alternatives based in the possibilities of income generation and sustainability of their livelihoods. Food sovereignty was a theme in the map of alternatives that women defended as a form of resistance to the discourse of development that promotes accelerated economic growth, sustained by a concept of productivity that only stimulates production for the market while ignoring the efforts of peasant agriculture that is based in the organization and the work of women, their families and community.

In Mozambique, for example, in the name of the Green Revolution and Green Economy, the government (in coalition with the governments of Japan and Brazil) have forced the advancement of projects like ProSAVANA, a land grab masked as a mega-development project designed to turn Mozambique's fertile savannah lands in the north into an export zone capitalizing on industrial mega-farms of soybeans, manipulating peasant families engaged in small-scale agriculture with false promises. Today, the government says it wants to replace the short-handled hoe, to bring improved seeds and technologies to increase productivity to improve food security and increase exports.



Women in resistance maintain that ProSAVANA is a false solution because it is causing the expropriation of land, handing it over to corporations in the name of increasing productivity. Women resist and give testimony taken from their experience they've accumulated over the years. Graça Samó, International Coordinator of the World March of Women, who has roots and lived her childhood in the countryside, maintains:

“I am the daughter of a peasant woman, who for five decades grew enough on the family's land to feed her 13 children and still send us to school, selected and saved seeds for the next season, and still had excess to trade for other products that we didn't produce on our farm. She always made decisions about what to produce and what to do with what she produced. It was a lot of work, but the women made *Ntsima* — a form of economic solidarity or mutual aid that permits someone to expand their fields of production and produce more. We understand this as food sovereignty.”

In contrast, a group of women of the Tsakane Association in the District of Mahniça, Mozambique say that:

“We were incentivized by the government to form ourselves into an association to produce *Jatropha* for biofuel, with the promise that we would earn money. We received the seeds and an initial subsidy. However, we never had technical support to understand how the plant behaves. After two years we only harvested 4 kilograms from the entire 2 hectare farm. No one from the government ever returned to tell us what to do. We wasted our time.”

The regional caravans and political training workshops held in the territories as part of the 4th International Action in 2015 allowed for us to realize the need to strengthen the struggle in defense of food sovereignty. Women maintain that food sovereignty goes hand-in-hand with the recognition of the rights of women to land, to seeds, the honoring of the local knowledge and wisdom. Women of rural areas and the city, young people and elders, want to have more control over what arrives on their dining table, how it was produced, how it was processed and furthermore, they want to participate in the decisions over this process and over the design and implementation of public policies. Rachel Mwikali, a young militant from WMW Kenya demands:

“We, young people, don't have control over the food we eat and we expose ourselves to many health risks and malnutrition. Today we have a lot of problems with obesity, diabetes, cancers and other chronic illnesses. In order for us to have food sovereignty, we need popular education that develops our consciousness and that permits us to take leadership in the design of public policies and that allows us to resist the power of multinationals that only defend imperialist interests.”

Sandra Morán of Guatemala, a member of the World March of Women International Committee and the elected congresswoman representing social movements, maintains:

“It's important that we create a process of decolonization, so we recover the history and experiences of our ancestors and their relation with nature – land, water, forests, seeds, and how these systems are intertwined. Through the *mística* we recover the values that sustain food sovereignty and within that resides the sovereignty of indigenous peoples.”

The World March of Women recognizes that a real revolution requires unity between the women in rural areas and women in cities, the honoring of the women that grow food, the systems that organize food production until it arrives at the tables of urban families. For us in World March of Women, we can't separate food sovereignty from agroecology and economic solidarity.

Continue on the March until our bodies, land and territories are free!

World March of Women



Sister

Today I saw a woman plowing a furrow.
Her hips are broad, like mine, for love, and
she goes about her work bent over the earth.

I caressed her waist; I brought her home with me.

She will drink rich milk from my own glass
and bask in the shade of my arbors growing
pregnant with the pregnancy of love.

And if my own breasts be not generous,
my son will put his lips to hers, that are rich.

Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957)

Gabriela is a Chilean poet, first Latin American
writer to receive a Nobel Prize of Literature.



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