



## Food Sovereignty: A Mosaic of Resistance and Renewal on October 16th

By Mercy Dedaa Osei, for ROOTS.

2025/11/26

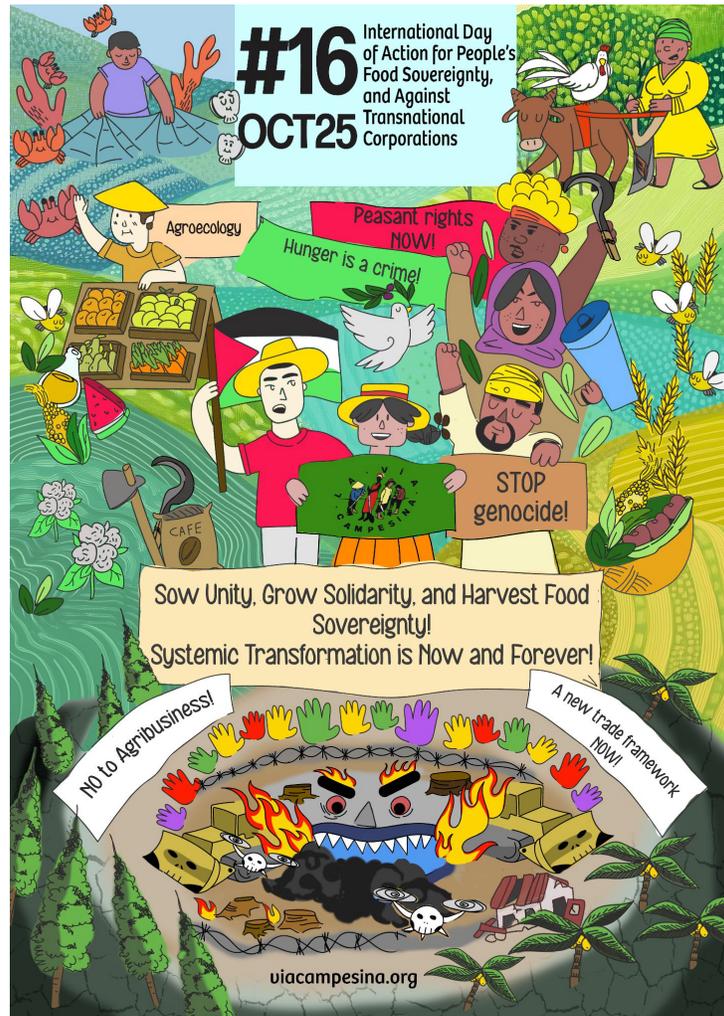
October 16 marks “World Food Day”, commemorating the founding of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation in 1945. However, in 2008, La Via Campesina (LVC) declared October 16, the “International Day of Action for Peoples' Food Sovereignty and Against Transnational Corporations”. LVC did so to highlight the flaws of the UN system and the FAO’s capture by global capitalism, which prevents it from addressing the real causes of hunger. World hunger is not simply a “natural” or “technical” challenge, though these factors are important. The most important driver of hunger is Imperialism’s control over global food systems. Global food giants do not see these



systems primarily as the world's nutritional backbone or a cultural resource. They view them solely as a means to generate massive profit.

LVC's renaming makes October 16 a permanent challenge to global establishment agriculture. It mobilises peasants, indigenous peoples, social movements, consumers, and fair-minded people generally to see the link between systemic exploitation and neoliberal politics and World hunger.

And it promotes the alternatives - especially "food sovereignty" or the right of communities to determine their own food systems rather than submit to global capitalist systems. It prioritises local food production and consumption, safeguards indigenous and local seeds, and agroecological farming methods that protect biodiversity. This article highlights how people's movements, organisations, and countries celebrated October 16 in Africa, Asia, and Latin America this year.



October 16th Poster. Photo: La Via Campesina

## Africa

In Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Uganda, numerous organisations held events and or activities that highlighted practical alternatives and promoted policy changes. From the Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum, Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers' Forum, to, these are farmer-led organizations operating in Eastern and Southern Africa. These organizations are engaged in the struggle to secure the economic, social, and political interests of smallholder farmers, identifying their opponents as the policies, practices, and systemic marginalization that disadvantage smallholder farmers. Committed to influencing the national and regional agricultural



policies to promote sustainable, ecological agriculture and empower farmers against forces that threaten their livelihoods and food sovereignty.

At the Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) in Uganda, the farmer-led advocacy organization commemorated October 16 through field activities, artistic performances, and exhibitions that emphasized the promotion of agroecology and food sovereignty.

In Uganda, the organization's Kisanga Community Agroecology School (CAS) hosted a community dialogue, bringing together legislators, local leaders, and smallholder farmers to discuss the importance of agroecology in promoting food sovereignty and protecting public health. In the dialogue, Peter Okeyoh, the Member of Parliament for Bukooli County in Mayuge district and a member of the Uganda Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security, commended ESAFF Uganda's efforts to strengthen smallholder farmers' resilience by promoting the production of high-quality, chemical-free food.

Additionally, smallholder farmers from ESAFF-Uganda's six Community Agroecology Schools—Kisanga, Road Barrier Upper, St Cecilia CAS, Nyamwamba, Bunyandiko, and Mumbuzi, represented by Ms. Nevaket Masika, presented a statement to members of parliament highlighting five critical policy issues designed to address obstacles that impede their engagement in sustainable farming practices. These factors include insecure land tenure, restricted access to credit and markets, as well as climate-related floods. The statement also emphasized the vital contribution of women farmers in fostering sustainable food systems. The statement highlighted the necessity for wider adoption of agroecology, and called on the government to secure women's land rights, protect farmlands from flooding and wildlife, enhance value addition, regulate harmful agro-inputs, and offer compensation to communities affected by the River Nyamwamba floods – a rallying cry for inclusive and sustainable agriculture.



Smallholder farmers exhibiting their produce during the event at Kisanga CAS in Kasese. Photo: ESAFF-Uganda

Furthermore, through artistic performance, Agroecology Clubs in schools supported by ESAFF Uganda utilised poetry to highlight agroecology and food sovereignty, representing youth involvement in the movement for sustainable food systems.

The organization also took part in the national celebrations in Fort Portal City, Uganda, showcasing agroecologically grown produce and farmer-managed seed varieties from their network of smallholder farmers. The exhibitions highlighted the concrete alternatives that communities are creating: foods that are safe, nutritious, and cultivated in harmony with nature.



Participants inspect exhibition stalls. Photo: ESAFF-Uganda



Hon. Frank Tumwebaze (In a yellow shirt), Minister for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, inspecting exhibition stalls by Smallholder farmers during the National Celebrations. Photo: ESAFF Uganda



Similarly, the Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers' Forum (ZIMSOFF) commemorated this day by holding an Agroecology and Food Sovereignty Fair in the Shashe Agroecology School. The fair introduced smallholder farmers and stakeholders to agroecology practices, as well as to display the diversity of seeds and food produced while nurturing natural resources. The event also allowed demonstrating the evidence and successes of agroecology and farmer-led seed systems, promoting policy discourse in favour of these approaches.

Representatives from the central cluster and relevant stakeholders attended the event. They observed the implementation of various agroecological initiatives aimed at enhancing nutrition security, income, livelihoods, and environmental sustainability.

The guest of honour, Assistant District Development Coordinator, praised the farmers from Masvingo District for their remarkable efforts in planting traditional grains, which are a government priority in light of current climate change issues.

A spokesman from the Environmental Management Authority praised the sight of gully-free districts as well as those who continue to preserve forested areas through conservation efforts. The Zimbabwe Republic Police also applauded the youth's involvement in Shashe, especially as a solution to drug and substance abuse, as well as crime.



Agroecology and Food Sovereignty Fair. Photo: ZIMSOFF



In addition, members of the National Network of Smallholder Farmers Groups in Tanzania (Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania - MVIWATA) convened a council meeting and joined smallholder farmers globally to observe this significant day. The meeting, convened at the headquarters of MVIWATA in Morogoro, brought together its members from different regions.



Council Meeting at MVIWATA Headquarters, Morogoro. Source: MVIWATA

## Asia

From Nepal and China, the experiences to commemorate and contribute to food sovereignty are not limited to efforts from progressive organizations, but also the government, as seen in the case of China.



Scenes from the Agroecology Workshop. Photo: All Nepal Peasants' Federation

In a collaborative effort, the World March of Women - Nepal, Sristi Sewa Semaj, and the All Nepal Peasants' Federation organized a 3-day program that culminated in a rally by hundreds of women, peasants, and youth activists. They marched and demanded peace, land rights, and a hunger-free world. The rally underscored the interconnection between food sovereignty and peace, emphasizing that the right to food and land forms the foundation of social justice and sustainable development.

In addition, the three organizations, through their joint efforts, organized an agroecology workshop for women peasants, covering lessons on topics such as pest management, seed and food sovereignty, agroecological principles and farming practices, soil and water conservation, and women's roles in agriculture. These two important events that took place in Kuntabeshi, Mandandepur Municipality, created a space for dialogue, learning, and solidarity among peasant women and leaders representing seven provinces of Nepal.



Some participants from the Agroecology workshop. Photo: All Nepal Peasants' Federation



A marched through Kuntaveshi. Photo: All Nepal Peasants' Federation



A variety of initiatives and programs were implemented in China to bolster the country's food sovereignty. These projects included the establishment of a farmer service centre in Dezhou, Shandong, which allows farmers to utilise drying and storage facilities. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs distributed grain dryers nationwide to address the difficulties caused by excess rainfall during the harvesting season. Also included are the policies and initiatives that have been implemented by the government in order to address the issue of crop losses, among other things.



Grain sorting as a pre-step for drying. The slogan on the wall reads “The Chinese people's food supply is firmly in their own hands.” Heilongjiang Province, China. Photo: Li Ang/Xinhua News Agency



Farmer Service Center in Encheng, Pingyuan County, Dezhou City, Shandong Province. The center has a big drying equipment and 9 standardized grain silos, which provide maize drying and purchasing services to the local farmers. Photo: Zhao Huhao/Xinhua News Agency

## Latin America

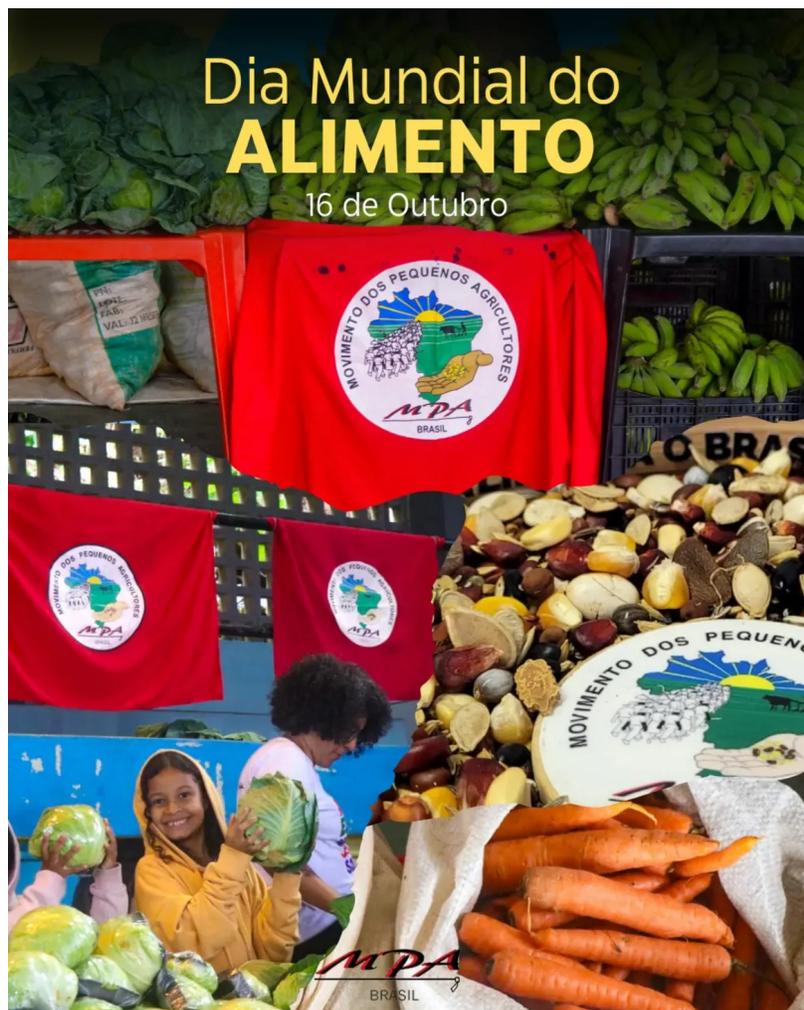
In Latin America, movements from Brazil, Argentina, and the Mexican government were not left out in the participation of this global effort.

Organizations like MST- Landless Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) inaugurated a bean agribusiness that will guarantee autonomy and increase producers' income by 50% in Paraná, Brazil, as part of efforts for October 16.

In the Small Farmers Movement of Brazil (Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores, MPA), the organization shared a statement on their social media platform highlighting how “food is a right, healthy food is the guarantee of a dignified and healthy life, defending food sovereignty is defending the life of the earth and its beings, it is a call to awareness about what sustains us: the food that comes from the earth, the fruit of the



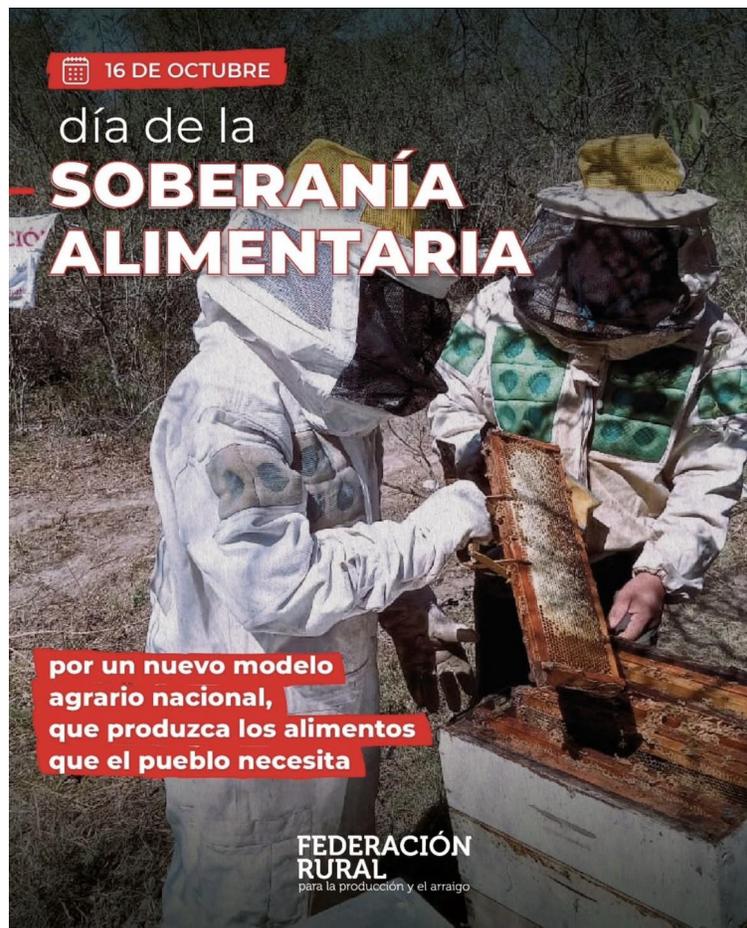
labor of millions of farmers. Celebrating this day reaffirms the right of all to eat with quality, diversity, and dignity. Food is not a commodity; it is an essential human right that connects the countryside and the city, culture and life. The Small Farmers' Movement has, in its debate, in its principles, and in its central banner of struggle, Food Sovereignty. Defending food sovereignty means caring for life in all its forms. It means ensuring that people have the power to decide what they produce, how they produce it, and what they consume, while respecting nature and biodiversity. In this time of climate crisis and environmental destruction, strengthening peasant and agroecological agriculture means protecting the planet and the future of humanity. Because without food sovereignty, there is no popular sovereignty.”





October 16th poster of MPA Brasil. Photo: MPA Brasil

The Rural Federation (Federación Rural) of Argentina also shared a political stance contextualizing the growing inequality, poverty and hunger in Argentina and the important need for them to add to their voice to global cry and efforts of La Via Campesina in defense of food for the people, the planet's biodiversity, and rights to live and work in territories free from violence, pollution, and depredation caused by large multinationals and concentrated economic power. The organization in the statement recommitted itself to work and organize day by day in the struggle for food sovereignty for the people, and for a future of dignity and social justice.



October 16th poster of the Rural Federation, reading “Food Sovereignty Day, for a new national agrarian model that produces food that the people need”. Photo: Rural Federation

Moreover, the National Indigenous Peasant Movement (Movimiento Nacional



Campeño Indígena ) sent out a strong message of solidarity, emphasizing the crucial role of rural, peasant, and indigenous women's voices due to their important role in sustaining life with their hands, through sowing, raising, and feeding the people. The organisation highlighted the violence perpetrated by large agribusiness entities across various provinces, as well as the indigenous populations and peasants who oppose dispossession and criminalisation, safeguarding what is most sacred: land, water, seeds, and life. They stressed how their communities remain organised, working collectively and demonstrating that another model is possible, one that respects nature, culture, and the right of peoples to decide what to produce and how to live. Simultaneously, they reiterated their commitment to land and food sovereignty.



October 16th poster of the National Indigenous Peasant Movement, reading “International Day of Action for Food Sovereignty”. Photo: MNCI



Finally, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Mexico implemented measures that foster sustainable production, enhance rural communities, and preserve traditional farming practices. The Government of Mexico pledged to enhance self-sufficiency and food sovereignty, aiming to ensure that every individual has access to healthy, safe, and high-quality food, as stipulated in constitutional article 4°. Initiatives like production for welfare assist small and medium-sized producers in enhancing their output sustainably, promoting the diversity of staple crops such as corn, beans, amaranth, and pumpkin in the Mexican diet. These initiatives aim to enhance the local economy while ensuring the populace has access to nutritious food that is of national origin.



A display of agricultural produce. Photo: Agriculture and Rural Development-Government of Mexico website



## Common Trends

From Asia, Africa to Latin America, these organisations shared common trends, such as focusing on seed and food sovereignty, alliance building and solidarity, framing hunger as a political crisis and struggle, and emphasising the role of women and youth. These organisations pursued various techniques and activities, but their vision remains unified and consistent. In the activities of these movements, organisations, and governments, there's an appreciation, as well as an affirmation, as seen in their concrete actions, of the need for food sovereignty, agroecology, and sustainability. Through their efforts, there is an exhibited understanding that the central conflict, of a struggle for food, is also a struggle for power.

In conclusion, the movement for food sovereignty is growing around common interests, suggesting consensus. A change in attitude and practice from food security to food sovereignty cannot occur in isolation. There is a need for broad and deep solidarity that transcends urban-rural divides and between governments, as well as policies that protect smallholder farmers, support local markets, and safeguard land rights. It also necessitates the urgent need for people, peasant movements, and/or organisations to continue agitating and standing together to reclaim their rights to define and defend their own food and agricultural systems, while also protecting the environment and providing healthy and affordable food for humanity and future generations.

---