

# A LETTER TO BUILD FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FROM OUR MUNICIPALITIES



*Rebellions germinating into transitions*

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## WHY SHOULD WE SOW REBELLIONS

We live in times of barbarism. At its heart lie neoliberal policies and elites who fuel social marginalization, economic and political impoverishment and the destruction of territories, cultures, livelihoods and landscapes. There is no space here to describe - neither do we want to dedicate it - such atrocity. Because our time is also **the time of a new social prominence, generous and conscious, that is sowing rebellions.**

Diverse and interconnected rebellions that converge in placing life care at the centre of our values and therefore of our practices. Rebellions that spread from what is close, that spring from what we have in common, breaking, from below, with this impossible world.

From these rebellions, we learn to build zones free from capitalism and patriarchy, embracing cooperation, mutual support, equality and respect to the nature of which we are part. They do not fit with the logic of economic accumulation, but with the social and solidarity economies. Food, and therefore agriculture, are not conceived as a business, here we believe agriculture is the basis that sustains our lives and our territories.

### BUILDING A TRANSFORMING MUNICIPALISM

Those who defend these principles, we believe in a transforming municipalism, which expands self-government and participation within and outside of existing institutions, which can and should support the transition from a model of capitalist agriculture and globalised food towards food sovereignty, revaluing social, environmental and proximity criteria.

**We defend local areas (municipalities) as places of transformation, from the bottom up, to drive and envision pathways towards food sovereignty.**

Given the upcoming municipal elections we present a set of proposals and reflections on how to design from local contexts interventions to promote food sovereignty. There are no recipes. *The ethos of this document is to generate, assist or facilitate reflections in the agora of each territory.*

The point of departure is the need to address holistically the agro-food system of each municipality, taking into account the horizontal dimension (environment, health, culture, heritage, employment, equality, education, etc.) and vertical dimension of the food chain (production, processing, storage, distribution, transport, consumption, waste management) as well as its embeddedness in the global context.

*So that rebellions can germinate into transitions..*

### MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT FROM LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

#### **In the field of food governance:**

We defend the need to rethink our agri-food systems from and for citizens. For that purpose is essential to enable participation, deliberation and decision-making mechanisms on municipal food strategies that comply with transparent and democratic principles.

In this sense, some potential measures are described below:

1. Create Food Councils: spaces of deliberations involving the administration, civil society organisations and other interested stakeholders, where municipal strategies are defined and involved parties oversee their implementation.
2. Conduct political actions that promote the socialization and collective management of public goods and services through new regulations.

3. Develop participatory programmes, regional and spatial planning tools and land stewardship agreements to protect the natural heritage and promote good agricultural practices. This process should involve local stakeholders as well as technical and research staff.
4. In order to develop these measures, is key to involve grassroots organisations and local institutions in the decision making process and also in the implementation phase. It is paramount to cooperate with other municipalities, creating municipalist networks (e.g. to generate synergies between Agricultural Parks, co-management of natural resources, product exchanges, etc.).

### **In the field of land management and protection:**

We want urban centres integrated in their territories, aware of the characteristics and symbolic value of the landscape and its associated elements. Therefore, it is important to manage properly the social use of the territory, seeking a balance between food production spaces and natural areas.

Some measures to support this type of management include:

1. Update, extend or study further our territories, based on agricultural censuses, maps of land use changes, land property, etc., in order to define, delimit and protect the agricultural landscape, watersheds and coasts, and all its associated assets.
2. To this end, there are tools such as the establishment of municipal or supra-municipal Agricultural Parks, jointly with Management Plans to revitalize local agriculture through concrete actions and dedicated annual budgets.
3. Ensure the collective management of the commons with the necessary regulations and ordinances.
4. Create ordinances in order to take advantage of underutilized agricultural land, from both public and private ownership, for agro-ecological production.
5. Promote allotments, community and school gardens, for self-consumption in underused sites, local parks and gardens. The municipality should also provide local infrastructure and assure the participation of the local community in their management.
6. Encourage the establishment of fishing zones in the vicinity of coastal centres of the municipalities, in order to encourage the creation of direct selling points and a better inclusion of fishing activities into the daily life of the villages.





### **In the field of the revitalization of the food industry :**

It is essential to prioritize municipal policies that help to maintain and increase the population of rural areas, which is dramatically shrinking in many villages. This includes policies that revitalize the economic fabric in the primary sector (agriculture, forestry, pastoral and fisheries) and related industries (secondary products, services, etc.) underpinned with agro-ecological and social economy principles, paying special attention to the viability of farms already established as well as promoting job creation aimed at women, young people, unemployed people and those with functional diversity.

This goal can be reached by:

1. Providing municipal or supra municipal training schemes on the following topics: agro-ecological practices, creation and management of cooperatives and other social economy initiatives, establishment of short food supply chains, food processing skills, hygienic-sanitary regulations, etc.
2. Encouraging the recruitment of employment and local development officers for the promotion, implementation and monitoring of active employment policies related to the agro-food sector.
3. Facilitating women's paid work in the agro-food sector by adapting machinery, implementing measures of reconciliation of work and family life, prioritizing their access to land and advisory service, for example, providing advice on the law of shared farm ownership.
4. Implementing financial mechanisms, public subsidies and tax breaks to support agro-ecological and local initiatives, including transitions from conventional agriculture to agro-ecological practices, etc.
5. Facilitating the involvement of young people in the agro-food sector through training plans, provisional assignment of housing, access to productive resources, etc.
6. Promote the creation of public enterprises in the primary and service sectors (e.g. waste management, food processing, forest management, etc.) and reassign or rearrange municipal or supra municipal infrastructure for public use (mills, slaughterhouses, co-working spaces, logistics centres, bakeries and kitchens).

### **In the field of management of productive resources:**

Productive resources in the municipality should be the basis for organizing a new food system. This implies, as already mentioned above, considering the specific characteristics of the territory as well as the management and planning tools that can assure a balance between social use

and conservation of the natural heritage. This place-based assessment should be followed by ensuring a fair and sustainable access to productive resources (land, water, seeds), prioritizing collective and communal management when possible. For example:

1. To create land banks, funds or other management tools, with public or private land, to facilitate access to land, generating mechanisms to foster exchange and avoid market speculation.
2. To promote or support seed banks and exchanges, as well as establish agreements with research centres to preserve the genetic diversity of plants and livestock.
3. In relation to production practices, to promote agro-ecological knowledge, including revaluing and rediscovering of local traditions and knowledges.
4. To promote responsible use and management of water resources through advisory sessions, dedicated training and public support. This includes improving irrigation systems to assure a more efficient use of resources, as well as promote irrigation systems that are adapted to the local characteristics of the territory, preserving traditional infrastructures.
5. Finally it is important to defend municipalities of threats over their natural resources through declarations such as fracking free and GMO free, for example by a municipal vote which bans those activities in the area.

### **In the field of marketing and local consumption:**

We long for an agricultural fabric that sustains our municipalities with agro-ecological and diverse short food supply chains that have a positive impact on the local economy, different from those based on the capitalist economy. These food networks must be integrated and contribute to strengthening the Social Market, that is, a network of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services based on ethical, democratic, ecological and solidarity criteria, consisting of companies and organizations of the social economy and those who consume these goods and services.

We propose:

1. Strengthen public procurement of local, agro-ecological and fair trade foodstuffs, for example, introducing these criteria in tenders and contracts.
2. Promotion of direct selling initiatives, markets and other forms of sustainable food chains that include local, organic and fair trade products. Facilitate the creation of buying groups, for example by providing access to infrastructure.



3. Develop informative campaigns to improve awareness and knowledge around agro-ecological local produce and sustainable food chains in order to increase consumption.
4. In those municipalities that have wholesale markets (Mercabarna, Mercamadrid, etc), Municipal Markets of public ownership, establish technical and political criteria to encourage the marketing of agro-ecological and local produce.
5. Limit advertising in publicly owned media, buildings or potential advertisement spots of products with questionably ethics and health messages.
6. Establish or support mechanisms for participatory certification of local agro-ecological products, both at the local and supra-municipal level.
7. In all possible market spaces (vending machines, local markets, etc.), support local and organic products favouring its visibility for example through differentiating labels.

### **In the field of cultural change:**

In order to assure that the changes proposed above are sustained, completed and enriched, it is necessary that there is a change in our values. Current values shape a patriarchal, consumerist and individualistic society that in the agri-food sector is translated into a degradation of the rural, a reduction of food to a consumer good, an instrumentalisation of nature, and also a downsizing of participation and cooperation capacities that limit grassroots actions.

To stimulate these changes the commitment of local governments is key. Some measures to implement in this line might be:

1. To enhance the role of people involved in the primary sector, especially farmers and female farmers, opening up discussion and education spaces for their participation (for example in local schools, seminars or workshops), including them as consultants in organic school gardens and public canteens, encouraging generational exchanges and placing value on traditional knowledge. By and large, training sessions should preferentially be led by women.



2. Perform actions to enhance the role of food in our health, culture and the overall economy, from the perspective of the political significance of the care and reproduction of life.
3. All proposals must contain measures to assure gender equality, particularly those with educational objectives such as campaigns or training initiatives.
4. Foster a relationship of respect and reciprocity with nature through different training activities. This includes for example discussing issues such as global warming or the overuse of pesticides or chemical fertilizers in agriculture.
5. Organise campaigns to stimulate civic engagement and participation, as well as provide training on group dynamics, communication, cooperation, collective decision making, etc.

The organizations that have collaborated in this letter are:

- Plataforma Rural
- Coordinadora Europea de Vía Campesina
- Ecologistas en Acción
- Amigos de la Tierra, Comunidad de Madrid
- Centro de Estudios Rurales y de Agricultura Internacional (CERAI)
- Instituto de Sociología y Estudios Campesinos (ISEC) de la Universidad de Córdoba
- Grupo de investigación Paisaje y Territorio en España y América Latina, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
- Cardiff University, Reino Unido
- UNED
- Plataforma por la Huerta Zaragozana
- Proyecto Agros
- Red TERRAE
- Revista Soberanía Alimentaria, Biodiversidad y Culturas
- FUHEM
- Emaús
- Ingeniería Sin Fronteras de Valencia
- Parque Agroecológico Soto del Grillo, ayuntamiento de Rivas Vaciamadrid
- Parque Agrario de Fuenlabrada, ayuntamiento de Fuenlabrada
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- Izquierda Unida
- Ganemos Madrid
- Comunaria
- COCEDER
- Terra Franca
- Perifèries
- Garúa s.coop.mad
- Germinando iniciativas sociambientales s.coop.mad
- Altekio, iniciativas hacia la sostenibilidad s.coop.mad
- Heliconia s.coop.mad
- Cyclos s.coop.mad
- RIPESS EU

+information: [secretaria@reasnet.com](mailto:secretaria@reasnet.com)

