

COMMON VISIONS

Contributing to strategies for long-term collaboration
across food movements



LONG
FOOD
PROJECT

A user's guide to
'A Long Food
Movement'

IPES-Food &
ETC Group
(2021)

**IN APRIL 2021, IPES-FOOD
AND ETC GROUP PUBLISHED
A MILESTONE REPORT:**

**A LONG FOOD MOVEMENT:
TRANSFORMING FOOD
SYSTEMS BY 2045**

Laying out two contrasting futures for food systems, the report sounded a call to action: holding up a mirror to food movements and showing what we could achieve over 25 years with enhanced collaboration. But the report was only the start of a process. The civil society-led food transformation envisioned in the report was just a snapshot of what could be achieved, with a handful of potential pathways forward and many question marks. Since the report was launched, the authors have engaged in conversations with other wide-ranging civil society groups to share and flesh out the 'Long Food Movement' vision. This user's guide is a tool for civil society partners to take those reflections further: it offers a recap of how civil society has achieved successes in the past and suggests why new strategies are now required, and an easy-to-navigate guide through the risks of an agribusiness-led future (Scenario 1) and the opportunities for civil society-led transformation (Scenario 2).

Food movements are at a critical moment. The climate crisis is accelerating, 'planetary boundaries' are being crossed, corporations are tightening their grip on food production and delivery, and food insecurity is rising by the day. At the same time, major global shocks continue to impact food systems – including the COVID-19 pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine. Seven years into a global promise to end hunger by 2030, the situation is instead getting worse. FAO estimates that 928 million people were severely food insecure in 2020 – a rise in one (pandemic) year that was larger than the previous five years combined. In the same year, approximately 1 in 3 people – 2.37 billion – did not have regular access to adequate food. COVID-19 continues to push uncounted millions more to the brink of hunger, and has put an estimated one third of food and farming livelihoods at risk as well as straining food supply chains. To this we now add the combined record-breaking global food price and debt crises. All of this is taking place in a context of non-stop environmental emergencies and historic levels of inequality.

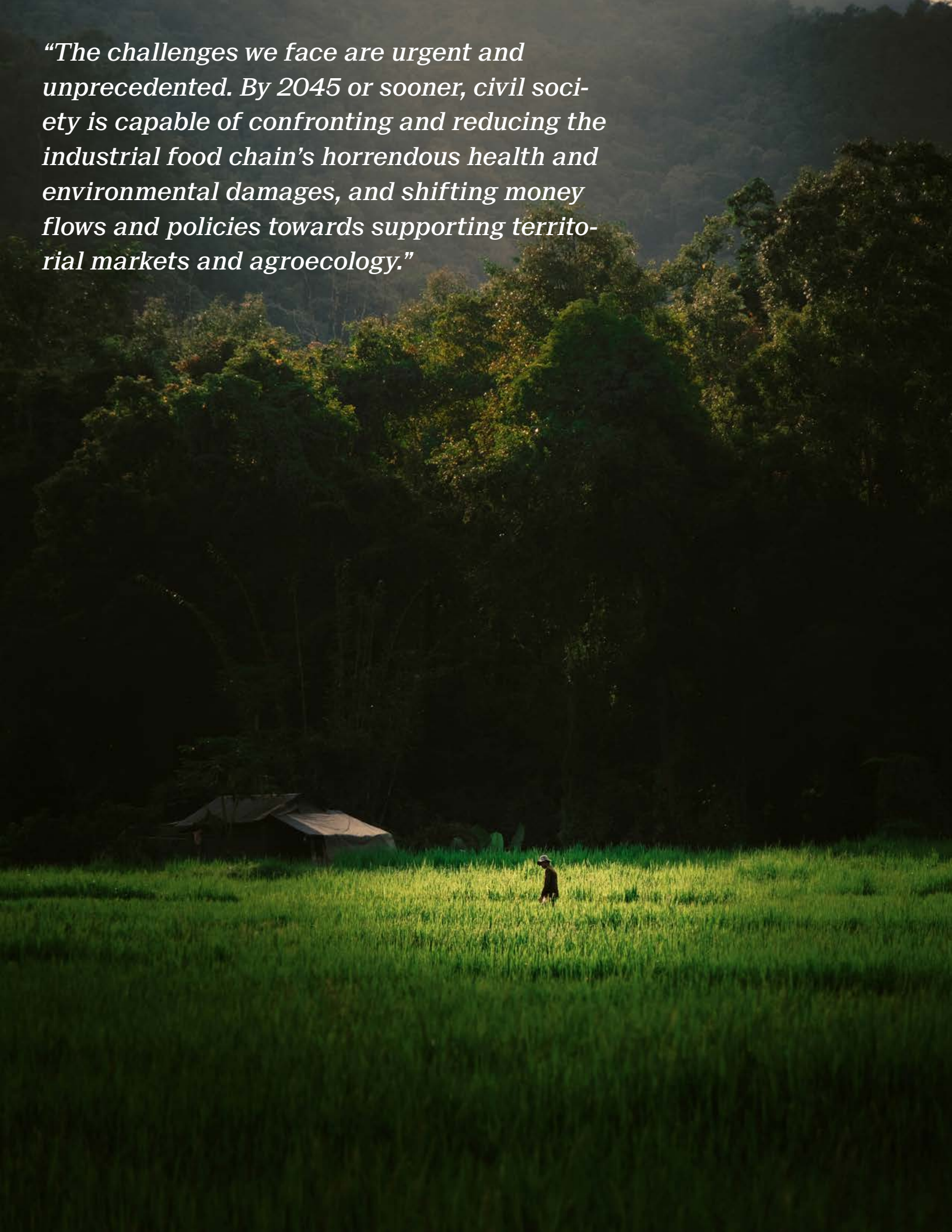
Many powerful actors are claiming they have the answers and are working to put themselves and their version of 'food systems transformation' in the driving seat. Yet today's food movements are knowledgeable, rooted in communities and contexts, well connected, and calling out false solutions. From farmers and fishers' groups to international social movements, from grassroots food initiatives to global health and environment advocates, from trade unions to administrators, lawyers and researchers, food movements are already providing a critical line of defence. Food movements are the only ones capable of seizing this moment to move the world to a safer place.

To better understand this potential, it is important to look back at what civil society has accomplished so far. Over recent decades, food movements have scored a series of high-profile international victories in support of peasants' rights, biodiversity, and inclusive governance. Other equally important successes have been won at national and local scales.

From anti-globalization protests that gave rise to the food sovereignty movement, to ongoing indigenous struggles against colonization, there is a vibrant history of collective struggle, resistance, and manifestation of alternative ways forward. This has paved the way for present-day movement building and organizing.

However, the challenges we face are urgent and unprecedented. It is crucial for food movements to build on these successes and work together to fundamentally re-evaluate plans and priorities with a long-term lens. There are many pathways - including political and legal steps - to strengthen food sovereignty and human rights in this century of crises. We believe that, by 2045 or sooner, civil society is capable of confronting and reducing the industrial food chain's horrendous health and environmental damages, and shifting money flows and policies towards supporting territorial markets and agroecology. But we need the right ingredients.

“The challenges we face are urgent and unprecedented. By 2045 or sooner, civil society is capable of confronting and reducing the industrial food chain’s horrendous health and environmental damages, and shifting money flows and policies towards supporting territorial markets and agroecology.”



KEY INGREDIENTS FOR A RADICAL CHANGE OF THE FOOD SYSTEM OVER THE NEXT 25 YEARS

Based on interviews with food movement participants, conversations with CSOs, decades of participation in diverse struggles, and literature review, we were able to identify four key ingredients that civil society has drawn on to be change-makers in the past - ingredients that will be even more crucial for food movements to drive forward the unprecedented undertaking that is required over the next quarter century.



01
**COLLABORATING
ACROSS SCALES**

(local to global, and back)

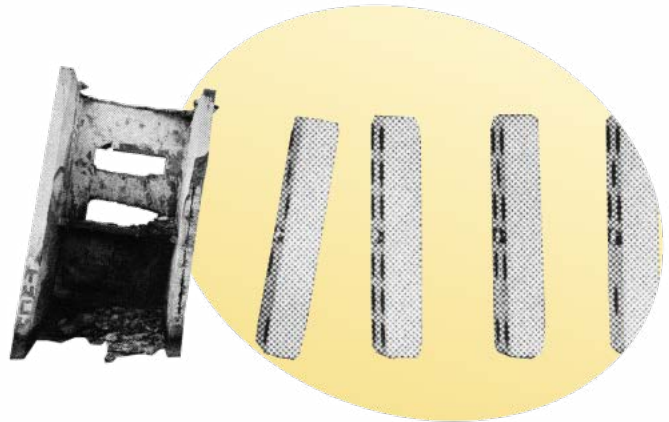


02
**COLLABORATING
ACROSS SECTORS &
CONSTITUENCIES**



03
**BUILDING LONG-TERM
COMMITMENT & VISION**

(outlasting the opposition)



04
**BEING READY
FOR CHANGE &
DISRUPTION**

COLLABORATION ACROSS SCALES (LOCAL TO GLOBAL, AND BACK)

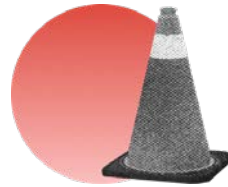


Organizing across scales – local to global, and back – is key to civil society making effective change. The challenges facing food systems increasingly cross national borders, making global connections both strategic and necessary. Most of the recent victories won by food movements have happened because of intense flows of information and ideas from local to global, and vice versa.



WHY IT MATTERS

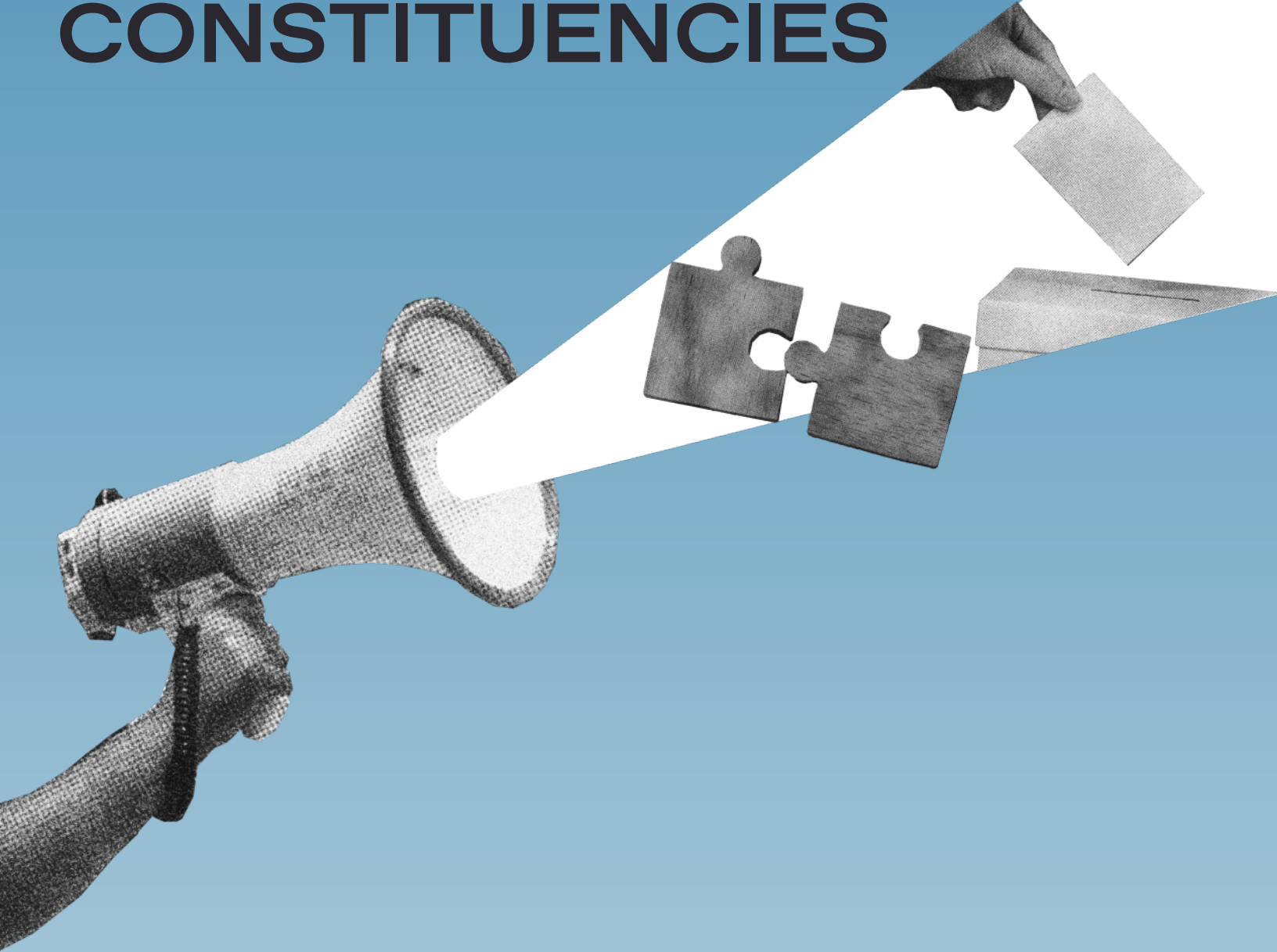
- Forming strategic alliances: linking a diversity of issues, building a sense of accountability and solidarity across scales and topics, and strengthening connection with the grassroots.
- Securing visibility for local struggles and using that global scrutiny to protect them against authoritarian responses or the rolling back of local progress.
- Giving civil society the knowledge and legitimacy to speak on various issues.



TENSIONS & CHALLENGES

- Cooperation and solidarity are generally stronger within social movements and weaker among NGOs.
- Resources and visibility tend to go to national and global-level actors, sometimes taking power away from communities.
- Communities may prefer global CSOs to support their immediate struggles rather than sounding the alarm over seemingly distant threats and negotiations.
- Decisions about who speaks on behalf of those most affected by industrial food systems can be challenging and can reproduce privilege and power inequalities. The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty and the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (both based in Rome and focused on supporting the participation of communities) have worked hard at getting this balance right, and this example holds important lessons.

COLLABORATING ACROSS SECTORS & CONSTITUENCIES

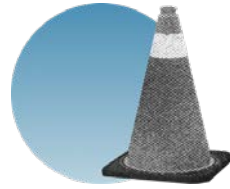


Building and maintaining alliances across issue areas, and with different constituencies (including state actors), are also regular ingredients in civil society's greatest advances. Civil society can use these cross-sectoral and cross-constituency relationships to work collectively at a scale that enables us to seize political opportunities, and to create new openings where they do not yet exist. CSOs can sometimes find themselves working towards a goal alongside unlikely allies.



WHY IT MATTERS

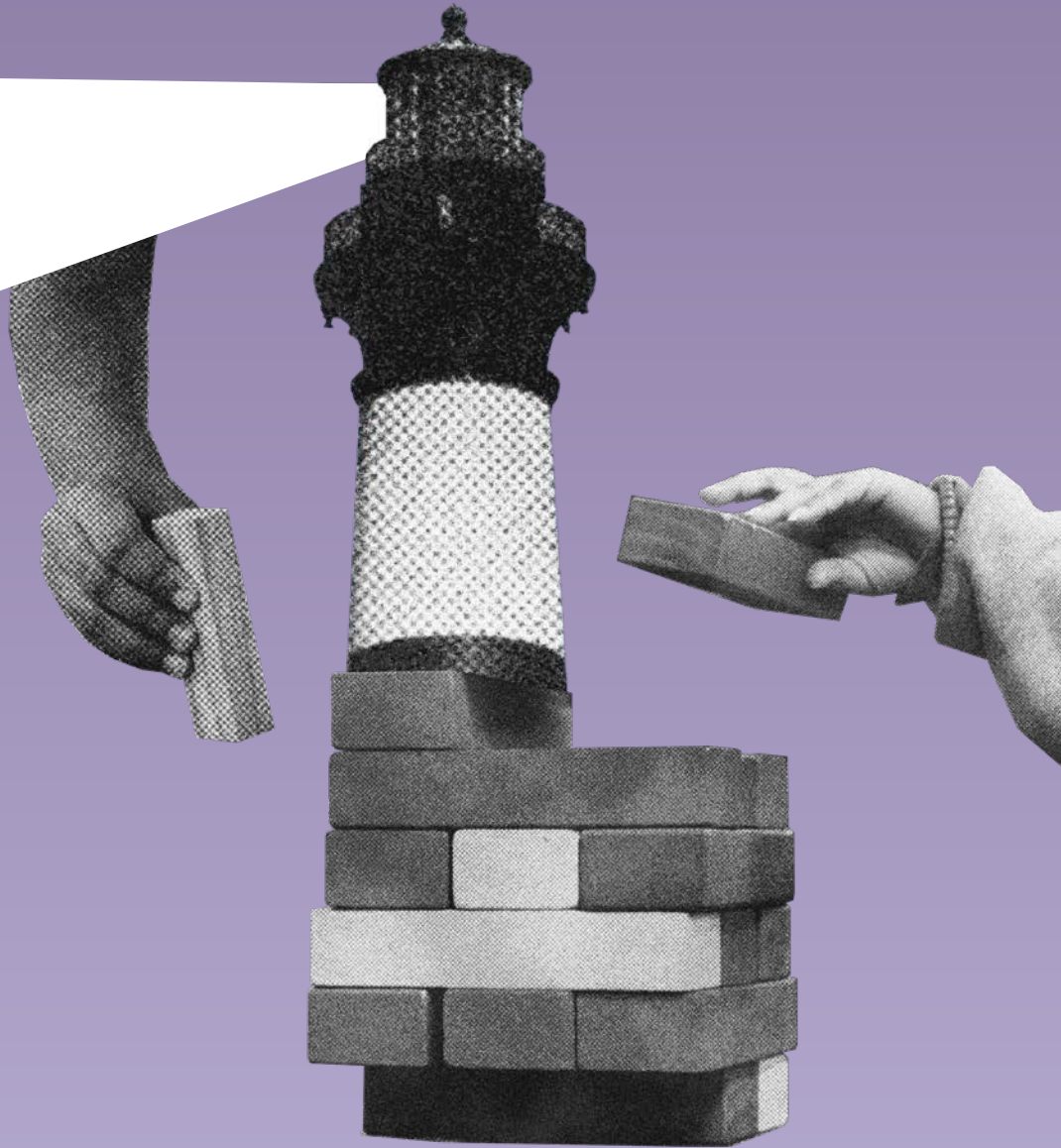
- Some level of support and buy-in from the state is needed for civil society to achieve ambitious changes, e.g. when pursuing land reform, social protection, public funding for agroecological research and training, and to hold corporations to account via human rights instruments, etc. Many successes – particularly national policy wins – have been driven by strategic collaborations with municipalities, national governments, or political parties.
- New governance spaces can be forged through state-CSO collaboration.
- Important allies can also be found in international institutions. Though collaborating with the U.N. is complex, food movements have worked in innovative ways to advance their agendas in these settings, often employing powerful inside-outside strategies.
- Although very controversial, civil society has rarely and unusually worked with agribusiness in order to have stronger influence with governments or U.N. agencies and seize opportunities to gain airtime and credibility for their arguments, e.g. in the early years of multi-stakeholder dialogue in international negotiations around the control of seeds, and in the dialogues around intellectual property that allowed CSOs to argue their opposition to life patenting with policymakers.
- Food movements often work with smaller companies, for example with the natural products industry, with organic seed companies, with smaller companies along the industrial food chain, and in regular collaborations with producer and consumer cooperatives.



TENSIONS & CHALLENGES

- Many social movements, straining their resources to the max, already link their food agenda with work on trade, health, climate, race or biodiversity. But continuing to do so – or going further – is costly in time and resources.
- Collaboration with the private sector is complex, asymmetrical, and comes with built-in power imbalances and risks for CSOs, who may be pressured from the outside (e.g. by governments, funders, and corporations/trade associations) to engage in roundtables, ‘multi-stakeholder dialogues’ or other initiatives over which they have little say.
- At times, relations with the state are necessarily adversarial, and collaboration may sometimes be limited to specific issues.
- Underlying these decisions are vital questions about who speaks for who and real risks of co-option and tactical misdirection of energies.

BUILDING LONG-TERM COMMITMENT & VISION (OUTLASTING THE OPPOSITION)

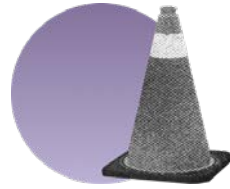


One of civil society's greatest strengths is to act from sincere values and to hang in for the long haul. Food movements' long-term commitment to the cause, personal convictions, institutional memory, and ability to rally around a common vision of where we're headed, allow them to potentially bring about major changes over a long timeframe.



WHY IT MATTERS

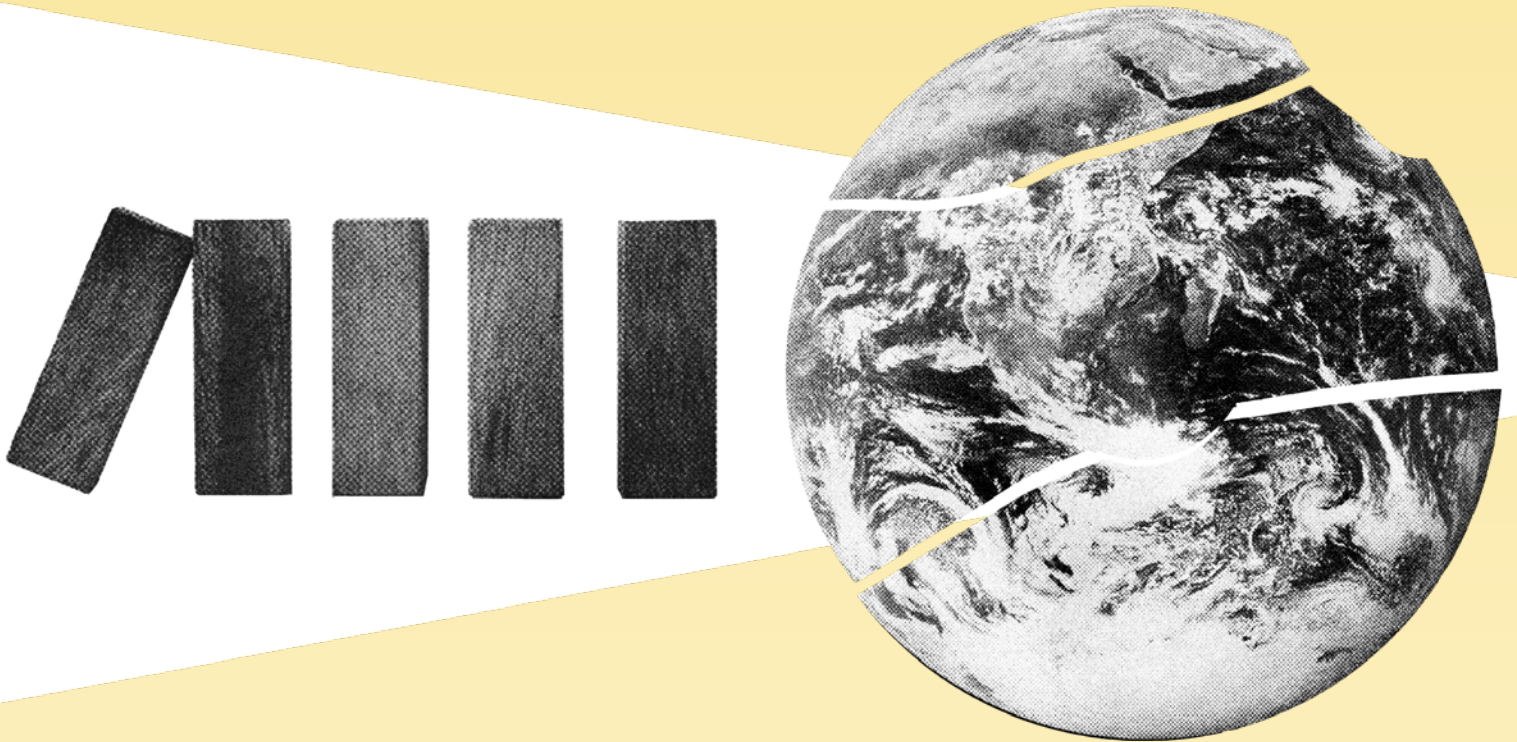
- Diplomats, bureaucrats, and governments come and go. Agribusiness works from one quarterly report to the next. Food movements can succeed by outlasting the opposition!
- Civil society often gets predictions right and can gain influence and credibility by sticking to its guns. Many of the trends playing out today around climate change, biodiversity loss, and new technologies were flagged far in advance.
- A particularly powerful shared vision is taking shape among today's food movements – around food sovereignty and agroecology. This collective sense of direction is essential to gain the full benefits of long-term planning.



TENSIONS & CHALLENGES

- The natural instinct to cooperate and plan long-term is challenged by competition for resources and the shifting interests of funders. Many CSOs identify small grants and short-term funding as barriers to effective long-term strategies. This forces CSOs to react to threats once they are on the doorstep, rather than to anticipate and pursue new opportunities.
- Food movements can only plan ahead effectively if they are also looking to the future and considering the implications of political, economic, and environmental changes (i.e. planning in context). But we generally see the world as it is now – and then work to make a better world over the next two or three years. Few have the luxury to consider how all the pieces of the puzzle are shifting at the same time.
- It is difficult to strike a balance between being too optimistic and too cautious (i.e. not aiming high enough).

BEING READY FOR CHANGE & DISRUPTION



The shocks of the past dozen years should not have been very shocking. Most of the gravest changes, such as the accelerating loss of global soil fertility and mass extinctions of species, were predicted.

From major disruptive events that can be anticipated ('grey swans'), to social tipping points that can be harnessed, the future might be more predictable than we think.



WHY IT MATTERS

- Hurricanes, floods, and droughts are often followed by epidemics and famines. But because they are not on a timetable and concretely accounted for in planning, governments and civil society often fail to prepare for them. Food movements, using a long-term strategic lens, are well-placed to anticipate and use these moments to move forward positive change.
- By pooling collective knowledge and collaborating deeply, food movements can develop early warning systems to anticipate disruptive events, and early response systems to guide the decisions that are often made in times of chaos, with long-term repercussions.
- History is filled with events which quickly transformed politics, social values, or economies. As behavioural research has shown, profound change can be unleashed by protest or mobilization by only 3-4% of people, or when an idea is adopted by just 25% of the population. This points to the need for civil society to be aware of imminent tipping points, and engaging with the cultural and behavioural shifts that can trigger new political realities. This is especially important as corporations continue to find new ways to manipulate behaviour and culture (see below).



TENSIONS & CHALLENGES

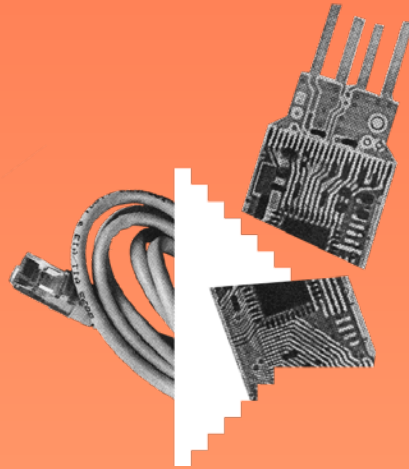
- Although CSOs have a lot of experience responding to disasters, civil society tends to move slowly when confronted with new issues.
- Food movements are very aware of climate chaos and alarmed by biodiversity loss and health crises, but have few resources to track details or how things fit together. Few monitor technofixes usually presented as technological developments, what corporations are up to, and what their plans are.

WHAT ARE 'PREDICTABLE SURPRISES' EVENTS AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Some economists talk of 'black swans' to describe unexpected events that come out of nowhere and change everything. But we can't predict the unpredictable. So it's more useful to prepare for future disruptive events that are likely to happen, we just can't be sure of when and how. In contrast to unknowable black swans, some call these 'grey swans', and we propose to use the very figurative concept of predictable surprises. These arise from conditions we can assume might happen (like rapid environmental change, wars and pandemics) and come with relatively predictable risks and opportunities. The Long Food Movement report discusses three of the many future disruptive events that food movements can plan for:



**THE NEXT
PANDEMIC**

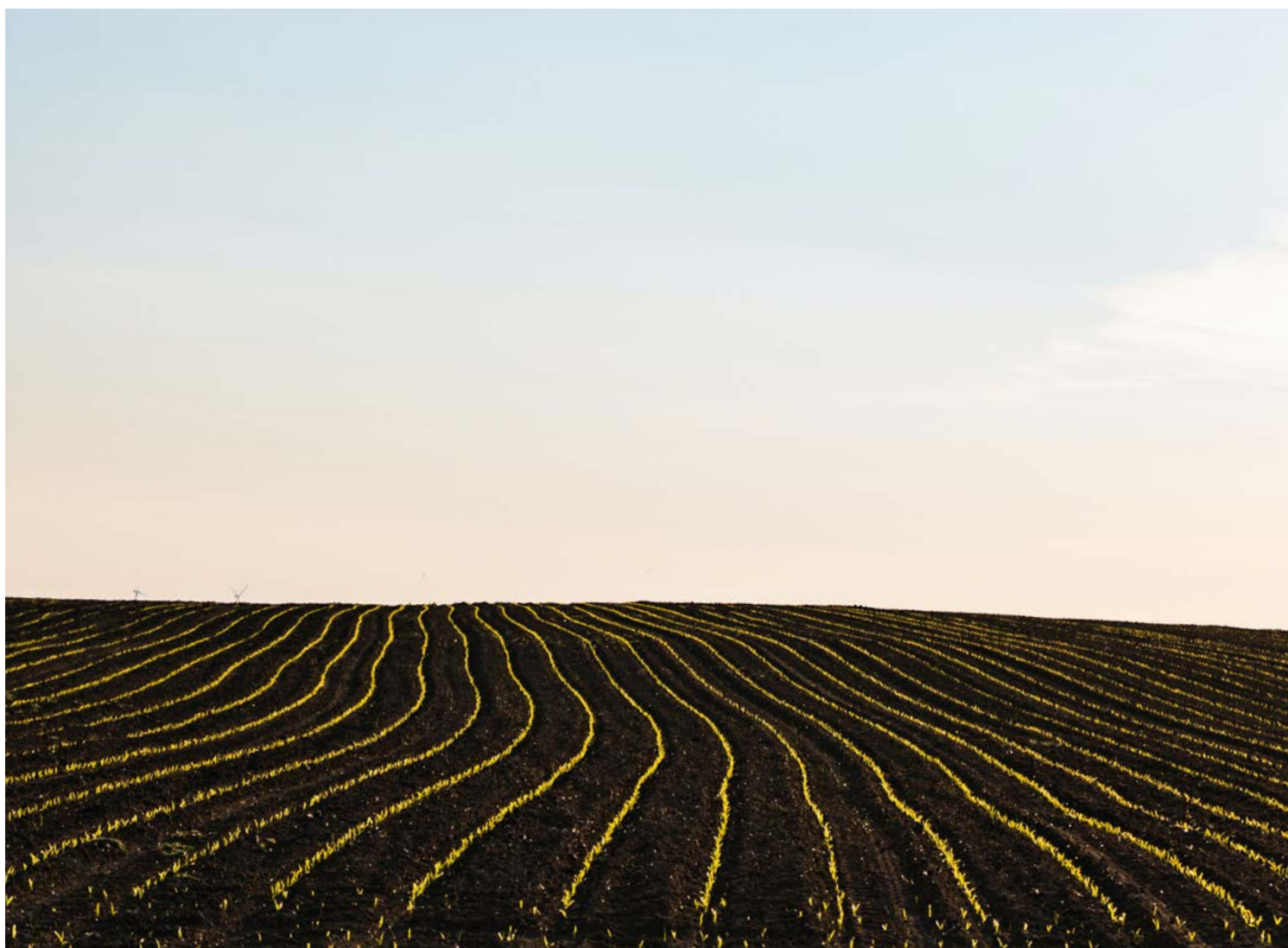


**COLLAPSE OF
INTERNET OR
DATA SYSTEMS**



**COLLAPSE OF
POLLINATORS**

FOOD MOVEMENTS AT A CROSSROADS: IN THE FACE OF MOUNTING CHALLENGES, CAN CIVIL SOCIETY STILL WIN WITH THE SAME TOOLS AND STRATEGIES?



Over decades, civil society has proven itself capable of scoring major victories. When it comes to building the sustainable food systems of the future, today's food movements have most of the ingredients in abundance – and the potential to develop further capacities by ramping collaboration up a notch. But the terrain of this battle is shifting, and food movements are at a crossroads. The challenges are mounting and morphing, raising questions about what can be achieved by “civil society-as-usual”:

01

Planetary boundaries are being crossed and cycles of climate change, conflict and hunger are taking hold. Just over ten years ago, the Stockholm Resilience Centre identified nine Planetary Boundaries that the world should never cross. Eight of the nine boundaries have either been crossed or have become much more vulnerable over the last decade, and the ninth may be in jeopardy. To this should be added global health and other social boundaries - as chronic and communicable diseases rise. The devastating consequences of how these boundaries connect with each other, and the effects of crossing them, are becoming hard to ignore: already, climate change, biodiversity loss, health emergencies and rapidly declining soil fertility are critically damaging the health of people and the planet, and threatening food systems around the world. Especially at risk are small and marginal farmers, forest dwellers, livestock keepers, coastal communities, indigenous peoples, women, and all of those whose lives and livelihoods rely on vulnerable ecosystems. Indigenous and racialised peoples who have been socially marginalised by economies, in particular, face devastating impacts: environmental change and other stressors affect hotspots of biological and cultural diversity, undermining their ability to rebuild resilience.

02

With new players entering the agri-food sector and new technologies taking root, corporate power is in the ascendancy. Industrial food corporations are accumulating never before seen profits, with increases higher than the rate of inflation. Asset management giants and others are successfully financializing the food chain end to end, and tech titans are moving into food and agriculture through new technologies. They are also gaining control of governance systems through so-called ‘multistakeholder’ initiatives (more below) and deploying powerful technological means to openly or invisibly shape opinions and subtly manipulate behaviours.

03

Civil society is facing new strains. Climate and food security shocks are creating unprecedented crises and forcing food movements (and their funders) to divert more resources into frontline responses. Civil society is also operating in an increasingly hostile environment, with government responses turning more and more authoritarian. This reduces food movements' capacity for wide-ranging collaboration and long-term strategizing, at a time when it is needed more than ever.

LIFE AT THE BOUNDARIES



SOIL EROSION

In 2020, the first global report on soils warned that one third of agricultural soils are so eroded that they risk being sterile - and that after 12,000 years of harvests, only 100 more may remain.



OCEAN POLLUTION

Some researchers note that oceans are on course to have, by weight, more plastic than fish by mid-century. This undermines the livelihoods of the world's 30 million artisanal fishers and workers, who provide nearly half of the fish we eat, and jeopardises one fifth of our protein.

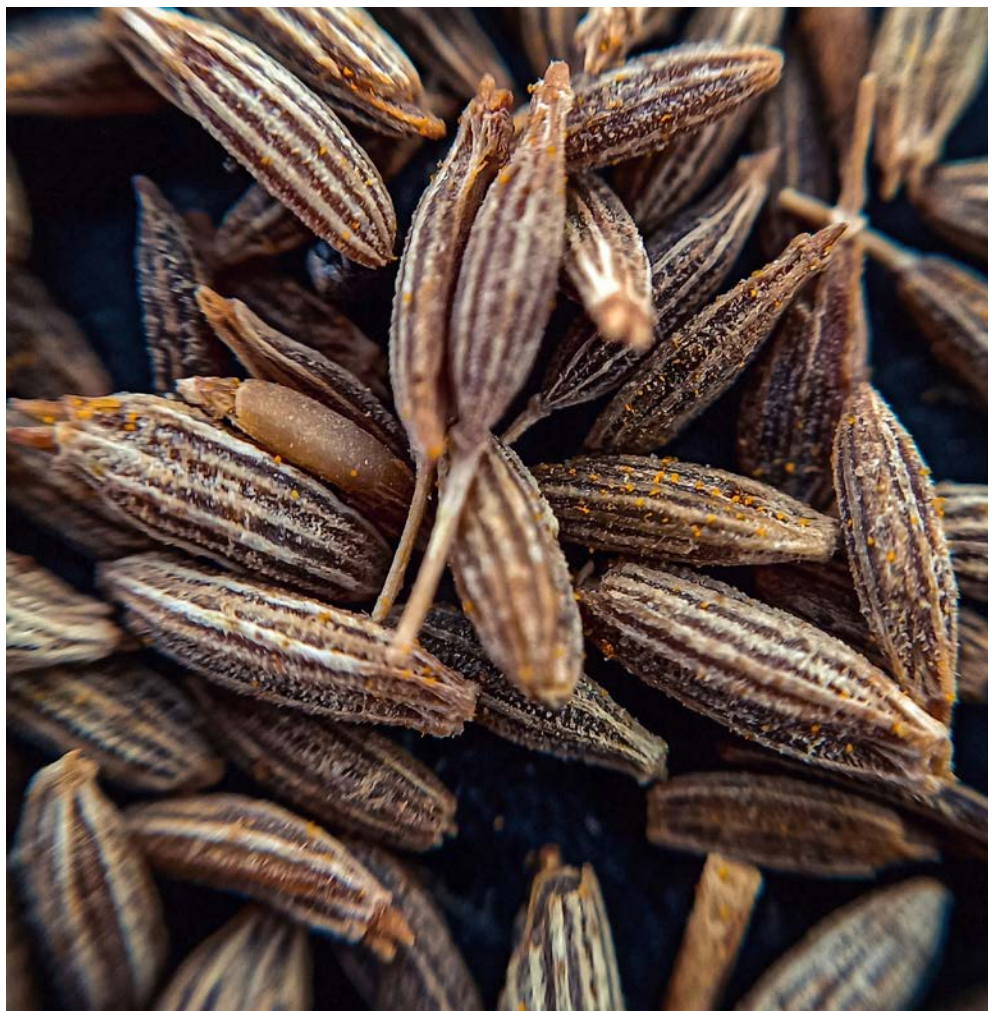


WATER SHORTAGES

If the current draw on underground aquifers continues, 5.7 billion people will regularly experience water shortages by 2050.

In this new terrain, can food movements still win major victories and build the just and sustainable food systems of the future with the same tools and strategies? What happens over the next 25 years if 'business-as-usual' continues? What happens, instead, if food movements collaborate in new ways, developing and deploying the four ingredients of change more systematically than ever before?

This is the backdrop against which we imagine two possible futures to 2045: one in which corporations are setting the agenda and civil society is stuck in 'business-as-usual' operating mode (Scenario 1), and one in which food movements reclaim the initiative and set in motion a transformation of food systems that benefits people and the planet (Scenario 2).



Scenario 1.

AGRIBUSINESS AS USUAL



In this scenario, we imagine a civil society that is partly able to challenge the agenda and prevent the worst excesses, but not to fundamentally change the course. Power relations remain largely unchanged – with agribusiness in the driver’s seat – even as farms, food supply chains, and the food industry undergo radical disruptions.

In this scenario, agribusinesses roll out highly disruptive innovations in four key areas: digitalization, automation, molecular technologies, and nature modification, referred to as DAMN. Delivering these under the guise of ‘climate resilience’, ‘nature-based’, or ‘nature-positive’ solutions is a big part of their promise to policymakers. But in a post-pandemic world, the previously dystopian notion of a fully automated food chain without human workers is also being sold as a solution for food safety, hygiene, and resilience to labour shocks.

The technological possibilities of the '4th industrial revolution' drive a new wave of corporate consolidation: agri-food companies team up with data giants to transmit weather, agronomic, and production data to and from so-called 'precision' farming systems, and to harness the benefits of 'surveillance capitalism'. By 2045, the biggest names in food are today's data processors, e.g. Amazon, Alphabet (Google), Microsoft, and Alibaba, as well as the telcos who control the data pipes and 5G networks. Opaque private equity and asset management firms – already in control of up to 30% of the stocks of leading agribusiness, as well as e-retail and cloud service operators – are pulling the strings in the background.

Over the next 25 years, these technologies are combined with geopolitical strategies to fundamentally reshape food systems. Powerful governments and corporations deploy automated logistics internets to control resources and food supplies across vast economic corridors. New trade agreements guarantee corporate access to resources, protect rights to corporate data exploitation, and put unfavourable regulations into the deep freeze. With food seen as a strategic asset and weapon, a new wave of land, ocean, data and resource grabbing gets underway, and trade chokepoints are increasingly privatized and militarized.

Farming is upended and farmers are forced off the land as algorithms are used to pinpoint the optimal growing conditions of every fertile square centimetre on earth; crops and livestock are tailor-made (and modified) for those conditions; and ecosystems are engineered through data for optimal (financial) performance. Robotic tractors and drones for spraying and surveillance – an 'internet of farming things' – are rolled out as fast as physical and digital infrastructures allow and these in turn send valuable surveillance data back to the cloud giants and to states. Downstream at the consumer end, data harvested from online activities is being combined with metadata generated from everyday activities, e.g. the use of digital wallets, or automated food services. Connecting these data sources opens up new opportunities to track, micro-target, and invisibly manipulate people's eating habits and to reshape food cultures.



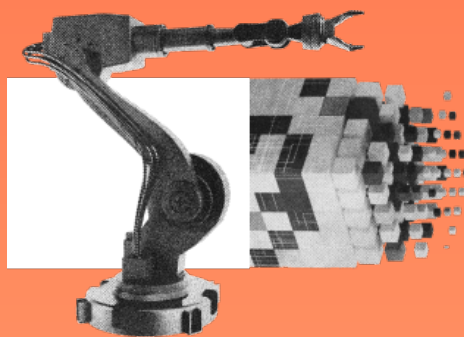
DAMN:

THE FOUR AREAS OF TECH THE FOOD SYSTEMS



D DIGITALIZATION

Big data is increasingly a valuable commodity in its own right, leading to the rapid ascendancy of data platforms in the agri-food industry and the ‘datafication’ of all aspects of food, agriculture, health, environment, and related domains. Data is transforming each ‘link’ up and down the chain, driving breeding and genetic engineering strategies, data-mediated systems of food logistics, commodity delivery (such as the use of blockchains) and consumer digital retail (Mooney, 2018). New quantum and biological computing developments will extend the power to process and derive insights from data.



A AUTOMATION

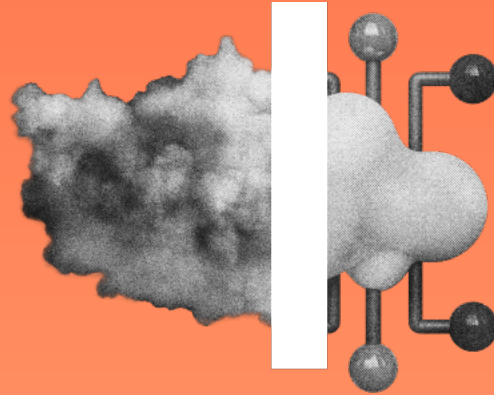
Consumer robots, 3D printers, delivery drones, and self-driving cars may be the iconic images of the so-called ‘fourth industrial revolution’. However, automation is already becoming a reality in on-farm labor and across the food service sectors. The value of the global food automation industry is expected to rise from USD 9.7 billion in 2020 to USD 14.2 billion by 2027 (Global Industry Analysts, 2020). Behind the automation boom, new networks of always-on fast streaming data (5G, edge networks, and beyond) are now being rolled out across farmland or extended by satellite and aerial internet transmission. By 2045, the miniaturization and embedding of sensors, and re-engineering of life processes as programmable living machines, will see automation increasingly become ‘biodigital’ (a cross between a biological and computer system).

NOFIXES THREATENING



M MOLECULAR TECHNOLOGIES

While molecular (chemical and genetic) technologies are most commonly associated with crop production (such as pesticides or GMO plants) or synthetic foodstuffs (like artificial flavours), developments arising from synthetic biology will transform each 'link' of the food chain. Within a quarter century, it may be possible for molecular manipulation - a form of nanotechnology - and genetic engineering to be driving the kind of game-shifting, platform-like changes that we currently see with data applications (and creating the same sort of monopolies as Facebook and Google). New developments in this cluster include genetically active pesticides (such as RNA sprays that hijack the genetics of the organisms), the biosynthesis of ingredients in biotech vats, gene editing, gene drive organisms, transient modification, targeted breeding by artificial intelligence and metagenomic strategies (manipulating whole communities of microbes), and foods personalized to people's microbiomes. In a 25-year horizon we can expect that data itself (including farm data) will be increasingly carried, stored, and manipulated on biological molecules through the field of molecular communication.



N NATURE MODIFICATION

The massive rise in data modelling (including environmental, biological, and agricultural data) opens up new strategies for intervening and manipulating earth system processes - such as re-engineering the carbon cycle, nitrogen cycle, nutrient flows or soil ecology. At scale, data and genomic interventions such as altering the agri-genome (microbial genomic resources, gene drives, and precision agriculture) amount to ecosystem engineering technologies. Parallel developments in weather modification, climate geoengineering, and engineered nutrient cycling will also impact food systems.





Scenario 2.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CIVIL SOCIETY-LED TRANSFORMATION



Diverse collaborations and long-term vision and strategy have been crucial in the work of food movements, past and present. And, as shown in interviews, food movements are frustrated by time and resource constraints, well aware of the importance of other movements, and interested in developing new ways of collaborating. However, our current approaches risk falling far short of what is needed to confront the many emergencies ahead. Now is the time for us to rise to the challenge.

Environmental breakdown, food security threats, and the push for new data-driven technologies are part of any realistic scenario going forward. But the agribusiness-led trajectories described above are not inevitable. In reality, resistance will grow.

This second scenario is based on what food movements are already doing and imagines where that could lead over the next 25 years. In this common vision, civil society forges deeper, wider, and more effective collaborations than ever before, cultivating:



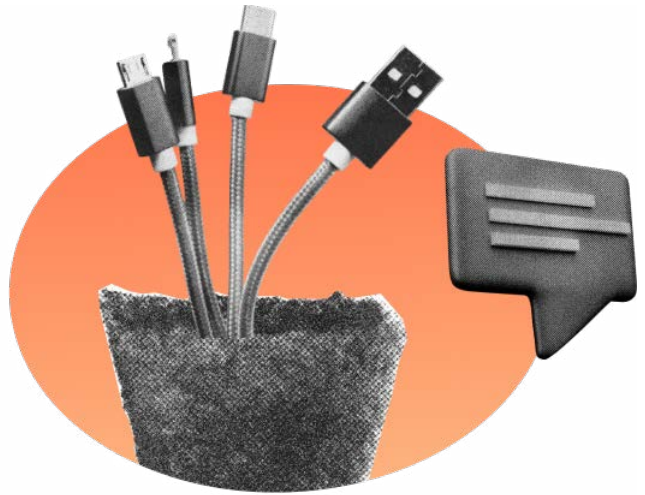
New capacities, spaces and “muscle” to think, strategize, and plan long term.



New funding arrangements that break out of either short-term campaign ‘hits’ or project-based approaches.



Early warning and early response systems to respond to the many future disruptive events ('Grey Swans') on the horizon.



Ways to share information, cross-fertilize initiatives, practice solidarity, and connect different actions together into a rich tapestry of real solutions.

Pathway 1

ROOTING FOOD SYSTEMS IN DIVERSITY, AGROECOLOGY & HUMAN RIGHTS

Over the 2020s, food systems based on diversity show their resilience in the face of shocks. Territorial markets continue to spread, and diets edge towards ethical and healthy choices. With a clear consensus in place around food sovereignty and agroecology, food movements succeed in defending the rights of the marginalized and amplifying their voices through inclusive processes, promoting diversified, agroecological systems, and accelerating alternative markets and dietary shifts.



Pathway 2

TRANSFORMING & RECLAIMING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Over the years, food movements fight back against corporate takeover of the multilateral system and civil society forces a fundamental governance reconfiguration of its own. And in the face of semi-permanent crises, we successfully make the case for emergency food security provisions that supersede trade rules and land-grab contracts, and a crackdown on agribusiness concentration and techno-fixes. These steps are underpinned by the ongoing spread of food policy councils, deliberative dialogues, and other mechanisms to strengthen the participation of social movements, indigenous peoples, and NGOs in food system governance.



Pathway 3

SHIFTING FINANCIAL FLOWS

The combination of climate emergencies, food-related epidemics, and technological risks and failures spark unprecedented calls for existing financial flows to be redirected. Civil society focuses on three areas:

- Soft targets like administrative and research budget lines
- The hard target of major commodity subsidies
- The untaxed 'externalities' and revenues of corporations

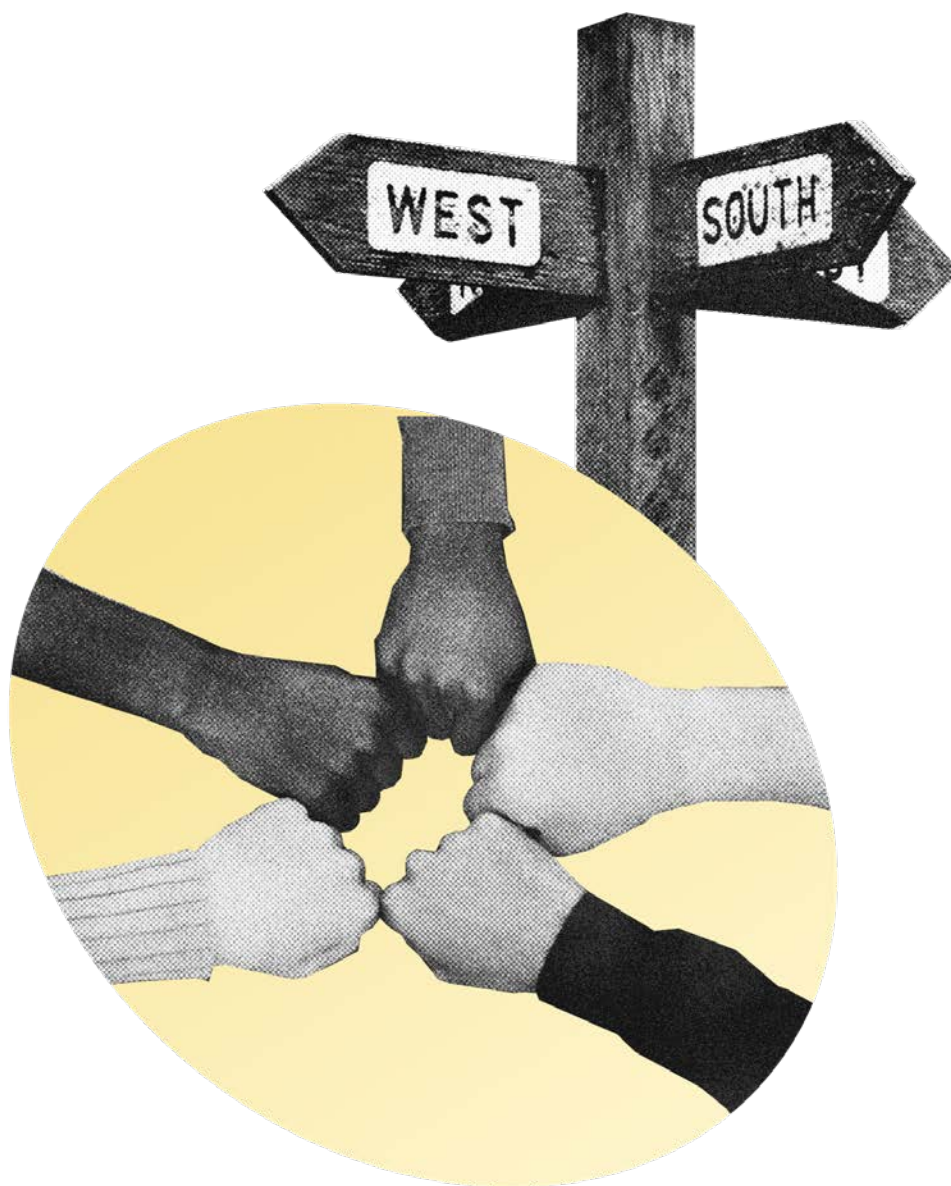


Pathway 4

CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK RETHINKING THE MODALITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY COLLABORATION

In order to advance Pathways 1-3, civil society needs to operate more collaboratively than ever before.

This means navigating diverging priorities, competition for funding and long-standing rivalries; syncing calendars to facilitate co-strategizing; building new tools to connect food movement actors to negotiating fora and to each other; and negotiating a new contract with funders.



CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that an agribusiness-led future will not bring the planet and its food systems back within a safe operating space. Instead, it will continue to create rampant inequalities, deepen food insecurity, and lead to harmful environmental impacts. At the same time, civil society is well placed to cultivate and support transformative strides towards a common vision of food sovereignty, agroecology and human rights – including redirecting trillions of dollars towards truly meaningful initiatives for people and the planet.

Faced with this reality, the case for forward-looking and collaborative food movements is compelling. Connected priorities challenge civil society to place multiple objectives and actions on a 25-year roadmap, and to keep this bigger picture in mind as we navigate potentially rapid environmental and social breakdown, and the tidal wave of the corporate agenda. The idea is not to get everyone on the same page, but to help all actors to see and bring together their separate pages into a powerful plan of action toward 2045.

Civil society is well placed to cultivate and support transformative strides towards a common vision of food sovereignty, agroecology and human rights – including redirecting trillions of dollars towards truly meaningful initiatives for people and the planet. Civil society can and must rise to this challenge. Standing still is no longer an option.

History shows that when confronted by necessity or opportunity, people can adapt almost overnight. The vast changes we have experienced through the COVID-19 pandemic show that, tomorrow, anything is possible. Civil society has huge untapped potential for deep, transformative change – if we get increasingly organized, proactive, and forward thinking.

Civil society can and must rise to this challenge. Standing still is no longer an option.

NO
FARMERS
NO
FOOD

GOOGLE "INDIAN
FARMERS PROTEST"



What next:

AN APPROACH TO PREPAREDNESS AND LONG-TERM COLLABO- RATION ACROSS FOOD MOVEMENTS

The LFM report is not a proposal or a manifesto. It was written as something of a provocation - a tool that can be used by those in food and other movements to support exploration of strategic options together. What matters most now is pursuing dialogue, debate, and reflection through which we collaboratively try to shape our movements to meet the challenges of the next 25 years. By working together and thinking long-term we can shift the agenda away from corporate giants - whether in agribusiness, finance, tech, or government.

The Predictable Surprises perspective is offered as a possible methodology that may enable us to consider how we can be better equipped to recognise, predict, and prepare for these and other predictable, potentially disruptive events and even identify when such events can be turned into possible opportunities to move our common cause forward. The steps proposed are looking back, looking ahead and distilling lessons for future preparedness.

LOOKING BACK

Can we collectively review what has happened in the past in terms of events that have impacted food systems in surprising but not entirely unexpected ways?

Can your organisation, your community, name events that changed everyone's lives, that were somehow predictable, but not prepared for, due to all kinds of constraints (economic, political, climatic)?

LOOKING AHEAD

Can we speculate together about what predictable surprises may be on the horizon? Examples might include the irreversible collapse of pollinator populations, the systemic failure of the internet and loss of data, failures in multiple bread-basket regions, further pandemics and multiple supply-chain breakdowns. What scenario might be the most relevant from your organisation's perspective? What are the signals that our movements need to decipher and respond to? Perhaps it is not about making predictions, but about understanding the ways in which predictions can work for us. How can we formulate these predictable surprises so that we can discuss them, react and respond, learn about them before they occur?

Finally, when we talk about lessons for future preparedness, we are asking what capacities and resources do we need in order to develop early warning systems that allow us to jump in ahead of the coming “surprises”. How can we assess our capacity to think in this way and prepare ourselves effectively, on an ongoing basis? Overall, what do we need to change to be able to address the future strategically?

Two final considerations in this proposed methodology are about finding ways to understand and match the scale of historical cycles and the proposal to think seriously about uncertainty.

How do we integrate the logic of our “micro-cycles” (the very local struggles, the sowing and harvesting and associated daily problems; and the day-to-day challenges of urban daily life) and larger global cycles? What can the “macro-cycles” offer, and how are we to ensure that the daily struggle does not close down the long-range view?

Over millennia, the peasant web of life has cherished certainties but embraced mystery at the same time, always striving to find a balance between what is known and what can't be controlled. The result of this fragile balance is meaning, which can help to inform our thoughts and ideas about the future.

Please refer to the full Long Food Movement Report for bibliography

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