

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, HUNGER AND GLOBAL TRADE RULES

Ramesh Sharma

Senior Economist

Trade and Markets Division

Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome

Email: Ramesh.Sharma@fao.org

Abstract

Food sovereignty has become a popular approach or model to address hunger as well as the problems that presumably caused the global food crisis. It is defined by certain principles. At its core is the sovereignty of small farmers to produce their own food with resources and institutions that are under their control. This paper compares the concept of food sovereignty with other concepts that aim to eliminate global hunger and malnutrition such as the 'food security' and 'the right to food'. Moreover it discusses the claim by advocates of food sovereignty that their approach is being constrained and undermined by certain trade rules as provisioned in the WTO. Despite some reservations about their effectiveness, the positions articulated by the food sovereignty side are increasingly guiding national policy responses to the price spikes in the global food sector. This is revealed by the renewed national focus on food production, higher targets for food self-sufficiency, increased attention to small farmers and to inequities in their access to productive and natural resources as well as markets. However, such policies are hardly ever constrained by the WTO Agreement on Agriculture which offers most member states sufficient policy space to address their particular national concerns about food and agriculture.

1. Introduction

Food sovereignty is considered to be a specific approach or model for eliminating hunger. It is crafted around certain principles which define that specific approach. The goal of the currently more widely applied concept of food security is also to eliminate hunger but it is applied in a more flexible or pragmatic way. Thus, although both concepts aim at the same goal, the approaches taken can be very different. The concept of food sovereignty emerged from intense discourses by civil society organizations (CSOs) around 1995-1996, led by the international peasant movement, La Via Campesina, an organization created in 1992. The discourses were taking place around three important developments: the inclusion in 1995 of agriculture within the WTO rules; the World Food Summit of 1996; and the Leipzig Conference on Plant Genetic Resources of 1996. Since then, the campaign has organized several conferences and issued declarations and papers to further elaborate the concept of food sovereignty.

Trade issues defined broadly are closely linked to food sovereignty. There is a large literature on the relationship between the food sovereignty and trade rules as

provisioned in various WTO Agreements that have a bearing on food and agricultural policies, notably the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). The food sovereignty movement has been very critical of the fact that WTO rules apply to food and has campaigned actively against it in all the WTO Ministerial Conferences. Its battle cry around the time of the Seattle WTO Conference is most telling of this: "WTO - Shrink or Sink!" (shrink the agenda, or else sink!).

The recent food crisis and price spikes have induced analysts and policy makers to move closer to the positions advocated by the food sovereignty campaign. These positions include priority to the food sub-sector within agriculture, higher targets for national food self-sufficiency, increased attention to small farmers, and addressing inequities in their access to productive and natural resources as well as to markets. These issues have also been prominent in recent global discourses on agriculture, food security and price volatility [1, 2, 3]. Many calls have been made for improving the global governance of food, agriculture and trade. In this sense, it seems that policies related to national food security are increasingly in line with the model promoted by the food sovereignty side for many years now.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss issues around the relationship between food sovereignty principles and global rules governing trade in food products. With this background, the next section introduces the concept of food sovereignty and its principles, including a brief on how this differs from the concept of food security. Section 3 provides a commentary on selected issues, first on the three core principles of food sovereignty and then on its interface with the WTO AoA. Section 4 concludes.

2. Food sovereignty

2.1 The concept and its evolution

The focus of this paper is on food sovereignty. Food security and Right to Food are other two concepts closely related to food sovereignty. These three terms are being used even more frequently since the food crisis. The differences among the three terms are noted towards the end of this sub-section.

The 1996 declaration released by Via Campesina at the time of the World Food Summit presents the core ideas of the movement [4]. Box 1 summarizes most of the main points from that declaration. In this abridged summary, there are a total of 21 points under the seven Prin-

principles. Many of them are related to trade/pricing issues, including the WTO Agreements, while others have more to do with the national political process. There are several papers that present analytical commentaries on the concept which will be discussed in the following sections [see 5, 6, 7, and 8].

Box 1: Seven principles of food sovereignty: the essential foundations for achieving food security

1. Food - A Basic Human Right

- 1.1 Everyone must have access to adequate and safe food
- 1.2 Each nation must declare this as a constitutional right Guarantee primary sector development for realizing the above

2. Agrarian Reform

- 2.1 Agrarian reform for land ownership/control by landless/actual tillers
- 2.2 Return territories to indigenous peoples

3. Protecting Natural Resources

- 3.1 Food sovereignty requires sustainable care and use of land and natural resources
- 3.2 Those who farm must have the right to do so
- 3.3 Shift away from cash-crop monocultures and industrialized production models
- 3.4 Prohibit patenting and commercialization of genetic resources (reject WTO TRIPS Agreement)

4. Reorganizing Food Trade

- 4.1 Food is first a food and then only a trade item
- 4.2 Policies must prioritize production for home consumption and self-sufficiency
- 4.3 Food imports must not displace local production nor depress prices

5. Ending the Globalization of Hunger

- 5.1 Food sovereignty is undermined by multilateral institutions
- 5.2 Economic policies of multilateral organizations such as the WTO, World Bank and IMF have facilitated growing control of multinational corporations over agricultural policies
- 5.3 So, regulate and tax speculative capital, and strictly enforce Code of Conduct for trans-national companies (TNCs)

6. Social Peace

- 6.1 Everyone has a right to be free from violence
- 6.2 Food must not be used as a weapon
- 6.3 No marginalization of countryside, nor oppression of ethnic minorities and indigenous populations

7. Democratic control

- 7.1 Small farmers must have inputs into formulating agricultural policies at all levels (national, international)
- 7.2 Democratize UN and related organizations for this process
- 7.3 Honest, open, democratic, participatory decision-making at all levels

Windfuhr and Jonsén [8] review many food sovereignty documents and find that there is no universally agreed definition for the term, while many documents offer interpretations. They consider the following definition from the 2002 People's Food Sovereignty Network to be among the most commonly used:

"Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable

development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food Sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to food and to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production."

According to them [8], food sovereignty is an umbrella term for particular approaches to tackling the problems of hunger and malnutrition, as well as promoting rural development, environmental integrity and sustainable livelihoods. This approach is being developed as a counter-proposal to the mainstream development paradigm built on liberalized international agricultural trade, trade-based food security, and industrial agriculture and food production by well-resourced producers. It places small farmers and food production at the centre of the framework, and, more importantly, considers it essential that small farmers themselves have full control over the process of production by exercising their right to natural and productive resources (hence the word sovereignty).

2.2 How does *food sovereignty* differ from *food security* and the *Right to Food*?

The approach to food security is not defined as precisely. Most papers use the following sentence from the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) as the definition of food security: *"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life"*. But it is not often realized that this statement is only a vision or goal, rather than an approach or strategy, unlike the case with food sovereignty. This is also indicated in the very first sentence of the WFS Plan of Action: *"The Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action lay the foundations for diverse paths to a common objective - food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels"*(emphasis added). From this, it is clear that no specific strategy or path or policy is prescribed for attaining food security - rather, just as said in the *Upanishads* for human salvation, there are many paths to the common goal. The WFS's Plan of Action comes with eight commitments that cover a wide range of topics on agriculture, rural development and governance, reflecting the multi-faceted character of food security. Most are presented as

Source: Abridged, including numbering, by the author, based on the 1996 declaration of Via Campesina – *Food Sovereignty: A Future without Hunger* [4].

guidelines or principles to pursue, rather than prescriptive measures. These are broad and flexible enough for individual countries to consider, interpret and adapt. Indeed, many countries have national food security strategies, policies and programmes, and these reflect the above characterization, “diverse paths to a common goal”.

Lee [7] cites a work by J. Dryzek which offers an interesting definition. Food security is characterized in terms of “economic rationalism” with building blocks like rational, self-interested private entities - regulated by rules, such as those of the WTO in the case of trade - and competitive markets. On the other hand, food sovereignty is seen as “green rationalism” grounded on the notions of the complexity of food production, the interrelationship of farmers and nature and the use of organic metaphors such as agro-ecological food production.

The *Right to Food* is a concept that does not rest on a particular set of policies, but focuses on the obligations of states and on allowing people who are negatively affected or deprived to use legal remedies to get their rights implemented. States have a wide margin of discretion on how to implement the concept. Food sovereignty also demands Right to Food. In Windfuhr and Jonsen’s views, while food security is more of a technical concept, and the Right to Food a legal one, food sovereignty is essentially a political concept.

The food sovereignty principles are being increasingly echoed by other people and agencies also, especially since the 2007-08 food crisis. For example, Olivier de Schutter, the UN special rapporteur on the right to food, recently wrote that hunger is not a natural disaster but primarily the result of political factors that condemn small farmers, the main victims of hunger, to poverty [9]. These factors include insufficient access to land, water and credit; poor organization of local markets; lack of infrastructure; and lack of bargaining power against an increasingly concentrated agro-industrial sector. He also said that it is crucial to help small producers organise themselves into co-operatives and unions to strengthen their positions in food chains, and to collaborate with governments in designing programmes that benefit them.

3. Commentary on food sovereignty and trade-related issues

This section presents a commentary on selected principles and arguments of the food sovereignty paradigm. The focus is on trade-related issues but some other elements of the arguments are crucial and therefore also covered. The purpose is to better understand issues around food sovereignty by analyzing how and where its positions and advocated policies are divisive on trade policies. The first part discusses three topics, considered to be three core principles of food sovereignty, namely ‘the centrality of small family farming’, ‘the centrality of food production and control over the process’, and ‘Control over productive/natural resources’. It will then address the question whether these principles run counter to the goals and principles of the WTO AoA.

3.1 The three core principles of food sovereignty

The centrality of small family farming

This is one key building block of the food sovereignty paradigm on hunger. The core argument made is that an agricultural development model based on small-scale farming holds the key to simultaneously solving *three* problems: food, poverty and environment. What is crucial is the ability of the small farmers to produce their own food and have full control (or sovereignty) over the resources to produce food. A second strand of the arguments made is that several of the ongoing trends and processes, and global and national policies, tend to marginalize small farmers and impoverish them further. These processes include large-scale cash cropping for exports, industrialization of farming, inroads of large agribusiness, and liberal policies and trade agreements that encourage these processes. These trends are further impoverishing small farmers by shrinking their political power.

These arguments are not without merit or support – many studies are cited that show how small farmers have been squeezed out in a process that rewards economies of scale, e.g. from successful product chains. Likewise, studies are cited that show negative effects of trade liberalization on small farmers. Household survey data have revealed high income inequalities and, as a result, stubborn poverty trends despite respectable economic growth rates of 5-6% [10]. These problems have been acknowledged and there is a growing consensus that the past model needs serious rethinking, in a way supporting the food sovereignty view of the world. Where people differ is on the policy response to these problems.

A considerable amount of debate takes place on the small versus large farming in the context of food security and poverty reduction. Again there is a virtual consensus in support of the viability of small-scale farming and its crucial role in fighting hunger. Three years back Professor Paul Collier of Oxford University published an article titled *The Politics of Hunger: How Illusion and Greed Fan the Food Crisis* in the journal *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2008) where he said that taking the small farm route is romantic but unhelpful, and argued for encouraging large-scale commercial farming as the way ahead, especially in Africa, for resolving the food crisis. In response to a call by *Future Agricultures Consortium’s* to respond to Paul Collier’s views, not one of the 20 leading development economists who responded subscribed to Collier’s view, instead supporting the opposite view that the way forward to address both the food crisis and poverty is to assist small farmers, focusing on their productivity gains [11]. In that debate, there was also a consensus that the best growth potential in Africa lies with food staples (cereals, roots and tubers, traditional livestock products etc) – which is yet another building block of the food sovereignty approach. Since the food crisis in particular, most high-level political statements have also pointed to the need for paying special attention to assisting small farming.

While there is a widespread consensus for an agriculture strategy that promotes and supports small-scale farming without necessarily being against large-scale farming as

long as this does not marginalize the former, there is one other argument in the food sovereignty writings that this camp needs to clarify. This is the argument about politically and economically empowering the small farmers in a way that bestows to them full control over the productive resources, including institutions that provide services to farming.

This particular position requires further articulation from them as the ground reality is different. The national policy papers of virtually all developing countries now encourage private sector provision of farm inputs and services as well as public-private partnerships in many areas, including the establishment of value chains. It is typically the private sector that is endowed with valuable technology, funding and management. It is not clear in the writings of the food sovereignty side, but if its position is against any role for the private sector – i.e. those outside the local farming community – then the food sovereignty side needs to say so clearly and also explain how farming will progress without this outside involvement. If, on the other hand, that is not the position and private sector is welcomed, they need to demonstrate a model under which private sector can be involved without the farming community losing full control over decision-making and resources. In order to fill the gap between rhetoric and reality, advocates of food sovereignty need to come up with empirical evidence and studies on best practices to convince policy makers and other stakeholders in the respective countries that they have a coherent and detailed approach that can be clearly written in national policy documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as well as trade and agricultural policies. The PRSPs are becoming important policy documents in most countries but there is a lot to be improved in their design so that trade and agriculture are properly mainstreamed [12].

The centrality of food production and control over the process

The following eight sentences collated from various documents on food sovereignty illustrate the main arguments made on this subject [4, 13]:

Food sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. Farmers and countries have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food is not primarily about trade. National agricultural policies must prioritize production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency. Food imports must not displace local production nor depress prices. Peasant farmers have the right to produce essential food staples for their countries and to control the marketing of their products. Food prices in domestic and international markets must be regulated and reflect the true costs of producing that food. Reject cash-crop monocultures and industrialized production models towards small farm-based food production.

Very briefly, it is all about farmers' right to produce and market food and have full local and national sovereignty on policies required for this. The latter includes domestic policies that provide ownership and control to farmers (and their groups) throughout the food value chain. Govern-

ments would have to ensure that this happens by providing subsidies to food production and food processing, marketing and protection through border/trade policies. Thus, imports of dumped and subsidized foods are obviously rejected outright. Also rejected is the control over food production and processing by non-farm entities (agri-business, national or transnational). This obviously includes large-scale land acquisitions and investments (also called "land grabs") by foreign companies. The argument above that food prices must reflect the true cost of production also implies that trade-based prices (import and export parity prices) are rejected.

Some of these arguments have more to do with the domestic political and policy process over the setting of priorities, allocation of budgetary resources and legislation that favours the control by farmers and local groups of resources, pricing and marketing. But others have more to do with the external trading environment, distortions in global food markets, and trade rules, notably the AoA. The latter is the topic of the next sub-section.

The food sovereignty paradigm not only calls for the primacy to food production but also rejects other processes that may hurt food production indirectly. One example of this is the argument against an export-led strategy that favours cash to food crops. Somewhat milder statements on this point reveal that food sovereignty is not necessarily against cash crops as millions of small farmers benefit from this, but against the process that undermines food production and marginalizes small farmers [6, 14]. This could come, for example, from investment agreements that encourage large scale cash cropping for exports in areas where staples producing small farmers are politically weak to counter the process and/or benefit from that. Cash-crop monocultures are also rejected from the natural resources view point.

What is mostly missing in the food sovereignty writing is credible evidence that demonstrate their points, and convince the other side. For example, the negative impacts of these processes on food sovereignty of the small farmers are often country and context specific, and thus it should not be very difficult to understand how the target groups are being affected, and what corrective measures are required. There is too much rhetoric and too little evidence, which undermines the arguments. For example, careful studies should be able to point to the often-blamed strategy that the export-led model favours transport systems that link cash crop areas to ports while a food-focussed strategy would see more resources devoted to connecting inland villages that produce and trade food crops. A majority of the extant PRSPs and similar national documents have adopted export-led strategies, and it is these documents that the food sovereignty analysts need first to focus their attention on.

Control over productive/natural resources

The importance of exercising control over the production process by food producing small farmers was noted above. Together with this, the third core principle of the food sovereignty approach to food security is farmers'

full access and control over natural resources essential for food production such as land, water, forests, seeds and biodiversity. The logic is simple and the food sovereignty model attaches high weight to this component as it considers marginalization (from access, control) as a significant cause of hunger. Although who in a society has access and control over natural resources primarily depends on the domestic political processes, the food sovereignty side has argued that this is being increasingly influenced by two sets of the WTO Agreements.

One of them is the WTO Services Agreement. Although the reach and influence of this Agreement in developing countries is relatively small currently, there is a considerable fear regarding the future. At stake is the possible control over resources like water, production inputs, banking, insurance and marketing. In the scenario presented by the food sovereignty side, domestic and multinational companies could use the provisions of this Agreement to control inputs and output services to the detriment of small farmers, including through unfavourable terms of exchange.

The other Agreement that the food sovereignty side rejects outright is the part of the WTO TRIPS Agreement that requires countries to provide some form of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) to plants and other life forms. The movement obviously attaches high importance to the rights of farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities over plant genetic resources and associated knowledge, including farmers' right to exchange and reproduce seeds. It feels that without that freedom, farmers will not be sovereign to produce food and lift themselves out of hunger and poverty. The agriculture part of the TRIPS Agreement has been contentious from the beginning. Efforts have been made through negotiations to reconcile this Agreement with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) which provides for farmers' rights and benefits sharing. On discussions at the WTO on the TRIPS-CBD, it is reported that Members have voiced support for the CBD objectives, i.e. the general principles of prior informed consent and equitable sharing of benefits that are enshrined in the CBD, but remained divided as to the best means to fulfil them within the TRIPS framework [15].

The food sovereignty's criticism over the recent trends in large-scale land acquisitions ("land grabs") also falls under this cluster. Land grabs are criticized not only on the ground of access to land, but also on access to water as any rationing of water in that region will certainly work against small holders. Such investments are also criticized as they promote the practice of mechanised monocultures.

3.2 Food sovereignty and the WTO Agreement on Agriculture

The food sovereignty movement has been critical of several WTO Agreements that have a bearing on food and agricultural policies, and particularly the AoA. One prominent argument mentioned earlier is that food is first a food and then only an item for trade, and that food should be fully kept out of all the WTO Agreements, in-

cluding the AoA. Other arguments made from time to time are to completely prohibit any form of dumping and provide full sovereignty (freedom) to implement trade and domestic support policies, which means even import controls and unlimited amounts of farm subsidies, i.e. the pre-Uruguay Round (pre-1995) status.

This sub-section focuses on the AoA. There are various ways of organizing this discussion in the context of the above questions. In what follows, this is done by asking the following two questions (a similar approach was taken in an earlier paper on trade rules and Right to Food – see Sharma 2004 [16]):

- a. Is the AoA as a whole conducive to food security, i.e. does it contain elements that contribute to food security in food-insecure countries?
- b. Do the AoA rules limit the ability of food-insecure states to pursue effective approaches to food security?

Question a addresses the issue of the impact of the AoA on the global food markets which in turn are important for national food security while the second question is about "policy space" for food-insecure countries. The commentary first looks into the current or Uruguay Round AoA and then the prospective or Doha Round AoA.

The question on the conduciveness of the AoA to food security

The answer to this question, reached in accordance with the conclusions of the author's 2004 paper on Right to Food [16], is essentially "yes", i.e. the AoA is a positive development for global and national food security. This conclusion follows from an analytical framework that compares a counterfactual scenario (the continuation, in the absence of the AoA, of various "disarrays" or distortions in the world food markets that existed prior to the Uruguay Round) with the post-AoA scenario. Briefly, pre-1995, when agriculture was kept out of the GATT rules, the global food markets were characterized by serious disarrays, caused by rampant and *ad hoc* protectionism and massive subsidies, both domestic and export. The source of most of these distortions were rich countries as only they could afford the sufficiently large subsidies to distort global markets, while non-subsidizers, mostly developing countries, were the ones who suffered from the consequences. These costs have been computed as being sizable in many global simulation studies. The distortions not only undermined food production incentives in the developing countries but also created for them unfair competition in their export markets. Hence, closing this loophole was absolutely essential [17].

In the mean time, there are many critics of the AoA who hold that it did not do much in *effectively* disciplining the sources of the disarrays as enough policy spaces were left for subsidies and protection. This is not entirely incorrect but one needs to acknowledge the significant

achievement made in subjecting agriculture to a rule-based system. Keeping food out of the WTO, as many food sovereignty papers have argued, runs the risk of lapsing to the pre-1995 disarrays.

Reducing further disarrays was left for the Doha Round. As usual, there are various views on the current AoA package, the draft Modalities of December 2008 [18], with some seeing this as half-full and others as half-empty. The half-full view is that the draft Modalities in the three core areas of the AoA are ambitious enough, both in an absolute sense and relative to the reduction rates of the Uruguay Round AoA. For example, on domestic support, the overall trade-distorting domestic support (OTDS) (sum of the Amber Box, *de minimis* and Blue Box) would be cut by 80% for Members with the highest levels of support in the base period, and by 70% and 55% for other two groups of countries with lower levels of support currently. The Amber Box support will be cut similarly, with 70% for those with the highest support levels, and by 60% and 45% for the other two groups with lower supports. On market access, the minimum average cut on final bound tariffs for developed countries would be 54%, with 75% cut for high tariffs. On export competition, the agreement is for the developed countries to eliminate remaining scheduled export subsidies by 2013, with detailed rules drawn in other areas to close indirect and hidden subsidies. Implementing all these cuts and closing loopholes sincerely would be a significant progress. The half-empty view, on the other hand, holds that the current provisions – riddled with various exceptions and flexibilities, such as for sensitive and special products, – that will still provide space for continuing distorting policies.

The question of policy space

Do trade rules limit the ability of the food-insecure countries to pursue agricultural development and food security, such as those articulated by the food sovereignty camp or other approaches? The conclusion reached in that previous analysis by Sharma [16], as in many other studies, was that on the whole the AoA provided considerable space for implementing food policies, barring some cases of products and countries.

For example, an analysis of the data on domestic subsidies shows that, barring some cases, actual trade-distorting subsidies granted by most developing countries are fairly low (about 3-5% of the value of agricultural production) relative to what is permitted by the AoA (10% for product-specific and another 10% for non-product-specific subsidies). On top of this, AoA's Article 6.2 exempts some useful subsidies from the above discipline (subsidies to low-income and resource-poor farmers), but this too has not been used much. In the case of bound tariff, i.e. the maximum tariff allowed under the WTO rule, the situation is somewhat different in that while the AoA bound tariffs are fairly high (relative to applied rates) for many developing countries and products, there are significant exceptions (countries and products) where policy space is an issue. Not having access to the Special Safeguard (SSG) of the AoA to many of these countries was an issue but was meant to

be rectified in the Doha Round with the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM). When import prices are high, such as during the past 4-5 years, these issues are not that relevant because the typical response in vulnerable food-importing countries would be to eliminate or sharply reduce import tariffs to lower domestic prices.

In the Doha Round, based on the draft Modalities, the developing countries will also reduce their tariffs and subsidies by two-thirds less than the developed countries, with several exceptions here and there. On domestic subsidies, a majority of the developing countries did not have trade-distorting subsidies in the Uruguay Round and, for this reason, will not have them in the Doha Round either, but the 10% + 10% *de minimis* limits, and Article 6.2 exemption, should provide enough room in most cases. On bound tariffs, the policy space will definitely shrink and might be an issue for a sizable number of countries and products. This makes the provisions on Special Products and SSM, both accessible to the developing countries only, particularly valuable for them, and they have rightly negotiated hard for these. Note that these instruments will reduce market access to exporters, which also include developing countries, but the issue being discussed here is policy space for an importer.

Doubts are often raised about some of the Green Box measures being truly "green" as assumed. The decoupled income payments are blamed for perpetually reducing the average cost of production (even if marginal impact may be zero), thus giving a competitive edge to those with financial resources. Likewise, an argument is often made that even if all distortions are eliminated, the fact that there are large productivity gaps between the developed and developing countries means that the rules of the game are still skewed in favour of the former. Thus, even if the AoA were balanced in design, outcomes would be asymmetric, with some countries utilizing the policy space more fully and using the full range of the instruments provisioned (e.g. Blue Box, trade remedy measures). Investment and capacity building are seen as the solution to some of these systemic imbalances. The Aid for Trade initiative was launched in 2005 primarily in response to these concerns and several WTO Agreements call upon richer countries to provide capacity building support to the developing countries.

The food sovereignty argument for keeping food out of the WTO seems to be more influenced by a "defensive" stand (the shrinking of the policy space) rather than an "offensive" one (eliminating distortions in the global food markets). Developing countries need to take the distortions seriously if they want to avoid food dumping and therefore cannot just be concerned with the defensive side. A more constructive approach for the food sovereignty proponents would be to try to preserve what has been achieved so far (both the Uruguay Round AoA and the Doha Round draft package) and identify specific areas where further improvements are needed for effectively implementing the food sovereignty approach to food security, e.g. improvements in the Special Products, SSM, cotton etc. In addition, recent projections of the global food markets show that periods of high and vola-

tile food prices are likely to be more frequent in the coming years. The AoA was designed primarily for an environment of structural surpluses and depressed prices. This means that trade rules must also adjust accordingly and there are several areas where such adjustments may be needed to the current package of the draft Modalities – see Sharma and Konandreas [19]. It is desirable that the food sovereignty proponents also raise these issues of food security.

4. Conclusions

The recent food crisis and price spikes have induced widespread interest on food and agricultural issues. At the global level, new initiatives have been taken and pledges made for increased support for agriculture. At the national level, new strategies and policies have been announced and investment programmes drawn. These developments are in the direction that the food sovereignty side has been campaigning for all these years.

Thus, one notable policy response to the food crisis has been that many countries are setting new, higher targets for self-sufficiency of key staples, including 100%, in several cases. Among the staples, rice has been prominent in such policies, largely reflecting uncertainties experienced with the global rice market. Even in developed countries, the Russian Federation (not a WTO member) announced a new food security doctrine in 2010 with high self-sufficiency rates for several foods. Note that while this has been the popular response to the food crisis, and along the line advocated by the food sovereignty proponents, higher levels of self-sufficiency beyond what economic logic would dictate based on competitive advantages in trade has economic resource costs, and so are not necessarily welfare-enhancing.

Likewise, increasing attention is being given to small farms, both in global food security discourses and national agricultural strategies, although progress in this area will depend on how concretely small farmers are defined, their constraints and needs articulated and these translated to policies and support. In countries, debates on inequities about adequate access to productive and natural resources as well as to markets have become prominent. Similarly, many calls have been made for improving the global governance of food, agriculture and trade. The reform of the Committee on World Food Security is an example of this. To complete this list, there have also been moves towards incorporating food sovereignty and Right to Food languages in national constitutions and agricultural policies. In some cases this is limited to a symbolic step while in others this is being done more prominently (see [5] for some case studies and [20] for recent initiatives in West Africa).

Patric Mulvany aptly summarizes these trends in support of food sovereignty in the preface to the Windfuhr and Jonsén study [8]: “Now, when there is intense debate about how the world will halve poverty and eradicate hunger, the policies that govern the way food is produced, consumed and distributed, how it is processed and traded, and who controls the food chain, need to be looked at comprehensively. This timely paper points a way forward and invites a more focused consideration of the principles

behind what is fast becoming recognized as the most important food and agriculture policy consensus for the 21st century”. With the availability of more and more statistics on income distribution from household surveys, an increasing number of studies have shown that income inequality must be reduced substantially in many food insecure countries before hunger and poverty can be tackled [10]. What better way to reduce inequities other than by focussing development efforts on small farmers, staples and inequities in access to natural and productive resources – the three core food sovereignty principles. As for some other elements of these principles, such as the risk of marginalization of small farmers due to the expansion of large and powerful agribusiness, and the WTO Agreements that facilitate that process, some disagreements will remain between the food sovereignty side and others, including national policy makers. But even on this, some consensus can be reached by clarifying the term food sovereignty with regard to the role of the private sector and developing effective mechanisms to reduce possible risks for small-scale farmers by properly monitoring the impact of global change in food and agriculture.

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