

SE12: Implementing the Right to Food Guidelines and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants in Africa and Europe – A Civil Society Perspective

Organized by: Switzerland; Germany; Fastenaktion and RAISE; People-Centred Food Systems project at Columbia University; UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food; Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights; FAO Right to Food Team; FIAN International; European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC); The Rural Women's Assembly; Centre for minority rights (CEMIRIDE); VSF-Suisse; Welthungerhilfe; Mater Fondazione

Summary of the side event

Keynote by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, **Michael Fakhri**

Panel with local experts, introduced by **Christa Suter**, Fastenaktion and RAISE project

- **Julliet Ogubi**, Cemiride, on the rights of indigenous peoples and pastoralists in Kenya
- **Tunsume Mwaibasa**, Welthungerhilfe, on the right to food in Malawi
- **Lungisa Huna**, Rural Women Assembly, on peasant women's rights in South Africa
- **Paula Gioia**, European Coordination Via Campesina, on peasants' rights in Europe
- **Christophe Golay**, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, on the right to food and UNDROP in Switzerland and on the European citizen initiative on the right to food

Discussion with the public led by **Jody Harris**, global research lead for the People Centered Food Systems project and co-drafter of HLPE report#18 on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition.

This panel aimed to hear perspectives on implementing two foundational human rights documents, from the perspectives of African and European civil society. Each panel member was first asked to look back, over the 20 years of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food and the more recent advent of UNDROP, to reflect on key achievements but also challenges in implementation experience. Then panelists were asked to think forwards, over the next decade, to reflect on what more might be needed to advance implementation, and their hopes for the future. Finally, some inferences can be drawn from looking across implementation contexts.

Looking back, several panelists referred to a lack of reference to the global documents at country or regional level, and limited explicit uptake. Several aspects of the documents were however reflected in the actions and achievements of the panelists and their organizations, including specific policy changes in support of rights; strategic litigation; the joining of right to food and food sovereignty agendas; and using social accountability measures. Panelists also highlighted the supportive role of solidarity; of working together across the ethical and interest groups that define actors; and of meaningful dialogue with power.

Looking forward, all panelists reflected the need for active participation and representation of marginalized groups to move rights agendas forward equitably. The right to participate in decision-making on food and agricultural policies is enshrined as one of the human rights principles in the Right to Food Guidelines (Foreword, para. 7) and in UNDROP (Art. 15). Some panelists also noted the need for legal frameworks, rights in constitutions, and justiciability at the national level to give rights teeth. Caution was urged on how rights might be deployed or co-opted and calls to continue to make rights violations visible. It was suggested that there is much to learn from 20 years of VG implementation for the newer UNDROP work.

Looking across contexts, it was clear that while there were different challenges by region, there were also similarities in the experience of civil society in different places, and similarities in the messages and roles for other actor groups. Maintaining communication across global regions makes for a richer set of shared experiences from which all regions can learn and makes for stronger global solidarity on rights issues.