Book Review

The Global Food Crisis, *edited by* Jennifer Clapp & Marc J. Cohen

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Reviewed by: Lisa Guo & David Rojas

Between early 2007 and mid-2008, global food prices increased by more than fifty percent.[1] For people living in poverty in developing countries, who might spend sixty to eighty percent of their income on food, such a severe increase was devastating.[2] The debilitating price increases resulted in food riots across over forty developing nations.[3] Although food prices have fallen considerably since that period, they are still substantially higher than 2005 levels.[4] Thus, in a March 2009 interview with the Financial Times, Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, stated that the "food crisis is not over."[5]

Dizzying price volatility and ensuing street demonstrations motivated policymakers to enact various new measures. For example, India introduced "draconian export restrictions" on rice and Argentina "attempted to expand export taxes," both of which contributed to the price increases.[6] Such panicked attempts at addressing the food crisis highlight the need for reasoned, comprehensive governance reforms to ensure global food security. *The Global Food Crisis: Governance Challenges and Opportunities*, a collection of essays based on a December 2008 workshop held at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, presents individual authors' perspectives on causal factors influencing the food

1. Jennifer Clapp & Marc J. Cohen, *Introduction* to THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS: GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES 1, 2 (Jennifer Clapp & Marc J. Cohen eds., 2009).
2. *Id.* at 3.
3. *Id.* at 1.
4. *Id.*
5. Javier Blas, *Number of Chronically Hungry Tops 1 bn*, FIN. TIMES, Mar. 26, 2009, *cited in* Global Food Crisis, *supra* note 1, at 1.
6. GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS, *supra* note 1, at xi.

crisis, immediate governance challenges arising from increased food prices, long-term ecological issues associated with current global food systems, and potential strategies to enhance food security in the future.

The first section features four perspectives on the causes of the 2008 global food crisis. The authors more or less agree on the immediate cause: an imbalance of supply and demand. The supply decrease came about because of a gradual slowing of agricultural production, accompanied by declining global grain stocks and increasing energy costs, which raised production costs.

At the same time, emerging economies, mainly China and India, have demonstrated an increased demand for higher quality food—in this case meat, which requires a great deal more supply input to produce. Finally, speculation by hedge funds and other investors in the food commodities market artificially increased demand. The futures market for food is designed to be a stabilizing tool for farmers to sell harvests ahead of time, which works if speculators buy when prices are low and sell when prices are high. But deregulation on Wall Street has allowed banks to speculate in futures contracts in unlimited quantities, leading to huge upward price pressure. The demand for grain has also increased due to biofuel production; as corn is diverted to create ethanol, corn stocks decline and corn prices increase. Meanwhile, high corn prices shift demand to other grains, and land used for other grains shifts to corn—another factor causing a decrease in supply.

Kimberly Ann Elliot, one of this section's four authors, argues that U.S. biofuel policy is the single most important cause of grain price increases. She draws attention to corn ethanol's high energy cost both in terms of actual production and in forcing the cultivation of new land for corn inputs. Taking all of this into account, biofuels in fact increase net emissions.

Anuradha Mittal disagrees on the relative importance of some of these short-term causes. For example, she argues that there has not been a great increase in demand for meat in India. Mittal points to the cultural preference in India against red meat consumption, as well as the fact that India remains a grain exporter. Her main focus, however, is on long-term structural factors as the key underlying causes of the food crisis. For example, many developing countries have shifted from subsistence to single cash crops for export (such as cotton, coffee, or bananas). When the prices of these commodities change, as they often do, a country's macroeconomic activities and income distributions are affected. This also forces countries to import their food crops, making them vulnerable to changes in food prices. This push from food crop to cash crop is drastically increased by the fact that rich countries subsidize their agriculture, which allows them to sell below cost. Finally, Mittal points out that investment in agricultural productivity, which has been falling since 1980, has led to less agricultural research and fewer agricultural projects. These changes have unbalanced and weakened the global food system in the last few decades, allowing short-term supply shocks to devastate the world. She thus compellingly argues that attention to the risk of short-term crisis

precipitators should be balanced with a more comprehensive treatment of key structural issues.

Jennifer Clapp similarly reiterates the immediate causes of the food crisis, and calls on readers to see the larger macroeconomic forces at play. For example, the U.S. Federal Reserve cut interest rates in 2007-2008, keeping the dollar weak against other currencies. The depreciation of the dollar generally leads to a rise in commodity prices, although economists are not certain as to all the reasons why. Speculation in food commodities probably exacerbated the effect. Additionally, as prices began to rise, many developing countries—Vietnam, Argentina, Egypt, for example—imposed restrictions on exports to insulate their economies. This policy may help at home, but serves to worsen the situation globally. Clapp, like Mittal, suggests that solutions must take into account these broader factors if the food system is to be fixed, and suggests a few first steps, including ending export bans.

Lastly, Sue Horton's essay discusses the similarities between the recent food crisis and the food crisis of 1974. She spends most of the essay outlining the remarkable parallels between the two crises, including supply shocks, energy price increases, and increased demand, but does not provide much commentary as to why this is important for future events. Although her stated intention is to learn lessons from the policy failures of the 1974 event, she devotes just three short pages to advice, and most of it simply describes the failure to set up a functioning international oversight organization after the 1974 crisis (two of the three established institutions are now defunct, and the third played almost no role in 2008). She offers what she calls "the usual economist perspective, that removing obvious market distortions is important."[7] Later, she identifies the importance of micronutrients, "given [her] own research agenda."[8] But neither piece of advice seems particularly connected with her historical inquiry.

Given the authors' diverging approaches, it is not clear whether we should agree with one over the other, or with all of them at once, or how to integrate the many suggestions that they each offer. But the four essays do succeed at showing the diversity of perspectives on the causes of the food crisis, and illuminating its extremely complex origins: in long- and short-term decisionmaking processes across a host of countries, in changes in supply and demand, and in the macroeconomic structure of the food commodities market.

Knowing the causes of the recent global food crisis is an important first step in the difficult and complicated process of attaining food security. But without specific, achievable, and far-reaching goals, understanding the causes is a far cry from finding the solutions. Although the contributors to Global Food Crisis seem to have a generally unified idea of the various factors that most directly caused the crisis, described in detail in the first section, they diverge greatly in the solutions they propose. In the second section, several authors highlight immediate governance concerns,

7. *Id.* at 39.
8. *Id.* at 39.

particularly emergency response measures, such as food aid shipments or physical food reserves. But given the extent of the crisis—after such drastic food price volatility and resulting civil unrest—it is odd to see that some of the proposals are essentially only minor changes.

Most of C. Stuart Clark's chapter, for example, argues for a Food Assistance Convention to replace the existing multilateral treaty for food transfers, the Food Aid Convention. But his concern for a name change, revised rules of procedure, and increased transparency in the Food & Agriculture Organization fo the U.N. (FAO) overlooks the core of the matter. One more promising recommendation, which could have benefited from further analysis, is Clark's description of a "human rights approach" to food assistance.[9] This involves the principle of "respecting and protecting the right to food," and the goal of "support[ing] national governments to ensure that the right to food is realized for those facing hunger."[10] By recognizing a right to food, a human rights approach to emergency food aid might effect a universally stronger focus on ameliorating the suffering of the most hungry people during the time when they most need assistance. In the chapter, however, there is no explanation of the importance of such an approach, what it might look like, or what might result from it.

Perhaps the most fascinating and promising of the four chapters on immediate governance concerns is Raymond F. Hopkins's depiction of an insurance-oriented regime replacing our current pro-cyclical, reactive food assistance practices. Hopkins notes that a fundamental change in food aid occurs every twenty years, and that the impending successor regime will involve a transformation from a charitable relationship "to a more rational-legal relationship of policy holder and insurer or re-insurer."[11] Such a regime would seek to avoid the problems associated with aid that is dependent on donors' contemporaneous circumstances. The chapter is focused on historical description and general advantages to an insurance-based system but mentions few actual proposals. Hopkins briefly refers to an International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) plan which "is consistent with the principles by which insurance operates to build assets available for release to those harmed."[12] Frederic Mousseau describes the proposal as a "virtual reserve" which would be funded by pledges from "big exporting countries and would be used to intervene in grain futures markets to discourage speculation when prices are rising"; the proposal is premised on the idea that speculation on futures was a "key factor of the price increase."[13]

Meanwhile, however, Mousseau argues against the IFPRI plan, questioning whether it is realistic, necessary, or effective. At the end of the chapter, he suggests several alternatives. One potentially effective proposal is for other developing countries to follow the lead of countries like

9. *Id.* at 102.
10. *Id.* at 102-03.
11. *Id.* at 88.
12. *Id.* at 89.
13. *Id.* at 106-07.

Malawi, which was "able to negotiate and secure the procurement of food at pre-agreed prices on the regional food exchange."[14] Unfortunately, Mousseau devotes only a paragraph to each proposal and provides scarcely enough description to introduce the reader to each, much less to provide an actual guide to enact such a policy.

Balancing a multiplicity of viewpoints with an adequate depth of analysis is a significant challenge for compilations of essays such as this one. Each chapter is a separate, short piece, describing a self-contained set of problems and proposals. The book is filled with fascinating, high-level ideas, but it is difficult for each author to develop a full, substantive set of proposals in fifteen pages. If Mousseau could have an entire section of a book to explain his proposals, we could have a clearer idea what it means, for instance, to "[t]hink regionally," and how to implement such a proposal.[15] Likewise, Gawain Kripke's chapter on U.S. participation in food aid does a great job of explaining political realities influencing food policy within the U.S., the donor of close to half of all international food aid. However, his chapter would benefit if it more clearly tied past political accomplishments and frustrations with present tools and opportunities.

Next, the authors discuss some of the ecological concerns highlighted by the food crisis, particularly climate change and the limited global supply of the fossil fuel inputs required for the current system of industrial agriculture, and offer suggestions for governance responses. The authors share a concern for implementing sustainable, locally-based agricultural methods that will ensure food security in changing climates. Additionally, two of the authors argue for a refocus on how we view food security using a human rights or "moral economy" framework. Such a framework would view food security and access to food, rather than economic efficiency, as the most important goal of the global food system.

Cristina Tirado, Marc J. Cohen, Noora-Lisa Aberman, and Brian Thompson identify some of the dangers climate change poses to food and water security. The essay's strength lies in its organized and thoughtful approach to the various issues posed by climate change. The essay looks separately at the impact of climate change on particularly vulnerable regions, such as coastal areas; vulnerable populations, such as subsistence farmers; and gender vulnerability, pointing out that climate change may add to the labor burdens of rural women who are responsible for finding food and water for their families. Next, the authors separate out the four dimensions of food security to discuss how climate change will affect each one. For example, food availability will be changed for better and for worse as crops change; food stability and access will be adversely affected, especially due to alien invasive species. However, their analysis is weakened by its lack of specificity for the solutions they offer. For example, the authors find that "[p]olicy-based adaptations to climate change may include policies on natural resource management, human and animal health, governance, and political rights, among many others."[16] While

14. *Id.* at 111.
15. *Id.*
16. *Id.* at 138.

offering a generalist survey of available policy options, this list fails to provide a basis for adequately discerning which of the multiple options is superior and why. Similarly, although the authors assert that adopting a human rights framework could focus countries' attention on the impacts of climate change to food security by prioritizing food security over efficiency, it is not clear how one would go about creating such a framework.

Noah Zerbe further criticizes market efficiency as a priority of the global system, and similarly argues for a shift in focus regarding the goals of the global food market to ensure common well-being rather than the most economically efficient allocation of resources. Zerbe argues that the market is currently skewed by overregulation in the global North, as rich countries heavily subsidize their food crops, allowing them to undercut subsistence farmers in developing countries thereby driving developing countries to cash crops. At the same time, the World Bank and other international organizations have pushed for underregulation in the Global South, under the logic that gains made by comparative advantage, lowering prices for consumers and raising incentives for producers, would guarantee food security. In fact, this has left emerging economies vulnerable to destabilization by market forces and caused severe food security issues. Zerbe provides a typical example in Zimbabwe, whose maize production declined after the country was forced to privatize its seed industry, exacerbating rural poverty and hunger.

Meanwhile, Tony Weis is concerned not with the climate consequences of fossil fuel agriculture, but rather with its inherent lack of sustainability. He argues for the need to reconceptualize modern agriculture. He points out the many hidden costs of fossil fuels, as well as the need to find other sources as fossil fuel stores dwindle. Like Elliot, he notes that biofuels have thin energy margins, even as they require additional land to be cultivated for crops to convert into these fuels. Instead of biofuels, he proposes greater labor inputs in farming—that is, requiring farmers to go back to preindustrial, labor-intensive methods of maintaining and building soil fertility. He hints at the potential problems this might cause, as such pre-industrial revolution farming was "rarely a farmer-, worker-, or gender-equity paradise."[17] But again, while it is important to remind the reader that dwindling fossil fuels will cause an agricultural crisis that may result in massive social upheaval, there is a frustrating lack of suggestions on how best to manage such change. For example, Weis glosses over the fact that greater labor inputs require a large percentage of a country's population to move into agricultural work.[18]

The final few chapters of the book introduce additional recommendations for the future of food assistance. The broad themes of the section are long-term food security, sustainability, and regional solutions. Given the causes of the crisis, immediate governance challenges, and ecological issues with the current global food and agriculture system, what

17. *Id.* at 157.
18. *Id.* at 156-57.

might a system which ensures enduring stability look like? The contributing authors' suggestions range from a general call for "[r]estoring higher rates of productivity growth worldwide" to "recommendations for institutional change to be incorporated into an immediate plan of action" for U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization renewal.[19]

Mark Redwood touts urban agriculture as an avenue for food security in his well-organized and deftly written chapter. Redwood first describes the conditions that led to the crisis: the historical trend of urbanization, city dwellers' reliance on tradable commodities (which are particularly exposed to market volatility), and reduced access to land and other food inputs. He then describes existing urban agricultural measures. Urban agricultural is essentially agriculture in, or on the fringe of, a city, "(re)using largely human and material resources, products and services found in and around that urban area, and in turn supplying" such resources to that urban area.[20] Redwood offers some data on the role of urban agricultural in various countries' food systems; for example, urban agricultural provides eighty percent of leafy vegetables in Brazzaville, Congo. He suggests that urban agricultural can be a way to minimize the risk that volatile prices bring about. Redwood then lists obstacles to the spread of urban agriculture, primarily government opposition to perceived resistance to planned urban development, and current problems with urban agriculture, including the risk of raising livestock in heavily urbanized areas. His chapter goes beyond mere generalities on the benefits of a regional focus to food aid. The chapter presents a balanced, useful, and specific recommendation on how to "prioritize[] local markets," through pursuing the development of urban agriculture in developing countries.[21]

Marcia Ishii-Eiteman's contribution on the need for a systemic overhaul to the global food system includes several provocative proposals. One such idea is a rights-based approach to food aid. Ishii-Eiteman notes that the "central question for sustainable food systems in human rights terms is: 'Who will produce food, how, and for whose benefit?'"[22] Ishii-Eiteman asserts that this question "provides the central unifying thread running through the tapestry of options facing policy-makers."[23] Another intriguing idea, revising intellectual property laws to increase protection for "indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems," is addressed briefly.[24] Unfortunately, the chapter gives the sense that it is simply a reiteration of U.N. reports, especially the U.N.-led International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, which is referenced abundantly throughout the chapter.

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19. Luc Mougeot, *Urban Agriculture: Definition, Presence, Potential and Risks*, *in* GROWING CITIES, GROWING FOOD: URBAN AGRICULTURE ON THE POLICY AGENDA: A READER ON URBAN AGRICULTURE (Bakker et al. eds., 2000), *as quoted in* GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS, *supra* note 1, at 209.

20. *Id.* at 209.

21. *Id.* at 210.

22. *Id.* at 219, *citing* Special Rapporteur on the right to food, *: A Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food: Building Resistance*, ¶ 53, U.N. DOC. A/HRC/9/23 (Sept. 8, 2008).

23. *Id.* at 220.

24. *Id.* at 231.

Among the extensive discussion throughout *The Global Food Crisis* on donor and recipient governments, large institutions like the U.N.'s World Food Programme, and regional agricultural development, a lamentable deficiency is the lack of emphasis on private sector investment. Emmy Simmons and Julie Howard's chapter, which focuses on food security in sub-Saharan Africa, includes a few passing mentions of the private sector. They mention the potential of supporting private-sector investment such as microfinance organizations and include an even briefer suggestion about leveraging additional capital through public-private partnerships. The book as a whole, however, devotes almost no attention to such ideas, despite an acknowledgement from several authors that private players have a large role in the current food system. As Jennifer Clapp and Marc J. Cohen note, "private actors loom large in the global food system."[25]

The weakness of *The Global Food Crisis*—its diversity of approaches—is also its strength. Sifting through the many contributions, a reader can find gems of analysis on a variety of topics and suggestions that range from the extremely general to the highly specific. A reader looking for a coherent set of governance principles and strategies to guide us through the food crisis will be disappointed, but the book is packed with plenty of suggestions that a reader can choose from in deciding where to begin. This speaks to the vastness of the problem that faces the world today; it is multifaceted and intractable, with long- and short-term causes, each of which requires an adequate response. Clapp and Cohen's volume does the important job of illuminating much of the structure of this vast problem, with a few specific proposals—such as urban agriculture, reforming the Food Aid Convention, reforming U.S. biofuel policy—sprinkled in. Most importantly, the book highlights the deeper instabilities of our food system at a time when some may be lulled by the end of the 2008 crisis, with prices returning to reasonable levels for the time being. Clapp and Cohen emphasize the urgent need to begin addressing the structure of our global food system if we are to prevent another crisis and ensure food security for developing countries in the 21st century.

25. *Id.* at 6.

Book Review

Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice, *by* Eric Holt-Giménez & Raj Patel with Annie Shattuck

Publisher: Food First Books
Price: $19.95
Reviewer: Annalisa Leibold

Food Rebellions!, by Eric Holt-Gimenez and Raj Patel with Annie Shattuck,[1] dissects the global agricultural system in an attempt to understand the recent increase in food prices and global hunger. Holt-Gimenez et al. tell a shocking tale of injustice, documenting the abuse perpetrated against the Global South by agricultural corporations and international financial institutions of the North. *Food Rebellions!* is best judged in context. It is not the most comprehensive scholarly work of its kind, nor does it provide an exploration of every practical solution to the problems it presents. Yet the book seamlessly weaves together a vast array of evidence from various disciplines to enrich the authors' narrative of the world's broken food system. The book's greatest strength is in its power to ensnare the reader in the fury of the food crisis and encapsulate her in the details of that great injustice.

The authors begin by analyzing the proximate and root causes of the recent devastating global food crisis. Holt-Gimenez et al. note that the current situation qualifies as a "food crisis" because of the sudden increase in food prices that reversed a trend of steadily decreasing prices, and resulted in a huge spike in global hunger that reached record levels in 2008.[2] The injustice of this crisis stems from the fact that there is more than enough food to feed the Earth's population—enough, in fact, to feed the world's population 1.5 times over.[3] The authors observe that people go

1. ERIC HOLT-GIMENEZ & RAJ PATEL, WITH ANNIE SHATTUCK, FOOD REBELLIONS! CRISIS AND THE HUNGER FOR JUSTICE (2009).
2. *Id.* at 6-10.
3. *Id.* at 7.

hungry because they are priced out of the market.[4] High food prices are fueled by a host of factors, including volatile oil prices,[5] rising meat consumption,[6] poor climate conditions,[7] a boom in the agrofuels industry,[8] and price speculation in the agricultural commodities market.[9] Yet, the authors are quick to point out that solving these proximate causes would not be sufficient to alter the structural problems responsible for the food crisis: that is, a global system of injustice.[10]

Holt-Gimenez et al. paint a sobering picture of a global agricultural system that is grossly inequitable, dominated by concerns for corporate profits rather than considerations of sustainable development or poverty reduction. After World War II, U.S. and European agricultural companies began developing technologies resulting in higher agricultural yields, which led to a production of food that greatly exceeded domestic consumption needs.[11] Propped up by state price supports and subsidies, the agricultural industry began dumping surplus products as food aid or inexpensive exports in developing countries instead of scaling down production levels.[12] At the same time, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank were forcing structural adjustment policies on most developing economies, which required developing governments to remove all price supports, subsidies, and other state controls over agriculture.[13]

Criticisms of structural adjustment programs and their contribution to hunger and poverty abound. In his book *Beyond the World Bank Agenda: An Institutional Approach to Development*, Howard Stein shows that, despite the fact that the World Bank has publicly admitted the failure of structural adjustment programs, its institutional approach to development nevertheless continues to incorporate the same neoliberal ideology.[14] Holt-Gimenez et al., consistent with these critics, argue that structural adjustment programs had devastating effects on the economies of many developing nations and regions.[15] Africa, one example explored in the book, was formerly a net exporter of food.[16] Because of the collapse of state support for agriculture and an inability to cope with import surges, this trend was reversed and Africa became a net importer of food, resulting in

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4. *Id.* (quoting World Food Programme Director Josette Sheeran).
5. *Id.* at 11.
6. *Id.* at 11-14.
7. *Id.* at 14-15.
8. *Id.* at 15-16.
9. *Id.* at 16-18.
10. *Id.* at 22 ("The rise of food dependency and hunger in the global South is not the result of overpopulation, a conspiracy, or the 'invisible hand' of the market. As we shall see, it is the result of the systematic destruction of Southern food systems through a series of economic development projects imposed by the Northern institutions.").
11. *Id.* at 24-25.
12. *Id.*
13. *Id.* at 37-45.
14. HOWARD STEIN, BEYOND THE WORLD BANK AGENDA: AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT 55-56 (2008).
15. HOLT-GIMENEZ ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 37, 40-45.
16. *Id.* at 45.

massive increases in poverty and hunger throughout the continent.[17] In one example, the authors note that Ghana used to produce much of its own food for local consumption; however, due to economic liberalization policies, local production now accounts for only around ten percent of domestic consumption in key industries.[18]

Holt-Gimenez et al. also blame the hunger crisis on the Green Revolution.[19] The Green Revolution was proposed as a mechanism to help eliminate poverty by modernizing farming inputs and thereby increasing agricultural output.[20] The authors claim that the practical results of this revolution were increased inequality, the concentration of land and resources in the hands of a wealthy few, loss of biodiversity, pest problems, and other environmental consequences.[21] Other commentators, such as David Naguib Pellow, have offered similar criticisms of the Green Revolution, noting specifically the environmental inequality associated with Green Revolution policies.[22] For example, "most pesticides banned for use in the United States are exported, dumped, or used throughout the Global South—a clear case of global environmental inequality and racism."[23] Holt-Gimenez et al. also vividly illustrate the personal costs of the Green Revolution by exploring the rise in farmer suicides in India, which occurred because small farmers with less than twenty acres of land were priced out of the market or forced into unprecedented levels of debt when the Green Revolution took hold.[24]

Additionally, the authors are highly critical of agrofuels, which have become a booming profit-making industry propped up by government subsidies.[25] The authors state emphatically that "[d]espite industry claims to the contrary, agrofuels do raise food prices."[26] This is because agrofuels use inputs that could be consumed as food, therefore driving up demand and prices for food commodities.[27] The authors also note that agrofuels threaten food prices by increasing corporate monopoly power, due to the vertical integration of agrofuels production.[28] Additionally, they threaten the ecological sustainability of arable land in the Global South.[29] The authors further imply that there is something grossly inequitable about an industry designed to feed the North's energy consumption needs at the cost of increased hunger in the Global South.[30]

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17. *Id.* at 44-49.
18. *See id.* at 41.
19. *Id.* at 27-37.
20. *Id.* at 26-27.
21. *Id.* at 27.
22. DAVID NAGUIB PELLOW, RESISTING GLOBAL TOXICS: TRANSNATIONAL MOVEMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE 150 (2007).
23. *Id.*
24. HOLT-GIMENEZ ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 32-35.
25. *Id.* at 72-75.
26. *Id.* at 69.
27. *Id.* at 69-70.
28. *Id.* at 70-72.
29. *Id.* at 80.
30. *Id.* ("The tragedy of agrofuels is that the global South will sacrifice its forests, savannas, peat bogs and productive land to satiate the energy appetite of the industrial North.").

Although Holt-Gimenez et al. present a persuasive story of the causes of the food crisis, one weakness of the book lies in the authors' tendency to draw occasional unsupported and unqualified conclusions by inferring bad intentions on the part of many elite actors. The authors seem to subtly—and in some cases openly—suggest that global actors, such as the IMF, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the World Bank, are not concerned with eliminating poverty and hunger, but are actually motivated by a desire to further entrench the power of certain global elites. For example, the authors note that the World Bank has determined that small farms are not economically viable.[31] Holt-Gimenez et al. argue that this has been used as part of a strategy to take land away from the less "efficient" poor.[32] It is not necessarily clear that the authors intend to suggest that the World Bank aims to promote the use of its theory for politically-motivated land grabs. Yet, absent further clarification, the reader may infer such a conclusion. The authors similarly allege that the unspoken aim of the Green Revolution was to prevent any major land reform which would benefit the poor.[33] Though this allegation may in fact be true, the authors fail to offer adequate evidence or detailed analysis to support this conclusion, but instead rely on inferences drawn from circumstantial evidence.[34] These conclusions and the limitations of such conclusions would be better explored in detail. It is entirely possible that organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank are well-intentioned but ill-informed, an opinion espoused by William Easterly in his book *The Elusive Quest for Growth*.[35] The conclusions reached in *Food Rebellions!* would be stronger if the authors addressed such counterarguments.

Part II of the book is devoted to exploring solutions to the food crisis. Holt-Gimenez et al. spend a good deal of time advocating for agroecology, sustainable and ecological agriculture.[36] They argue that agroecology can have tangible environmental and social benefits, as well as the prospect for greater production output. Specifically, they point to the superior performance of agroecology in its resilience to extreme weather, its ability to sequester carbon and thus combat global warming, and its contribution to well-balanced diets.[37] The authors discuss some convincing evidence to support their conclusions about agroecology, including an in-depth study carried out by researchers from the University of Michigan showing that a switch to organic production of food worldwide would not, as alleged by

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31. *Id.* at 44.

32. *Id.* at 44-45.

33. *Id.* at 31 ("An unspoken objective of the Green Revolution was to avoid implementing agrarian reform. In this sense, the Green Revolution was less a campaign to feed the urban poor than a strategy to prevent the rural poor from seizing land to feed themselves.").

34. The authors support their conclusion merely by pointing out that this was the practical result of the Green Revolutions. *Id.* at 31.

35. *See generally* WILLIAM EASTERLY, THE ELUSIVE QUEST FOR GROWTH: ECONOMISTS' ADVENTURES AND MISADVENTURES IN THE TROPICS (2001).

36. HOLT-GIMENEZ ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 99-100 ("While sustainable agriculture has frequently been dismissed by international agricultural research centers as 'lacking science,' the fact is that the practices of many ecological farmers have been racing ahead of industrial science's understanding of sustainability for some time.").

37. *Id.* at 101, 103.

some critics, lead to a decrease in agriculture output.[38] The authors also note that when total output is considered under a polyculture farm, as opposed to single crop production, yields can increase (from twenty percent to sixty percent).[39] Although this evidence provides support for the proposition that small organic farms have social benefits and may produce competitive levels of output, it is not clear that small-scale organic farms are superior in production capacity. Reed et al. accurately point out that "Neither side in the debate has been able to table definitive evidence to support their opinions. The debate has remained a clash of ideologies and philosophies rather than a discussion of the different qualities of farm businesses and what they bring to communities."[40] Holt-Gimenez et al. do some work in establishing evidence about the nature of the qualities of small farm businesses and what they bring to communities. Yet the authors do not rigorously compare this evidence against the evidence supporting large-scale non-organic farms. Thus, while Part II helps establish the central ideology of agroecology and provides some evidence in support of the practice, it does not definitively settle the debate regarding which agricultural practice produces the greatest output.

Holt-Gimenez et al. also explore the notion of food sovereignty, which they define as "the democratic control over our food systems."[41] The authors echo many conclusions reached by Wright and Middendorf in *The Fight Over Food*, which emphasizes the current movement to reclaim control over our food systems and our rising food consciousness.[42] Wright and Middendorf point out that the rise in food consciousness "stem[s], in part, from our postmaterialist age, in which some of us have the luxury of putting quality and identity issues surrounding food front and center in our consciousness."[43] They observe that many people in developing countries are unfortunately still concerned with basic food insecurity.[44] Yet, Wright and Middendorf note, "The desire for accessible 'quality' food, a healthy environment, and regional economic development transcends the social markers of race, class, gender, and geography that divide us. We all want and need sustainable livelihoods."[45] In *Food Rebellions!*, Holt-Gimenez et al. echo this thought, arguing that activists and organizations around the world are working to regain control of their food systems in order to

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38. *Id.* at 111 (citing Catherine Badgley et al., *Organic Agriculture and the Global Food Supply*, 22(2) RENEWABLE AGRIC. & FOOD SYS., 86-108 (2007)).

39. HOLT-GIMENEZ ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 113, 116.

40. Matthew Reed, Allan Butler & Matt Lobley, *Growing Sustainable Communities: Understanding the Social-Economic Footprints of Organic Family Farms*, *in* CREATING FOOD FUTURES: TRADE, ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT 67, 67 (Cathy Rozel Farnworth et al. eds., 2008).

41. Holt-Gimenez et al., *supra* note 1, at 84.

42. Wynne Wright & Gerad Middendorf, *Introduction: Fighting Over Food: Change in the Agrifood System*, *in* THE FIGHT OVER FOOD: PRODUCERS, CONSUMERS, AND ACTIVISTS CHALLENGE THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM 1, 1-26 (Wynne Wright & Gerad Middendorf eds., 2008).

43. *Id.* at 5.

44. *Id.*

45. *Id.*

ensure quality food and a healthy environment.[46]

Part II may disappoint some readers in that the authors fail to explore concrete political and legal mechanisms for the implementation of their proposed agroecology. They speak generally about political will[47] but fail to provide robust practical solutions to overcome the current institutional inertia. Based on the causes of the food crisis explored in Part I, there seem to be many areas ripe for domestic legal changes, including regulation of the agricultural commodities market, reforms in antitrust law to diffuse the concentration of power wielded by monopolies in the agricultural industry, and revision of the U.S. Farm Bill, which governs agricultural subsidies and food aid policy. Yet the authors do not discuss such legal reform, nor do they discuss the strategies of political maneuvering necessary to implement such reforms. The authors argue that, "To overcome the food crisis, we need to transform the food system"[48] and "The challenge is to remove the structural barriers that are holding back all these promising alternatives."[49] Suppose one believes in the book's premise that the root cause of the global food crisis is a system of global injustice perpetuated by powerful elite actors and that the solution involves a transformation of the food system to allow space for agroecology. How does one then go about removing the structural barriers preventing the kind of transformation envisioned? Unfortunately, *Food Rebellions* does not answer this difficult question.

How relevant is *Food Rebellions*? In April 2008, "The world's economic ministers declared . . . that shortages and skyrocketing prices for food posed a potentially greater threat to economic and political stability than the turmoil in capital markets."[50] The problems that Holt-Gimenez et al. document are some of the most pressing areas of global concern and one finds it difficult to read their account without feeling a strong sense of indignation at the global injustice. Due to the tone of the book, it would appear that *Food Rebellions!* was meant for popular consumption. True to form, it will likely fuel the fire of activists and the socially-conscious alike, helping to strengthen the army of people who demand change in the global food system. Some might wish that the book did more to inform practical strategies for such change. Yet perhaps we should recognize the value to rallying the army, and leave it up to others to arm themselves with the various weapons necessary to fight the system of injustice.

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46. Holt-Gimenez et al., *supra* note 1, at 84.
47. *Id.* at 169.
48. *Id.* at 84.
49. *Id.* at 85.
50. Steven R. Weisman, *Finance Ministers Emphasize Food Crisis Over Credit Crisis*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 14, 2008, at A12, *available at* http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/14/business/14finance.html?ref=business.

Book Review

Famine: A Short History, *by* Cormac Ó Gráda

Publisher: Princeton University Press
Price: $27.95
Reviewed by: William J. Moon

No discussion of access to food is complete without examining famine—an extreme case of food scarcity that has haunted human civilizations throughout history. In addition to creating victims of hunger-related deaths and plague,[1] famine leaves an inerasable mark on human culture and community.[2] The term "famine" is an "emotive one [in any language],"[3] and many famines are remembered by specific names that hint at massive human suffering.[4] Cormac Ó Gráda's new book, *Famine: A Short History*, historicizes famine by studying cases from the earliest civilizations to more recent ones in North Korea, Malawi, and Niger. The book's fresh contribution to the literature stems both from the impressive bank of world history that Ó Gráda concisely synthesizes, and from his use of non-conventional methodologies. These methodologies range from etymology to oral history and folk memory, each of which fill the knowledge gap that conventional history has left unanswered.[5] This approach allows the author to test the validity of highly influential theories of famine set forth by such thinkers as Robert Malthus and Amartya Sen. Perhaps more importantly, it also allows the author to consider the future of famine in the age of globalization.

Ó Gráda starts the book by highlighting the human experience behind famine. Readers are immediately exposed to the grave symptoms of famine, which, besides death tolls resulting from hunger and disease, include increases in rates of crime, prostitution, and child abandonment. Ó Gráda notes Malthus' observation that "[m]others [in China] thought it

1. STEPHAN HAGGARD & MARCUS NOLAND, FAMINE IN NORTH KOREA: MARKETS, AID, AND REFORM 1 (2007).
2. CORMAC Ó GRÁDA, FAMINE: A SHORT HISTORY 48 (2009).
3. *Id.* at 6.
4. *Id.* at 5.
5. Notably, Ó Gráda admits that the use of non-conventional methodologies likewise constitutes one of the book's shortcomings. *Id.* at 42 ("Folklore is prone to forget the more distant past, however, and suffer from chronological confusion.").

their duty to destroy their infant children, and the young to give the stroke of fate to the aged, to save them from the agonies of such a dilatory death."[6] Hunger likewise forced many destitute women to enter prostitution, such as happened in China in the late-1870s and in India during the 1940s. Most recently, it was documented that hundreds and perhaps thousands of North Korean women illegally crossed the borders into rural China to engage in prostitution in an effort to stay alive during a massive North Korean famine in the 1990s.[7] Rates of petty crime also increase, along with a heightened attentiveness to the protection of one's property. On a cold night in 1848, for example, a farmer in Ireland "bludgeoned to death one Mary Ryan, a destitute woman, for stealing 'a few sheaves of wheat' from his farmyard."[8] Stalin's decree of August 7, 1932 punished stealing with a sentence of death or ten years in prison, which led to over 200,000 imprisonments and ten thousand executions.[9]

However astonishing these events may seem to modern eyes, they take a backseat when compared to the breakdown in the basic moral fabric of society that manifests itself in the form of suicide and cannibalism. In 1291 India, families drowned themselves in order to avoid excessive hunger.[10] The Old Testament describes a mother who "shall eat [her children] for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness. . . ."[11] At the height of a major famine in 1065, Egyptians sought to avoid men hiding with ropes "who latched onto passers-by, hoisted them up in a flash, carved up their flesh and ate them."[12] In the early twentieth century, a U.S. missionary organization in China reported authenticated cases of cannibalism in the *New York Times*.[13] While it is notoriously difficult to decipher truths from half-truths and myths buried in these stories, the sheer amount of written history suggests that at least some form of cannibalism existed in many cultures across the world.

The book is perhaps of most relevance to the legal audience in its attempt to answer the question, "Is famine history in the modern world?"[14] Although Ó Gráda does not provide a direct answer and notes the difficulty of making predictions,[15] he focuses on recent statistics and the variables that play a role in inducing famines. In offering reasons to be optimistic, Ó Gráda notes the quintupled growth of GDP per head since

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6. *Id.* at 52, *quoting* THOMAS ROBERT MALTHUS, AN ESSAY ON THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION 109 (9th ed. 1888).

7. Ó GRÁDA, *supra* note 2 at 60.

8. *Id.* at 50-51.

9. Michael Ellmann, *Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited*, 59 EUR.-ASIA STUD. 663, 668 (2007).

10. Ó GRÁDA, *supra* note 2 at 62-63.

11. *Deuteronomy* 28:57.

12. Ó GRÁDA, *supra* note 2 at 64.

13. *Mission Board Asserts Some Chinese Have Resorted to Cannibalism*, N.Y. TIMES, July 7, 1929 at 18.

14. Ó GRÁDA, *supra* note 2, at 2.

15. *See, e.g.*, *id.* at 260 (citing infamous doomsday prediction by Stanford's Paul Ehrlich, who "got it almost exactly wrong" when he forecasted in the late 1960s that hundreds of millions of people would starve to death in the 1970s).

1900, the dearth of despotic leaders like Hitler and Mao[16] that were linked to some of the worst famines of all time, and the modern technologies that allow international relief mechanisms to react to famines more quickly.[17] Ó Gráda's optimism also stems from the Malthusian belief in the link between aggregate food supply and famine. Ó Gráda highlights, for example, that per capita global food output has risen by approximately one-third since the early 1960s.[18]

Ó Gráda argues that the relatively recent globalization of public and private relief actions has also been a positive phenomenon. While the Irish famine of 1740-41, for example, generated little aid from outside the country, the Irish famine in the 1840s received support from across Great Britain and even $170 in contributions from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.[19] During the Great Northern China Famine of 1876-79, Chinese expatriates from around the world sent money home, while the Russian royal family organized several domestic and international relief efforts in the early 1890s.[20]

The 19th century seems to be the time period when telegraph and news media became global in scale, allowing bad words to travel fast and international relief to take prompt action. Ó Gráda emphasizes the importance of the technological landscape in the twenty-first century: "transmission of information is, or can be, instantaneous, and transport is relatively cheap and quick."[21] While Ó Gráda is critical of the bureaucratic inefficiencies of NGOs and un-altruistic motives of state donors, he seems to be satisfied with the general effectiveness of food aid. Ó Gráda notes, for example, that the improved nutrition statistics for children in North Korea offer reassuring evidence that "humanitarian aid has been reaching those who needed it."[22]

While factually correct, Ó Gráda's analysis could be more rigorous by observing governance structures in hunger-prone countries. In a modern world characterized by a relative abundance of food, famines are most likely to strike in countries controlled by autocratic governments. Those states often have economies that are underdeveloped and autarkic, which allow the governing bodies to be insulated from outside influence. Importantly, the political costs of starving citizens in these states are drastically lower than in democratic states.[23] In North Korea, for example, upwards of three million people—roughly ten percent of the entire population—died due to a famine that started in the mid to late 1990s, at a time when world food production per capita was reaching an all-time

16. This point seems a bit misleading, since tyrannical leaders like Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, and Kim Jong-il of North Korea still govern sovereign nations.

17. Ó GRÁDA, *supra* note 2, at 261-62.

18. *Id.* at 263.

19. *Id.* at 218.

20. *Id.* at 219.

21. *Id.* at 278.

22. *Id.* at 267.

23. *See, e.g.*, BRUCE BUENO DE MESQUITA ET AL., THE LOGIC OF POLITICAL SURVIVAL 23-24 (2004).

high.[24]

Ó Gráda points out that famines occurring in peacetime have almost always been "exacerbated by corrupt and rapacious governing elites."[25] He also notes the "progress of democracy and relative political stability in Africa, where their absence often led to famines in the past."[26] Yet, Ó Gráda does not place enough emphasis on the political economy of autocratic governments, where the cost to governments in starving its citizens is almost negligible relative to the cost borne in democratic societies. In his seminal work, *Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Sen emphasizes the distributional aspects of food.[27] Sen argues that democracies are much less likely to be affected by famine because starvation is a function of "some people not *having* enough food to eat . . . [not] the characteristic of there *being* not enough food to eat."[28]

While Ó Gráda seems to agree with Sen's entitlement theory, Ó Gráda gives more consideration to Food Availability Decline (FAD) theory, which claims that "famines occur if and only if there is a sharp *decline* in the average food availability per head."[29] For example, Ó Gráda argues that further analysis on the three cases highlighted by Sen—Bengal, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia—gives much more credibility to the FAD theory.[30] While Ó Gráda sensibly argues this point, FAD may be less relevant than ever before in democracies, where free media allows bad news to travel fast, and significant political costs are levied upon leaders who starve their constituents. However, FAD would present significant problems for autocratic regimes, especially those like North Korea that insulate their economies from international trade.

With this in mind, can food aid be used as a tool of political leverage against autocratic governments? Ó Gráda argues that foreign aid, rarely disinterested, has widely been used as a source of political leverage.[31] As an example, Ó Gráda considers the role that food relief played in overthrowing Béla Kun's communist regime in Hungary in 1919.[32] This point, however, is empirically questionable. In the recent North Korean famine, massive deaths due to starvation did not result in regime change or even destabilization.[33] It is noteworthy that the North Korean regime refused to increase food imports even as hundreds and perhaps thousands of its citizens were starving to death.[34] The situation remains the same to

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24. Ó GRÁDA, *supra* note 2, at 264 fig.9.I.
25. *Id.* at 231.
26. *Id.* at 281.
27. *See generally* AMARTYA SEN, POVERTY AND FAMINE: AN ESSAY ON ENTITLEMENT AND DEPRIVATION (1981).
28. *Id.* at 1.
29. *Id.* at 118.
30. Ó GRÁDA, *supra* note 2, at 192.
31. Ó GRÁDA, *supra* note 2, at 227.
32. *Id.* at 227-28.
33. It is noteworthy that the costs to authoritarian regimes of providing basic public goods like food to its disenfranchised citizens are extremely low. *See supra* DE MESQUITH ET AL., note 23, at 10.
34. *See* William J. Moon, *The Origins of the Great North Korean Famine*, 5 N. KOREAN REV. 105, 115-16 ("[F]oreign aid workers were being expelled from the country, even when food

this day. In March 2009, North Korean officials kicked out five food aid groups, even as one-third of the population is said to be in need of food assistance.[35] While improvements in technology have enhanced the world's capacity to assist famine-prone parts of the world, technology alone cannot force autocratic governments to *accept* food aid.

What is the solution? Ó Gráda's provocative look at the problem of famine suggests that there are several potential tools available. One such tool is eliminating or easing the various conditions aid bodies attach to international food aid programs. Another potential tool is more effective monitoring. Notwithstanding the many autonomy issues raised by aid activity in sovereign countries, monitoring is, in certain important respects, a good thing. Food distribution in authoritarian regimes might fail to reach the neediest members of the population absent effective monitoring. This is the problem of international aid diversion, where "not only do targeted beneficiaries go without allotted food while the less deserving are fed, but corrupt officials and others enrich themselves in the process."[36] In North Korea, where international food aid is often diverted to support the army,[37] scholars estimate that the level of diversion reaches "perhaps 30 percent or more of total aid."[38]

Then again, heavy regulation of food aid could lead to the abandonment of aid altogether, since authoritarian regimes often face little cost in starving their citizens. Alternate solutions offer some reason for optimism. For example, international aid can focus on forms of aid that are less appealing to elites, who often have access to more desirable food. While there is always the risk that elites will sell such products on the market, this may not be all that bad. In a market economy, an increase in the foreign supply would shift the supply curve, decreasing the overall price of food.[39] This is the case even in communist countries like North Korea, where a black market in food has come to complement or even substitute the public distribution system. While this may not be the most efficient way to save people's lives, it may sometimes be the only way to save lives in authoritarian regimes that have little incentive to feed the starved.

All in all, while the book's relatively short length prevents Ó Gráda from deeply examining the future of famine, his work is an extraordinary addition to the famine literature and should be of much interest to both consumers and producers of famine scholarship. Ó Gráda's ability to tackle a very difficult subject in an engaging manner will especially be useful to students and scholars who want a quick but comprehensive overview of famine.

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supplies, while improving, were nonetheless scarce.").

35. *North Korea Refuses US Food Aid*, BBC NEWS, Mar. 18, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7949785.stm.

36. HAGGARD & NOLAND, *supra* note 1, at 108.

37. *Id.* at 108-09.

38. *Id.* at 109.

39. *See* Moon, *supra* note 34, at 115.

Book Review

Food Sovereignty: Towards Democracy in Localized Food Systems, *by* Michael Windfuhr & Jennie Jonsén

Publisher: ITDG Publishing
Price: $29.95
Reviewed by: Chelsea Purvis

The food sovereignty policy framework seeks to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. Multiple definitions of food sovereignty exist; proponents have yet to agree on a single set of policy proposals.[1] With *Food Sovereignty: Towards Democracy in Localized Food Systems*, Michael Windfuhr and Jennie Jonsén find common ground among various interpretations of food sovereignty and offer a policy agenda. Windfuhr and Jonsén's analysis of the sources of hunger and malnutrition is compelling, and the authors convincingly explain the shortcomings of traditional responses to these problems. They are not persuasive, however, when arguing that food sovereignty is currently the most effective framework for addressing hunger and malnutrition.

Windfuhr and Jonsén begin *Food Sovereignty* by describing the severity of global hunger and malnutrition. Although enough food is produced to feed the entire world population, 850 million people are hungry and malnourished.[2] Windfuhr and Jonsén focus on the suffering of smallholder farmers[3] and the rural poor, who comprise nearly three-fourths of the world's hungry.[4] The authors predict that hunger and malnutrition will only increase as absolute global demand for food begins to surpass global supply.[5]

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1. MICHAEL WINDFUHR & JENNIE JONSÉN, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: TOWARDS DEMOCRACY IN LOCALIZED FOOD SYSTEMS (2005).
2. *Id.* at 3 (citing Food & Agric. Org. of the U.N. (FAO), THE STATE OF FOOD INSECURITY IN THE WORLD 2004, 6-10 (2004)).
3. *Id.* at 3.
4. *Id.* at 4.
5. *Id.* at 5.

Windfuhr and Jonsén argue that the source of hunger is the global system of food and agricultural trade. This system privileges multinational corporations, wealthy countries, and large landholders, but it marginalizes smallholder farmers and other rural people. Structural adjustment policies push poor countries to produce export crops only; subsidies in wealthy countries put smallholders elsewhere at a comparative disadvantage.[6] Large transnational corporations dominate the ownership and production of agricultural inputs, from seeds to pesticides.[7] Intellectual property rights systems protect this ownership and prevent "the spread of knowledge and technology among smallholder farmers . . . ."[8] Concentrated control of inputs by transnational corporations disadvantages small, locally-based producers but keeps input prices low. The international food processing industry seeks cheap inputs and so encourages this concentration among large transnational corporations.[9] Furthermore, global agriculture is largely industrial: intensive and input-heavy. Industrial agriculture tends to degrade land and "consolidate[] agricultural land and assets in the hands of big landowners, agribusinesses, and other large commercial entities."[10] International policy agreements, like the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture, have fixed this system in place.[11]

The food sovereignty policy framework, Windfuhr and Jonsén explain, seeks to transform the world's food and agriculture system. Non-governmental and civil society organizations have been developing this framework since the mid-1990s.[12] Windfuhr and Jonsén glean from the various statements and proposals of nongovernmental and civil society organizations a list of shared commitments of the food sovereignty framework. As illustrations of shared commitments, Windfuhr and Jonsén cite the "priority of local agriculture," "access of smallholder farmers . . . to land," "the right to food," "the right of smallholder farmers to produce food," "the right of consumers to decide what they consume," "the populations' participation in agricultural policy decision-making," and "the recognition of the rights of women farmers . . . ."[13] Food sovereignty proponents also advocate ending subsidies and dumping,[14] and they promote agroecology, which is "the holistic study of agroecosystems . . . ."[15]

In order to achieve these commitments, supporters of the food sovereignty framework have pushed for political reform. Windfuhr and Jonsén identify "six concrete policy proposals" that Food Sovereignty advocates have advanced.[16] The first is a Code of Conduct on the Human

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6. *Id.* at 6-7.
7. *Id.* at 8-9.
8. *Id.* at 8.
9. *Id.* at 8.
10. *Id.* at 8.
11. *Id.* at 6.
12. *Id.* at 11.
13. *Id.* at 13-14.
14. *Id.* at 13.
15. *Id.* at 14 (citing MIGUEL A. ALTIERI, AGROECOLOGY: THE SCIENCE OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE (1995)).
16. *Id.* at 15.

Right to Food. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization Council accepted such a Code of Conduct in 2004, but compliance is voluntary.[17] The other policy proposals are:

> An International Convention on Food Sovereignty that replaces the current Agreement on Agriculture[;] [a] World Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sovereignty established to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of trade liberalization on Food Sovereignty and security[;] [a] reformed and strengthened United Nations[;] [an] independent dispute settlement mechanism . . . to prevent dumping and . . . GMOs in food aid[;] [and an] international, legally binding treaty that defines the rights of smallholder farmers to the assets, resources, and legal protections they need to be able to exercise their right to produce.[18]

These sweeping policy proposals aim to change completely the way we create, possess, and exchange food globally.

Windfuhr and Jonsén describe two other frameworks, aside from food sovereignty, that "have been used in the discourse on the issue of persistent hunger and malnutrition and in the design of strategies for its eradication":[19] the right to food framework and the food security framework. The authors identify strengths and weaknesses with both concepts. The right to food framework includes legally binding obligations for individual states "to respect, protect and fulfill" the right to food for individuals within those states. But the right to food framework lacks specific policy proposals, Windfuhr and Jonsén say, since it is "a human right rather than . . . a political concept."[20] 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."[21] The framework does not impose binding obligations on states, however, and focuses too little on individual access to food and to productive resources.[22] Windfuhr and Jonsén argue that both the right to food and food security frameworks "lack[] a particular set of policies" and instead "focus[] on the obligations of states and on allowing people who are negatively affected to use legal remedies to get their rights implemented."[23]

Windfuhr and Jonsén's criticisms of the right to food and food security frameworks are valid, but they do not successfully make the case that food sovereignty is a more effective framework for addressing hunger and

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17. *Id.* at 15.
18. *Id.* at 15-16.
19. *Id.* at 19.
20. *Id.* at 15.
21. *Id.* at 21 (citing FAO, Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action, (Nov. 13-17, 1996), http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.htm).
22. *Id.* at 22.
23. *Id.* at 23.

malnutrition. First, food sovereignty reiterates many of the policies in the right to food framework. Windfuhr and Jonsén claim that "Food Sovereignty . . . is a more precise policy proposal" than those offered by the right to food or food security frameworks.[24] It is difficult to see how this is the case. The authors acknowledge, for example, that the right to food is captured in a variety of international agreements. It is guaranteed in the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; United Nations agencies have held "expert consultations on the right to food"; NGOs and CSOs created a Code of Conduct on the right to food; the UN Commission on Human Rights appointed a UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food; and Food and Agricultural Organization members have adopted voluntary guidelines for achieving the right to food.[25] Food sovereignty seeks to enshrine its values in similar international instruments and agreements. Windfuhr and Jonsén criticize the right to food framework for offering wronged individuals only "legal remedies to get their rights implemented,"[26] but food sovereignty appears also to call almost exclusively for similar legal remedies.

Food sovereignty's policy proposals are more sweeping, perhaps, than those associated with the right to food or food security. But Windfuhr and Jonsén does not explain how proponents of food sovereignty can implement such major change. They do not discuss how advocates can create "a reformed and strengthened United Nations," for example.[27] Neither do they explain how they can reform individual state governments. Windfuhr and Jonsén argue that governments must address rural marginalization, aid access to land and resources, fund rural areas, and employ rural people[28]—but they do not describe how citizens can ensure that their governments fulfill these obligations.

Windfuhr and Jonsén rightfully criticize the food security framework for neglecting individuals. Food sovereignty, however, relies heavily on international instruments and agreements, which would seem to contradict the framework's focus on "local autonomy."[29] Windfuhr and Jonsén acknowledge as much toward the end of their piece: "[A] potential conflict remains between the advantages of local control and sovereignty and the advantages of open-mindedness to new internationally controlled policies."[30] The authors seem confident that as food sovereignty develops, it can function on both a national and international level—but this tension suggests a real weakness in the concept.

Food sovereignty, Windfuhr and Jonsén say, sprang from non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. "[F]armers' organizations . . . fisherfolk, pastoralists, and indigenous peoples' organizations" originated the idea before scholars and international bodies

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24. *Id.* at 23.
25. *Id.* at 19-20.
26. *Id.* at 23.
27. *Id.* at 16.
28. *Id.* at 25-27.
29. *Id.* at 27.
30. *Id.* at 33.

took hold of it.[31] Food sovereignty would be enriched from a renewed focus on members of civil society. What is missing now in Windfuhr and Jonsén's otherwise rich discussion of food sovereignty is how individuals—from activists in wealthy nations to smallholder farmers in poor ones—can bring food sovereignty policies into existence. How can food sovereignty, better than the right to food or food security, ensure that rural people have access to food, means of production, and choices about how and what they eat? To answer this question, food sovereignty advocates should consider how they can effect change in the food and agricultural system at lower levels, rather than focusing exclusively on changing international institutions at the top.

31. *Id.* at 1.