

Afrique Verte International and Terre des Hommes France

support the women's groups
working to process cereals
and thus contribute to food security
and sovereignty in the Sahel



Definitions used in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security (1996)

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active life.

Food sovereignty is the peoples', Countries' or State Unions' right to define their agricultural and food policy. It includes:

- prioritizing local agricultural production in order to feed the people, and the access of peasants and landless people to land, water, seeds, and credit;
- the right of Countries to protect themselves from food imports sold under production cost;
- populations taking part in national agricultural policy choices;
- the recognition of the rights of women's groups which play a major role in agricultural production and processing to feed the population.

Food security seeks to meet the quantitative and qualitative needs of populations. **Food sovereignty** deems the social and environmental conditions of food production to be important. These two notions, however, cannot be dissociated **since food sovereignty can only be achieved once food security is already in places.**



Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are cereal producing countries (millet, sorghum, maize, rice, fonio...).

Apart from in the event of accidents (drought, floods, insects, pests...), agricultural production levels exceed national needs and ought to be sufficient to feed the entire population; however, the populations in semidesert zones are still in difficulty.

In the Sahel, food security is still precarious

Afrique Verte International :

supporting the cereal industry in the Sahel for 20 years now

In the Sahel, cereals account for 80 % of the necessary calories for daily life. But they tend to be sold untreated (on the ear or as grain) and this no longer meets the requirements of much of the urban population. Urbanisation is causing rapid changes in the Sahel and modifying the way people live, with women working outside the home. They no longer have the time to grind, wash and dry untreated cereals (at least 4 hours per day) so as to prepare the traditional meal. Consumers are therefore switching to imported, ready-to-use cereals (rice, couscous, pasta...) which only take 10 minutes to cook, despite the fact that they are more expensive and about 80 % of the population in these 3 countries live on less than US\$ 2 per day.

Food sovereignty is thus under threat as local supply cannot compete with the large-scale food industry even though the cereal industry is expanding rapidly.

Local cereals are essential to ensure food security and sovereignty for the Sahelian populations, but supply needs to adapt to changing needs...

In order to rise to this new challenge, Afrique Verte International supports over 150 micro-businesses, employing about 4,500 women, specialising in processing local cereals into ready-to-use foods (couscous, flours...) so as to:

Enable women to secure lasting employment in an expanding professional sector

“ Thanks to the support of Afrique Verte we are able to improve our management, marketing, and processing techniques so as to meet hygiene standards, and above all meet other processors who have shown us new recipes so as to diversify our range. The cereal exchanges mean we can increase our profile and sell our products to consumers who are insufficiently well-informed about these innovations. ”

Mrs Aïssa G., Cereal Processor
at Niamey, Niger.



To find out more about this issue, please don't hesitate to contact us as we have a large number of documents available for hire (videos, teaching kits, exhibitions...). For all information: www.afriqueverte.org

Provide consumers with a wide range of food products, whilst creating employment opportunities for small farmers, thus generating additional earnings for the entire sector

“ Because I work I no longer have enough time to prepare the traditional meal like women in the villages. So to gain time I buy imported semolina or spaghetti, but prices have gone up too much and I am glad to be able to easily find millet couscous mil or dégué in my local shops. And that way I know it benefits small farmers in Burkina, and I am proud to be able to help them...”

A consumer at Ouaga, Burkina.

Generate income that helps all the family, and so improve the status and autonomy of women in the Sahel

“ When you work yourself and are paid, you don't always have to go to your husband for unexpected expenditures. Now, if my child is ill I take him to the health centre, and pay for the transport, consultation, and medicine ... When we get back home in the evening we are proud to have shown that we can improve home life. We have all seen a financial improvement, but above all a moral improvement. We feel we have a greater role and people consider us differently...”

A MISOLA flour processor at Bamako, Mali.

MISOLA : made from locally produced millet, sorghum, and groundnuts enriched with mineral and vitamin complements, **the MISOLA flour** made by women's groups is especially suitable for under-5s, and women who are pregnant or breast-feeding. Afrique Verte is a partner of this project in the Sahel.



Support the women processing cereals who wish to invest to improve their future

“ We have been working with Afrique Verte for four years and have acquired a lot of new skills. But some problems still remain, and Afrique Verte can't sort them out on its own. For example, we still do a lot of work by hand but we know that mills, shellers, and driers exist which would help us to improve the quantity and quality of what we produce. That is why Afrique Verte puts us in touch with credit unions and helps us prepare our credit applications...”

Mrs Aïssa H., cereal processor at Niamey, Niger.

Terre des Hommes France : working to promote economic, social and cultural rights for 40 years (ESCR¹)

Terre des Hommes France works alongside and supports local partners in Africa, Latin America and Asia via training and support programmes.

These programmes encourage:

- the integration of populations into the local economy,
- their social integration,
- greater awareness of their rights.

The partners also work to:

- develop citizenship,
- federate social forces,
- develop an active civic society able to influence public policies.

In France Terre des Hommes works via local delegations and alliances with international solidarity organisations and unions to promote awareness and carry out advocacy operations.



¹ Health, education, employment, and food security and sovereignty rights...

All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated.²

A hungry society...

- deprives the population of essential needs,
- leads to deficiencies in terms of the health, education, wellbeing, and physical and intellectual capacities of men, women, and children, wherever they suffer from them.

The right of every person to a sufficient standard of living includes the right to adequate nourishment (in terms of quantity and quality and in accordance with their cultural habits), the right to have access to water, the right to suitable lodging, the right to health, the right to education...

Sahelian organisations have helped elaborate fairer agricultural and cereal policies by taking part in national and international networks, as illustrated by the ESCR platform in Mali, which is supported by Terre des Hommes.

Terre des Hommes France is convinced that Food security and sovereignty implies

- A responsibility of the State: the obligation to respect, protect and act to see the right to adequate food is fulfilled,
- Public policies to support grass-roots organisations,
- International economic agreements which respect the population's rights.



Terre des Hommes France and Afrique Verte share the conviction that in order to secure food security and sovereignty in the Sahel it is important to develop the production and consumption of local cereals.

Terre des Hommes France fully associates itself to this campaign to see that the necessary economic and political steps be taken to support women's groups working to process cereals.

² Declaration of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, 25 June 1993.

Afrique Verte International and Terre des Hommes France support women working to process cereals

- so that they can meet consumer demand,
- to improve their status thanks to the benefits of their activity being recognised,
- to provide a market for small national producers and to stimulate the local economy.

Afrique Verte International and Terre des Hommes France are jointly conducting this advocacy campaign to persuade French and European political decision-makers to respect the positions they have adopted: at the Rome FAO Summit in June 2008, the Heads of State and representatives of 180 countries unanimously undertook to “*eliminate hunger and secure food for all today and tomorrow.*”



Afrique Verte International and Terre des Hommes France

have observed a shortfall between this statement and the reality on the ground **even though solutions do exist...**

That is why, in order to ensure food security and sovereignty in the Sahel, we demand that the necessary political, economic, and social measures be taken to support women's groups working to process cereals.

We request that:

- the States encourage local credit structures **to improve access to credit** for the women working to process cereals so that they can invest and increase their production capacity,
- the States and development partners encourage the **creation of collective storage infrastructures** to conserve the quality of the cereals,
- the States **provide tax advantages for certain processing equipment** (mills, deshellers, driers...) so as to improve food production,
- the States **reduce VAT on processed products**, bringing them into line with unprocessed cereal which is not taxed,
- the States **revise the fees of analysis laboratories** and ensure the availability of food packaging which meets applicable standards so as to ensure consumer safety.





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