

# Agroecology in Action

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ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

Stories from the continent

Vol.1 Issue No.005

01 - 07 SEPTEMBER 2025

FREE ISSUE

## STORIES COMING UP



Nigeria National Assembly Suspends Approvals of GMOs Amid Public Concern



Story of Change: Empowering Tanzanian Farmers through the Healthy Soil Healthy Food Initiative.

## FROM THE EDITOR

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a revolution is unfolding, led not by international actors, but by local champions of food sovereignty. This article tells the story of how CNPAF-RDC, through tireless research and advocacy, helped craft a national bill that places nutrition, traditional food systems, and community resilience at the heart of public policy. Far from being a technical or bureaucratic exercise, this legislative effort is a powerful act of social justice, cultural preservation and self-determination. It shows that when civil society is empowered, and when government listens, transformative change becomes possible, from the ground up. As part of AFSA's My Food is African campaign, this story affirms that protecting indigenous foods is not just about heritage; it is about health, dignity, and the future of our food systems.

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# DR Congo: Food Sovereignty through a Bill

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In 2024, a quiet but powerful political revolution began in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Faced with growing public health concerns, increasing pressure on food systems, and the cultural erosion of traditional foods, an organization committed itself to promoting food sovereignty, sustainability, and nutrition.

Following persistent advocacy based on research and the government's commitment, Comité national pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture familiale en République démocratique du Congo (CNPAF-RDC) has quickly made a name for itself in the promotion of food sovereignty. It played a central and crucial role in drafting a bill on nutrition and food security, marking a major step towards transforming the way the State governs food systems.

This legislative process marks a historic milestone in the DRC's path toward food security and sovereignty. It calls for legal protection of indigenous foods and for the improvement of safety standards for consumers across the country.

### THE LEGISLATIVE TRIGGER AFTER THE EVALUATION

CNPAF-RDC's work began with a thorough review of the existing nutrition and food safety regulations. It conducted a study on "the state of laws relating to food security and nutrition and their application in the DRC", highlighting the main weaknesses of the texts. This report revealed gaps in protecting of local food systems, regulating processed foods and the absence of clear national nutrition guidelines.

Armed with this evidence, CNPAF-RDC presented its findings to civil society actors active in the area of agriculture as well as to government. This is done through official letters, consultative meetings and continued advocacy. CNPAF-RDC recommended a national legal framework that prioritizes both food security and nutrition, with special attention to local and traditional food systems.

In response, the government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, accelerated the process of amending and adopting a new national bill on food security and



nutrition in parliament. "This was a moment of validation for our movement," said a CNPAF-RDC official. "Our work did not just remain on paper, it influenced real government action."

### WHAT THE BILL RECOMMENDS

The DRC's food system is complex and rich, with diverse crops, culinary traditions and farming practices. However, just like many African countries, the DRC faces rising challenges relating to the importation of

processed foods, unsafe food handling and nutrition-related diseases.

For this reason, the bill addresses a number of important issues. These include: establishing national nutrition guidelines to promote nutrient-rich local foods; setting clear food and nutrition safety standards to protect consumers from contamination and substandard food products; legally recognize and protect local and traditional foods and food systems as part of the DRC's cultural and ecological

heritage; promote education and awareness raising about healthy eating in schools, markets, and through the media; and ensure that small-scale food producers and local vendors are supported, not criminalized, under new food safety regulations.

For CNPAF-RDC, these reforms are not just about the law, but they are also about dignity, justice and sustainability. "Food is a human right, but it must also be safe, culturally appropriate and accessible," said CNPAF-RDC Technical



Secretary. "This bill helps to ensure that the Congolese people can feed themselves with confidence, pride and security," he added.

#### "MY FOOD IS AFRICAN"

The bill is a direct result of CNPAF-RDC's participation in the "My food is African" campaign, an African initiative led by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA). In DRC, CNPAF-RDC has been one of the champions of this campaign, working to revive local food traditions, promote agroecology and reshape food policies through grassroots mobilization.

As part of this campaign, CNPAF-RDC has organized community dialogues, media engagements and awareness-raising programs in schools, two editions of the Festival of Traditional and Local Foods (FESTAL) in 2023 and 2024 (FESTAL) to highlight the role of indigenous food in nutrition and cultural preservation. The bill now provides a legal basis for these activities, giving the campaign greater political weight and a medium-to-long-term impact.

"This is what food sovereignty looks like," said a regional AFSA representative. "Communities generate solutions, supported by strong institutions and backed by national legislation."

#### NEXT STEPS?

With the draft law complete, CNPAF-RDC is now working with the government stakeholders to guide it through the legislative process. Consultations with parliamentarians, ministry officials and civil society organizations are ongoing to ensure that the bill's provisions are inclusive, achievable and enforceable.

In addition, CNPAF-RDC is preparing awareness-raising materials and public forums to sensitize the citizens about the bill and the impact it will have on their lives. Plans are also underway to launch a nutrition education campaign through the media and in schools throughout 2025.

In a country where food is central to identity, health and survival, the creation of a national nutrition and food security bill is more than a political victory, it's an act of transformation.

Through its leadership, CNPAF-RDC has demonstrated the power of civil society to shape national agendas, ensure legal recognition of traditional knowledge and defend the rights of farmers, consumers and future generations.

If it adopts this historic legislation, the DRC will be planting the seeds of a safer, healthier and more sovereign food future; proof that food must be equitably accessed and protected by law.

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