



ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA



KNOW AGROECOLOGY

A media guide for journalists and
communicators in Africa



KNOW AGROECOLOGY

A media guide for journalists and communicators in Africa



Citation

AFSA (2018): Know Agroecology: A media guide for journalists and communicators in Africa. Kampala, Uganda.



Acknowledgements

AFSA is grateful to Mr. Charles Odongtho and Mr. Patrick Luganda for their efforts in writing this guide and to Ms. Bridget Mugambe for her additional contributions. Further acknowledgements go to the partners, members and journalists whose ideas and contributions have enriched this guide. AFSA expresses thanks to the Marin Community Foundation for their financial support.



Published by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa

AFSA brings together small-scale food producers, pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, farmers' networks, faith groups, consumer associations, youth associations, civil societies and activists from across the continent of Africa to create a united and louder voice for food sovereignty.

www.afsafrica.org

ISBN 978-9970-595-12-9



9 789970 595129

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK	2
KEY TERMINOLOGIES.....	4
Agroecology	4
The 10 Elements of Agroecology.....	6
Food Sovereignty.....	7
Seed Sovereignty.....	9
Industrial Agriculture.....	9
Genetic Engineering	10
Local and Indigenous Knowledge	11
WHY AGROECOLOGY SHOULD MATTER TO EVERY JOURNALIST AND EVERY MEDIA OUTLET?..	12
TOOLS FOR JOURNALISTS, REPORTERS & MEDIA OWNERS	14
TIPS	14
Tip 1: How to find stories to report.....	14
Tip 2: Some journalism terms you should master	16
Tip 3: The Five W's and H	16
Tip 4: Some Do's and Don'ts of Reporting on Agroecology	17
Tip 5: Story Development.....	18
Tip 6: Using Data	20
Tip 7: Opportunities Available for Agroecology Reporters or Writers	20
Questions to Ask	21
MEDIA TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATORS.....	23
Tool 1: Press Release	23
Tool 2: Press Conferences	25
Tool 3: Opinion Pieces	26
ABOUT AFSA	27
AFSA'S THEORY OF CHANGE.....	28
REFERENCES	29
Annex 1: Sample Press Release	30

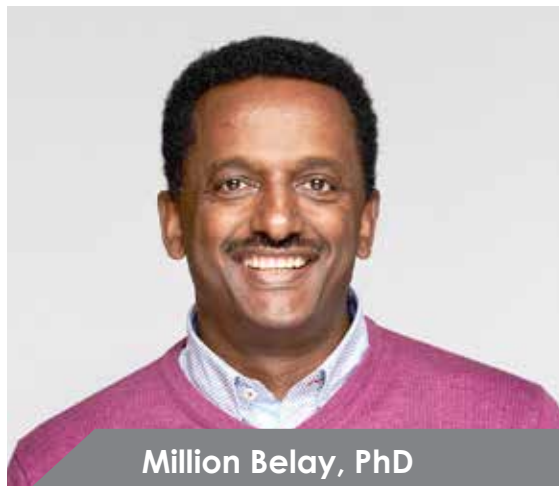
Foreword

In AFSA we recognise that lack of information is not the most pressing problem for the food sovereignty movement but rather the disconnect in sharing that information with communicators and journalists. The media is a major force in disseminating information and shaping public opinion, and we recognise the urgent need to close the gap between African media and African public, governments, civil society and other actors working on food systems.

When properly harnessed, the media is a power that can elevate the food sovereignty agenda to the policy makers' tables. There are some efforts by civil society in Africa to develop guides and training materials, however these are mostly tailored to national level advocacy efforts. These communication gaps have not been properly addressed by African civil society at the continental level.

In developing this guide, AFSA recognises that one of the key ingredients for influencing policy is communication, both by agroecology communicators and journalists. The process of developing the guide, therefore, involved a workshop where 25 journalists and 15 agroecology communicators from different parts of the continent participated and shared views. Some of AFSA's partners have also commented on the guide. The process has been participatory and enriched by different views across the board.

It is my view that a disempowered and uninformed journalist cannot play a serious role of empowering his or her audience. We also recognize that the task of the journalist is a complex one to explain to the ordinary person what food sovereignty means, linking health and nutrition with agriculture, informing people about laws



Million Belay, PhD

and policies relating to food and seeds, and educating people about the growing agroecology movement.

This media guide is meant to rally to action communicators, journalists and media houses in Africa to take a closer look into their role and functions in relation to agroecology.

The guide is by no means a recipe. Information on agroecology and food sovereignty is ever changing and dynamic. African farmers have been doing agriculture for thousands of years and they have rich and deep knowledge about food systems. Journalists need to go out and harvest information on the food systems dynamics and educate the African and global society about the diversity and richness of food in Africa.

It is our hope that this media guide will contribute towards empowering communicators and journalists in Africa especially those working with the local media, to get inspired and encouraged to talk about and report on Food Sovereignty through Agroecology in Africa.

AFSA Coordinator

About this Guidebook

Along with the benefits to journalists and communicators, this guidebook is also useful to development enthusiasts, activists, farmer extension, civil society groups, youth associations, consumer associations and government officials. It aims at helping those who are amplifying the transition to Agroecology in Africa.

There is a recognition that some of the information in this guide may be obvious to some journalists and communicators. However, the intention is not to have experienced journalists on one side and upcoming journalists on another side and equally have communicators on another side. The intention is to look at

communication from a holistic angle and share information in the same spirit.

The guidebook explains the key terms and concepts, and shares the concerns of various stakeholders towards the transition to Agroecology.

It focuses on critical issues of Agroecology such as food and seed sovereignty, nutrition, biodiversity, industrialized agriculture, threats to livelihoods, and land rights, and equips the reader with tools of practice in reporting and communicating on Agroecology. The guidebook also gives tips on basic media reporting, and provides useful tools for communicators.



Key Terminologies

Africa has witnessed various food crises. This is as a result of diverse factors. However, the increasing globalization of industrial agriculture is posing both threats and gains. The attention given to export crops, lately genetically engineered crops, and the rapid expansion of commodity crop farming for animal feed, biofuel and fibre (e.g. sugar cane, maize, soybean, oil palm, eucalyptus) is increasingly reshaping the world's agriculture and food supply, with potentially severe economic, social, and ecological impacts and risks.

In the face of such global trends, the concepts of food sovereignty and ecologically based production systems have gained much attention in the last two decades. New approaches and technologies involving the application of blended modern agroecological science and indigenous knowledge systems spearheaded by thousands of farmers, NGOs, and some government and academic institutions have been shown to enhance food security while conserving natural resources, biodiversity, and soil and water throughout hundreds of rural communities across the continent.

Agroecology

Agroecology is a concept used in multiple ways to show how agriculture does not exist as an isolated entity but as part of an ecology of contexts. It makes a strong connection between culture and food production practices in Africa. It is an integrative discipline that recognises the relationship between plants, animals, humans and the environment within agricultural systems – the ecology of food systems. It has been described as a science, a practice, and a social movement.

Agroecology refers to farming systems that work in harmony with nature, using cultivation techniques and breeding programmes that do not rely on chemical fertilisers, pesticides, or artificial genetic modifications. It builds on traditional agricultural practices using research, technology and existing indigenous knowledge, while at the same time ensuring that it is farmers that are in control of all aspects of food production. Using ecological agriculture, farmers produce abundant, healthy food sustainably.

Agroecology assesses how, when, if and what technology can be used in conjunction with natural, social and human assets. In many ways, agroecology is the antithesis of current conventional, corporate driven monoculture based agriculture systems. Where conventional agriculture seeks to simplify agroecology embraces complexity. It recognizes the importance of changing the current policies to bring about a better and structured food system.

Scaling up Agroecology

Transitioning to agroecology requires the transformation of agriculture systems, rather than just the spreading of a set of techniques for food production. The 2018 UN FAO Agroecology Symposium in Rome called for urgent change. The Chair's Summary concluded that "It is time to scale up agroecology now," and noted that the focus on increasing yields promoted by the Green Revolution is viewed by many as not sustainable and not sufficient to eradicate hunger and poverty, or to face the challenges of natural resources exhaustion,

environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, and the need to adapt to climate change. The document set out the following key actions for scaling up agroecology:

- Strengthening the central role of family farmers and their organizations in safeguarding, utilizing and accessing natural resources.
- Fostering experience and knowledge sharing, collaborative research and innovations
- Promoting markets for agroecological based products for health, nutrition and sustainability
- Reviewing institutional, policy, legal and financial frameworks to promote agroecological transitions for sustainable food systems.
- Taking agroecology to scale through integrated and participatory territorial processes.

Linking Agroecology to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The FAO notes that in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the SDGs) there is an urgent need to promote transformative change in how food is grown, produced, processed, transported, distributed and consumed. FAO states that 'Agroecology is seen by many to offer multiple benefits, including for increasing food security and resilience, boosting livelihoods and local economies, diversifying food production and diets, promoting health and nutrition, safeguarding natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystem functions, improving soil

fertility and soil health, adapting to and mitigating climate change, contributing to women's empowerment, and preserving local cultures and traditional knowledge systems, often in synergy with organic agriculture.'

Research done by AFSA in Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Mali, Uganda, and Zimbabwe show that with agroecology and the right focus and support, communities can revive their soils and lands, cultivate relevant crops, improve livelihoods, enhance nutrition and deal with the challenges of climate change among others. The case studies show that agroecology contributes directly and positively to 10 of the 17 SDGs. The media can utilize this available and irrefutable evidence to counter the mechanical, monocultural and ecologically destructive and exploitative model of industrial agriculture.



The 10 Elements of Agroecology

These elements guide the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems.

- **Diversity.** Diversification is key to agroecological transitions to ensure food security and nutrition while conserving, protecting and enhancing natural resources.
- **Co-Creation and Sharing of Knowledge.** Agricultural innovations respond better to local challenges when they are co-created through participatory processes. Agroecology depends on context-specific knowledge. It does not offer fixed prescriptions – rather, agroecological practices are tailored to fit the environmental, social, economic, cultural and political context.
- **Synergies.** Building synergies enhances key functions across food systems, supporting production and multiple ecosystem services.
- **Efficiency.** Innovative agroecological practices produce more using less external resources.
- **Recycling.** More recycling means agricultural production with lower economic and environmental costs.
- **Resilience.** Enhanced resilience of people, communities and ecosystems is key to sustainable food and agricultural systems.
- **Human and Social Values.** Protecting and improving rural livelihoods, equity and social well-being is essential for sustainable food and agricultural systems.
- **Cultural and Food Traditions.** By supporting healthy, diversified and culturally appropriate diets, agroecology contributes to food security and nutrition while maintaining the health of ecosystems.
- **Responsible Governance.** Sustainable food and agriculture requires responsible and effective governance mechanisms at different scales – from local to national to global.
- **Circular and Solidarity Economy.** Circular and Solidarity economies that reconnect producers and consumers provide innovative solutions for living within our planetary boundaries while ensuring the social foundation for inclusive and sustainable development.

For more information on agroecology:

1. UN Food and Agriculture Organization: <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/en/>
2. AgroEcology Fund: <https://www.agroecologyfund.org/what-is-agroecology/>
3. Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa: <http://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Agroecology-the-bold-future-of-farming-in-Africa-ebook1.pdf>

Food Sovereignty

The concept of food sovereignty was first brought to the international policy scene by La Via Campesina at the 1996 World Food Summit. They offered a set of mutually supportive principles that provide an alternative to neoliberal policies and at the same time recognise the right to food.

Food sovereignty includes the rights of peoples, communities and countries to define their own policies for agriculture, fisheries, consumers and trade of food,

as long as these policies are ecological, sustainable, contribute to social justice and do not restrict the possibility for others to do the same. It also questions what is produced, how it is produced and who produces it. It means the ability to regain self-reliance and assert one's food independence by exercising a right to choose what to grow and how to grow it. When communities achieve food sovereignty, they achieve food security, better livelihoods, better nutrition and a better standard of living.



Seven Principles of Food Sovereignty

1. Food: A Basic Human Right – Everyone must have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity.
2. Agrarian Reform – A genuine agrarian reform is necessary which gives landless and farming people – especially women – ownership and control of the land they work and returns territories to indigenous peoples.
3. Protecting Natural Resources – Food Sovereignty entails the sustainable care and use of natural resources, especially land, water, and seeds and livestock breeds.
4. Reorganizing Food Trade – Food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade. National agricultural policies must prioritize production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency.
5. Ending the Globalization of Hunger – Food Sovereignty is undermined by multilateral institutions and by speculative capital. The growing control of multinational corporations over agricultural policies has been facilitated by the economic policies of multilateral organizations such as the WTO, World Bank and the IMF.
6. Social Peace – Everyone has the right to be free from violence. Food must not be used as a weapon. The ongoing displacement, forced urbanization, repression and increasing incidence of racism of smallholder farmers cannot be tolerated.
7. Democratic Control – Smallholder farmers must have direct input into formulating agricultural policies at all levels. The United Nations and related organizations will have to undergo a process of democratization to enable this to become a reality.

(Source: La Via Campesina, www.viacampesina.org)

Africa has the potential to feed itself because it has all the resources required to produce sufficient food. These include fertile soils, a climate that favours agriculture all year round and a wide range of indigenous seeds. However, this potential is under threat from commercial and industrialized farming. They should be countered by African solutions. This is why food sovereignty is important.

For more information on food sovereignty:

- La Via Campesina: <https://viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty/>
- Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa: <https://afsafrica.org>
- The Journal of Peasant Studies: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03066150903143079>

Seed Sovereignty

Farmers' Diverse Seeds - the basis of Africa's food

Most Africans' food is produced locally and, as recent research confirms, about 90% of farmers who provide this food use locally-adapted seeds from "informal" Farmer-Managed Seed Systems (FMSS). Most seeds come from farmers' own stocks of saved seed, from neighbours, and from local markets. This seed is the basis of, and is regenerated by, agroecological production. Skilful farmers, through careful selection, enhance their seeds so that they can adapt to changing conditions – skills that should be shared across the continent. This is the seed system that ensures food sovereignty and secures our future food supplies. To attain seed sovereignty, farmers must retain control over their seeds and their right to free exchange, saving and reuse of seed, devoid of patents or control by private interests such as corporate seed companies. Seed sovereignty reclaims the rights over seeds – collective rights which are often oral and established and respected within different communities.

For more information on seed sovereignty:

- African Centre for Biodiversity: <http://www.acbio.org.za/en/seed-laws-policies>
- Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa: <https://afsafrica.org/francais-afsa-seed-policy-report-resisting-corporate-takeover-of-african-seed-systems-and-building-farmer-managed-seed-systems-for-food-sovereignty-in-africa/>
- Grain: <https://www.grain.org>

Industrial Agriculture

Many African leaders are embracing an expansion of industrialised agriculture which incorporates the increased use of monocropping (growing single crops intensively on a very large scale), synthetic fertilizers, chemical pesticides, hybrid and genetically engineered seeds. The industrial agriculture model focuses on increasing production at all costs. It is driven by the notion of a hungry population that needs to be fed through increased production, without consideration of other factors surrounding food production such as social, cultural, environmental and economic concerns among others.



Industrial Agriculture significantly contributes to climate change with harmful and disruptive consequences as opposed to agroecology which contributes to dealing with the challenges and effects of climate change.

For more information on industrial agriculture:

- Centre for Ecoliteracy: <https://www.ecoliteracy.org>
- New World Encyclopedia: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Industrial_agriculture
- Union of Concerned Scientists: <https://www.ucsusa.org/our-work/food-agriculture/our-failing-food-system/industrial-agriculture#.W2g5hS2Q06g>
- Global Agriculture: <https://www.globalagriculture.org/report-topics/industrial-agriculture-and-small-scale-farming.html>

Genetic Engineering

Genetic Engineering involves the deliberate modification of characteristics or genetic material of an organism. The two most common applications of genetic engineering in agriculture are for crops that are designed to be herbicide tolerant and insect resistant. Other genetic modifications that are coming up are targeting other objectives such as drought tolerance and enhanced nutrition value through 'bio-fortification'. The second generation of genetic engineering is moving away from transgenic modification (combining genetic traits from different species) towards gene editing and gene silencing (interfering with the genetic make up of one target species). The latest genetic engineering trend is what are called gene drives, where modifications are made to organisms, e.g. mosquitoes, which are then released to infect other



members with infertility or extinction traits so as to kill the entire species. New technologies are also emerging to create new organisms using synthetic biology.

From the onset GMOs or genetically engineered crops have been surrounded by much controversy especially regarding food safety, health risks, environmental damage, and the weakening of farmers' rights to seed through patents, among others.

For more information on genetic engineering:

- African Centre for Biodiversity: <http://www.acbio.org.za/en/gmos>
- No scientific consensus on GMOs: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12302-014-0034-1>
- Latest news on GMOs: <https://www.gmwatch.org/en/>
- World Health Organisation: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-technology/faq-genetically-modified-food/en/

Local and Indigenous Knowledge

“Traditional knowledge has become ‘common sense’ to the people indigenous to these localities. Local knowledge is accepted by the indigenes as valid knowledge that addresses their well-being issues in the context of their cosmovision.”

Bernard Y Guri, Executive Director, Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD).

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality. These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world's cultural diversity, and provide a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development.

For more information on local and indigenous knowledge:

- Institute of Development Studies: <https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Howeschambers10.2.pdf>



Why Agroecology should matter to every

Africa is experiencing increasing expansion of industrialization in areas of food systems, agriculture and manufacturing and it is directly affecting food sovereignty, biodiversity and ecology. These trends directly threaten indigenous people on the continent, their food and survival. Agroecology comes in as a better option for adaptation and mitigation because among other benefits it contributes to better nutrition, health and preservation of the environment.

Amidst all this, there is less understanding of the principles and practices of Agroecology. Many journalists on the continent have not appreciated the role of Agroecology and its contribution to sustainable development and food sovereignty. And yet they have a big task to explain the complex subject and its benefit to their wider audiences. Journalists in Africa need to pay more attention to Agroecology by first of all appreciating that it is about our own indigenous knowledge and practices that involve working sustainably with our environment.

They need to appreciate that Agroecology is a way of life, a struggle and resistance against the excesses of capitalism, and recognize that Agroecology is the basis for sustainable agriculture, food sovereignty – a guarantee of care and protection of Mother Earth.

Journalists operating in Africa need to challenge themselves to positively report about Africa and to know that their audiences desire to have information and knowledge as well as answers to unending questions about Agroecology.

Many journalists and media houses are urbanised and hence might not appreciate the basics of agriculture. Popular literature from western countries is also more biased towards promoting modernization of agriculture, monocultures and industrial agriculture as the solution. Many journalists are hence either not aware or do not believe that small-scale farmers feed the continent.

The other common challenge is that even for the few journalists who may write about Agroecology, their editors may spike the story in favour of the corporate agenda.

There is need therefore to critically train journalists and communicators on agroecological practices and principles. They need to be helped to appreciate the different concepts and to know that the best way to report on complex subjects is through evidence-based reporting. Often journalists may find it easier to report on technology related development as opposed to development that is deeply embedded in indigenous knowledge systems. Journalists should apply investigative skills and scientific facts to get audience attention.

There is also need to change the way journalists perceive and report about agroecology by simplifying the knowledge and benefits of agroecology compared to industrial agriculture.

The global burden of malnutrition is being carried by Africa. This has caused severe social-economic and political consequences with all population groups affected. Faced with these challenges, agroecology can make a difference in reforming food systems for better

journalist and every media outlet?

“Many journalists on the continent have not appreciated the role of Agroecology and its contribution to sustainable development and food sovereignty. And yet they have a big task to explain the complex subject and its benefit to their wider audiences.



nutrition and health. When agroecology is amplified at small farmer level, there is food security, dietary diversity and better nutrition. Therefore, the media through their reporting can help in promoting agroecological interventions that are affordable and help communities fight malnutrition and ill health.

Internationally, journalists can amplify positive African stories to global audiences to help encourage the rich and powerful countries, their citizens and multinational companies to act in solidarity with the communities of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, hunter gatherers and fisher folk that feed the continent.

On the other hand, agroecology contributes to climate change adaptation

and mitigation. Analysts predict that climate change is not going away soon, and that it will get worse before it gets better. To mitigate some of its effects, everyone will need to know more about climate change. The way the media covers it will affect how well societies deal with the problem. African journalists will become increasingly important to the global response to climate change.

As climate change takes hold, people will demand information about what is happening and what they and their governments can do about it. There is evidence that Agroecology can deal with the challenges of climate change. Journalists should therefore interest themselves in seeking out this information.

Tools for Journalists, Reporters & Media Owners

Journalists' Lens

Journalists ideally target three main things:

- Informing
- Educating
- Entertaining

They should however also act as agenda setters for public debate, as watchdogs and campaigners for social issues.



Story Ideas on Agroecology

Journalist can pitch to their editors by picking one or more of these story ideas which are all linked to Agroecology.

- Consumer rights
- Farmers' rights
- Community land rights
- Seed sovereignty
- Climate change
- Soils, forests
- Sustainable Development Goals
- International commitment to national development



Tip 1: How to find stories to report

Follow the money

Agroecology is a development issue. A lot of funds have been committed towards these development issues. Follow the money and you will find all the elements of a good story.

You can develop a story by asking yourself the following pertinent questions:

- Where is that money for agroecology?
- Where is it happening?
- Who controls it? Who spends it? Who makes sure it does what it is meant to do? Who funds the NGOs, governments and the politicians?
- Which companies stand to profit from action to address agroecology?

- Which stand to lose?
- Are donors and rich countries keeping their promises towards agroecology?
- Are funds committed? Are they really 'new' or additional and not from existing aid budgets.
- What government commitment and budget allocations are there?

Localize the global

There are thousands of publications, findings, demands and issues made every day. As a journalist, you can find a way of localizing them to your own context and audiences.

Wear Agroecology glasses and report from new angles

Use your agroecology glasses and identify



new issues, policies, invention, new things and ask yourself: How could X affect agroecology? How could agroecology affect X? By doing this, you will find many angles to report from, such as export, health, youth, women, culture, religion, politics, etc.

Keep on top by following

You can keep on top of the agroecology story by reading work of other media outlets that are covering it well. Use all relevant media tools e.g. social media, YouTube, etc. You can connect with other reporters who are familiar with the topics.

Join discussion platforms e.g. mailing lists

Find how to connect to others such as experts, specialists, commentators, award winners of agricultural reporting,

environment reporting or agroecology reporting.

Read journals

Journalists can read journals on agroecology and can keep track by subscribing.

Get connected

A journalist should get as many sources as possible. The good news with Agroecology is that it is directly related to human development. You can build large contact lists from various sectors. Some of the best sources will not be from organizations but from the general public – such as farmers, pastoralists, fisher folk and small business owners.

Tip 2: Some journalism terms you should master

1. **Lead:** The first sentence of a hard-news story is a succinct summary of the story's main point.
2. **Inverted Pyramid:** The model used to describe how a news story is structured. It means the most important news goes at the top of the story, and the lightest, or least important, goes at the bottom. The inverted pyramid is the model for writing news. It simply means that the heaviest or most important information should be at the top – the beginning – of your story, and the least important information should go at the bottom. And as you move from top to bottom, the information presented should gradually become less important.



3. **Copy:** The content of a news article.
4. **Beat:** To cover a particular area or topic, such as cops, courts or city council.
5. **Byline:** The name of a news story's author, usually placed at the beginning of the article.
6. **Dateline:** The city or town or village from which a news story originates, usually placed at the beginning of the story.
7. **Source:** Anyone you interview for a news story.

8. **Anonymous Source:** A source who does not want to be identified in a news story.
9. **Attribute:** To tell readers where the information in a news story comes from.

Tip 3: The Five W's and H

All stories must cover certain key questions which are often called the 5 Ws and H.

These are:

- **Who** – Who was involved in the story?
- **What** – What happened that was important or interesting in the story?
- **Where** – Where did the story happen?
- **When** – When did the story happen?
- **Why** – Why did the story happen?
- **How** – How did the story happen?

For Agroecology reporting, below are some W's and H:

- Who is affected by agriculture policies?
- What is the nature of food sovereignty?
- What could happen if there is no food sovereignty?
- What is the current situation with agroecology?
- What is the evidence for this situation?
- Where is the evidence
- When is it happening?
- Why are farmers concerned with the current situation?
- How did the policy on seeds fail?
- What do the various stakeholder say

farmers, advocates, policy makers... say?

- What can be done?

Tip 4: Some Do's and Don'ts of Reporting on Agroecology

1. In your stories, avoid using technical terms that readers or a listener may not quickly understand or relate with. Try as much as possible to get a common term to use in your report so you are easily understood. Remember that as a journalist one of your roles is also to break down complex subjects and details for your audiences. Don't bombard your readers or listeners with too much technical jargon.
2. Through your reporting, do hold Government officials accountable to the public for the laws and policies they make regarding food sovereignty and agroecology issues.
3. Ensure that by your reporting you help the media and other stakeholders to



monitor their government's progress towards achieving stated goals.

4. Avoid using unexplained percentages or figures that are not contextualized in your stories.
5. The media have an important role to play in raising awareness about the benefits of agroecology and its potential contribution towards national development and sustaining the environment. In this respect, it is advisable to approach the subject from a purely development journalism perspective.
6. Always respect request for anonymity by sources with information that they are willing to pass to you as a journalist. Don't betray the trust and confidence of the sources so they always share with you useful information in their hands. You need such sources to sustain coverage of the subject.
7. Where possible, highlight the role women and the youth can play in the preservation of our environment through their close relationship with land and the environment generally.
8. Always be sensitive as a journalist to stereotypes and stigma regarding the subject of agroecology and avoid using them in your reports. Stereotypes and stigma generally used in your report can potentially bias the minds of our media audiences and lead to distraction from the main message, for example, 'Agroecology is a backward model of food production.'

Tip 5: Story Development

While developing a story, it is important to consider the following:

Gathering information

Prepare to explore in different directions. A journalist collects information in three ways: direct observation, interviewing and research.

Identify the central question

Attempt to answer it, or find answers given by different individuals or groups who are connected with the issue or the topic you are reporting on. Decide who you need to speak to i.e. eyewitnesses, involved parties and/or experts, e.g. agroecologists, climate change activists, nutritionists, economists, government officials, etc.

Decide on your own what story you want to write, not the editor.

Make the story your own by:

- Adding informative, insightful, colourful details and descriptions
- Choose which data to include e.g. statistics
- Do not copy the language of a report or press release. Write in a simplified manner as to inform your local audience.
- Write in simple language so your readers understand.
- Create insights on how the information affects their lives.

Obtain a report, press release or any reference materials

Pick out relevant information you can use e.g. dates, statistics, quotes, explanations, imagery, etc.

Put the story into context. Ask yourself the following questions:

Is this happening anywhere else? What effect is this having on other sectors (such as tourism, trade, health, and agriculture)? Has this ever happened before? What are the trends?

Journalists need to develop human interest stories that are informative, using different angles to empower communities.

Piecing the story together

Often journalists state that the hardest thing about reporting is deciding how and where to start.

Journalist should do the following:

Get a lead. If the lead is interesting, it will attract more readership.

- After getting the lead, organize the story. Understand your intended audience and decide which information to use and what information should be left out.
- Know how to end the story. Find a right ending or 'kicker' such as a call to action.

What makes a story newsworthy?

Newsworthy refers to the level of relevance that defines a story to be published.

Journalists, reporters, editors, media owners and various communicators can have varied perceptions and knowledge about a news story.

The editor's viewpoint influences a lot what story to publish, and this has diverse effect on public opinion. There are yardsticks that are used by editors to select worthiness of news or story.

These yardsticks are:

- **Timeliness:** New things, good news, updates, old discarded news
- **Significance:** Number of people affected by story
- **Prominence:** How famous is the story? Who is a prominent person involved?
- **Proximity** (locality): how close to communities / country the story is.
- **Human interest:** How it appeals to emotion; evokes response; calls for action, amusement, sadness; offbeat; interesting; feel-good note, etc.
- **Consequence or impact**

Choosing between Hard vs. Soft News

When reporting about agroecology, journalists can choose between hard and soft news.

Hard news is current events that should be reported immediately.

The lead tells the readers what the story is about, and includes the most important elements of that story. Good leads grab the attention of readers and encourage them to read the rest of the story. The lead is usually just one sentence.

Soft news is about features or general trends.

Features are intended to inform readers and make them care more deeply about a situation or an issue like climate change and its impact on agricultural production. Features are about human interest topics and explain more in depth than hard news stories. To report a feature, a reporter may have to spend days doing interviews, including phone calls, leg work and research.



Tip 6: Using Data

Journalists can do more than just present data. You can use it as a research tool. It can reveal the trends that can support the conclusions included in articles. Finding outliers - extreme or atypical occurrences - in data can be the start of an investigation.

Why is this data different from the norm? Finding that answer of itself is a story.

The other major use of data is visualization. Turning data into a map or an infographic can help you narrate a story in a visual way. This approach requires some design skills and planning and it is advisable to review previous examples and tutorials found in this book and elsewhere if you are going to make your own visualizations. You can also build or learn basics of Data Journalism.

Tip 7: Opportunities Available for Agroecology Reporters or Writers

There are several reciprocal opportunities and professional benefits out in the market for journalists who undertake reporting on Agroecology. These include:

- (a) Specialized focus on reporting sustainable agriculture and traditional farming methods is a very popular area for media awards locally, regionally and internationally. Journalists should take advantage of this.
- (b) Advocates for Agroecology, such as AFSA, can establish regional or continental media awards to encourage more robust and content driven reporting on agroecology.
- (c) Training opportunities are available on subjects closely related with agroecology reporting.
- (d) Journalists who report on agriculture have a huge potential to travel and get exposed in the region as well as at international conferences to share their experiences. This is an opportunity worth pursuing by every journalist.
- (e) Immense opportunities also exist in the areas of research for new knowledge around agroecology reporting with the availability of IT tools and software applications such as those offered by social media networks, e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc.
- (f) There is a multiplicity of regional and international organizations looking out for journalists with a potential and passion for agriculture reporting so they can engage them in more media works and advocacy. Reporting on agroecology offers an easy access to such openings.
- (g) Journalists who develop interest and passion for agroecology also have an opportunity to share their stories on several platforms internationally such as on blogs, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp. Such publications when well done have a potential of exposing a journalist to funding and exposure to better opportunities around the world.

Questions to Ask

The journalist should clearly know what his/her story is about, by reviewing and asking the following questions:

Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is everything in your article absolutely accurate? • Are the sources you use reliable and credible? • Is every quote accurate and in the proper context? • When you ask questions, make sure you understand the answers. • Double check dates, names, titles, location spellings, etc. • Be sure numbers add up and the math is right. • Ask yourself: Will the reader believe this story? Can the reader trust me?
Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No story has only one side – have you considered all sides? This is one of the hardest things to be totally aware of and self-check on. We all have our own prejudices, but your opinion has no part on the story – leave it out! Treat all sides fairly. • Ask yourself: Will the reader trust me? Will the reader think I am biased?
Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for the drama. Where is the conflict? Create energy in a story. • Always write with an active voice. • Ask yourself: Will the reader care?
Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this matter now? Old news is no news. The story must be current or be important enough to report now - not about something that may have happened six months ago and is no longer important. • Ask yourself: Am I saying something new?
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first paragraph is the lead –and it has to catch the reader's attention, so they will read on. You do not want the reader to think "So what?" • Ask yourself: Will the reader be interested and engaged? Will the reader want to read to the end?
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your article make sense? Can it be easily read and followed? Is it confusing? • Do the important elements come first? Does it have a focus and a clear reasoning? • Ask yourself: Will the reader find this easy to follow? Will it be interesting for them until the end?
Quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I quoted people correctly? Have I got enough quotes? Have I chosen the right quotes? Are they interesting? Is there enough variety in the people I have quoted? • Are both sides represented fairly? Have I put the quotes in the right punctuation? • Ask yourself: Will the reader hear all sides? Will the reader know that certain statements are quotes?

Detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there enough detail? Has a picture been painted? Is there a sense of smell, touch, taste, atmosphere, colour, shape? Are general statements supported by specific numbers and facts? Statistics? Have I made it clear what I am trying to say? • Is my central hypothesis totally clear? • Ask yourself: Will the reader be able to picture the event? Is there enough information for the reader to understand the issue?
Back-ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate background. History, context (story development), explanation of causes, cultural context, etc. A local issue can be placed in a national perspective, or vice versa. • Ask yourself: Will the reader understand the significance of this story?
Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use words that ordinary readers understand. Keep sentences short. Keep the focus sharp. • Simplify complicated ideas. • Ask yourself: Will any reader understand this story? • Once you are done writing the story, read it to yourself aloud. If the story doesn't make sense to you the writer or author, most likely it won't make sense to the person reading or listening.



Media Tools for Communicators

Tool 1: Press Release

"Getting your story on the air or in print is usually just a matter of figuring out how to make it interesting to a large number of people, and communicating that through a news release." – George McKenzie

How to write a winning press release

A press release is a written statement for distribution to the media. It is written on the organisation's letterhead. The purpose is to give journalists information that is useful, accurate and interesting.

It announces and informs about scheduled events, awards, news occurrences or happenings, accomplishments, etc. It must be relevant, carrying recent news. It can be used as a basis for a hard news item and/or a feature or even an investigative story.

Elements of a Press Release

1) *Headline.* It should be brief, clear, to the point. Summary of the release's key point/message.

News release headlines should:

- Have a "grabber" to attract readers, i.e. a newspaper headline is meant to grab readers' attention and keep them glued to the story for details.
- Be written in bold, larger than body text, present tense.
- Written after writing complete press release to get a better/concise summary.

2) *Body of press release*

- Start with date and city in which the press release is originated.
- First sentence should grab the reader and say concisely what's happening. Next 1-2 sentences then expand upon the lead.
- Writing should be compact; avoid long sentences, paragraphs, repetition.
- Add a quote or two to make it more personal.
- Avoid overuse of fancy language and jargon - 2nd/3rd generation rights (minority rights?)
- Deal with actual facts – events, products, services, people, targets, goals, plans, projects. Provide concrete facts. Think in terms of 5W's and 1H i.e. who, what, when, where, why, and how.

A press release should be no more than two pages long. The more newsworthy you make the press release content, the more easily it will make news. Find out what "newsworthy" means to a given market and use it to hook the editor or reporter.

3) *Include info about your organisation/ company*

- Journalists will get organisation or company information from this section
- Title for this section
- At the end of the section, point to your website by providing the complete URL address e.g. <http://sipd.webs.com/>. The URL could appear elsewhere when using headed paper/letterhead

4) Add contact information

If your press release is really newsworthy, journalists will want more information or will want to interview key people associated with it.

5) Signal the end

Do so with three ### symbols, centred directly underneath the last line of the release. This is a journalistic standard.

6) Make your release catchy

There are too many releases or news articles out there. Make the editor's life easy or else your press release will end up in the trash can/deleted folder. Out compete other stories.

7) Send release to news editor

If emailing, copy in top editor plus 1 or 2 relevant reporters. Remember bureau chiefs.

- Don't make subject line: "press release." Get editor's attention by making it your "grabber" headline, e.g. "Farmers Protest Land Grabbers" not "Press Release on Farmers in Uganda".

8) Never ask for 'publicity'

- Ask for "coverage" if you are inviting reporters to an event.

9) Use basic fonts

- Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial, 12 points recommended.
- Double-space although it's no crime if you don't.

Press Release Checklist

- Company/Organisation Letterhead, Name, Address, Phone Number, Web Address
- Phrase 'PRESS RELEASE' in all caps
- Contact person's name
- HEADLINE or TITLE in BOLD/CAPS or UPPER CASE
- BODY – Date/City - who, what, when, where and why
- Catchy text
- Use quotes to add a personal touch
- Company/organisation info, i.e. About AFSA
- Basic font, double spaced, page numbers



Tool 2: Press Conferences

A press conference is a formal meeting with journalists designed to generate news about a specific subject / to clarify a specific issue.

A press conference should be a special event organised only when the circumstances demand it especially when your organisation has newsworthy information, an issue to put out that is compelling and interesting.

How to organize

Before:

- Give yourself enough time to prepare



- Choose an appropriate time; avoid clashes
- Select convenient and accessible venue
- Develop a press kit [press release, backgrounders, shot bios of speakers, relevant pictures/images, brochures, fact sheets]
- Send out invitation at least a week in advance; follow-up
- If you've not done a press conference before, do a rehearsal.

On the big day:

- Call media houses for confirmation
- Keep time
- Dress appropriately
- At the appointed time, panellists take seats
- Invite journalists for quick registration
- Hand out press kits on arrival
- Have someone welcome the journalists
- Moderator welcome journalists and introduce the issues(s)
- Moderator invites lead person to speak
- Use clear and concise language; avoid jargon and technical terms
- Raise and explain issues without sounding condescending
- Tell the truth always
- Do not get unnerved by tough or hostile questions
- If the same question is asked differently, take the cue that your answer was not convincing or understood.

- Stay focused on the key issue; avoid inflammatory language and controversial opinions that could bury your message or divert attention.

After:

- Communicate feedback e.g. thank you

Tool 3: Opinion Pieces

An opinion piece is a writer's point of view e.g. commentaries, letters, editorials, cartoons/satire, blogs, tweets.

Opinion articles are commentaries written either by newspaper/news agency staff writers, including regular columnists, or guest writers who have something compelling to say. They are sometimes referred to as "op-ed" articles. They are often 750 words average length, plus a photo and address.

Types of Op-Ed

There are three types of opinion articles:

- Solicited opinions/commentaries (experts)
- Unsolicited opinions (published for topicality, originality, power of argument, expertise/authority, style, wit)
- Good opinions highlight problems, showcase progress, explain, and/or propose solutions.

Questions for opinion writers

- a) Why should we readers trust you? (Expertise)
- b) Can you back up what you say? (Evidence)

- c) What is new? (Different, original, compelling)
- d) So what? (Why anyone should care/significance)
- e) Do you consider opposing viewpoints? (Empathy, changing minds)
- f) How will your ideas and arguments contribute to the conversation? (Value)

Tips for opinion writing

- Own your expertise (know what you are expert in but don't limit yourself)
- Stay current (follow the news)
- The perfect is the enemy of the good
- Flexibility of mind (beware of connections)
- Use plain language (words matter)
- Respect your reader

Basic opinion article structure

- Lead/introduction (built around news hook)
- Thesis (statement of argument – explicit or implied)
- Argument (based on evidence – stats, news, history, reports, experience)
- "To Be Sure" paragraph (pre-empt critics, acknowledge any flaws)
- Conclusion

Leads/intros and news hooks

- Use the news
- Tell a dramatic anecdote
- Reference popular culture
- Turn conventional wisdom on end
- Use wit & irony
- Use an anniversary
- Cite a major new study
- Get personal

About AFSA

Origin & Mandate

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is a broad alliance of different Civil Society actors that are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and Agroecology in Africa.

AFSA was founded in 2008 by a group of individuals concerned that there was need to amplify Agroecology. In December 2011, it was launched at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties 17 (COP 17) in Durban, South Africa.

Our Mission

The core purpose of AFSA is to influence policies and to promote African solutions for food sovereignty. As a continental platform, AFSA aims at consolidating issues pertaining to food sovereignty and mobilize advocacy and workable solutions. We believe Food Sovereignty can cool the planet, while feeding the world and regenerating ecosystems.

Our Aims

To champion Small African Family Farming / Production Systems based on agroecological and indigenous approaches that sustain food sovereignty and the livelihoods of communities. To resist the corporate industrialization of African agriculture which will result in massive negative effects to Africa. These include land grabs, destruction of indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems, displacement of indigenous peoples especially the pastoral communities and hunter gatherers and the destruction of their livelihoods and cultures.

AFSA aims to be a strong voice that shapes policy on the continent in the area of community rights, family farming, promotion of traditional knowledge and knowledge systems, the environment and natural resource management.

Member Networks

AFSA members represent smallholder farmers, pastoralists, hunter-gatherers, indigenous peoples, citizens and environmentalists from Africa. These provide a forum to analyse, discuss issues, challenge policies and identify ways forward and possess a strong voice that shapes policy and action.

AFSA is a network of networks, currently with 35 active members including;

- African farmers' organizations
- African NGO networks
- Specialist African NGOs
- Consumer movements in Africa
- International organizations
- Individuals
- Environmentalists
- Faith based institutions

AFSA Principles

AFSA's work is based on the following binding principles:

- Championing small African family farming/production systems based on agroecological and indigenous approaches
- Resisting industrialization and commodification of African agriculture and food systems
- Emphasizing African-driven solutions

- Building a strong voice to shape policies
- Empowering women and youth
- Contributing to land ownership and control in the hands of communities.
- Rejecting the genetic engineering and privatization of living organisms
- Advocating for political commitments towards agroecology and food sovereignty
- Building synergy with all actors
- Mobilizing communities for one voice on agroecology
- Knowledge sharing, learning and collaboration
- Protecting and promoting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities to control their natural resources.

AFSA's Theory of Change

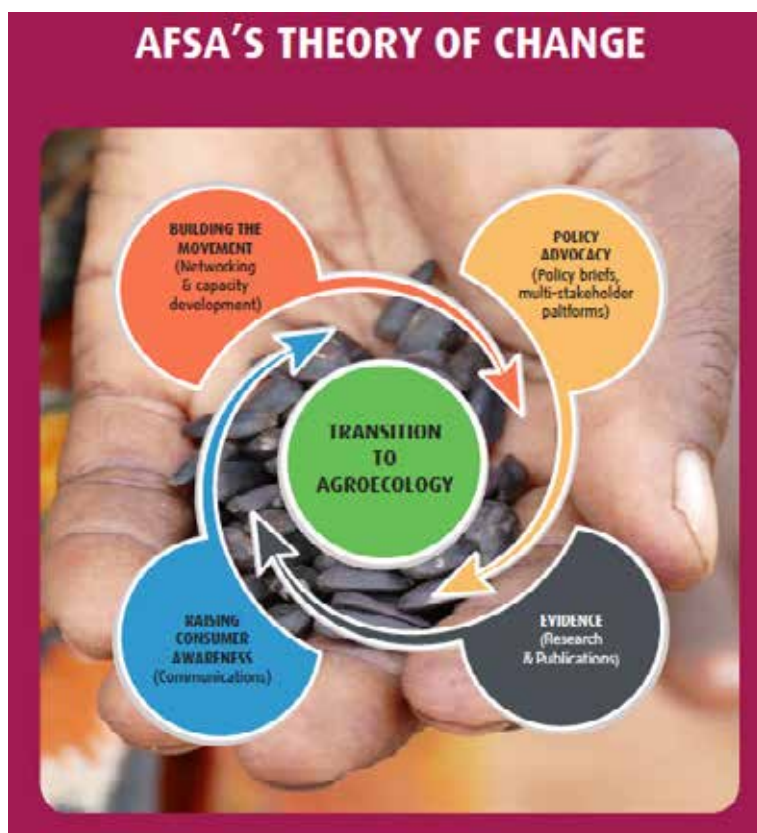
AFSA aims to create impact by:

- Building The Movement (Networking & capacity development)
- Raising Consumer Awareness (Communications)
- Policy Advocacy (Policy briefs, multi-stakeholder platforms)
- Evidence (Research & publications)

What does AFSA do?

We are galvanizing the food sovereignty movement and building momentum to influence the transition to agroecology across Africa, specifically by:

- Enhancing Farmer-Managed Seed Systems
- Strengthening community land rights
- Strengthening consumer action and
- Addressing the challenges of climate change



References

- African Centre for Biodiversity: <http://www.acbio.org.za/en/gmos>
- African Centre for Biodiversity: <http://www.acbio.org.za/en/seed-laws-policies>
- AFSA (2016), *Agroecology The Bold Future of Farming in Africa*. <http://afsafrika.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Agroecology-the-bold-future-of-farming-in-Africa-ebook1.pdf>
- AgroEcology Fund: <https://www.agroecologyfund.org/what-is-agroecology/>
- Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa: <https://afsafrika.org>
- Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa: <https://afsafrika.org/francais-afsa-seed-policy-report-resisting-corporate-takeover-of-african-seed-systems-and-building-farmer-managed-seed-systems-for-food-sovereignty-in-africa/>
- Centre for Ecoliteracy: <https://www.ecoliteracy.org>
- CIKOD: <http://internationaltreefoundation.org/cikod/>
- Global Agriculture: <https://www.globalagriculture.org/report-topics/industrial-agriculture-and-small-scale-farming.html>
- Grain: <https://www.grain.org>
- Indigenous Knowledge: <https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Howeschambers10.2.pdf>
- La Via Campesina: <https://viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty/>
- Latest news on GMOs: <https://www.gmwatch.org/en/>
- Michel P Pimbert (2017), *Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Biocultural Diversity*. Routledge Studies in food, society and the environment.
- New World Encyclopedia: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Industrial_agriculture
- No scientific consensus on GMOs: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12302-014-0034-1>
- Nyeleni (2007) *Declaration of Nyeleni, Forum for Food Sovereignty*, <http://nyeleni.org/>
- Nyeleni (2015) *Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology*, www.foodsovereignty.org/forum-agroecology-nyeleni-2015
- The Journal of Peasant Studies: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03066150903143079>
- UN Food and Agriculture Organization: <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/en/>
- UN Women 2010, *A Handbook for Kenyan Journalists in Enhancing Women's Rights and Access to Land and Property in line with the Constitution of Kenya 2010*
- UNESCO 2013, *Climate Change in Africa: A Guidebook for Journalists*
- Union of Concerned Scientists: <https://www.ucsusa.org/our-work/food-agriculture/our-failing-food-system/industrial-agriculture#.W2g5hS2Q06g>
- World Health Organisation: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-technology/faq-genetically-modified-food/en/
- www.educba.com - January 2017 publication on Soft Skills for Internal Communication

Annex 1: Sample Press Release



PRESS RELEASE FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

26 APRIL 2018

Hands Off African Seeds! - No Intellectual Property on Life

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) today launches a continental seed policy report challenging the corporate capture of African farmers' seeds and seed systems. Launched on World Intellectual Property Day, the report documents the policy shift towards corporatisation of seeds on the continent, in direct contravention of international obligations to protect farmers' rights and to conserve agricultural biodiversity. It shows how these dangerous policies are rapidly advancing and how farmers are resisting. The report entitled 'Resisting corporate takeover of African seed systems and building farmer managed seed systems for food sovereignty in Africa' maps the way forward for building a continental movement to Save African Seeds.

Zimbabwean farmer and La Via Campesina General Coordinator, Elizabeth Mpofu said, "Regional bodies like SADC and COMESA are developing rules that will increase the availability of commercial seeds, only benefiting corporations like Syngenta and Monsanto. Indigenous seeds are not recognized. We believe in controlling our land and seeds and producing the healthy food that we want, the way we want. Our response is to fight for food sovereignty against these transnational corporations."

The race to capture the intellectual property rights of seeds is at the heart of the problem, with the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) in the driving seat. Civil society organisations around the world agree that there should be no intellectual property on life, yet the seed giants are using African regionalisation policy processes to grab the IP rights to farmers' seeds and planting material, and criminalise farmers' traditional practices.

African agriculture policy is increasingly about 'modernization' through a massive increase in the use of chemical fertilizers and 'improved' seeds, switching the focus to

staple crops and commodities tradable on global markets. In practice this has led to a huge concentration on the development and marketing of hybrid maize seeds and artificial fertilizers.

The reality is that 90% of seeds sown in Africa come from 'informal' sources, local markets, or seeds saved by farmers or their neighbours – the majority of whom are women. It is these seeds that are providing 80% of Africa's food. They are reliable, available and affordable, but the seed giants want them outlawed. These seeds and the cultural systems and knowledge that underpin them are under threat from policies designed to privilege corporate seed systems, while criminalising and vilifying farmer managed seed systems.

"The answer to seed sovereignty is not in the hands of corporates, but in the hands of smallholder farmers who feed the world," said Peter Nzioka, Kaane Small Scale Farmers Association, Machakos, Kenya.

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa calls on African nations to wake up to the dangers of these flawed policies; to scrap the externally-driven and damaging seed laws; and to recognise that the future of African food systems lies in supporting African food producers to provide sustainable African solutions.

The seed policy report 'Resisting corporate takeover of African seed systems and building farmer managed seed systems for food sovereignty in Africa' is available as a free download at <http://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SEED-POLICY-ENG-ONLINE-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf>

About AFSA

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa brings together small-scale food producers, pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, farmers' networks, faith groups, consumer associations, youth associations, civil societies and activists from across the continent of Africa to create a united and louder voice for food sovereignty. AFSA's Resilient Seed Systems & Agroecology Working Group is leading the drive for farmers' seed rights.

For further information or interviews please contact:

Dr. Million Belay – AFSA Coordinator

Email: million.belay@afsafrica.org, afsa@afsafrica.org

Twitter: @afsafrica facebook: AFSA

www.afsafrica.org







P.O.Box 571 Kampala, Uganda

Email: afsa@afsafrica.org

Website: www.afsafrica.org

Tel: +256 414 499 169

