

Cultural Indicators for Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Sustainable Development

The **Cultural Indicators for Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Sustainable Development** were developed by Indigenous Peoples in partnership with the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) at the *2nd Indigenous Peoples' Global Consultation on the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty* in Bilwi Nicaragua (2006). They provide a practical tool for Indigenous communities to assess strengths, trends and threats to the practices, knowledge and relationships that sustain their traditional food systems. IITC continues to bring Indigenous food producers and knowledge-holders together to discuss threats, share strategies and methods and create alliances to restore their traditional food systems and defend their Food Sovereignty.



IITC Training on the Cultural Indicators for Food Sovereignty, Chimaltenango Guatemala, June 2008.

For more information contact:

Saul Vicente Vasquez, IITC Food Sovereignty Program Coordinator, saulvv@treatycouncil.org; or Nicole Yanes, IITC Community Programs Coordinator, nicole@treatycouncil.org; or log on to www.iitc.org



International Indian Treaty Council

Food Sovereignty and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



"Our ancestors in some areas have secured our traditional ways and food systems in Treaties. These international agreements were signed for "so long as the sun shines, the river flows and the grass grows."

--- Chief Wilton Littlechild, Ermineskin Cree Nation, Treaty No. 6 Territory, Canada, addressing the United Nations World Food Summit, Rome, November 1996

What is Food Sovereignty?

“**Food sovereignty** is the right of Peoples to define their own policies and strategies for sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food, with respect for their own cultures and their own systems of managing natural resources and rural areas, and **is considered to be a precondition for Food Security.**”

“The **rights to land, water, and territory, as well as the right to self-determination**, are essential for the full realization of our Food Security and Food Sovereignty.”

--- *The “Declaration of Atitlan” adopted at the 1st Indigenous Peoples’ Global Consultation on the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty, Guatemala, 2002*

The Right to Food is an Internationally-Recognized Human Right:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family...including food...”

-- *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

“...In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.”

-- *Article 1 in Common, International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*

“...the denial of the Right to Food for Indigenous Peoples not only denies us our physical survival, but also denies us our social organization, our cultures, traditions, languages, spirituality, sovereignty, and total identity; it is a denial of our collective indigenous existence.”

--- The “Declaration of Atitlan”

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms rights that are essential for Food Sovereignty, including:

- Article 3: Right to Self-Determination
- Article 20: Right to Subsistence and Traditional Economies
- Article 24: Right to Health and conservation of vital plants and animals
- Article 26: Right to traditional lands, territories and resources
- Article 29: Right to conservation and protection of the environment and productive capacity of lands, territories and resources
- Article 31: Right to maintain, control, protect and develop cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and cultural expressions including genetic resources, seeds and medicines
- Article 32: Right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for development and right to free, prior and informed consent
- Article 37: Treaty Rights

Obstacles to Food Sovereignty include:

- Lack of access to Traditional Lands, Water and Natural Resources
- Deforestation, mining, drilling, damming and other types of imposed development carried out without Free Prior and Informed Consent
- Environmental contamination and the use of toxic pesticides
- “Free Trade Agreements” and food imports
- Introduction of genetically modified foods and seeds
- Large-scale industrial agriculture
- Loss of language, cultural practices, and ways of transmitting traditional knowledge to new generations
- Violations of Nation-to-Nation Treaties
- Impacts of climate change and false “solutions” including bio/agro fuel production