



WORKSHOP SYNTHESIS

Southeast Asian Perspectives on Food Sovereignty: Outcomes and Observations

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On October 14-15, 2010, the University of the Philippines Third World Studies Center hosted a workshop on food sovereignty in Southeast Asia. As stated in the workshop program, the workshop was convened to

“[...] examine and debate food sovereignty from various perspectives through the experiences of social and farmers’ movements on a range of themes (agrarian reform policies, right to food, land grabbing, biofuels and land conversion, public-private partnership, GMOs [genetically modified organisms] and biotechnology, farmer’s rights, seed savings and IPR [intellectual property rights], organic production and marketing, global food crisis and economic policies, among others).”

The first set of panels highlighted the challenges to attaining food sovereignty by Southeast Asian nations. The discussion flowed from how the region dealt with recent food crises to the ways grassroots movements seek to ensure that local communities have access to the food they want in the quantities they need.

PANEL ONE: SITUATING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY WITHIN SOCIAL JUSTICE STRUGGLES AND MOVEMENTS

It was the aim of the first set of panelists to give a broad perspective of the place of food sovereignty in large-scale movements fighting for social equity within Southeast Asia.

Why were some ASEAN member states able to weather the 2008 rice crisis better than their co-members? This was one of the main problems dealt with by Riza Bernabe of the Citizen's Action Party (AKBAYAN) in the presentation entitled "Food Crises and Food Sovereignty." She argued that the manner by which the ASEAN faced the rice crisis laid bare the weakness of cooperation within Southeast Asia. She also showed how the ASEAN's appropriation of the language of civil society when speaking about food sovereignty has been devoid of earnest concern or concrete commitments for ending hunger within the region.

During the worldwide rice shortage in 2008, rice prices almost doubled in the major rice-producing countries of Southeast Asia. The ASEAN rice reserve was set up precisely for such situations. Bernabe however, showed that the ASEAN rice reserve was merely a drop in the bucket in ensuring that the member states of the ASEAN would have sufficient rice to weather a crisis in the region's staple food. Paradoxically, during the rice crisis, there was more than enough rice produced in the region to feed the populations of every Southeast Asian nation, but not every member state of the ASEAN was able to access this supply. Bernabe explained that political pressures kept the access to this surplus limited to wealthier nations. Without changing the present ASEAN advocacy of trade policies that promote the interests of food traders over food producers, this situation is unlikely to change. The presentation ended by emphasizing the necessity of establishing self-sufficiency within a country instead of excessive reliance on an ineffective region-wide cooperation to successfully solve food insecurity in Southeast Asia.

Jean Yasol of Southeast Asian Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE) addressed the problem of the proliferation of potentially dangerous genetically modified organisms in her presentation entitled "Seeds, Food, Life: Impacts of GMOs on Food and Agriculture." According to Yasol, biotechnology for food production is not *per se* a crime against nature; it is the modern means of genetic engineering that is abominable. She argued that the

production of GMOs violates the proper course of evolution, arrogating to geneticists the process of modifying genomes, which can drastically alter the defining characteristics of organisms. Furthermore, Yasol said that most genetically modified crops are produced for export, contributing to the degeneration of agriculture into agribusiness.

In the Philippines, a number of GMOs are already in the market, following certification for commercial production from the Department of Trade and Industry. A number of these crops have been altered to produce the *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) toxin, which is lethal to a number of insects. The developers of the Bt eggplant want their product in the market as well, overtly to help save the world from hunger. They appear unconcerned with the negative impacts of Bt crops, such as the speeding up of the development of pest resistance to the toxin, the growth of parasitic life-forms that are immune to the pesticide, and the death of friendly insects through ingestion of the toxin. Bt eggplant is also potentially dangerous to humans. According to Yasol, the same variety of eggplant was banned for commercial planting in the farms of India, rendering the permission to plant this “Frankenstein” on Philippine soil questionable. Only biotechnology companies would benefit if the ongoing trials of the Bt eggplant were to lead to its propagation in local markets, disregarding the consumer’s right to choose what to consume in the process.

The local news typically feature the members of farmers’ movements expressing their woes in front of government agencies concerned with agriculture. Vicente Fabe gave the workshop participants a glimpse of how local farmers’ movements involve themselves in worldwide food sovereignty movements by reading a paper entitled “International Food Organizations, Global Summits, and People’s Movements.” He began by reminding the participants that poverty has a rural face. Fabe then enumerated the causes of this poverty: the improper distribution of the means of production, the inadequacy of support from the government, and the lack of rural community consultation by decision makers. Addressing these causes involves giving political power to the rural poor by raising their awareness of the injustices committed against them. Economic empowerment, primarily through the establishment of cooperatives, is also a step forward in curing rural poverty.

Fabe pointed out that these concerns are taken to the world stage by his group, the National Federation of Peasant Organizations (PAKISAMA), through their affiliation with the Asian Farmers’

Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA). Fabe stressed that their participation in international conversations on farmers' welfare—primarily through the Committee on Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and through the International Fund for Agricultural Development—is necessary, given the causal link between “neoliberal globalization triggered by oligopolistic capitalism” and the deprivation of farmers' rights. These forums allow people's movements to be formally included in the deliberation process of international food-security policymaking, even if, at present, their role is merely consultative.

Charito Medina of the Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Development, Inc. (MASIPAG) showed how scientists can help solve food insecurity by directly engaging with farmers. The introduction to his presentation entitled “Seed Saving and Farmers' Knowledge” began with the question, “Should farmers save seeds?” His answer was a resounding yes. Since the time humans began to domesticate plants until well into the last century, the development of seed types was primarily in the hands of farmers. Then came advances in chemical farming concurrent with the rise of multinational corporations. According to him, there were dire consequences to these developments. A case in point is the Philippines, “Green Revolution” in the 1970s, which made chemical farming widespread throughout the country. Consequently, the hundreds of rice varieties grown in the country's fields were reduced to dozens. Chemicals utilized by farmers to combat pests and plant diseases resulted in genetic pollution; the loss of biodiversity, leading to crop-destroying organisms laying to waste genetically uniform crops; and the depletion of soil nutrients.

MASIPAG has taken measures to solve these problems. They assert the rights of farmers over the desires of industrial plant breeders through their attempts to empower farmers so they can choose what to plant, seeing this as one way of eliminating the “plague of genetic sameness.” Medina said that MASIPAG scientists serve as advisers to farmers who develop their own seed varieties, using the seeds that MASIPAG preserves and adhering strictly to organic farming methods. The outputs of these endeavors are introduced into MASIPAG's seed-banking system, which goes beyond mere seed storage. Medina showed how the knowledge of farmer-breeders is disseminated among their fellow farmers, forming a creative commons among farmers nationwide, thus increasing their capacity to develop their own farming technology.

Discussion

One participant sought a comment on Thailand's proposition to form an ASEAN rice cartel to address food security issues in the region. Bernabe said that while such a cartel would be advantageous to Thailand, being the region's highest net exporter of rice, it would undermine the concept of regional cooperation. Climate change also makes such a proposition unsound in the long run. Take the case of Vietnam; even though the country is currently a net exporter of rice, Vietnam's officials project that the country will be among the ASEAN's net importers of rice within a few decades, given the changing weather patterns.

A comment was made about how MASIPAG rice varieties have been adopted by a local government unit, exemplifying government support to nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Medina said that MASIPAG occasionally cooperates with the government. In fact, MASIPAG has been performing the duties of the Department of Agriculture in one of the country's major islands. However, MASIPAG rejects some government food policies. According to Medina, as long as the government pushes for GMOs and advocates an anti-farmer definition of food security, there will be no lasting NGO-government cooperation.

A participant brought up a contentious provision in Republic Act 10068 (the Philippine Organic Farming Act of 2010), wherein the government controls the labeling of produce as "organic." MASIPAG's response to this has been "name recognition over labeling." Medina claimed that MASIPAG's reputation will make the government's monopoly of the term irrelevant. This is in keeping with MASIPAG's advocacy for organic production—they do it for the sake of rural development and not for monetary considerations.

A participant asked about the manner by which Indians were able to stop the propagation of Bt eggplant in their country. Yasol debunked the common belief that the success of the anti-Bt eggplant campaign in India was merely a matter of political will. She asserted that science was the basis for the nationwide rejection of Bt eggplant trials in India. Armed with scientific data, social movements worked with consumers to deny the developers of the Bt eggplant a chance to introduce the GMO to Indian farmlands, and subsequently to Indian homes.

Panelists were asked: can cooperation within the region ever be effective? In response, Fabe stated that there is agreement among farmers to adopt organic farming methods. These agreements were made at the regional level as well as at the national level. Bernabe meanwhile shared her observation that farmers in different Southeast Asian nations face the same set of problems. Southeast Asia is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Multinationals have the resources to seize farmlands throughout the region, making land reform useless for the welfare of ASEAN farmers unless it is implemented region-wide. Bernabe also states that there is a need to make liberal trade agreements work principally for the benefit of Southern societies. These agreements are the only binding components of regional cooperation within the ASEAN; trade liberalization must function to benefit farmers, instead of furthering the growth of “corporate agriculture.” Nevertheless, Bernabe reiterated that such cooperative measures could only do so much. ASEAN member states must reformulate their food policies to focus on achieving national self-sufficiency.

Observations

Each presenter was able to impress which rights are violated by those who profit from global food insecurity. The panel also showed how nonspecialist viewpoints can come to terms with perspectives from both the social and the natural sciences to develop effective strategies against those who wield technology as little more than a means of market domination.

It is interesting to juxtapose Bernabe’s presentation with Fabe’s, and Yasol’s presentation with Medina’s. While Bernabe spoke of a lack of cooperation between Southeast Asian governments, Fabe implied that there is a sense of solidarity among Southeast Asian farmers. While Yasol describes a front in the battle for food sovereignty that relies on scientists specializing in genetics, Medina showed a front that has farmers in possession of “common knowledge” and incessant curiosity as primary combatants.

PANEL TWO: GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The second panel sought to address challenges to the attainment of food sovereignty faced by the community of nations and specific countries.

Douglas Kammen from the National University of Singapore gave a briefing on the food (in)security situation in East Timor, which became a sovereign state in 2002 after decades as a province of Indonesia. Ever since Portugal colonized East Timor in the sixteenth century, East Timor has been a food-deficit area. When Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975, a forced relocation of subsistence-farmer communities to the coast caused massive famine. In response, the government instituted a “mini-green revolution,” modernizing farming in the country. Nevertheless, the structural problems behind East Timor’s food insecurity kept such measures from producing significant results.

The East Timorese became painfully aware of these structural problems following their independence from Indonesia. Significant budgetary outlays have gone to the importation of food. Crony contractors from the private sector acquired rice for the East Timorese government. The government then resold this rice to the populace at a price lower than the acquisition cost, in a move to project itself as a populist government. Thus, the two “hijackers” of East Timorese politics—cronyism and populism—have halted any advances in addressing the country’s deplorable food security issues. While the subsidy solution may have provided short-term benefits to consumers, such “pandering to the masses” has undermined local food production. Farmers are still producing insufficient quantities of food to feed the entire population of East Timor. Meanwhile, NGOs and civil society actors focus their attention on combating government corruption. As a result of this lack of will to confront the country’s food insecurity head-on, East Timor’s subsistence producers are fast joining the ranks of East Timor’s consumers.

Hazel Tanchuling of the East Asia Rice Working Group (EARWG) of the Rice Watch Action and Network (Rice Watch) brought the focus back to the entirety of Southeast Asia. In her paper entitled, “Scanning of National Responses after the Food Crisis,” Tanchuling explained how EARWG examined the landscape of rice commerce following the 2008 rice crisis. They discovered that in the aftermath of

the crisis, most countries have adopted long-term rice security plans so that they can better address similar crises in the future. Most governments also increased support for local rice productivity programs.

Cambodia proves to be an interesting case study for Rice Watch. Even with a lack of government support, Cambodian farmers were able to increase their yields during the crisis. This is an exception worth investigating, given that government intervention after the crisis has been largely consumer-focused. Tanchuling's group also observed that the private sector played an important role in determining the trade of rice in the region. These observations imply that the complex interrelations of Southeast Asian governments and transnational corporations will remain for quite some time. This will have both positive and negative effects on the efforts of rice-producing countries to become self-sufficient, abandoning their dependence on their neighbors. Tanchuling said that there may come a time when Southeast Asian nations will no longer engage in rice commerce within the region but export their surplus elsewhere. However, the volatile climate, poor governance and corruption, and the possible incompatibility of other national policies with initiatives to encourage and develop national self-sufficiency make this future of prosperity a distant possibility.

Basing his presentation on a paper written by Elpidio Peria of the Third World Network, Paul Borja of SEARICE gave a presentation entitled, "Finalizing the ABS, Access Benefit Sharing, Protocol in Nagoya, or Beyond? The Emerging Elements of the ABS Protocol and the Interests of the Philippines and Developing Countries." According to Borja, though the ABS protocol under the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) seeks worldwide recognition of the right of sovereign states to determine who can access their genetic resources, it also obligates the parties thereto to equitably share the benefits derived from their flora and fauna. Currently, negotiations are taking place in Nagoya, Japan for the finalization of the protocol.

There is disagreement largely between the Global North and the Global South regarding terminologies in the protocol. Different blocs are also pushing for specific changes in its text. With the way the negotiations have been going, the agreement may go through another round of deliberations or may produce a protocol that excludes the interests of many. Either result will have an effect on food policies worldwide; it could worsen or lessen biopiracy, which is typically in the form of multinational corporations patenting genetic resources to acquire "ownership" over them. Borja said that such unfair global

business practices and the steady loss of agricultural biodiversity are what brought about the development of ABS, especially for the benefit of developing/less-developed countries. Borja's presentation, however, ended with a lingering question: "Does state sovereignty over genetic resources under the current ABS regime necessarily translate to food sovereignty?"

Discussion

A question about government expenditures in agriculture was fielded; what should the Philippine government invest in? The question was contextualized to focus on the Philippine government's investments in irrigation thus far; the participant said that while the cost of irrigation is large, its benefits are long lasting. Tanchuling said that while the allocation for irrigation has been high in previous years, such an investment has not paid off—rice production in the Philippines did not increase. Tanchuling added that she is not completely against the government subsidy for irrigation support. Irrigation is an important part of establishing self-sufficiency, but the Philippine government must closely examine the type of irrigation systems that it is funding.

The next question was directed to Kammen: what has been the role of Australia in crafting East Timorese food policy, given the apparent interest of the commonwealth federation in the parliamentary republic? Kammen said that he is only aware of Australia's petroleum-extracting activities and the intervention of the Australian government's overseas aid program in East Timor's drinking water problems. He is familiar with farming support from other countries. For example, East Timor's minister of agriculture is sourcing farming technology from China. Government statistics say that there was a tremendous increase in production in 2009 because of these technology imports; however, these figures are questionable, given reports from the local media.

One participant criticized SEARICE's preference for ABS. He said that the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is more in line with upholding the rights of farmers than ABS, which is inextricably linked to the anti-farmer concern of patenting of genetic resources. Borja conceded that this is a common critique of ABS, though the ITPGRFA is also flawed. For example, ITPGRFA only prohibits the patenting of seeds in their unmodified form, a restriction that can be circumvented by processing seeds. Nevertheless, SEARICE is looking into which of the two agreements is better.

Another participant wanted to know how rice cartels are identified. Tanchuling said that data for identifying rice cartels are scarce, although some are as readily identifiable as other agricultural product cartels in the country. Nevertheless, it is well known that smugglers are very important in determining where rice goes throughout Southeast Asia. Kammen commented that it is necessary to examine the procurement process to discover the agents influencing the chain from production to distribution in countries like East Timor and the Philippines. Kammen also said that the high possibility of devastating storms forming one after the other in Southeast Asia during the 2010 rainy season would likely cause a repeat of the 2008 rice crisis. Cartels would surely come into play should this happen.

There was a final query about democratizing access to seeds: should seeds be “open source,” countering the drive of nations pushing for the patenting of agricultural products? Borja said that SEARICE is looking into pushing for this, given that the development of open-source software has made great strides in recent years; it should be easier to develop “open source” seeds, as plants of a species naturally cross-pollinate, sans a human “programmer.”

Observations

The second group of panelists stimulated a closer examination of the apparent commonalities of food insecurity issues in poorer Southeast Asian countries, reiterating previously discussed significant similarities while giving emphasis to equally important national peculiarities. As with the previous panelists, the presenters here cast national governments and multinational corporations in villainous roles. However, Kammen was able to show that those who challenge these villainous entities may have erroneously chosen their points of attack. Perhaps those who consider themselves within civil society ought to criticize themselves as vigorously as they do their “enemies.”

PANEL THREE: GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

From the level of nations, the third panel brought the workshop's focus on movements to eradicate food insecurity at the grassroots level.

Starjoan Villanueva of the Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao, Inc. (AFRIM) began the first day's third panel. Her presentation, entitled “Land Conversion and Agrofuel Plantations in Mindanao: Promises and Uncertainties,” was concerned with the

pressing debate on the use of farmlands in Southern Philippines. According to Villanueva, the Mindanao Food Basket is under threat. Eight companies are targeting millions of hectares of farmland in Mindanao for growing agrofuels, including palm oil, cassava, and the *tuba-tuba* plant of the genus *jatropha*, for the benefit of fuel-hungry industrialized nations such as Spain and China.

The promise of large income from growing low-maintenance biofuel plants—without converting land already in use for growing edible crops—is alluring. However, with the food insecurity situation in the Philippines, Villanueva predicts that setting aside land for growing biofuel would trigger a food crisis similar to the 2008 rice shortage. Take the case of growing *jatropha*—the plant requires much water; diverting this scarce resource from farmlands where food is grown will have dire consequences. The proposed biofuel plantations also threaten to wrest control over ancestral domains from the indigenous peoples of Mindanao. Finally, the accountability of the government as well as the investors for the potentially negative impacts of biofuel production is not clearly defined. Villanueva cautioned against the promise of economic development by agrofuel companies, given the previously mentioned hidden costs of entering into such production, and the unlikelihood of quick recovery by both farmers and the environment should this type of cash crop agribusiness venture fails.

In a presentation entitled “Agrarian Reform in Conflict Areas: The Bondoc Peninsula Experience,” Danilo Carranza of the Rural Poor Institute for Land and Human Rights Network (RIGHTS) gave the workshop participants an overview of the activities of a localized peasant rights movement, as well as a view from below of the violence suffered by the would-be direct beneficiaries of the equitable distribution of farmlands. Peasant organizations in the Bondoc Peninsula in the Philippine province of Quezon have been fighting for the rights of landless tenants for nearly two decades. Starting from organizations brought together by community organizers, unionized or otherwise, collectivized farmers in the Bondoc Peninsula are now pushing the government to implement genuine agrarian reform.

However, landlord domination in the area persists. Tenants are still unable to exercise their political rights independent from the dictates of the *hacenderos*. Profit sharing remains largely in favor of landlords, with hardly any added benefits to farmers. Landlords use their armed henchmen to threaten or even kill farmers fighting for their

rights. They also employ lawyers to file suits against these farmers purely for harassment. Members of armed movements such as the New People's Army are also considered a threat to peasant progress. These "revolutionaries" exact "revolutionary justice" on farmers who prefer to submit to legal authorities. Neither the Philippine government nor local authorities have done anything of consequence to deny these groups the power that they possess. As Carranza noted, this situation exemplifies the appropriateness of characterizing the Philippines as a weak state.

After a discussion of physical violence against farmers campaigning for land reform, Maria Helen Dayo of the University of the Philippines Los Baños Gender Center focused on another kind of violence—the violence committed against particular ways of life—in a presentation entitled "Does Nature Determine the Gendered Spaces in Indigenous Society?: A Look at the Ivatan Farming System." The Ivatan, indigenous people of the Batanes Islands, have been engaged in growing (primarily root) crops, catching fish, and raising livestock for centuries. Ivatan women have been engaged in weaving for about as long. Dayo said that a culturally allocated delineation of responsibilities between men and women exists among the Ivatan; nevertheless, both are involved in activities to ensure that their family members have sufficient food.

This differentiation was once primarily determined by the needs of the community. Now, the division of labor among the Ivatans has a market-determined character. Recently, the Ivatans have been recipients of financial assistance from the government and foreign donors for the purpose of agriculture and enterprise development, as well as the preservation of the local biodiversity. This intervention brought with it impositions that have altered the Ivatan way of life. These people now apply their knowledge for ensuring self-sustenance for the acquisition of profit. Women are now weaving for the tourism industry, diverting themselves away from their responsibilities that concern food production. The traditional culture that determines the gendered spaces in Ivatan society is undergoing a profound transformation.

Marita Rodriguez of the Center for Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD), a nongovernment organization, gave the day's last presentation entitled "Food Sovereignty through Access and Control of Coastal Resources." CERD's main concern is the empowerment of fisherfolk. According to Rodriguez, her organization works to ensure the proper use and management of marine resources, taking into account "biodiversity and the welfare of future generations."

They are the implementers of the Fishery Integrated Resource Management for Economic Development (FIRMED) program, which sets out to organize fisherfolk to instruct them in sustainable fisheries practices. The program also seeks to make fisherfolk the main determiners and managers of their sources of livelihood.

CERD has support from the local government in the areas where they implement FIRMED. This support is in the form of ordinances for coastal resource management and protection. CERD sees these government units as partners—a relationship that was made possible by assisting fisherfolk to independently articulate their concerns. CERD sees the results of their intervention in the strong commitment to managing marine resources imbibed by the fisherfolk they have worked with. There is also a marked decline in illegal fishing in areas where CERD is present. Rodriguez believes that their mind-set-changing efforts are profoundly decreasing the ability of large stakeholders in the fishing industry to take away what rightly belongs to small fishers. Structural food insecurity and climate change, however, are challenges to their success.

Discussion

Has growing fuel crops become the main competitor of growing food? Villanueva gave a firm yes in response to this question. As fossil fuel abandonment continues due to the damage that they cause to the environment, the number of “fuel growers” increases; consequently, the amount of land dedicated to growing food decreases.

Dayo was asked if young Ivatans remain interested in farming. Have the Ivatan youth been migrating away from the community? If so, what has the community been doing to counteract this? Dayo said that emigration is indeed an activity common among young Ivatans. They go to the country’s urban centers to study and their preferences are becoming more “modern.” The older members of the Ivatan community are worried; even though many of them still have respect for the ancient ways, young Ivatans may come to lose appreciation for farming. The local government, in cooperation with other institutions, is investing in developing possible solutions to this impending problem.

Questions were fielded regarding climate change. Are the fisherfolk aware of the phenomenon? What adaptive measures have they taken to address climate change? According to Rodriguez, while they are unfamiliar with the concept, the fisherfolk she is involved with notice the effects of the changing climate. The fisherfolk note that the rains

have become more intense, waves have become stronger, the tide levels have become higher, and the rainy season has become longer. The women have found it increasingly difficult to gather shells for sale, as shelled creatures can no longer be easily found where the sun shines, seemingly hiding from the intense heat. Currently, the aforementioned fisherfolk communities have no definite climate change adaptation measures in place—further study for this purpose is necessary. Members of these communities however, have been asking CERD about the changes they have been observing; after learning about the basics of climate change, some of the fishers began to manage the waste generated by their fishing activities better to prevent the aggravation of global warming.

One participant asked each of the panelists if the grassroots initiatives previously discussed are critiques of modernity or the development paradigm. Therefore, should the push for food sovereignty be seen as a “postmodern” movement? Are such movements a challenge to gauges of progress originating from the Global North? To answer this question, Carranza stated that RIGHTS approaches agrarian reform in its conventional sense—that is, as a means of promoting equity and asset reform, increasing the beneficiaries of farmlands. He is aware that agrarian reform has also been seen as a way of freeing up land to make farmers more competitive, making it a movement in support of free enterprise. RIGHTS, however, has been unconcerned with challenging this view, said Carranza.

Dayo said that the Department of Agrarian Reform has been chiefly concerned with the integration of the Ivatan community into the nationwide market, drawing them away from the periphery. Consequently, the livelihood of Ivatan women has been negatively affected. As they are pressured to produce goods for outsiders, they must also pay the attendant costs of catering to a market outside their community, despite limited consumer demand for their products. This pressure is exacerbated by the encroachment of people coming from the mainland, bringing with them nonnecessities along with notions of “modernity.” Consequently, Ivatan children are now going to private schools; tourism is turning into a primary occupation; most disturbingly, farming is becoming a profit-centered activity.

Rodriguez explained that CERD gets in conflict with local governments as regards their definition of the concept of modernity. Modernity for local governments means an increase in tax revenue. Meanwhile, a local community’s concept of modernity prioritizes

improving incomes, increasing access to social services, thus prioritizing the welfare of the individuals comprising the community. In the areas where CERD is present, the organization challenges the establishment of large businesses that undermine the welfare of the fisherfolk, which makes them “antimodern” in the eyes of government officials.

Villanueva began her response to the modernity question by posing questions of her own: who is modern? She believes that the concept of modernity is a product of neoliberal economic policies, which are the reasons behind excessive consumerism supplanting human development as the preoccupation of people in agriculture. What currently holds sway worldwide is globalization as dictated by the Global North; in response, the Global South “must start globalization from below,” said Villanueva.

How can nonstate armed groups be held accountable for their crimes against farmers? Carranza took on this difficult query. RIGHTS expects these groups to have a higher respect for international humanitarian law than their government counterparts, as these groups are self-proclaimed pro-peasant “revolutionaries.” Nevertheless, they use their arms against peasants who refuse to support them. Carranza said that the main approach to dealing with such violations has been to publicize these crimes. Another approach is making these excessively violent groups accountable to their allies abroad, taking advantage of their sensitivity to their worldwide reputation. Finally, there is a joint monitoring committee between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front, to which many “progressive” groups belong.

The final question was directed to Rodriguez. Is overfishing mainly the fault of commercial fishers using high-capacity trawlers? How do fisherfolk advocates deal with large fishing boats? What do organizations like CERD do about illegal fishing, another cause of fish depletion? Rodriguez was in full agreement with the observations behind the questions; without irresponsible fishing for profit, there would be more fish to catch than there is at present. CERD invokes Republic Act 8550 (Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998) which provides for the prohibition of commercial fishing in municipal waters by local ordinance. CERD also employs the services of lawyer-advocates for legal education for their beneficiaries as well as legal actions against the people behind excessive or illegal fishing.

Observations

The panelists were able to articulate the specific weaknesses of government, owing perhaps to the specificities of their advocacies and the richness of their experiences on the field. Some panelists' admission of the limitations of their movements in terms of their guiding framework was welcome auto-critique, showing a measure of adaptability that must be the hallmark of any social movement.

The advocacies of these groups are rooted in their belief that indigenous peoples or long-existing agricultural and fishing communities have a greater claim to their sources of livelihood than anyone else. These rights are clearly unacknowledged by large-scale private industries and other adverse claimants—the type that exploit natural resources for nationwide or global consumption, thrusting formerly isolated agricultural communities into markets beyond their borders. This begs the question: given how much traditional farmers and fishers are enmeshed in the global market, will the recognition of their “better claim” to their sources of livelihood necessarily involve their (re-)isolation from trade beyond the local level?

DAY ONE IN BRIEF

The common challenges to a Southeast Asian nation's food sovereignty—land grabbing by multinational corporations, GMOs, collusion between corrupt officials of the government and abusive landlords, among others—are insurmountable when faced in isolation. This is true for virtually every member state of the ASEAN, except for a few. There is, however, one problem that all ASEAN states must band together to confront: climate change. A failure to adopt cooperative adaptation measures would leave Southeast Asian nations with insufficient resources to withstand barely predictable, highly destructive weather.

Long-standing ways of growing crops have been facing serious challenges since the latter half of the last century. In place of developing pest-resistant varieties of staples with respect for natural selection, geneticists have been “cheating” with dangerous biotechnology, altering the genetic composition of crops without sufficiently contemplating the consequences of such experimentation. Though some of the negative effects of genetically modifying crops remain unproven, many have become indisputable, often after damage has been done. The demands of the global market economy are also pressuring food growers to produce principally for other people so that they can afford

basic necessities. Throughout the region persists the absurd situation of hungry farmers selling their labor for the production of “export-quality” crops so that they can have enough money to purchase inferior imports.

Governments have tended to stand back as these absurdities occur, especially when such leniency is profitable for state agents. Many initiatives at the grassroots level have been attempting to provide remedies to government inaction. However, when their actions are at odds with the interests of the profit-obsessed or against the desires of the power hungry, those involved in the implementation of these initiatives suffer violence. Nevertheless, they continue with their campaigns, showing the resolve that the implementers of state policies must have to ensure that local communities can attain lasting self-sufficiency, thus seeking a stop to endemic hunger, as well as the annihilation of local traditions.

Naturally, the above generalizations have exceptions. Some government units have greater commonalities with more progressive nongovernment forces than with their corruption-ridden coequals. These exceptions were discussed more thoroughly by some members of the last couple of panels. Day two’s discussants also highlighted agriculture and agribusiness practices that stray from the mainstream.

PANEL FOUR: GOVERNMENT RESPONSES AND INITIATIVES FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

In this panel, government agents and scholars studying governmental activities were given the chance to explain and/or critique the government line concerning matters intimately related to food sovereignty.

Larry Pamugas, a representative from the provincial government of Bohol, delivered a presentation on “Bohol Local Government Initiatives for Food Sovereignty.” He began by giving statistical data about his home province, a relatively large island with a relatively small population among the islands of the Philippine archipelago. He shared Bohol’s overarching development framework, to wit: “[Bohol is] a prime eco-cultural tourism destination and a strong, balanced agro-industrial province, with a well-educated, God-loving and law-abiding citizenry, proud of their cultural heritage, enjoying a state of well-being and committed to sound environmental management.”

Pamugas shared how his office has tried to implement this framework. He presented a local legislation that bans the proliferation

of genetically modified organisms in the province—a first in the Philippines. Pamugas showed how successive campaigns against GMOs in Bohol result from government-NGO cooperation—again, a rarity in the country. In conjunction with the anti-GMO policy, the municipal government of Bohol also promotes organic agriculture, funding local, low-cost innovations in growing produce that involves zero artificially produced chemicals. Pamugas ended his presentation by stating that Bohol, long known as a food “basket,” seeks to become a “kitchen” of organic agriculture through the assistance of organic farming entrepreneurs and by providing incentives for practitioners of sustainable agriculture.

Mary Ann Manahan shared Focus on the Global South’s research on “Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Land Policies.” First, she gave a briefing on the state of agrarian and land reform in the Philippines. According to her, agrarian reform remains an unfinished business; the decades-old comprehensive agrarian reform program has mixed results, with misses and hits. Thus, most Filipino farmers continue to count themselves among the country’s rural poor. Aggravating the problem is the international community pushing for land policies that benefit the private sector more than the rural farmer.

The study is a collaborative endeavor among members of the academe as well as individuals from civil society. It examines the ways ODA has affected the land reform process, in particular the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program in the Philippines. According to Focus, foreign funding assistance qualifies as ODA only if (1) government bodies are in charge of its disbursement, (2) its stated purpose is assisting recipient countries in their economic and citizens’ welfare development pursuits, and (3) it is granted at “concessional terms.” The agricultural assistance that follows these criteria has tended to be largely for integrating rural farmers to the neoliberal global market. Ready-made frameworks for addressing rural poverty to attain the said objective are what ODA sources promote—frameworks that are usually inapplicable to the Philippines. In other words, global pressures are hindering the distribution of overseas assistance to where it is needed the most in the Philippines. It is imperative that the perspective of those in charge of facilitating ODA shifts from being needs-based to being rights-based—that is, the largesse should be equitably distributed among its potential beneficiaries and recognize that the landless and near-landless cultivators must take a more active role in pursuing their rights to land and food.

Finally, Cecilia A. Florencio of the Department of Food Science and Nutrition, College of Home Economics, University of the Philippines Diliman, shared her thoughts on “Food Sovereignty, Nutrition and Daily Life.” She started with a quick review of the etymology of food sovereignty. She noted that it was only much later that definitions of food sovereignty explicitly included consumption and nutrition, as in the statement “Food sovereignty promotes the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition.” She then used two examples to demonstrate the relevance of food selection and consumption in daily life, to the claim of food sovereignty advocates that food sovereignty puts those who produce, distribute, and *consume food* at the heart of food systems and policies.

According to her, breast milk is indisputably the best for infants, and breast-feeding is beneficial to mothers in so many different ways. Yet, there is worldwide promotion of infant formula, even when bottle-feeding, particularly in less-resourced countries, is associated with an increase in infant mortality. Aggressive marketing, at times bordering on the unethical, has seriously undermined mother’s ability to breast-feed. There is much to do in order to support women and breast-feeding and to address so-called commerciogenic malnutrition. The other example cited is micronutrient deficiencies. In the case of vitamin A deficiency, some governments, including the Philippines, have focused their resources and efforts on the distribution of vitamin A capsules and the addition of vitamin A and other nutrients to a whole gamut of food items, including carbonated beverages, giving such foods an aura of being nutritious. According to Florencio, there is a place for the provision of nutrient supplements and for fortification, but the government’s first and foremost policy should be “to look to our farms and not to our pharmacies” to prevent malnutrition.

Discussion

The first question raised was: what is the total agricultural area of Bohol vis-à-vis the nonagricultural? Pamugas stated that 60 percent of Bohol is used for agricultural production. The provincial government maximizes the arable land in the island. Pamugas described this as a triumph of excellent leadership; the local government of Bohol allocates millions for their rice-growing program. Additionally, there is local legislation that protects the interests of small farmers. In Pamugas’s view, NGOs cannot do what only the government can,

though the partnership between these two forces is necessary in achieving what they did in Bohol.

The next question concerned ODA. A participant stated that most ODA programs merely scratch the surface. The same sought Manahan's opinion on ODA in Mindanao, as it is primarily activity-driven, not results-based. Manahan said that most ODA agencies indeed only focus on certain quantitative indicators of assistance—how much they have given to whom, how much has been spent on what. It is incorrect however, to concern oneself only with these indicators when dealing with a complex situation such as rural hunger in the Philippines, especially in conflict-ridden Mindanao. Most ODA agencies fail to take into consideration factors such as local conflicts or other context-specific indicators of rural poverty. Even with NGO involvement in determining where ODA goes, a large portion of funding still goes to foreign consultants who suggest policy directions that fail to adequately address the poverty situation in recipient countries.

Another ODA-related question was fielded. Given the new administration, will there be changes in administering ODA in the Philippines? Will there be a greater possibility of involving stakeholders in determining where funding assistance goes under the leadership of President Benigno Aquino III? Manahan cited some of President Aquino's statements as a response—that local government should focus on ensuring transparency, participation, and accountability within their territories. This may be a step forward in making sure that overseas funding goes where it should go. However, Focus, among others, continues to center its attention on exploiting the small spaces given that are kept open by government agencies for it to voice out concerns about foreign funding. They are looking at intervening in the formulation of the Aquino administration's medium-term investment plan, as ODA is, at its core, an investment issue.

One participant noted that insufficient money causes problems, but so does an excess of money; funding assistance keeps coming in, but where it goes must be properly prioritized.

The next question was for Pamugas. A workshop participant sought more information about Bohol's ability to become and thereafter remain rice-sufficient despite the hilly terrain of the province. According to Pamugas, this is achieved by adapting their planting technology to their terrain. Also, having relatively the same set of people as leaders in the municipal governments has helped ensure continuity in the local government's agricultural policies.

Lastly, there was a comment made about the feminist character of the concept of food sovereignty. According to one participant, the ability to nurture (presumably in a maternal manner) cooperation, complementarity, and sustainability are highly valued by both feminists and food sovereignty advocates.

Observations

The panel can be described as being primarily concerned with the proper allocation of relatively abundant and readily usable resources. The government has powers that can ensure that these resources—immovable, replenishable, conditionally donated—benefit everyone, including the poorest of the poor. The government can challenge the international forces—some seemingly deliberately malevolent, others acting with the “best intentions”—that keep them from doing otherwise, largely through the assistance of civil society as well as the academe. However, these same powers make it difficult to make the government accountable for actions that hinder efforts to defeat food insecurity at the national level.

Florencio was able to show the little-explored link between food sovereignty and nutrition. The households’ control (or lack of it) over their food selection and consumption, and the factors that threaten or reinforce their local knowledge and daily practices related to food and nutrition are integral to the very concept of food sovereignty, in its expanded version.

PANEL FIVE: FARMER’S AND CONSUMER’S ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN THE PHILIPPINES

The last panel focuses attention on unconventional ways of mainstreaming advocacy for the objectives of food sovereignty.

Errol Ramos of the Fair Trade Alliance (FTA) delivered a briefing on “Fair Trade Movement and Food in the Philippines,” which was primarily a discussion of what food sovereignty means to FTA. Before going into that, he first remarked about the urgency of the discussions in the workshop; with a new administration and the threats of climate change, it is imperative that the multiple sectors involved in food production identify opportunities to combat structural hunger. In FTA’s view, this begins by ascertaining the role of small farmers and agrarian reform beneficiaries in the attainment of food sovereignty in the Philippines.

This determinative process hinges on what definition of food sovereignty stakeholders and policymakers subscribe to. FTA believes that food sovereignty is primarily the capacity to grow food without foreign assistance—in other words, agricultural self-sufficiency. This is far from the definition of food sovereignty—in fact “food security”—that the Philippine’s National Economic and Development Authority prefers—that is, having enough money to purchase food from food growers in other countries. The productive capacities of local farmers suffer from such trader-bias. The FTA also believes that the capacity to determine how land is utilized is also constitutive of food sovereignty. Finally, FTA critically links food sovereignty with sustainable agriculture through organic farming. Thus, involving farmers in the path toward food sovereignty necessarily entails giving them the means to determine where their produce goes. This can be done through the formation of farmers’ cooperatives whose members manage themselves, so as to make farming a highly profitable activity.

Bert Peeters describes his advocacy for “Permaculture as Alternative Agriculture” as a product of frustration. In Cabiao, Nueva Ecija, a province in the center of the Philippines’ largest island, he sought to implement a sustainable development framework with a number of land developers. The framework proved to be ineffective. Peeters then came across permaculture, a system for efficient resource management that relies on naturally observable systems for developing sustainable systems of human-nature interaction systems. Peeters described it as against “quick-fix” approaches to resource management. It is an approach that fully takes into account “natural principles”, understanding the “place” of everything in nature.

Inspired by permaculture, Peeters formed the Cabiokid Foundation, which takes its name from Cabiao, the prefix “bio-,” and “bukid,” the Filipino word for farm. The foundation maintains a permaculture spot in Cabiao. There, according to Peeters, people utilize “the least amount of energy for the greatest possible effect.” There, human activity is restricted to certain zones; other zones where other creatures are allowed to live are left untouched. Peeters shared insights he obtained from practicing permaculture, such as the necessity of understanding small systems before learning to manage large systems. Whether large or small, permaculture demands that man-made systems mimic those that are naturally occurring.

What happens when female farmers take the lead in promoting sustainable agriculture? This was the topic of the presentation made by

Margie Lacanilao of Kasarian-Kalayaan (literally “gender-freedom,” shortened as Sarilaya), which was entitled “Women Promoting Sustainable Agriculture: The Sarilaya Experience.” Lacanilao shared that female farmers in the Philippines face the peculiar problem of nonrecognition—their farming tasks are largely seen as household work. As a “socialist eco-feminist” organization, Sarilaya brings together women from across the country to support the upliftment of women’s welfare while contributing to the development of local communities at large. While its concerns are quite broad, Lacanilao limited her discussion to the food production aspect of Sarilaya’s initiatives.

In the Imelda Valley in Nueva Ecija, women—the majority of the valley’s population—began to adopt solely organic agriculture practices. Sarilaya popularized the utilization of a “household” approach to farming, wherein production extends beyond the fields to backyard gardens. As a feminist organization, Sarilaya also has the unique advantage of linking itself with other women movements to support of its activities. According to Lacanilao, Sarilaya’s successes are manifold. Its farmer-members, as well as their families, are eating a wide variety of nutritious food grown in the little land they own. In the Imelda Valley, farmers manage to share their advances and surpluses to neighboring communities while remaining self-sustaining.

Benedicto Sanchez of Organik na Negros! Organic Producers and Retailers Association (ONOPRA) showed a video about his organization’s achievements. ONOPRA has been popularizing organic agriculture through collaborations with local government. As the video was being shown, Sanchez said that there is no need to wait for more progressive politicians to come to power in order to promote organic agriculture, at least at the municipal level, as there are “traditional politicians” who are willing to give organic agriculture a chance. Sanchez also showed that “organic” need not necessarily mean “vegetarian.”

The final presentation was on “Organic Agriculture, Marketing, and Consumer Activism” by Joy Ann Dimabuyu of Agri Aqua Network International, Inc. (AANI). Dimabuyu described the specialization of her organization as the promotion of organic agriculture through various marketing activities. Dimabuyu said that while the market for organic agriculture in the Philippines remains small, there is much potential for it to grow into a viable agribusiness. There are, however, obstacles to fulfilling this potential. For example, many farmers are wary of adopting organic agriculture practices, as they fear

that there are few buyers of organic produce. The difficulty of price standardization is similarly a major hindrance.

AANI seeks to address these roadblocks through effective marketing; that is, generating consumer interest in organically grown food. AANI seeks to give consumers options to “go organic”—hopefully developing a strong consumer base for such products as a consequence. Dimabuyu wants to gain consumer trust in the superiority of organic produce, which in turn she hopes will result in return business—necessary for the sustainability of organic farms. Dimabuyu lauded the farm-to-market roads built in recent years by the Philippine government, citing these as significant advances in bringing organic products to more locations in the country. Among the spaces AANI uses to promote organic produce are government trading posts, organic weekend markets, and multi-sponsor organic fairs. While AANI directly supports a number of organic farmers, Dimabuyu also believes that consumers are equally primary beneficiaries of their activities; AANI’s initiatives may be a means to encouraging consumers from across the country to demand the nationwide abandonment of chemical-based farming.

Discussion

The open forum began with a strong suggestion from one of the first-day panelists. He said that looking at the promotion of organic agriculture as primarily a matter of marketing toward obtaining profit is incorrect. Such a view, according to him, fails to take into account the welfare of rural farmers. These farmers should not produce simply for profit; they must be able to produce primarily for their own consumption. It is erroneous to focus on sellers over producers.

Sanchez was the first to reply to these comments. He said that ONOPRA’s initial concept of food security is ensuring the availability of rice between planting season and harvest time. Sanchez emphasized that agriculture must be based on profit, as it is necessary for farmers to pay for land capital and labor costs. Farmers cannot always rely on microcredit from nongovernment organizations. Dimabuyu stressed the importance of bringing the produce of farmers to the market. This is the sole way for farmers to earn the profit they require. Marketing helps farmers participate in a process wherein there is a delivery of goods to consumers for valuable consideration, which will hopefully result in return business and help the producers make their productive engagements sustainable.

The next question was again directed to Sanchez and Dimabuyu. One participant wanted to know the level of the debate regarding price standardization of organic produce within the organizations given representation in the panel. According to Sanchez, certification costs and market competition are the primary considerations in determining the prices of organic produce in Negros. Dimabuyu believes that one's target market is the primary determinant of the price of one's goods; if an organic rice seller's target demographic can pay high prices, then those are the prices that the seller should charge. While she subscribes to a notion of profit maximization, her organization nevertheless makes public access to organic goods—that is, providing consumers with healthier choices at affordable prices—their priority.

Ramos was asked how far FTA has gone into examining the discourse of linking agricultural policy with industrial policy, given that the rhetoric of delinking these policies has given rise to growing disinterest of recent generations in farming as an occupation. In response, Ramos gave examples of agriculture-industry linkages (tobacco farmers working in the cigarette industry, dairy farmers working with dairy companies). He said that the key to making the link more apparent is making agriculture a profitable enterprise by giving support to farmers in accordance with a nationalist framework of production.

A participant wanted a clearer distinction of permaculture and organic farming. Peeters reiterated that permaculture concerns a wider range of human-nature interaction than organic farming. It is a systematic approach that offers insights into long-term solutions to the degradation of the environment resulting from human activity. Organic farming can be a component of permaculture, but the approach goes far beyond food production.

Another participant fielded a “burning question” for Ramos. With rural farmers producing primarily for the urban market, receiving little in return from their dealings with middlemen, where is “fair trade” in Philippine agribusiness? How can there be “fair trade” when prices are set primarily for the benefit of traders? Ramos was firmly in agreement that farmers should have been receiving more payment for their produce long before the rice crisis, which was the only time when the price of rice was significantly increased. The government should strike a balance between producer welfare—that is, the livelihood of farmers—and consumer welfare, meeting the needs of both the urban and rural poor for better accessibility to sufficient food.

Who is making money from the marketing of organic goods? How can organizations such as AANI mainstream organic produce? These questions brought about various responses from practically everyone in the room. Participants were commenting on how organic products seem to have a niche market, thus the higher prices against nonorganic products. One participant believed that farmers' cooperatives should be in charge of bringing organic produce to the public, lessening the costs of transporting goods to accessible markets, and increasing the profits of farmers. Participants thereafter chorused with pronouncements against middlemen; one participant went so far as to claim that the lives of farmers will never improve as long as there are intervening traders. Another first-day panelist stated that organic production should become the norm. Additionally, farmers should cease producing food for "urban gods."

Sanchez reiterated his call for government support, suggesting that there can be no mainstreaming of organic agriculture without utilizing the unique powers of the government. Dimabuyu went back to pricing concerns. She sees the need to work in tandem with an agriculturalist to properly calculate costs from production to marketing. This arrangement has made sure that the farmers working with AANI make as much profit as they can from selling their organic produce.

Observations

Ramos was originally part of the fourth panel, set to provide a critique of government trading policies vis-à-vis agriculture. His accommodation in this panel was a fortunate change. It appears that his presence in a panel primarily consisting of farmer advocates and consumer activists brought to the surface questions about traders that would have been given insufficient emphasis if an avowed supporter of fair trade was absent.

This is the most ideologically diverse of the workshop's discussant groups. Or so it seems; regardless of their differences on trading systems, the panelists were implicitly in agreement that foreign intervention is undesirable interference in the Philippine fight against food insecurity. There was also a tacit agreement that "going organic" is not a panacea for food insecurity—it is but one means among others. The societal changes necessary for achieving food sovereignty are more varied than those contemplated by people who think that the shift to organic agriculture is an end in itself.

DAY TWO IN BRIEF

With two panelists overtly championing government support of civil society initiatives, a couple of NGO representatives who are less than eager to collaborate with the government, a feminist farmer, a land developer advocating a species of anti-anthropocentrism, a prominent nutritionist with academic and civil society ties, and an organic agriculture marketing specialist, there were more clashing mind-sets among day-two presenters than among the panelists of the first day.

Nevertheless, there were commonalities in the panelists' line of arguments. There was a clear consensus that mainstreaming organic agriculture practices was a necessity. Tampering with the genetic makeup of edibles is abhorrent; and "fortifying" food as a long-term solution to malnutrition is ridiculous. There is also a tacit agreement that attaining mere rice sufficiency is never enough; apart from rice, there must be varieties of nourishing food available to everybody. In short, the panelists agree that palliatives to food insecurity inevitably fail.

There were, however, clear points of divergence. First is the matter of foreign assistance. Is foreign funding for agricultural development a boon or the cause of unnecessary complications? Another point of contention is the issue of whether there is a need for the integration of farmers into increasingly larger market systems. Some of the panelists were for turning farming into a highly lucrative profession; others were for the abandonment of the pursuit of profit by food producers, convinced that self-sustainability means absolute nonreliance on trade for basic necessities. This contention surfaces the complications of treating food like nonnutritive commodities, which the advocates of food sovereignty, strictly defined, are vehemently against.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: LINGERING QUESTIONS

Workshop convenor Dominique Caouette from the Network on Transnational Dynamics and Collective Action ended the whole affair by asking unanswered questions that arose from the discussions in the workshop. First, he wondered aloud if the popularization of organic agriculture was a means to food sovereignty or alleviating poverty, or a concluding objective in itself; regardless, who truly benefits from making organic agriculture mainstream? Second, what are the dilemmas of scaling up when one succeeds in small-scale sustainable food production ventures? Third, if the concept of food sovereignty has

underlying values, what constitutes the concept's ethical dimension? Finally, can changes in the processes of food production be made reconcilable with structural changes, or changes in the relations of food production, with the attainment of food sovereignty in mind?

The author left the workshop with a couple of questions in addition to those aforementioned. Most of the participants used food sovereignty and food security interchangeably. There would have been less debate if the workshop's focus was the latter. According to FAO, food security "exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 2003). Thus, food security is a concept more palatable not only to national governments and multinational corporations but also to residents of urban centers, who thrive on the "willingness" of producers to grow what paying nonproducers want, as food security is about providing adequate food for both productive and leisure activities—not about "cultural appropriateness" or "ecologically sound" methods of producing food (Forum for Food Sovereignty 2007). Thus, will food sovereignty ever supplant national food security as a government policy agenda, especially in countries like the Philippines, where mere subsistence is unachievable for many?

There is a possibility that the concept of food sovereignty, as deployed in Southeast Asia, is cut from the same cloth as the "nativism" that were prevalent in many countries after they transitioned from colony to sovereign state, thus a dangerously antihistoricist concept existing solely to challenge Northern imperialism. It would certainly seem so if food sovereignty is made a component of an isolationist national economic policy. In any case, food sovereignty seems difficult to defend against arguments that the concept exists solely to expand the vocabulary of dissent against the so-called Western European-American hegemony. How can food sovereignty activists and advocates in Southeast Asia address such criticism of the concept?

Most of the participants wanted a follow-up activity to address lingering concerns like the aforementioned. Should such an activity fail to materialize, perhaps the materials consolidated by this workshop are already sufficient to generate interest in conducting further inquiries into a fairly new theoretical contribution to addressing the myriad food problems of Southeast Asia. ❀

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