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ENRAGED: WOMEN AND NATURE

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[FIAN International](#) was founded in 1986 as a human rights organization advocating for the realization of the human right to adequate food and nutrition.

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In the heart of Northern Syria, rising from the ruins, there is an ecological village built by and for women of diverse backgrounds and faiths. With their bare hands they build their homes, their schools, and their farms. Amidst the violence, these women create a peaceful place for themselves and their children, free from the oppression of patriarchy, and in respect with nature. This is just one example from this year's *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch* (hereinafter, the *Watch*), as it continues to support the struggles of small-scale producers and those most affected by hunger and malnutrition.¹ The *Watch*, grounded in the lived experiences of real people, seeks to contribute to radically transforming our food systems to ensure the realization of the human right to adequate food and nutrition for all, without discrimination. Contributors to the *Watch* have long underscored the pivotal role of women in food systems and food work,² highlighting women's rights as an inalienable component of a holistic understanding of the right to food and nutrition.³

This year's contributors seek to amplify this lens, placing women at the epicenter of food systems. It is a timely issue given the ever-increasing violence and attacks against women (and communities in general) who seek to reimagine food, environment and economies in ways that do not conform with the rise of corporate power and neoliberal right-wing governments. It is in the face of systemic violence – which is inherent in patriarchal capitalism and underpins the current ecological crisis – that women's individual and collective struggles for the right to food and nutrition are located.

¹ Between 2008 and 2018, the *Watch* has had contributions from around 275 authors, civil society organizations and social movements from all over the world. In all issues, regional and gender balance has been key.

² By food work we refer to all activities/labor around food: from producing, preparing, and cooking, to buying/sharing, and disposing of food.

As authors of this framing piece, we weave together the stories shared in this issue through the nexus of women-violence-nature. The five articles reflect an array of women's struggles, activism and analysis with regard to the right to food and nutrition. Each in their own way, the articles: (i) bring to the fore the predominantly right-wing political climate in which this activism takes place; (ii) highlight state violence through various discriminatory international and national policies which act to constrain and curtail women's autonomy through restricting and undermining their right to food and nutrition and other human rights; (iii) illuminate how patriarchy and the hegemonic neoliberal capitalist food and agricultural system negatively impacts both women and nature; and (iv) foreground the resistance being waged for a just food system. We view these insights as evidence of a food system in which both women and nature are exploited, 'othered', and made invisible, while also demonstrating new ways of being with each other and nature.

THE HIDDEN HANDS

The focus of this *Watch* issue is on women and the articles are developed predominantly by women from all corners of the world.⁴ The five articles give explicit visibility to Black, Dalit, indigenous, migrant, refugee and LGBTIQ women. The articles also highlight the individual and collective struggles of urban and rural women, peasants, agricultural workers, small-scale producers, pastoralists, fisherwomen, consumers, asylum seekers, refugees, mothers, sisters, daughters and wives. Their identities and positionalities are multiple and fluid across time and space. As revealed by an intersectional feminist approach and a right to food and nutrition perspective, women's lives and experiences, and their relationship with and access to adequate food (or lack thereof), are shaped not *just* by their gender, but also by their race, ethnicity, caste, class, sexual orientation or identity, geographical location (urban/rural, North/South), and (dis)ability, among other factors. *Watch 2019* authors Woods and Gioia critically challenge us not to render women as homogenous. Their conversation asks us to center questions of race as well as sexual orientation in our intersectional approach to the right to food and nutrition, and the food sovereignty movement at large.⁵

Women continue to be disproportionately affected by hunger, and rendered invisible in food systems. Yet paradoxically, despite all attempts to separate them from the land, women make up the bulk of food producers and agricultural workers. In many communities, women are the bearers of traditional knowledge around plants, biodiversity and seeds, in other words, the "progenitors of our food chains".⁶ Women also play a key role in livestock rearing, in protecting forests, rivers, lakes and seas, and in fisheries – from net weaving and fish catching, to fish trading and processing.⁷ Simultaneously, they are "at the forefront of the struggle for a non-capitalist use of natural resources (...), globally building the way to a new non-exploitative society, and one in which the threat of famines and ecological devastation will be dispelled."⁸ Their actions are embedded in a context of ecological crisis, where present and future risk of climate collapse is an ever-present reminder of nature's rage.

The stories told show that, while many women globally are food producers, almost all women are feeding the world as food finders, makers and feeders – of men, families and communities. Women worldwide take up most of the burden of social reproductive work in both urban and rural contexts, even while on the move, taking up to 10 hours a day. Seibert, Sayeed, Georgieva and Guerra elucidate the varied food work that women accomplish: "[f]rom breastfeeding (...) to the preparation and cooking of food in daily life, women in many cultures are the custodians of

3 As outlined in the *Watch 2015*, "(...) FIAN International, the social movements and civil society organizations that constitute the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition (GNRFN) have interpreted the right to adequate food and nutrition as embedding food sovereignty, the *full realization of women's human rights* [emphasis added], and the indivisibility of all human rights." Schieck Valente, Flavio Luiz. "The Corporate Capture of Food and Nutrition Governance: A Threat to Human Rights and Peoples' Sovereignty". *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch(2015)*: 19. Available at : www.righttofoodandnutrition.org/files/Watch_2015_Article_1_The%20Corporate%20Capture%20of%20Food%20and%20Nutrition%20Governance.pdf.

4 It gathers the contributions from over 30 authors, interviewees and reviewers, all but one are women, from over 20 countries from all regions in the world. They include small-scale food producers, a farmer and beekeeper, an agronomist, and an environmental engineer, activists, academics and researchers, among others. Several articles were drafted through collective methodologies, including interviews, teleconferences and written inputs.

5 We are reminded that reflexivity and an awareness of positionality – particularly around who and how we organize, who speaks for whom, when and how, and which voices are elevated – should be central to any meaningful feminist praxis. Without this, we tread dangerously, risking to erase the very processes and voices which women fight to build.

6 Andrews, Donna and Lewis, Desiree. *Decolonising Food Systems And Sewing Seeds Of Resistance*. Johannesburg: African Center for Biodiversity, 2017. p. 2. Available at: acbio.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Decolonising-Food-Systems-and-Sowing-Seeds-of-Resistance.pdf; Andrews, Mercia. "A case study of the Southern African Rural Women's Assembly: We can bend the stick". *Agenda* 33 (2019): 1-11. Available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10130950.2019.1598275; Permanent People's Tribunal on Transnational Corporations in Southern Africa. *Permanent Peoples Tribunal Juror Report on Transnational*

Corporations in Southern Africa. August 18-19, 2016. Available at: permanentpeopletribunal.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/09/PPT_SWAZILAND_FINAL_SEPT2016.pdf.

7 FIAN International. "Fishing for Gender Justice on Women's Day". March 8, 2019. Available at: www.fian.org/en/news/article/fishing-for-gender-justice-on-womens-day-2165.

8 Federici, Silvia. "Women, Land-Struggles and Globalization: An International Perspective". *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 39:1-2 (2004). Available at: journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0021909604048250.

healthy food practices and promoters of just food and nutrition systems." Galeano and Sosa narrate that women migrating from Central America to the United States look for food, cook, and put their children first when food is scarce.

Throughout this issue authors underscore the importance to make visible this invisible, unpaid, unrecognized social reproductive work of women. At multiple levels, it is central to the maintenance of, and explicitly subsidizes, the current neoliberal global food regime – from the home to the countryside. Particularly in rural areas and working class communities, women's work is 'free' – it is not recognized as work, and is often regarded as a woman's duty. This obscures the unfair social division of labor, as well as the energy and creativity that goes into women's food work. These roles are ascribed and socially embedded, and call for constant reflection so as to shine light on our own assumptions, as well as on the values we assign to women's roles and food work in society.

THE FOOD NEXUS

Who is hungry? Who carries the burden of this hunger? Who produces food and why? These are crucial questions in our understanding of the dominant food system and to our resistance to it. A significant contribution of the five articles is that they draw our attention to the place of food at the nexus of women, violence and nature. They each demonstrate this by showing the multiple axes of power that actively discriminate against women's right to food and nutrition. In the UK, for instance, Woods describes how Black women, women of color, and migrant and refugee women have limited access to food and other human rights. These women are underrepresented, marginalized, and excluded, erased from policies, research and data. Their analysis suggests that it is in no way coincidental that non-conforming bodies are denied the right to food and nutrition.

Our gaze as readers is turned squarely on the unrelenting systemic attack on wellbeing. Contextualizing this nexus within the multiple crises of this current period, the articles bring to the fore the political and economic machinery that food work and activism are situated in. All this is the result of gender-ascribed roles that are rooted in the unequal sexual division of labor in the patriarchal and capitalist society, and which must be deconstructed from an ecofeminist critical perspective.

We propose an additional lens to deepen and examine this nexus, by locating it within a broader frame of ecological destruction and crisis. Natural resource exploitation, declining biodiversity, pollution and contamination, overconsumption and climate change are just some of the socio-ecological impacts of contemporary food systems.⁹ These affect *all* humans (albeit unequally), who *all* ultimately depend on a healthy planet to survive and to thrive. We posit that the ecological crisis is a result of socially constructed hierarchies — the domination of "human by humans",¹⁰ enabling us to situate and connect the structural inequality against women and the destruction of nature both materially and ideologically. The materiality of food and its embodiment and embeddedness espouses that food activism and narratives encourages the "right to the visceral, spiritual and sensory freedoms"¹¹ as well as the right to outrage, revolt and anger.

The narratives shared in the articles primarily show the denial, limited access, unequal and unjust distribution of food. The denial of food as a human right undermines our individual and collective humanity. Food is not equivalent to calories: "[n]utrition cannot be separated from food, health, the environment and agricul-

9 Smith, Kiah. "Food Systems Failure: Can we avert future crises?" in Shucksmith Mark, and David Brown, eds. *Routledge International Handbook of Rural Studies*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016. pp. 250-262.

10 Mellor, Mary. *Feminism and Ecology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997.

11 Lewis, Desiree. "Bodies, matter and feminist freedoms: Revisiting the politics of food". *Agenda* 30:4 (2016): 6-16.

ture..., [they] are comprised of identity, love, care, and spirituality, as well as physical, mental and emotional health.” More so, they “integrate the transmission of knowledge, languages, ceremonies, dances and prayers, as well as stories and songs related to subsistence practices and traditional foods.”¹²

CAPITALISM, PATRIARCHY AND ECOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION

For decades, critical analysis has critiqued the dominant capitalist agricultural model and prevailing food regime.¹³ Researchers have shown the negative impacts and consequences it has on the livelihoods of many subsistence peasants, small-scale farmers, producers and fishers in the countries of the South.¹⁴ It is widely acknowledged that we need systemic changes and a human rights-based approach to address parallel crises of food, climate and livelihoods.¹⁵ Yet there is little research on the gender impact of the current food regime on women, even less from a feminist perspective, and only a handful from an ecofeminist critique.¹⁶ The hunger bias towards colonized bodies – be it in the countries of the South or migrants, refugees or first generation citizens in the countries of the North – appears absent in understanding who is hungry at a systemic level. Similarly there is limited race-, class- and gender-based analysis of who is over-consuming food, where they reside, and of how the well fed conceive of food, and their socio-economic position in relation to the hungry.

By contrast, ecofeminist work emphasizes that positionality matters and reminds those in countries from the North that they “dominate an increasingly fragile earth, ‘mastering’ a nature from which we are largely alienated. As a ‘people of plenty’ we produce a cornucopia of goods and services at the expense of our environment, the Third World, and the laboring peoples”.¹⁷ Society requires a renewed focus and critique on the overproduction and overconsumption of food, which would entail measuring food budgets, food waste, and more importantly, how skewed and disproportionate these are for those who are most hungry.

The articles presented here make evident that the dominant food system is biased. First, the history of global food regimes is one in which colonialism, imperialism, globalization and neoliberalism have sought to privatize land and dislocate women from food production so as to entrench reliance on global food markets.¹⁸ This has been achieved through neoliberal, capitalist (i.e. the dominant) food and agricultural policies, as well as the privatization of social services, and the roll back on social protection. Several articles in this *Watch* cite some key barriers to women’s right to food and nutrition, such as the World Bank’s structural adjustment programs, tariff and import liberalization, market and financial deregulation, and a shift in food production from local consumption to export. Other factors are: the dismantling of food and nutrition councils and agricultural boards; market-related land reform policies; lack of decent wages; land grabs; corporatization and privatization; and peasant dispossession. As a result of all this, hunger disproportionately affects women, particularly in the Global South.

Second, of equal importance is to recognize that the current food regime is predicated on an extractivist model, which causes irrefutable ecological destruction on the commons, which women around the world depend upon. Galeano and Sosa cite land dispossession from peasant, indigenous and Garifuna (Afro-descendant) communities to advance extractivism in Honduras – and the resulting destruction of small-scale farming – as one of the structural causes of the feminization of both poverty and migration. Similarly, Leyesa and Gioia critique the extractivist model of

¹² Galdames Castro, Mafalda and María Daniela Nuñez Burbano de Lara. “Gender and Food Sovereignty: Women as Active Subjects in the Provision of Food and Nutrition”. *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch* (2015):31. Available at: www.righttofoodandnutrition.org/node/32.

¹³ For example: George, Susan. *How The Other Half Dies*. New York: Penguin Press, 1986; Patel, Raj. *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*. London: Portobello Books, 2007; Holtz-Giménez, Eric, ed. *Food movement unite! Strategies to transform our food system*. Oakland: Food First books, 2011; Friedman, Harriet. “From Colonialism to Green Capitalism: Social Movements and Emergence of Food Regimes”, in Buttel, Frederick H. and Philip McMichael, eds. “New Directions in the Sociology of Global Development”. *Research in Rural Sociology and Development* 11 (2005): 227-264.

¹⁴ For example: Tsikata Dzodzi and Dede-Esi Amanor-Wilks. “Land, Labour and Gendered Livelihoods”. *Feminist Africa* 12 (2009). Available at: www.agi.ac.za/agi/feminist-africa/12.

¹⁵ Mahon, Claire. “The right to food: a right for everyone”, in Rosin, C., P. Stock, P and H. Campbell, eds. *Food Systems Failure: The global food crisis and the future of agriculture*. Oxon UK: Earthscan/Routledge, 2012. pp. 83-97; Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. *Human Rights Council Thirty-first session, Agenda item 3 - Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development*. A/HRC/31/51. 2015. Available at: undocs.org/en/A/HRC/31/51.

¹⁶ For example: Shiva, Vandana. *Who really feeds the world?: The failures of agribusiness and the promise of agroecology*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2016. pp. 56-66; and *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. London: Zed Books, 1989; Cock, Jacklyn. “A feminist response to the food crisis in contemporary South Africa.” *Agenda* 30:1 (2016): 121-132. Available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10130950.2016.1196983.

¹⁷ Merchant, Carolyn. *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender and Science in New England*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989. p. xiii.

¹⁸ Federici. *Supra* note 8.

production, and Seibert et al. reject the “predatory model of agrarian capitalism”, and validate the deconstruction of oppressive and exploitative systems that women are subjected to. This is akin to the exploitation of nature at the center of ecofeminist perspectives.¹⁹

19 Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990; Mies, Maria and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books, 2014; Federici, Silvia. *Revolution at Point Zero*. Oakland: PM Press, 2012.

20 Ruder, Sarah-Louise and Sophia Rose Sanniti. “Transcending the Learned Ignorance of Predatory Ontologies: A Research Agenda for an Ecofeminist-Informed Ecological Economic”. *Sustainability* 11(5), (2019):1479. Available at: www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/5/1479.

21 Razavi, Shahra. “Engendering the political economy of agrarian change”. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36: 1 (2009):198.

22 Smith, Kiah. *Ethical trade, gender and sustainable livelihoods: Women, smallholders and ethicality in Kenya*. London: Routledge, 2014.

23 Gibson-Graham, J.K. *The end of capitalism (as we knew it): A feminist critique of political economy*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

24 UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. *Supra* note 15.

Third, in making gender visible in the process of food work and food systems, we seek to make the unfair division of labor apparent and bring to the fore how patriarchal capitalism exploits and extracts labor from women (as well as people of color, non-human animals, nature and other ‘others’).²⁰ Feminists have long criticized processes of neoliberal restructuring as “an attempt by capital (and the state) to shift the burden of reproduction and care of the labor force onto the shoulders of women (and girls) whose unpaid labor was (wrongly) assumed to be infinitely elastic, and the functioning of households (also wrongly) considered to be something that could be taken for granted”.²¹ From the vantage point of rights and livelihoods, it is impossible to separate women’s day-to-day knowledges, practices, labor and values around food provisioning and consumption from the conditions required for the effective functioning of global food systems and the environments on which they depend.²² This has led some feminists²³ to de-emphasize capitalist markets as the ‘norm’, in order to give more weight to ‘diverse economies’ in which much of women’s work occurs.

POWER AND VIOLENCE

Violence is a “primary form of discrimination, impedes women from engaging in their own right to adequate food and nutrition, and efforts to overcome hunger and malnutrition”.²⁴ Diverse women’s experiences in the articles reflect this. This structural, systematic, gender-based violence occurs at the level of families and households, within communities and cultures, and is enacted by corporations and the state. Under patriarchy, violence affects *all* women, but some women are more persecuted than others: Gioia shows that “gender non-conforming people know what multiple discrimination means ...Afro-descendant trans women suffer high levels of violence and discrimination by society and the police”. Quoted in Leyesa, Kurdish researcher Salima Tasmemir narrates how “[s]tate-led forced displacement [of Kurds] and deforestation have affected the lives of local people due to loss of livestock and the destruction of fields and orchards, agricultural tools and other assets”. Galeano and Sosa highlight state-led violence against women human/environmental rights defenders, and widespread incidences of gender-specific harassment, sexual assault and even death, whereby “the most attacked are women who defend land and the rights of indigenous peoples”. They also highlight how six out of every ten women who migrate from Central America to the United States are raped in the journey. Filipina activist Mary Ann Manahan, also quoted in Leyesa, narrates how female activists and journalists face threats of sexual violence online in the Philippines. Woods’ article connects racism, immigration laws and the active denial of women’s human rights with unequal access to legal justice for women in the UK.

In these examples, prejudice and discrimination are overt and targeted at women. Their experiences of gender inequality related to their identities/social positioning are entwined with attitudes and actions that discriminate, exclude and limit women’s right to food and nutrition, right to land and other human rights such as housing, labor, decent work and wages, the right to asylum and justice. Taking this analysis further, the articles show how gender-based violence is also the serious,

life-threatening outcome of deepening political authoritarianism, militarization, neo-fascism, extreme nationalism, religious conservatism, trans/homophobia, neo-liberalism, corporatization, and modern imperialism. The rise of right wing politics globally plays out on women's access, control and rights to food and nutrition via migrant and refugee policy, racism and xenophobia, and in the patriarchal control of women's food and bodily autonomy. This is perhaps most clearly described by Tasdemir when she says that in Kurdish regions "women are discriminated because of their ethnic identity *and* because they are women. They are targeted by state authorities and oppressed by the patriarchal structures of their own societies."

We wish to add to this perspective a more critical assessment of the role that violence against women plays in relation to food systems: that the active violence enacted against women – albeit differentiated by race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or geographical location – is nothing less than the reactionary politics of the powerful to uphold the status quo hierarchy of patriarchy. From an ecofeminist perspective, the violence, discrimination and other injustices against women who seek to feed themselves and others reveal much about patriarchy and the "dominating, exploitative and oppressive relations that validate and maintain the structural inequalities pivotal to capitalism".²⁵

Indeed, a long history of feminist analysis has drawn attention to the ways that women, nature and the 'other' are viewed as subordinate to the dominant 'norm' of white, male capitalism.²⁶ All of the articles in this issue of the *Watch* reveal the complex and problematic processes by which women come to be 'othered' within the global food system, alongside how power and patriarchy reaffirm dominant binaries such as male/female, society/nature, production/reproduction, North/South, local/global, traditional/modern and culture/economy. This domination and violence is played out materially on women's bodies and their access to land and other natural resources, and culturally-politically via the devaluation of women's social reproductive food work and knowledge.

FROM RESISTANCE TO REBELLION

The organization and articulation of feminist struggles in various parts of the world is a critical peg in the struggle for food justice. In the decade that has passed since the world food price crisis of 2007/8, the unprecedented upsurge of civic mobilization and radical resistance to entrenched food politics worldwide has only intensified. This has happened in parallel to movements for climate justice, such as *Extinction Rebellion* and *Fridays for Future*, *Right to Say No*, LGBTTIQ rights, *#MeToo*, *#FeesMustFall* and related campaigns, like *#BabaeAko* (I am a woman) in the Philippines, and other pro-democracy uprisings, such as the *Arab Spring* and the *Umbrella* movement in Hong Kong.

Women's agency expresses itself in subtle yet powerful daily resistance and in organized social movements. The women at the heart of experiencing food injustice and struggles are in their kitchens, in the market, in the countryside and towns, mounting sustained resistance. Some are warding off land grabs by state and mining companies, often against the backdrop of violence and intimidation. In Brazil, for example, Leyesa observes how "[w]omen who had never participated in organizations before now have the urge to do it, to fight for their rights". Other women are participating in local food councils in their cities, or in international food governance spaces. A case in point is provided by authors Seibert et al., food producers and

²⁵ Ruder and Sanniti. *Supra* note 20.

²⁶ Mies and Shiva. *Supra* note 19; Gibson-Graham. *Supra* note 23; Mellor. *Supra* note 10; Salleh, Ariel. *Ecofeminism as Politics, Second Edition: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern*; London: Zed Books, 2017; Tsing, Anna. *The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015.

activist women negotiating at the UN Committee on World Food Security for new standards on land, forests, fisheries, or food systems and nutrition, where civil society and indigenous peoples act under the banner of ‘*Nothing about us without us*’.

Others, slowly and steadily, are transforming social relations in quiet ways through feeding themselves from the food they produce or the gardens they plant to feed their communities, such as the women of the free ecological women’s village of Rojava in Northern Syria, whose story Tasdemir shares with us. They all remind us that ‘small is beautiful’, and that subversive politics is a key component in the armaments against the relentless onslaught of patriarchal capitalism. The immense power of women’s resistance cannot be understated. As summarized by feminist scholar Federici:

*we should recognize that the persistence and prevalence of subsistence farming is an astounding fact considering that ... capitalist development has been premised on the separation of ...women ... from the land. Indeed, it can only be explained on the basis of a tremendous struggle that women have made to resist the commercialization of agriculture.*²⁷

²⁷ Federici. *Supra* note 8, p.48.

REIMAGINING FOOD SYSTEMS

In every article in this year’s issue of the *Watch*, the authors highlight the rage felt by women across the world, and how they organize, mobilize and resist. Women are central protagonists in the struggle for agroecology and food sovereignty (Seibert et al.), in indigenous and non-indigenous solidarity (Galeano and Sosa), and in the rejection of corporatization, violence (Leyesa), and discrimination based on sexism, class and race (Woods). As Gioia writes “a united struggle that challenges gender norms, seeks bodily autonomy and brings down patriarchal, racist and colonial structures can become a counter-threat”. Similarly, Brazilian activist Michela Calaça, quoted in Leyesa, calls for building international alliances to resist agri-business and protect and promote “nature, peasant seeds, real food, and agroecology,” emphasizing that such a fight “will also benefit the planet that suffers from the consequences of climate change”.

Women are, and have always been, central to the creation of radical food politics that have the power to reconnect us with nature, remake social relations and prioritize intersectional justice.²⁸ Supporting this, with examples from Cuba, India, Rwanda and Mali, Seibert et al. illustrate how women worldwide are advancing agroecological practices that strive for both social and ecological justice. These practices can transform not only our relationship with nature, but also gender relations within communities, strengthening female autonomy, the recognition of women’s work and the creation of equal participation spaces. Yet for agroecology to fully achieve this transformative potential, a feminist approach is indispensable. Gioia shares the experience of the Land Dyke Feminist Family farm in Taiwan, whose members are simultaneously bringing gender awareness into agricultural practices and promoting biodiversity through agroecology. The author argues that such experiences can help us rethink and redefine both the concept of family – moving from a monolithic, heteronormative and paternalistic model towards a pluralistic approach – and the way in which agriculture and farms are structured. This is just one way that women are developing alternative forms of power and counter-narratives for food justice and food sovereignty.²⁹

²⁸ Andrews and Lewis. *Supra* note 6.

²⁹ Cock, Jacklyn. “A feminist response to the food crisis in contemporary South Africa”. *Agenda* 30 (2016): 121-132.

By acknowledging that non-market transactions and unpaid household work constitute up to 50% of economic activities globally, “the discursive violence entailed in speaking of ‘capitalist’ economies”³⁰ can be queried. In this year’s *Watch*, for example, Seibert et al. point out the need for generating a new economy where productive and reproductive work is made visible and shared. Activities that reflect a different vision of the economy, including women’s resistance efforts, can be differently imagined, credited, valued and respected.

We sought to offer an additional perspective: We foreground that food is nature. Our perspective of food is framed within a holistic approach, one that recognizes our deep connection and interconnectedness to the socio-ecological web of life.³¹ Food is sustenance: It keeps the body and soul together, its nourishment is life affirming. Food is meaning-making and through it we express our social, cultural and ecological biodiversity. As such, we are reminded that “[u]nderstanding that we are all part of nature in the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breath means recognizing both our ecological and social interdependence and our shared vulnerability”.³² By bringing to the fore questions of power with regard to race, class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and by illustrating who is being denied the right to food and nutrition, we simultaneously expose the structural violence that degrades both people and the environment. Denial of the right to food is the denial of life, nature and self. Making visible how intrinsic food is to our sense of being, self-identity, self-expression, pleasure, well-being and connection is an act of making oneself visible. The act of claiming the inalienable right to body integrity is in itself a form of emancipatory politics. In exposing the denial of rights at the women-violence-nature nexus, we also make space to be collectively enraged with the destruction of the Earth on which we all depend. We only have one home.

³⁰ Gibson-Graham, J.K. “Diverse economies: performative practices for ,other worlds”. *Progress in Human Geography* 32(5) (2008):615.

³¹ Tsing. *Supra* note 26.

³² Cock, Jacklyn. *Writing the ancestral river: a biography of the Kowie*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2018. p. 12.



IN BRIEF

This framing piece connects the contributions of the five articles of this *Watch* issue through the nexus of women-violence-nature. It shows that in the dominant food system both women and nature are exploited, 'othered' and made invisible, while also demonstrating new ways of being with each other and nature.



KEY CONCEPTS

- Women's identities, experiences and access to adequate food are shaped not just by gender, but also by race, ethnicity, caste, class, sexual orientation or identity, geographical location, and (dis)ability, among other factors. An intersectional approach is required.
- Women continue to be disproportionately affected by hunger, and hidden in food systems, despite the pivotal role they play in them.
- It is crucial to make visible the social reproductive work of women, and the unfair social division of labor, both of which are central to the maintenance of the current global food system.
- The current food system relies on an extractivist model, which causes irrefutable ecological destruction of the commons, which women (and food systems) depend upon.
- Increasing incidences of state-led violence against women who seek to feed themselves and others are serious and life threatening; they reflect the reactionary politics of the powerful to uphold patriarchy. Inequality and violence limit women's right to food and nutrition.
- Recognizing ecological and social interdependence also means respecting food as nature, as life itself. By foregrounding power relations and who is being denied the right to food and nutrition, we expose the structural violence that degrades both people and the environment.
- Women's agency expresses itself in quiet daily resistance and in organized social movements, in international food governance spaces, and through feeding themselves and others.
- The power of women's rage and resistance (individual and collective) to improve social and ecological relations in the face of multiple crises cannot be understated.



KEY WORDS

- Ecofeminism
- Food Systems
- Capitalist Patriarchy
- Women-Nature-Violence Nexus
- Ecological Crisis
- Resistance