

Socialist Labour Party

West Midlands

www.socialist-labour-party.org.uk

johntyrrell3@icloud.com



**TAKING BACK CONTROL
OF OUR FOOD**

**Conference Resolution
2014**



The following resolution was presented at the Triennial Congress in January 2012. It was referred to the NEC.

This Congress recognises that the unprecedented food shortages, where over a billion people were officially classified as being in hunger in 2009 (UN Food and Agricultural Organisation), is "the result of a global economy in which hundreds of millions of small producers have faced ruin through the hijacking of the food system by large agribusiness and food retailers." (War on Want). At the same time it is claimed that just a quarter of the food wasted in the US and UK would feed the 1 billion hungry people. Wasting food is costly and environmentally damaging. Its production accounts for about 5% of our CO2 emissions.

The situation in Britain is that large supermarket chains daily throw out vast quantities of food, much of which ends up in landfill sites. The charity Fare Share reports a doubling of the numbers of people approaching charities in Leicester for food as a result of the Con Dem government policies to roll back the state sector. At the same time there is growing demand for allotments in inner city areas where there are long waiting lists. In the London Borough of Camden there is a 25 to 40 year waiting time for availability.

Congress believes in view of this the Socialist Labour Party should adopt a policy specifically on food sovereignty aimed at regaining control over access to food production and supply through such measures as linking communities directly to suppliers in order for those who are unemployed or on low incomes have access to affordable high quality healthy food. It has to include (the way we produce and consume food, including what kind of food we eat, rights of workers and citizens, the impacts of food production on the environment, alternative food distribution systems, participatory research systems, sovereign and democratic policies.

La Via Campesina is an international organisation which defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. It strongly opposes corporate driven agriculture and transnational companies that are destroying people and nature. It points out that present government policies, including those of the UK promote food insecurity and dependence on a global market using technologies that poor countries and small producers cannot afford. Biodiversity is lost in the process. They summarise the complexity within 7 principles:

1 Food is a basic Human Right, so we declare "access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity".

2. Agrarian reform. "a genuine agrarian reform is necessary which gives landless and farming people ownership and control of the land they work". In the UK this could include not only the availability of allotments to meet demand but the creation of co-operatives with the ability to produce and distribute the food referred to on 1.

3. The protection of natural resources. "Food sovereignty entails the sustainable care of natural resources, especially land, water, seeds, and livestock breeds. Those who work the land must have the right to practice sustainable management of natural resources and to conserve biodiversity free of restrictive intellectual property rights. This can only be done from a sound economic basis with security of tenure, healthy soils and reduced use of agro-chemicals."

4. Reorganising the Food Trade. "Food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade." SLP Policy "prioritises production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency. Food imports must not displace local production nor depress prices"

5. Ending the globalisation of hunger. "Food sovereignty is undermined by multinational institutions and by speculative capital. The growing control of multinational corporations over agricultural policies has been facilitated by the economic policies of multilateral organisations such as the WTO, World Bank and the IMF." The food trade will be protected from speculative capital.

6. Social Peace. "Food must not be used as a weapon which increases levels of poverty and marginalisation."

7. Democratic control. Smallholders and consumers will have direct input into formulating food sovereignty policies.

Proposed John Tyrrell
Seconded Shangara Singh Bhatoe
West Midlands Region SLP

Congress notes that since that time there has been a significant deterioration in the welfare of people as large, powerful and unaccountable corporations take control of food production and marketing. In the UK it is noted that many have been forced to seek help in feeding themselves and their families and food banks have appeared across the country to alleviate starvation.

In 2012 a delegation from the SLP visited Cuba and visited a scheme intended to make residents of Havana more self sufficient and less dependent on increasingly expensive imports. It is estimated that Havana can feed in excess of 50% of its population, a figure unmatched elsewhere. The following year a day school was held at the Uplands Allotments in Handsworth, Birmingham. This is said to be the largest allotment in the country and the site of various schemes dealing with the localisation of food production and distribution.

In view of the serious situation brought about by Government policies based on Capitalism and the free market this Congress resolves to continue to formulate policies which will allow us to bring back control of food we consume and improve our health. This includes:

- Campaigning against factory farming and local authorities allowing planning permission for such developments. It is noted that 'flu epidemics can be associated with intensive rearing of animals such as turkeys in East Anglia or pigs in Mexico, again by unaccountable corporate interests.
- Learning from initiatives such as that seen in Havana, and now being emulated in Venezuela and other Latin American countries, to use vacant land to grow more crops in urban areas.
- Encouraging the development of food co-operatives and links with local food producers and farms in the region.
- Avoiding buying unhealthy products containing excessive amounts of sugars and unhealthy fats or salt.
- Working with unions to stop the existence of food production factories where employees are on low wages and zero hour contracts. This leads to exceptionally poor practices and

low levels of hygiene. Several documentaries and reports have shown factories supplying large supermarket chains dealing with products such as chicken for ready meals and international recipes such as naan bread being returned to the production line after falling on the floor. The Guardian noted that most chicken supplied is infected with bacteria which can cause serious illness or death if not properly cooked.

- Harvesting fruit and vegetables which may be left to rot. In Birmingham there is an "Urban Harvest" scheme to pick fruit from trees in gardens where the fruit is not collected.
- Protecting bees by ensuring they have a thriving floral environment uncontaminated by harmful pesticides. To this end we need to join campaigns against unaccountable corporations like Monsanto and governments which give them support to take over control of our food.

Havana, Cuba. Food Production. SLP Delegation 2012

<https://vimeo.com/64876333>

The Upland Allotments, Handsworth. SLP day School, 2013

<https://vimeo.com/64876331>

Around the World in 80 Gardens: 1 Mexico and Cuba. Monty Don

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJ0NYP2TrjY>

images: <http://www.theurbanfarmer.ca> <http://www.globaljustice.org.uk> <http://foodsovereignty.org.uk>

