



## ZINDUKA FESTIVAL 2015

### Regaining Sovereignty Over our Food



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## **Abbreviations**

**MVIWATA:** Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania

## **Background**

Fahamu Africa, in collaboration with Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (MVIWATA), organised movement-building sessions focused on regaining sovereignty over our food system. The convention brought together 19 participants (14 females and 5 males) drawn from small farmers associations in Machakos (Machakos Small-Scale Farmers Association), Migori (Ragana Faith Women Group) and urban-based farmers in Nairobi (Bunge la Wamama Mashinani).

MVIWATA, founded in 1993, is a national farmer's organisation, which brings together smallholder farmers from all regions of Tanzania with a common voice to defend economic, social, cultural and political interests of smallholder farmers. The network advances the rights of smallholder farmers through capacity building, lobbying and advocacy and cross learning. The movements' slogan is *Mtetezi wa Mkulima ni Mkulima mwenyewe*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introductions**

The session entailed introductions, sharing experiences and determining the issues affecting farmers in Kenya and Tanzania. These emerging issues include:

- Control of prices
- Exploitation by middlemen
- Absence of farmers' voices in decision-making processes on issues related to agriculture

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<sup>1</sup> The defender of the farmer is the farmer himself/herself

*Discussing issues affecting peasant farmers across the East Africa region*



## **Key Debates**

### *Why is there a food crisis in East Africa?*

The deliberations concluded the food crisis in East Africa is a result of:

- the presence of middlemen, resulting in higher food prices;
- the lack of decision making, leading to the imposition of issues on farmers (top-down approach);
- governments in the east African region deliberately neglecting farmers and benefitting from the tribulations of smallholder farmers;
- the lack of subsidies from the government; and
- the effects of climate change.

*'The 21st century is a year of ecology; we will talk about food sovereignty, a concept that is contrary to what is being touted as good by the west.'*

*Kepta Ombati, Chair, Zinduka Festival Organising Committee*



### *Who is responsible for the food crisis?*

The entities responsible for the food crisis were declared as:

- corporates who have enslaved farmers through the purchase of fertilizers;
- middlemen responsible for rising food prices at the expense of farmers;
- poor agricultural policies that do not take into account the realities of smallholders farmers;
- governments when they support the operations of corporates from developed nations, especially on issues of agriculture; and
- the absence of engaging smallholder farmers when issues affecting them are being deliberated.

### *Debates on who is responsible for the current food crisis*



## **Drawing Connections between the Current Food System and the Economic, Legal and Political Systems**

- Development of laws that criminalize activities carried out by smallholder farmers (ie. seed laws)
- Politicians responsible for signing agreements that allow investors to come in; these investors are responsible for further exploitation of farmers
- Corporates in agricultural production given more power, which is sanctioned by governments; sometimes they sell seeds that do not germinate and the farmer is not compensated

*Discussing the economic, legal and political implications on the current food system*



## Arusha Declaration Museum Visit

The visit entailed learning about *Ujamaa*<sup>2</sup> villages. It was shared that *Ujamaa* villages were an idea originated by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, which focused on freedom and self-reliance. Nyerere recognised quite early the importance of self-reliance amongst a group of people and these villages would bring communities together as part of this rural development strategy.

### *Visiting the Arusha Declaration Museum*



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<sup>2</sup> *Ujamaa* means family hood in Swahili; it is a concept introduced by President Julius Nyerere as a social and economic strategy for Tanganyika.



*Practical experience of Ujamaa communities coming together*



*Reflections of lived realities of smallholder farmers in East Africa*



*Smallholder farmers from East Africa developing an envisioned future*





## **Food Sovereignty Movement-Building Resolutions**

We, the farmers of East Africa, are aware that the current food system seeks to exploit us through taxes, poor prices for our produce, control over our seeds and destruction of our indigenous farming ways to benefit the food brokers and multinational companies. We seek the following resolutions:

1. **We want to change** the systems, policies and laws that support our exploitation through taxes, control of movement of our produce to other countries in East Africa and poor prices.

We are proposing the following alternatives:

- Control over our seeds and other inputs we need in farming
  - Farmers determine the prices of their produce, not the market
  - Farmers decide on their production systems
2. **We want to pursue a vision** of sustainable agriculture where the peasant farmer is respected, free and fully involved in all matters affecting them. We envision a movement amongst peasant farmers in East Africa where exploiters are non-existent.

The steps we are taking to realise our vision:

- Organising far and wide to reach as many farmers as possible through forums
- Uniting all farmers groups in the region
- Petitioning our governments to change the systems that oppress us
- Using print and audio media to publicise our call

3. **Our rallying calls** are:

- It is time for the African farmer to be heard!
- The advocate of the farmer is the farmer!
- Our unity is our success as East Africa

