

# UK Food Group

*'Seeking solutions to the global crisis in food and agriculture'*



## ACTIVITY REPORT January – December 2007

The UK Food Group is the principal civil society network on global food and farming issues and is the UK focal point for many European and International networks. For example: in the UK - BOND, Soya, Terminator and other seed technologies, Agricultural biodiversity and genetic resources, agrofuels, food sovereignty, marginalised producers, etc; in Europe – European Platform for Food Sovereignty, Concord European Food Security Group, Nyéléni Europe (follow up to the international forum), European Peasant / Farmer Seed Network, EC consortium projects with African partners, etc; Internationally – Campaign for More and Better aid to agriculture, Food sovereignty, World Food Day on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, World Bank International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development etc., Convention on Biological Diversity.

### Objectives of the UK Food Group

- (A) To develop a common understanding of each others goals, through facilitating CSO networking, capacity building and joint work**
- (B) To represent the membership of the network and facilitate individual members to influence government and other key decision makers**
- (C) Evidence gathering and publications to fulfil the needs of member's advocacy strategies**

### Key points

Food and agriculture issues are becoming more visible internationally (World Bank, UN organisations, Regional trade agreements – EPAs, private sector initiatives) and this is reflected in many members' agendas, be they concerns: for excluded and marginalised rural peoples; about the need for resilience in production systems to confront new threats such as climate change; about agricultural biodiversity and diversity in production and the agricultural landscape; about the need for recognition of the rights of food providers; about technology and property rights; for the quality of food and who controls the food system and its parts; about agrofuels; or for realising the Right To Food and food sovereignty.

The demands on the UK Food Group are greater than the resources of the part-time coordinator or the management group and have to be shared widely among the membership and others.

This has resulted in the formation of *ad hoc* sub groups of members, specific listserves and specific meetings to address these issues. The UK Food Group provides a platform for these initiatives, informs the network about them but does not seek to control or, necessarily, organise them.

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UK Food Group is an independent network within Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming Charity No. 1018643; Company Reg. No. 02673194, England  
Acord, Action Aid UK, Baby Milk Action, Banana Link, Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Christian Aid, Consumers International, Centre for Food Policy - City University, Concern Worldwide UK, Farm Crisis Network, Find Your Feet, Gaia Foundation, Garden Africa, Garden Organic, Harvest Help, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF), New Economics Foundation (nef), Oxfam GB, Panos Institute, Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN-UK), Practical Action, Progressio, Save the Children UK, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF), Send a Cow, Slow Food UK, Tearfund, War on Want, Women's Environmental Network (WEN), World Development Movement (WDM), WWF UK. Observers, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Greenpeace, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Sustain.

With the extension of the network to represent BOND on food and farming issues, this has caused a reflection on the way in which we manage consultations and represent BOND in different debates, to Ministers and officials and in Europe.

However, within all these initiatives we are learning how better to ensure some consistency in reporting, positioning and information sharing.

### **Changes to the 2007 UK Food Group workplan**

During the past year several things have happened that have impacted on our programme of work:

- we relocated, in November 2006, from Christian Aid to Sustain, which had housed us since inception in 1986 for more than 20 years but had simply run out of office space to accommodate us or any other external groups;
- we revised our constitution in January 2007;
- we started the EC project in February 2007;
- we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with BOND in August 2007 to represent them on global food and farming issues;
- we appointed a new coordinator, Geraldine Galvaing, in October 2007 to replace Rachel Sutton who had been with us for more than four years and was seeking a belated 'gap year'.

### **Changing Context**

The past year has seen unprecedented changes in perceptions and realities concerning agriculture, food and the environment. While consumers and small-scale producers are coming closer together as exemplified by the discussions on food sovereignty, such associations are frustrated by official policy, international agreements and the exercise of corporate power in the food system.

During this year there have been significant processes such as those leading to the World Bank's World Development Report 2008 "Agriculture and Development" and the Bank's International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development. The World Bank's report did little, however, to change the perception that international finance institutions do not wish to change the way in which agriculture and its related trade is carried out. Also, the European – Africa Economic Partnership Agreements are being negotiated and their conclusion is being resisted by farmers' organisations in Africa.

The UK Food Group has been facilitating discussions on these and other issues and, inevitably, this has impacted to some extent on the detailed implementation of our programme.

### **2007 Key network support and programme activities**

- Production of publications: research on alternatives to soya feed for UK livestock, report on agroecology, report on major donor priorities for agricultural development.
- Participation in and representation of European civil society organizations at the Nyéléni 2007: Forum for Food Sovereignty in Bamako, Mali.
- Started work on a 3-year EC public awareness project "Spotlight on the marginalized: strengthening the position of smallholders in European trade policy" whose main objective is to highlight the linkages between European policies, particularly EPAs, and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Africa.

- Secured an EC consortium project for 2008-2011 with Italian, Belgian and francophone partners including ROPPA titled “Agro-food policies and regional integration: for a practice of solidarity between Europe and Africa”.
- Signed a memorandum of Understanding with BOND which now recognizes the UK Food Group as representing BOND on global food and farming issues.
- 3 Management Group meetings.
- Annual meeting, pre Nyéléni 2007, with speakers from Nyeleni 2007 delegates and the Development Fund. Norway.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Joint UKFG/Sustain Agricultural Production, Trade and Technology Working Group meeting including a Nyéléni 2007 feedback session. 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting on Common Agricultural Policy, World Bank World Development Report 2008, agrofuels etc.
- 1 Climate Change working group meeting - invited to participate in this meeting, which involves many UKFG members, that was discussing links between climate change and agriculture. Resolved to continue dialogue especially re adaptation and diversity.
- 1 Concord European Food Security Group meeting with presentation and feedback on Nyéléni 2007.
- 1 BOND EU Policy Committee
- 1 UK Platform for Food Sovereignty meeting
- Organisation of World Food Day 2007 – Focus on the Right to Food, EPAs and other topics.
- 1 European Platform for Food Sovereignty meeting.
- 1 UK Food Group meeting on agrofuels
- See further details below on press work, information dissemination, collaboration with other EU networks, seminars, parliamentary briefings, meetings and government consultations and presentations at conferences, by the Co-ordinator, Chair or members representing the UKFG network.

### Summary of work during 2007

In the past year, the UK Food Group has played an important role in extending the discussion on key food and farming issues among members, other UK NGO networks as well as at European level and internationally. We have held seminars, working group meetings and have conducted research. We have also published a number of articles, especially in the follow-up to the Nyéléni 2007: Forum for Food Sovereignty. (The UK Food Group was nominated from among many European networks to represent European civil society organizations at this innovative and significant forum.) During the year we also completed: research on alternatives to soya feed for UK livestock, especially dairy cows; a report on agroecology and a report on major donor priorities for agricultural development. The publications will be released later this financial year.

We started work on the three-year EC public awareness project “Spotlight on the marginalised: strengthening the position of smallholders in European trade policy” in partnership with Germanwatch, BothEnds, FIAN and African collaborators including SEND Foundation in Ghana. One of the main objectives of this project is to exemplify the linkages between European policies, most particularly EPAs, and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. This is being done through raising awareness and lobbying key policy-makers at the EU level and in the European project countries. We have also been successful in securing another EC consortium project for 2008-2011 with Italian, Belgian and francophone West African partners including ROPPA (West African regional network of smallholder farmers). It is titled “Agro-food policies and regional integration: for a practice of solidarity between Europe and Africa” in which our focus will be on examining and disseminating information about different models of agricultural production as promoted by farmers’ organisations, governments and aid agencies.

During this year we also achieved an important agreement – a Memorandum of Understanding with BOND which now recognises the UK Food Group as the network that acts as the BOND working group on global food and farming issues.

The issues of biofuels, more commonly referred to by farmers movements as ‘agrofuels’, and climate change, together with biotechnology are dominant in the discourse about global food and farming. We are addressing these through seminars and sharing information and ideas, participation in other networks and organising contributions to, and sharing information about, international consultations on key scientific and technological issues as they affect agriculture and rural development.

Finally, in the course of the current year there have been many administrative changes, for positive reasons and with excellent outcomes: we have relocated our offices from Christian Aid to Sustain, adopted a revised constitution and replaced our coordinator. These changes have been time consuming and the completion of a few activities have been delayed as a result.

#### **Information dissemination**

UKFG operates more than 4 listserves that provide information on food issues, corporate control, food sovereignty, agrofuels, agricultural production models, technologies and trade. Not only UKFG members but also many other like-minded CSOs from the USA and Europe also participate in adding and distributing information.

#### **Collaboration with European and International networks**

The UK Food Group has participated in the following networks this year: Concord's European Food Security Group of CONCORD, The European Platform for Food Sovereignty, Agribusiness Accountability Initiative (AAI), the European Seeds meeting ‘Let’s Liberate Diversity’, and meetings with our present and future EC project partners. UK Food Group is also the UK focal point for the campaign for More and Better aid to agriculture and for FAO’s World Food Day activities.

#### **Parliamentary briefings and government consultations**

UKFG and its members continue to be the focal point with DFID and DEFRA on relevant issues, especially relating the genetic resources, farmers’ rights, agricultural policy and hunger. We have regular meetings with key officials and occasionally with ministers and members of parliament. We will be organising for a series of meetings in the run up to UN meeting in Bonn, CBD/ COP9, that will have a focus on agricultural biodiversity including terminator technology.

#### **Meetings, seminars and debates**

The UKFG has been involved in or organised a number of meetings and seminars for its members and with other networks. There have also been many teleconferences on specific topics.

#### **January 2007 UK Food Group Annual Meeting**

At this meeting addressed by Aksel Naersted of the Development Fund, Norway and our UK delegates to the Nyéléni 2007: forum for food sovereignty. The revised constitution of the UK Food Group was adopted.

### **March 2007 Nyéléni 2007 feedback meeting**

UK delegates reported back to the membership on the outcomes of the Nyéléni 2007 forum for food sovereignty. Also discussed were: the completion of the World Bank's World Development Report 2008; the consultations on the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development. Plans for future working group actions were discussed.

### **June 2007 and later Terminator technology**

UKFG has participated in the development of its member's new campaign to ban Terminator technology. Progressio is taking the lead with support from many members. The campaign was launched at our World Food Day event on 16 October.

### **July 2007 Climate Change**

UKFG attended a meeting of the Climate Change working group and discussed how our network could help promote some of the outputs from theirs with special reference to adaptation.

### **July 2007 Agrofuels**

UKFG organised a consultation among NGOs on the threats posed to food and livelihoods from the new focus on agrofuel plantations. It was a very lively meeting the contents of which are now publicly available.

### **October 2006 World Food Day**

UKFG organised the UK's World Food Day event, part of a series of events across the world to mark the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). The title was "Defending Farmers and the Right to Food". The very interactive event included a lively debate on "the future for marginalised farmers in Africa" organised by Concern Worldwide (UK) which was promoting its "Unheard Voices" campaign to increase DFID's support for marginal farmers. It brought together speakers from DFID, a Ghanaian partner and member organisations, with many interventions from the floor. Other seminars organised by Send a Cow, Practical Action and Progressio, focused on environment-sustaining livestock production, Farmers' Rights and the launch of a campaign "*Say no to Terminator seeds: become a seedsaver*".

Discussions centred around realising the Right to Food through supporting small-scale crop and livestock farmers, who should be at the heart of decision making about food, farming and related environmental policies - issues that are embraced by the Food Sovereignty policy framework.

One speaker in the debate was Mohammed Issah from SEND Foundation, Ghana who spoke about the detrimental effect of the proposed Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU on smallholders. He illustrated this by pointing out that, for example, it would not halt the flow of cheap imported chicken "spare parts" – subsidised chicken pieces – that undercut the local poultry trade. He said, "*The EU EPA will worsen the livelihoods of Ghana's smallholder farmers.*" He also reported that farmers' organisations were strongly opposed to signing the agreement.

Details of the event and its outcomes, publications and campaigns launched at this event and associated weblinks can be found at [www.ukfg.org.uk/seminars/wfd2007\\_ukfg\\_report.pdf](http://www.ukfg.org.uk/seminars/wfd2007_ukfg_report.pdf)

### **October 2007 BOND AGM**

In our capacity as serving as the BOND representative on global food and farming issues we attended the AGM and asked the Secretary of State for International Development, keynote speaker, a question about the review of DFID's agriculture policy and the priority that DFID is giving to food, farming and the environment. There will be a meeting with the Secretary of State to follow up his answer and other issues.

## Participation in special meetings

- Participation in Nyéléni 2007: forum for food sovereignty held in Sélingué, Mali in February 2007
- Participation in European seeds conference in Halle, Germany “Lets Liberate Diversity”. The UKFG is the focal point for this network. June 2007
- Presentations on food sovereignty at two meetings organised by Concern Worldwide UK about the future for marginalised farmers. March and September 2007

## Publications

- We completed our publication on Agroecology ‘*Feeding this generation - Evaluating genetic engineering, the green revolution and agroecology*’, as reported last year. This publication is now being updated, edited and reformatted for wide distribution.
- We have also completed the research for a report on Major Donors’ policies on agricultural development funding.

There have also been a number of reports and articles prepared by the UK Food Group Chair.

- “*The greedy must relinquish their hold on the world's food*”, The Guardian, Wednesday 17 October 2007, (available at [www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/oct/17/food.comment](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/oct/17/food.comment)) – also quoted in the Guardian Weekly special world Food Day supplement
- “*Defending Farmers and the Right to Food*”, UKFG media advisory on World Food Day 2007, 16 October 2007 .(available at: [www.ukabc.org/wfd2007.htm#b2](http://www.ukabc.org/wfd2007.htm#b2) .
- “*Food sovereignty comes of age: Africa leads efforts to rethink our food system*”. Food Ethics Council Bulletin. September 2007.(available at: <http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/files/magazine0203-p19.pdf>)
- “*Feeding People*”, August 2007, Snail Mail, Slow Food UK.
- “*Agricultural Biodiversity on the line*”. CSO agenda for the 2008 conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity. 6 July 2007. ECO 5 @ SBSTTA 12. (available at [www.ukabc.org/sbstta12.htm](http://www.ukabc.org/sbstta12.htm))
- Synthesis report of Nyéléni 2007: forum for food sovereignty (available at <http://www.nyeleni2007.org/IMG/pdf/31Mar2007NyeleniSynthesisReport-en.pdf>)
- “*Now is the time for food sovereignty*”. Report on FAO Special Session to review progress towards meeting the goals of the 1996 World Food Summit. Food Ethics Council Bulletin. Dec 2006. (available at [http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/files/Bulletin-Winter\\_06\\_cover.pdf](http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/files/Bulletin-Winter_06_cover.pdf))

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