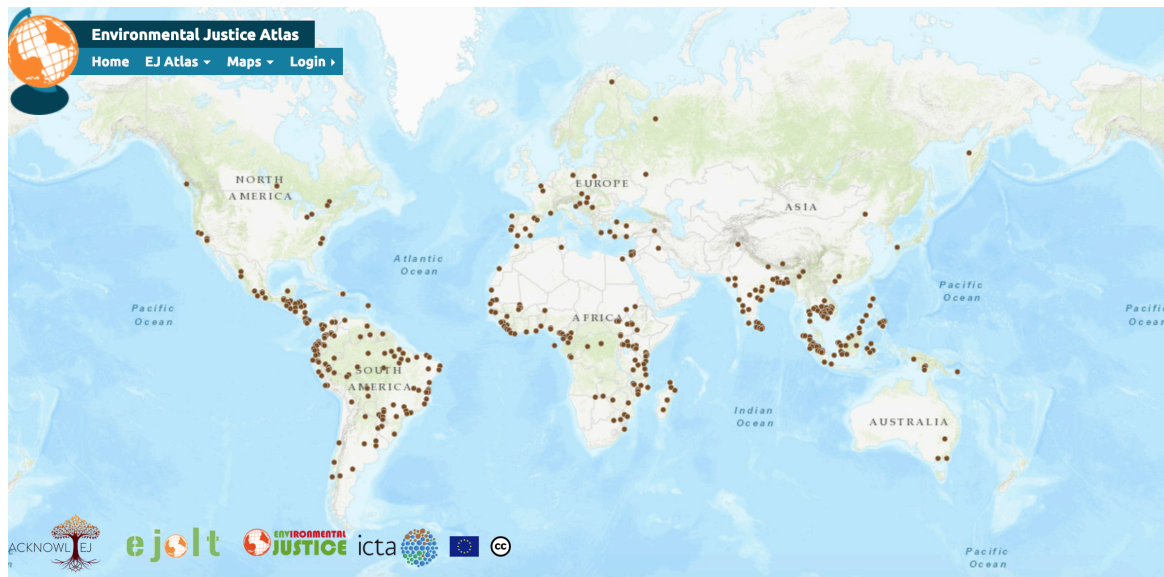




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Indigenous and Local Communities Land Rights: Pathways for a Climate Resilient Future for Food



Environmental Justice Atlas

Food insecurity is one of the leading fears enveloping climate change. The agribusiness sector projects the argument that in order to eradicate hunger and provide enough food for the rapidly growing population, we must increase the efficiency of food production worldwide. Thus, the development of new technologies for food production intensification has been largely prioritized on the global climate change adaptation and mitigation arena. However, despite the current statistic of almost one billion people facing chronic malnourishment, we do produce enough food to feed the planet. The globalized food system has created a crisis in which food insecurity is caused primarily by poverty rather than food scarcity. The rhetoric of the agribusiness sector implies that industrial agriculture is primarily responsible for the majority of food

produced globally and that traditional farming methods are by no means efficient enough to support the entire population. The truth is, however, that **peasants produce 70% of the total food grown in the world**. But in the global rush to secure land for industrial agriculture production reignited by the threat of climate change, peasants and indigenous people have been increasingly deprived of their right to grow food for themselves and their surrounding communities. What commonly gets overlooked in the conversation about food production is that indigenous and local communities (ILCs) are not only often the smallholder farmers, but also the ones resisting land grabs and maintaining agroecological and food sovereignty alternatives. The sweeping privatization of land, that for centuries was under the communal tenure of its native peoples, in combination with unfavorable trade agreements has led to the loss of food sovereignty of peasants around the world, but especially in the global South. [Land Matrix](#) reports that 78% of recorded large-scale land acquisitions in low- and middle-income countries across the world are for agricultural production with three-quarters of that dedicated to biofuel exports (which in most cases competes with food production). Millions of

indigenous communities all over the world have been displaced to make way for palm oil, eucalyptus, soy, corn, and sugarcane plantations (all these violations and resistance are mapped and described

[Environmental Justice Atlas](#)). One example comes from Brazil where the Atlantic rainforest completely disappeared after 40 years of eucalyptus production, but indigenous movements of Guarani and Tupinikim peoples, together with Quilombola people have been struggling for years to get back their territories, recover the land and revive traditional food production. Resisting land grabs and advocating for communal land tenure and for the rights of peasants and indigenous peoples are crucial not only from a social justice but also from the environmental perspective. Industrial agriculture deeply relies on the use of genetically uniform seeds, phosphate-derived fertilizers, synthetic pesticides, and irrigation systems that require large quantities of water, putting immense stress on the Earth systems. With all the emissions that go into food production, i.e. agriculture, changes in land use, manufacture of agricultural inputs, transportation, and packaging, food production accounts for 32.2% of global greenhouse gas emissions, making it the largest contributor to climate

change. Most importantly, the majority of food produced does not even go towards human consumption but towards feeding livestock and biofuel production. Meanwhile, the food sovereignty resistance movement provides an effective alternative to the hegemonic industrial food system. It is centered on equitable land redistribution and incorporates agroecology, agroforestry, small-scale peasant and Indigenous knowledges, paradigms, and land management. The concept of food sovereignty pioneered in 1996 by [La Via Campesina](#), which employs grassroots efforts and social mobilizations to advance the needs and advocate for land rights of over 200 million peasants. Their campaign for agrarian reform was the first one of its kind to be created, governed and used by small farmers and poor peasants, who have gotten no representation in the past. LVC advances the scaling out of the agroecology movement through Campesino a Campesino (Peasant to Peasant) training where smallholder farmers can share and learn best land management practices and cosmo-visions from each other. Creation of such support networks is crucial in order to reinvigorate and preserve ancient knowledges and to ensure peasant's ability to remain resilient in the face of climate

change. Food production rooted in food sovereignty practices has been shown to be able to regenerate topsoil, recover local biodiversity and also provide more resilience in the face of changing climate, as food is grown in a web of complex and dynamic self-supporting systems that are not reliant on fossil fuels and agrochemicals. For instance, in the aftermath of hurricane Ike in 2008, agroecological farms suffered a damage level of only 50 percent in comparison with 90-100 percent losses on monoculture plantations and were able to start producing food again in just over a month. In terms of the doubted 'productivity' of such farming methods, agroecology actually produces more biomass per acre than industrial monocrops. It is imperative to remember that the relatively modern concept of agroecology takes its roots in indigenous knowledge, where sustainable agriculture is only one of the effects of respectful interactions with ecologies. Thus, it cannot exist in a silo and be used as an 'environmentally-friendly' addition to the industrial food system. Democratizing the food system for the sake of the planet and its people starts with protecting the rights to the land and natural resources of the leading 'food producers' in the world, indigenous peoples and peasants.

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