

Action Brief for and with Indigenous Peoples

This draft document has been developed for discussion at the Stockholm Food (SFF). It is an interim step in the development of an Indigenous Peoples Action Brief and will be iterated on through further Dialogues. It begins by laying out challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in relation to healthy, sustainable, and just food systems and opportunities for action to collectively advance these dimensions. These may evolve into calls for action.

Asks to other communities are presented, which this CfA may iterate on further to frame as “unlocks” to systemic barriers. Finally, three key messages developed for the SFF are shared.

This brief was developed by the CfA members as a reflection on their contributions to an urgent transition to healthy, safe, and just food systems. As a community we are committed to regularly updating this brief in line with our commitments, contribution and ambitions.





Challenges faced by IPs in relation to healthy, just and sustainable food systems

01.1

Loss of control over ancestral lands and territories due to weak land tenure rights, land grabbing, and extractive activities.

Many Indigenous communities are being displaced from our ancestral lands and waters, leaving us with less space to grow food or sustain traditional harvesting and fishing practices. Without secure land tenure and ocean and water access, communities face constant threats of land grabbing, water diversion, marine development, and destructive extractive industries, which erode both livelihoods and cultural survival.

Legislated land subdivision is forcing Maasai Nomadic pastoralists to settle, eroding communal life and reducing grazing space. The rise of land sales; unfamiliar in Maasai culture, causes vulnerable families to sell ancestral land to meet basic needs, resulting in loss of identity, heritage, and sustainable livelihoods. Displacement from ancestral lands reduces space for food production and traditional practices, undermining food sovereignty, nutrition, and community well-being. Without secure land tenure, Indigenous Peoples face threats from extractive industries that erode livelihoods, cultural survival, and the foundations for sustainable and just food systems.

In the case of Ecuador, the displacement of Indigenous communities from their ancestral territories has intensified due to the advance of mining and oil extractivism, supported by state concessions that prioritize fiscal revenue over collective rights.

The expansion of the oil frontier in the Amazon and of large-scale mining in the Sierra and the Coast not only entails the expropriation of communal lands without processes of prior, free, and informed consultation, but also the fragmentation of strategic ecosystems such as páramos, humid forests, and watersheds. These projects generate soil and water contamination, loss of biodiversity, and the irreversible deterioration of the local productive base, which displaces subsistence agriculture and erodes food sovereignty.

Furthermore, tourism development is also a pressure. Important agricultural lands are being converted for hotel construction — for example, wetland habitats essential for planting taro are being filled in. This results not only in the loss of valuable planting land but also the loss of ecosystem services that these habitats provide, further undermining food security and cultural survival.

01.2**Erosion of Indigenous food systems undermines nutrition and health.**

The decline of traditional crops, seeds, and food knowledge reduces dietary diversity and contributes to malnutrition. At the same time, the spread of ultra-processed and imported foods is driving rising rates of obesity and diet-related diseases among Indigenous communities, further weakening the foundations of healthy, sustainable, and just diets.

As communities shift away from traditional nomadic food systems, they are unable to rely on customary practices for food security. However, the education and awareness needed to sustain livelihoods through settled agriculture have not been established. For that reason, communities become dependent on external food systems that are not as nutritious or sustainable.



01.3**Dependence on external food systems that undermine local food sovereignty and resilience.**

Imported, unhealthy and industrialized foods are increasingly replacing Indigenous diets, not only because of cultural shifts but also due to the economic pressures of subsidized production, aggressive marketing, and unequal trade policies.

This undermines traditional foods and weakens local resilience, while creating health risks as many communities are pushed towards processed, less nutritious foods. These structural inequalities marginalize Indigenous food systems, even though they are more sustainable, culturally rooted, and economically viable when supported.

In Ecuador, the expansion of conventional agriculture has been promoted under the discourse of guaranteeing food security, without questioning the origin of food or ensuring the right of peoples to food sovereignty. This productivist vision responds to public policies designed under capitalist and extractivist logics, which prioritize export-oriented monocultures, the intensive use of agrochemicals, and dependence on hybrid or transgenic seeds. Far from strengthening community autonomy, these strategies consolidate an agro-industrial model oriented toward the global market, which degrades ecosystems, homogenizes diets, and displaces traditional production systems. Worse still, governments reduce the food and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples to mere folkloric elements to be showcased at official events, stripping them of their true political, economic, and spiritual value in the construction of just and sustainable food systems.

01.4

Climate change impacts (droughts, floods, range land degradation, deteriorated ice conditions, and damage to water ecosystems) disproportionately affect pastoralists, farmers, and Indigenous food systems, including fisheries that depend on healthy rivers, estuaries, coastlines, and oceans.

Rising temperatures, irregular rainfall, freezing-thawing events on snow, droughts, floods, and extreme weather events are destroying crops, reducing grazing lands, and threatening water sources. At the same time, pollution, overfishing, and climate change are degrading rivers, estuaries, coastlines, and oceans. These climatic shifts have also led to local extinctions of important food resources and marine intoxications, such as ciguatera fish poisoning, making some marine resources unusable.

Together, these impacts severely affect Indigenous pastoralists, farmers, and fishers causing food insecurity, loss of biodiversity, and erosion of cultural livelihoods tied to both land and water.

Human – wildlife conflict intensifies during drought, as communities and wildlife compete for dwindling water and pasture. While conservation efforts aim to foster harmony, extreme scarcity often drives wild animals to attack livestock, threatening pastoralist livelihoods. This creates tension between conservation advocates and communities, who sometimes kill wild animals when they endanger their food sources.

01.5

Exclusion of Indigenous voices in national and global decision-making on food, agriculture, and fisheries, despite states having legal obligations to protect these systems and the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Peoples, regardless of whether their legal rights are formally recognized in respective States, are systematically excluded from decision-making spaces on food, agriculture, health, and nutrition. This exclusion erases their knowledge and lived realities, resulting in policies that undermine Indigenous food systems, weaken cultural practices, and ignore their vital contributions to land and water management and healthier and more sustainable diets. In Ecuador, the exclusion of Indigenous voices in

decision-making on food and agricultural policies is evident in how the State designs food security and production programs without real processes of free, prior, and informed consultation.

Although the Constitution recognizes the right to food sovereignty and plurinationality, in practice decisions are concentrated in ministries and technical bodies that privilege agribusiness and export markets. As a result, Indigenous food systems are either rendered invisible or treated as marginal, and their proposals to strengthen agroecology and community water management are rarely integrated into national planning, perpetuating structural inequality.

SECTION 02

Opportunities for action to collectively advance healthy, sustainable, and just food systems

02.1

Promote Agroecology as a holistic, climate-resilient, and culturally appropriate system that builds on Indigenous knowledge and strengthens ecosystems.

Agroecology integrates traditional Indigenous knowledge with ecological farming practices to strengthen ecosystems, improve soil health, and support biodiversity. It provides climate-resilient solutions that respect local culture and enhance the sustainability of land- and water-based food systems. Importantly, agroecological approaches contribute to improved nutrition and human health, supporting more equitable, healthy, and sustainable food systems.

02.3

Secure land ownership and tenure rights for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities as the foundation for sustainable food production and cultural survival.

Recognizing and protecting Indigenous land tenure is the foundation for sustainable food production, cultural survival, and ecological stewardship. Secure land rights prevent dispossession, over-exploitation, and conflict while allowing communities to sustainably manage forests, grazing lands, and fisheries. Land security also supports long-term investments in food systems and conservation.

02.2

Advance Food Sovereignty as the right of communities to define their own food systems, ensuring dignity, autonomy, and resilience.

This ensures dignity, autonomy, and resilience, while protecting cultural food practices and traditional diets. It also strengthens local economies, reduces dependence on external food systems that may undermine Indigenous food security, and reduces vulnerability to external shocks (environmental, economic or social).

02.4

Strengthen intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledge, including women's and youth leadership in agroecology.

Encouraging youth and women's leadership ensures that traditional knowledge, including sustainable food practices and ecological wisdom, is preserved and adapted for current and future challenges.

02.5

Build partnerships between Indigenous Peoples, governments, and global actors to co-create policies that prioritize healthy, sustainable, and just food systems.

Build partnerships between Indigenous Peoples, governments, and global actors to co-create policies that prioritize healthy, sustainable, and just food systems, while actively incentivizing the production and consumption of Indigenous foods and reducing support for processed, unhealthy, and imported foods.

02.7

Encourage demand for Indigenous food products.

Strengthening local and national markets for Indigenous foods ensures that traditional crops, livestock, and aquatic species are not only produced but also consumed. This supports cultural continuity, creates livelihoods, and sustains food systems rooted in local ecosystems. To be effective, this also requires identifying and addressing barriers such as policy restrictions, inadequate infrastructure, and limited consumer awareness.

02.9

Promote Indigenous foods as healthy and nutritious alternatives.

Indigenous diets are often richer in diversity, micronutrients, and natural ingredients compared to heavily processed industrial foods. Highlighting these benefits through nutrition guidelines, public health campaigns, and consumer education reinforces the role of Indigenous food systems in combating malnutrition and non-communicable diseases.

02.6

Invest in Indigenous communities, Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous-led initiatives towards food security and food abundance.

Supporting Indigenous communities with funding, training, and technical assistance enables the development of culturally appropriate and sustainable food projects. Investments in capacity building strengthen local governance, food production, and ecosystem management, ensuring long-term resilience and food security. For communities that traditionally did not practice farming, workshops and demonstration sites can equip them with skills to cultivate the land as an alternative source of food and livelihood security. These trainings should be tailored to community needs, delivered in local languages, and conducted in a culturally sensitive manner.

02.8

Introduce policies and incentives that make Indigenous foods more attractive and accessible.

Governments and institutions can promote Indigenous foods through subsidies, local procurement programs, and inclusion in school feeding or hospital nutrition schemes. Such policies create stable demand while helping Indigenous producers reach wider populations.

02.10

Raise consumer awareness and appreciation for Indigenous food cultures.

Storytelling, labeling, and awareness campaigns can help consumers value the cultural identity, ecological sustainability, and health benefits of Indigenous foods. When communities and consumers see Indigenous foods as both nutritious and meaningful, demand increases, supporting both health and cultural survival.



SECTION 03

Asks to other communities to enable further action

Policymakers

03.1

Recognize and protect Indigenous land and resource rights.

Secure land tenure and governance rights are essential for food sovereignty, agroecology, and cultural survival. Policies should prevent dispossession and support sustainable management of forests, grazing lands, and fisheries.

03.2

Implement policies and incentives that promote Indigenous foods.

This can include subsidies, public procurement programs in schools and hospitals, and campaigns to raise awareness of Indigenous food products.

Cities & Local Governments

03.3

Support urban and rural market access for Indigenous foods.

Create spaces for Indigenous producers to sell culturally appropriate and nutritious foods, while integrating these products into school, hospital, and community food programs.

03.4

Collaborate with Indigenous communities in food system planning.

Incorporate local knowledge and preferences into city and regional nutrition programs, infrastructure, and supply chains.

Food Industry & Businesses

03.5

Invest in Indigenous-led food initiatives.

Partner with Indigenous communities to produce, market, and distribute culturally rooted and ecologically sustainable foods.

03.6

Ensure supply chains are fair and sustainable.

Avoid commodifying Indigenous knowledge or exploiting local resources; maintain transparency and equity in sourcing.

Civil Society & NGOs

03.7

Co-implement development projects that strengthen Indigenous knowledge, culture, identity, and natural resource management.

Projects should support healthy, sustainable, and just diets while integrating community perspectives at all stages.

Finance & Philanthropy

03.9

Invest in Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led initiatives.

Support projects that build resilient food systems, preserve biodiversity, and promote cultural sustainability.

Researchers & Academia

03.11

Document and share Indigenous knowledge systems.

Highlight the contributions of traditional diets to nutrition, health, and biodiversity, ensuring that Indigenous perspectives guide research priorities.

Consumers & Community Groups

03.13

Increase demand for Indigenous foods.

Buy, promote, and advocate for traditional, nutrient-rich, and culturally significant foods.

03.8

Facilitate capacity-building programs.

Provide training, knowledge exchange, and technical assistance for youth and women in agroecology, nutrition, and sustainable food production.

03.10

Create accessible finance mechanisms tailored to Indigenous priorities.

Funding should support both land- and water-based food systems, agroecology, and culturally rooted food production.

03.12

Co-create research projects with communities.

Use culturally sensitive methodologies that respect Indigenous ways of knowing and support intergenerational knowledge transfer.

03.14

Engage with Indigenous perspectives on healthy and sustainable diets.

Encourage dialogue to better understand cultural and ecological dimensions of food choices.

Media & Communication Platforms

03.15

Highlight Indigenous food systems and successes.

Share stories that showcase the health, cultural, and environmental benefits of Indigenous diets.

03.16

Amplify Indigenous voices in public debates on nutrition, health, and sustainability.

Use culturally sensitive methodologies that respect Indigenous ways of knowing and support intergenerational knowledge transfer.

International Organizations & Policy Networks

03.17

Support global recognition of Indigenous food sovereignty.

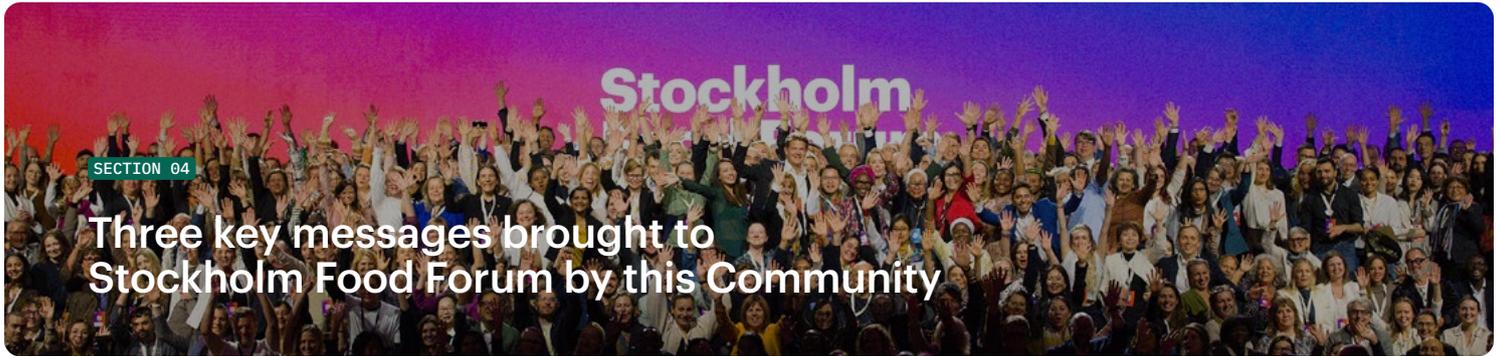
Include Indigenous perspectives in international dialogues on food security, climate change, and biodiversity.

03.18

Facilitate partnerships between Indigenous communities and global actors.

Enable knowledge exchange, co-creation of strategies, and advocacy for Indigenous priorities on food systems.





SECTION 04

Three key messages brought to Stockholm Food Forum by this Community

MESSAGE 01

Food Sovereignty and Governance are Non-Negotiable.

Indigenous Peoples must have the right to decide what to grow, how to grow it, and how to manage their lands, waters, and resources. Secure land tenure and governance rights are foundational for sustainable food production, agroecology, and the preservation of cultural and ecological heritage, as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

MESSAGE 03

Strengthening Demand and Policy Support for Indigenous Foods Drives Health, Equity, and Sustainability.

It is essential to create policies, incentives, and market opportunities that increase the availability, consumption, and appreciation of Indigenous foods. This includes supporting nutrition, human health, local economies, and culturally meaningful diets while reducing reliance on industrial, processed, and unhealthy foods.

MESSAGE 02

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Food Systems are Essential for Healthy, Sustainable, and Just Diets.

Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and traditional food systems preserve biodiversity, cultural identity, and ecological stewardship. Supporting these systems ensures resilient, culturally rooted, and nutritious food for communities and broader populations.

SECTION 05

Potential next steps

- **Continue capacity sharing among Indigenous communities to strengthen Indigenous food systems and sustainable practices**, drawing on principles that align with agroecology where appropriate, to support biodiversity, resilience, and cultural preservation.
- **Establish a collective advocacy platform** to amplify Indigenous voices in global food and climate forums.
- **Using this brief's language and concepts to inform narratives in media, social media, and community dialogues.** Create op-eds, blogs, and infographics connecting planetary health diet principles to local health issues.
- **Develop joint policy briefs and campaigns** on agroecology, food sovereignty, and land rights.
- **Strengthen regional and global alliances** with other food movements and civil society networks.
- **Design and implement development projects** on healthy, sustainable, and just diets that support Indigenous knowledge, culture, identity, and natural resource management, integrating community perspectives at every stage.

SECTION 06

Acknowledgements

This Community for Action is co-hosted by EAT and AFPAT.

The Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad (AFPAT) is based in Chad, in the central African region of the Congo Basin. AFPAT works with indigenous peoples on two programmes: human rights and indigenous peoples' rights; environmental protection through the three Rio Convention frameworks (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity – UNCBD, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification – UNCCD, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC).