

"Food safety, food security and agriculture"

Vandana SHIVA

Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, India

ABSTRACT

Food as culture, as nourishment, is governed by the laws of nature and rules of culture. Growing of food, cooking of food, offering of food are all part of the cosmic cycle of life and its renewal. Thus the law of food in Indian civilization is captured in two verses from our ancient texts. As the Taittiriya Upanisad says :

From food (anna), verily, creatures are produced
Whatsoever (creatures) dwell on the earth...
For truly, food is the chief of beings.

Beings here are born from food, when born they live by food, on decreasing they enter into food.

Food is alive; it is not just pieces of carbohydrate, protein and nutrient, it is a being, it is a sacred being.

Verily, they obtain all food
Who worship Brahma as food.

If we have hazardous, unhealthy food, it is because the laws of life that govern food are being forgotten.

And then the state creates laws to govern food – laws of property rights, laws of trade, laws of food safety. The World Trade Organization has become the institution for laws for food – from seed, to the super market, from the farm to our kitchens.

Three agreements of WTO directly relate to food – The agreement on Trade Related Property Rights (TRIPS), the Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) and the Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary Agreement (SPS). However, the laws embodied in these agreements work against farmers, against the earth, against our health. They are rules and laws designed to destroy small farmers, local food cultures, and culturally and democratically defined food safety.

At every step of the food chain, from seed, to trade, to table, there is a major contest between two legal regimes – laws that flow from the integrity of nature and culture, and laws that serve the economic interests of global corporations. Food laws grounded in nature and culture protect biodiversity and cultural diversity, the earth, farmers and consumers. Food laws that serve corporations, promote monocultures, monopolies, food hazards, ill health, especially obesity and total destruction of farming communities.

Movements defending earth rights, farmers' rights, consumer rights organized through the commission on the future of food have produced a manifesto based on the laws of food as the laws of the Earth – Terra Madre.