GRAIN in 2022
Highlights of our activities
GRAIN is a small international non-profit organisation that works to support small farmers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems. The objectives of GRAIN are to deepen public understanding of the forces shaping the global and local food systems and their impact on farming and food systems, and to support social movements and civil society organisations in advancing towards food sovereignty.

Since 1990, GRAIN has been active in the global movement challenging corporate power over people’s food and livelihoods. As a movement-resource organisation, our role is bringing incisive analysis through our independent research, supporting and fostering cooperation and alliance building with local and international organisations for more effective advocacy and activism in advancing towards food sovereignty. Our work is carried out both globally and on the ground with partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

This report highlights our information work and movement building support in 2022 across our interrelated programme areas:

- Corporations, power and the global food system
- Land grabbing and the struggle for land
- People’s control over seeds
- Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis

We also reflect on our outreach and organisational development and share a bit about the internal structure of GRAIN. For more information, please visit our website, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, subscribe to our mailing lists or contact us directly. Please also consider donating to GRAIN to help sustain our work.

Year in review: Highlights and challenges

2022 marked the year that we could get together again, after several years of Covid lockdown. We used the opportunity to meet up for a week outside Barcelona in September. Of course, it was bittersweet, in that we were missing our dear colleague, Carlos Vicente, who passed suddenly in March. It was a special moment to join together in our grief and to connect as a team, especially for the newcomers to GRAIN’s staff and board.
The opening up of travel allowed us to reconnect with our partners across the world, at the Seed Guardian gathering in Chile, the Africa Climate Justice conference in Mozambique and the G-20 counter summit in Bali Indonesia, among others.

It was also the year that Russia invaded Ukraine, sparking off chaos in the international commodity market and showing how vulnerable the globalised industrial food system is. It was the year floods in Pakistan devastated harvests, droughts and heatwaves brought extreme temperatures, plants could not endure and wildfires destroyed habitats. And it was the year that farmers endured tremendous price increases of their inputs, while fertiliser and pesticides companies were posting huge profits – something that GRAIN documented throughout the year.

In 2022, we embarked on a transition as co-founder and coordinator, Henk Hobbelink, will be retiring in April 2023. The transition involved a lot of reorganising of responsibilities, as well as training and capacity sharing by several staff. We are very happy with this process as it created a lot of confidence that GRAIN will be even stronger as a result.

In this publication we report and reflect on these and other activities carried out during the year. We hope it gives some insight into what we have achieved and learned in 2022 and what challenges we are facing going forward.

Enjoy reading!

The GRAIN team

Corporations, power and the global food system

- Confronting today’s growing corporate control over the global food system.
- Exploring how corporate power impacts small-scale food producers.
- Linking corporate power to the food crisis, control over resources, and global trade relations.

Farms, arms and Israel’s agro-diplomacy

A first-time report for GRAIN pulls back the curtain on the overseas activities of some of the main Israeli agribusiness companies. It shows how a handful of little-known Israeli companies, often led by former defence and secret service officers with high-level political connections, are the main actors in Israel’s foreign agro-diplomacy. Their growing number of large-scale agriculture projects in Africa, Latin America and Asia provide few benefits for local communities, but generate severe consequences from land grabbing to public debts. The report, annexes and infographic are available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish and partners are translating materials into Arabic for further reach. Presented by GRAIN staff in webinars, the report was well received by Palestinian organisations as well as movements in solidarity with Palestine, and has been useful to support network building among those impacted by Israeli agribusiness in the Global South.
**The fertiliser trap**

With the world in the midst of an energy and climate crisis, prices for chemical fertilisers are skyrocketing, putting food production at severe risk in many places. In a joint report with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, we show how public budgets are under severe strain while the world’s largest fertiliser companies are making record profits. Farmers and governments in the G20 spent $21.8 billion more on key fertilisers imports in 2021 and 2022, while the world’s biggest fertiliser companies are expected to make almost an US$84 billion profit over the same period. The report generated influential coverage and political impact thanks to outreach efforts in collaboration with the Global Strategic Communications Council Network. Released prior to the UN COP27, the report filled an information gap at a critical time, with key arguments getting picked up by decision makers in Europe.

**GRAIN’s voice in public debate**

- Peasants still feed the world, even if FAO claims otherwise said GRAIN and partners in an open letter to the FAO in the face of a new study changing several key positions. The letter reverberated in the media and among groups on social media. We also brought the topic to a session of the Oxford Real Farming Conference in January.
- The food crisis is a food price crisis due to a large extent to financial speculation, and a polycrisis of food-energy-climate and land, GRAIN argued as agribusiness profits continued to skyrocket while media and political leaders bemoaned increasing levels of hunger worldwide.
- GRAIN cut through the big tech hype for African food systems, framed digitalisation from a feminist perspective and questioned digital agriculture for small-scale farmers, as big data and digital agriculture converge on food systems around the world.

**Free trade agreements are deviations of power that erode food sovereignty and need to be abolished - not reformed - to get out of corporate submission, says the GRAIN report focusing on the history of trade deals with Mexico, also adapted into this Instagram post.**

**Undue influence: funds pushing industrial ag**

GRAIN and partners came together in a webinar series to generate a common understanding on the role of pension funds in land grabbing. The two webinars attracted over a hundred people, introducing the issue into the work of fellow activists and putting new groups into conversation with each other for a multi-sector perspective. GRAIN’s background and follow up material provided a structure for the analysis and a source of content for the media pick-up that came as a result of the online sessions.
**Transnational resistance**

GRAIN participates in regular meetings with several transnational groups resisting land grabs. Though the work is difficult, the results are clear. In March 2022, Chain Reaction Research released a report, citing data produced by GRAIN, showing that many land deals for oil palm in Africa have failed since 2000. Mongabay’s coverage of the report also refers to the cross-border network of the informal alliance against industrial oil palm where GRAIN has served as a facilitation team member for nearly a decade.

> “Reasons for delayed, failed, or dropped expansion plans vary and include community resistance to expansion on their traditional lands. Oil palm growers experience considerable operational risks and costs from violent community conflicts, and many African communities have been successful in their resistance to oil palm development.”

— Chain Reaction Research, March 2022. African Oil Palm Expansion Slows, Reputation Risks Remain for FMCGs

**Development banks exit from land grab**

For years, GRAIN has spoken out against the development banks behind the land grabs in Africa and specifically the Democratic Republic of Congo. In February 2022, development banks of Belgium, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands followed France in selling off their financial interest and pulling out of PHC, a plantation company with a record of egregious land grabbing in the RDC. GRAIN worked on a statement which was signed by 30 organisations, many of them from Africa, asserting that the land grab was the cause of gross human rights violations and environmental crimes, for which the development banks bear a
heavy responsibility. The statement declares that while the development banks had pulled out, the harm done must be redressed. In October, GRAIN participated in a press conference with groups from the DR Congo and Côte d’Ivoire organising against the Finance in Common meetings in Abidjan, highlighting testimony from local groups and villagers impacted by the Africa Development Bank undermining food sovereignty.

The site farmlandgrab.org continues to be a clearing-house for news and communications. In 2022, 600 new articles were posted on the site where 70,000 unique visitors came and 49 issues of the newsletter were sent to over 6,000 subscribers during the year. With a refresh and updated pages this year, the site has improved functionality.

In defence of the Cerrado, Brazil
Over the course of the year, GRAIN was actively involved in the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal hearings on the Cerrado with the coalition in Defence of the Cerrado in Brazil. This accusation set precedent introducing the concept of ecocide into the Tribunal for the first time. The thematic and final hearings presented evidence and testimonials on the impact of agribusiness and extractives on land and territory, food sovereignty, biodiversity and water. Around 250 people from over 50 organisations in nine states of the Brazilian Cerrado, as well as other national and international partner organisations, attended the final hearing where GRAIN presented. The tribunal jurors accepted the priority recommendations to Brazilian state institutions, and groups are keen on following up to see these recommendations implemented.

Digital land grabbing
The digitalisation of information on land and natural resources may seem to set land governance on the right path. However, our work on The digitalisation of land: more data, less land found that digitalisation could result in a new cycle of land theft by reclassifying public and communal lands as private properties. As we also saw in the case of digital land records in Indonesia, this could push land onto the market system and effectively turn it into a financial product, thereby, further increasing the concentration of land ownership in the hands of those who control data and global finances.

On the occasion of the general assembly of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in December 2022, over 100 organisations signed onto a statement co-written by GRAIN to “reiterate our denunciation of the RSPO and our commitment to actions that can truly serve the interests of communities and put an end to the colonialist model of industrial oil palm plantations.”
People’s control over seeds

- Challenging corporate seed and intellectual property laws.
- Revealing unprecedented levels of corporate control over seeds and the push for GMOs.
- Cultivating emerging seed saving and exchange movements.

Biodiversity booklets

With the help of GRAIN, the Alianza Biodiversidad and Colectivo de Semillas de América Latina finalised production of the Biodiversity booklet series, with a total of eight primers covering topics such as threats to biodiversity, grassroots proposals on how to take care of seeds and how to push forward the saving and exchanging of seeds. Each booklet has been accompanied by an online launch. These valuable resources can now be adapted and translated into other languages to contribute to seed sovereignty in communities around the world.

GMOs in Asia

Biotech firms and agribusiness are pitching new biotech plants as a silver bullet for humanity’s woes, from food and nutritional insecurity, to climate change and the loss of biodiversity. In Asia, where the promotion of genetically modified plants and foods is being pushed forcefully not only by agribusiness, but also by publicly-funded institutions, this is resulting in the persistent change of laws, regulations and standards governing genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Our report, GMOs in Asia: What’s happening and who’s fighting back?, updates the status of regulations and resistance to GMOs in seven Asia Pacific countries: Japan, Philippines, China, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Australia. So far, the report has been translated to Spanish, French, Hindi and Chinese and reproduced by groups around Asia and Europe fighting against GMOs.

Global #StopUPOV campaign

The second #StopUPOV global week of action between 28 November and 2 December brought attention to the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV). GRAIN produced a new report and infographic on Who profits under UPOV, showing that the top four pesticide and seed companies made soaring profits over the past five years, partly due to the intellectual property rights protection granted by UPOV. Other actions during this year’s campaign included a public discussion organised by Alianza Biodiversidad, an online conference organised by the Indonesia coalition for the transformation of the food system, the launch of a new report on the potato seed industry by the African Centre for Biodiversity and a mobilisation in front of the Swiss parliament organised by Swiss-based funders and civil society entities.

From the past two years of actions, information sharing and mobilisation against UPOV, we have seen concerns around UPOV grow as well as concrete political changes to limit UPOV.
Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis

Drawing attention to the industrial food system as a main driver of the climate crisis.
Zooming in on industrial meat and dairy as key culprits.
Proposing food sovereignty and agroecology as an important part of the solution.

Making the food-climate connection
Being in conversation on key issues is an important way to share information that can inform action. Throughout the year, GRAIN had the opportunity to present in several events and webinars around food and climate with partners, funders and the public such as:

- Press conference 'No to Nature Based Solutions' ahead of the UN Convention on Biodiversity in March. Over 360 organisations launched a statement exposing “nature based disposessions” that will cause huge new land grabs and promote harmful practices like monoculture tree plantations and industrial agriculture.
- online meeting of Food Think, a Beijing-based agroecological communication group with an audience of around 1,000, mostly young ecological farmers and practitioners from the national community supported agriculture (CSA) movement in China.
- workshop with journalists in Uganda on covering agroecology and climate topics.
- webinar with EDGE Funders called the Climate-agrifood nexus and participating in EDGE’s climate justice working group.

- The February-March 2022 report of the Special Rapporteurg on the right to food cited a number of GRAIN materials and recommended to member states “Not pressuring other Member States to join the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants in any way. Being a party to that Convention should no longer be required as part of bilateral or regional agreements. Member States are strongly encouraged to remove such requirements from current agreements.”
- In January 2022, the Supreme Court of Justice of Honduras declared unanimously the total unconstitutionality of the Law for the Protection of Plant Varieties. One of the key points was that the UPOV Convention “violates constitutional principles for life, human dignity, and the right of the Honduran people to an adequate standard of living.”
- The Constitutional Court of Ecuador ruled in favour of the unconstitutionality of the entry of transgenic seeds and crops for research purposes into the country (a country that was declared free of transgenic seeds and crops by the 2008 Constitution). GRAIN participated with an Amicus Curiae at the time of the presentation of the case.
- In November, the Coalition of National Sovereignty in Malaysia petitioned that the Prime Minister withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal. One of the arguments presented in the petition was the requirement to join UPOV.
online session of the Thousand Currents Academy on Funding climate solutions
1st Youth Forum on Agroecology with JVE in Cote d’Ivoire
Agroecology school with Assembly of the Poor, Thailand
Presentation on the climate-agrifood nexus at the Belem’s letter national meeting in Rio de Janeiro.
African People’s Counter-COP organised by the Africa Climate Justice Group parallel to the UN climate COP27 in Egypt. This mobilisation, both online and in decentralised physical events, was held to bring attention to the issues and people not included in the official spaces.
course on Green Capitalism and Agribusiness by ENFF/MST school in Brazil

Greenwashing glossary

The ways that agribusiness and the fossil fuel industry are trying to defend their operations and maintain the status quo are innumerable, but we selected ten to bring into focus in a new Agribusiness greenwashing glossary. With bite-size definitions, related memes and additional resources for each entry, the glossary reverberated on social media and was picked up by journalists, thus multiplying its dissemination through interviews, podcasts and videos. Partner groups translated the materials to Arabic and Portuguese as part of their campaigns and summits related to the UN COP27 climate summit in Egypt and continued climate work.

A stand out publication in terms of outreach, the Agribusiness greenwashing glossary publication had 2,634 page views and the social media memes were liked by over 700 people on Instagram in the week of its release.

In a deeper look at farming for carbon credits, we published a separate article that shows how these programmes are designed to cover up pollution while consolidating control over food and agriculture in the hands of a small number of corporations. One clear case study is the case of Niger, where a new US-based company called African Agriculture Inc., has just signed a series of agreements granting it access to over two million hectares of land for the production and sale of carbon credits. This is after a devastating experience by the same company in Senegal. While for years GRAIN and many others have been calling for returning carbon to the soil through agricultural practices as a solution to the climate crisis, this research makes clear that only through a vast programme of agroecology, land redistribution and the re-localisation of food systems can we effectively build carbon back into the soils and cut emissions in the food system.
Where in the world is GRAIN
a selection of events where GRAIN participated and contributed

- Exchange on agrarian context and defence of maize. February, DF, Mexico
- Pan African Palestine Solidarity Network. March, Dakar, Senegal
- Seminar for the land. March, Asunción, Paraguay
- Africa climate justice group conference. March, Maputo, Mozambique
- Women’s and general meetings of the informal alliance against oil palm plantations. May, Aboisso, Côte d’Ivoire
- Women and trade exchange and training. May and November, Kalangala and Buvuma islands, Uganda
- Closing audience of the Permanent People’s Tribunal in defence of the Cerrado. July, Goiânia, Brazil
- Asia Pacific feminist convening on food sovereignty and convening on trade and corporate power. September, Bangkok, Thailand
- Global food crisis public debate. September, Barcelona, Spain
- Latin American congress on political ecology. October, Quito, Ecuador
- G-20 Counter Summit. November, Bali, Indonesia
- Seed guardians gathering & Red TECLA congress. November, Aiquinco & Santiago, Chile
- Alianza Biodiversidad meeting. The meeting allowed 13 organisations from 10 Latin American countries to meet again after three years of pandemic, resulting in a renewed commitment to continue this twenty-year articulation. November, Santiago, Chile.
- 5th Kisan Swaraj Sammelan Convention for Farmers’ Sovereignty. November, Karnataka, India
- Annual general meeting of the National Networks of Farmers’ Group. November, Morogoro, Tanzania
- LVC South Asia Regional conference. December, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Digitalisation in agriculture meeting. December, Delhi, India

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This past year, the evolution of our communications and outreach continued. We persisted with our goal to make our content more accessible, through improved writing, social media outreach, multimedia formats and work with the press. We completed many interviews, provided resources and shared our publications with journalists from well-known outlets as well as many diverse online and local media from different corners of the world. Our work also found its way to academic journals and institutional publications. Many of our partners also featured GRAIN materials in their newsletters, bulletins and list servers.

Our website, mailing list and social media platforms continue to be important for outreach and information. We have been working to improve our outreach analytics, applying a filter for bots and cleaning up our mailing list to make our statistics more accurate.

One important project was developing a gender-inclusive language guide. Building on our anti-patriarchy work over the past several years, we agreed to improve the language we use in our publications and translations to challenge patriarchal expressions. Working with our programme staff, publications and translators team, we developed an internal guide for improving our writing to make it more inclusive. In the future, we plan to share this experience with partners and look forward to being in conversation with those who share concerns about addressing patriarchy in communications to learn together.
This has been a year of learning and transition for GRAIN. We prepared for the retirement of co-founder and coordinator Henk Hobbelink with over 20 transition preparation meetings with the incoming coordinator, current Asia programme staff, Kartini Samon, on topics ranging from finances to decision making to conflict management. Several sessions were also held on fundraising, as current staff take on new roles and responsibilities in this area as well. We began to shift support roles among all staff, also adjusting to the sudden loss of our colleague, Carlos Vicente, in Latin America, and the addition of a new staff for the Asia programme team.

Deciding to build capacity internally instead of bringing in a new outside coordinator was a collective decision. We consider that building leadership skills and strengthening our collective coordination are aligned with our organisational culture and values.

This year, we also took on a strategic planning process with a monitoring and evaluation framework to enhance our planning and reporting to funders and bolster our internal learning processes.

Overall, GRAIN continues in a strong position both in terms of financial stability and governance. We continue to improve our internal administration tools and practices. GRAIN’s autonomy is essential for our work, and so we strive to maintain diversified support. We are committed to providing clear financial and activity reports for our funders and are proactive to engage with new funders aligned with our mission.

In September, we were able to meet again in person after three years for our annual staff and board meeting just outside Barcelona. Two of our board members ended their term, and three new joined in to help reinforce support during our transition period. Our time together served to exchange, evaluate and develop strategy and programme, connect together as staff and board and celebrate Henk as he prepares to transition to a new phase of life outside of GRAIN. We also visited organic food hub EcoCentral and the agroecological farm Cal Notori in the Agricultural Park of Baix Llobregat to learn about regional food systems.
Annex: GRAIN publications in 2022

Corporations, power and the global food system
- Resisting pension fund capitalism: a webinar series
- Lurching from food crisis to food crisis
- Peasants still feed the world, even if FAO claims otherwise
- Thailand’s swine fever cover-up: a disaster for its small pig farms
- Big farms don’t feed the world
- Funding industrial agriculture vs agroecology: Not a simple binary
- A fertiliser cartel holds the global food system hostage
- Free trade agreements: Mexico. How to get out of corporate submission?
- Farms, arms and Israel’s agro-diplomacy
- The fertiliser trap: the rising cost of farming’s addiction to chemical fertilisers
- Private equity sharks take a bite out of the ‘blue economy’
- We need a movement to take pensions out of financial markets
- Big food companies jumping on the plant based food bandwagon
- Getting out of the food-energy-climate crisis

Land grabbing and the struggle for land
- Will digital land records stop land grabs in Indonesia?
- Development banks make shameless exit from a colonial land grab in the Congo
- Updated map of Bolloré’s global farmland holdings
- A century of agro-colonialism in the DR Congo
- The digitalisation of land: more data, less land
- Local communities in Senegal demand the return of their land acquired by US firm
- From Asia to Africa: Tentacles of oil palm plantations are squeezing communities dry
- The Brazilian state and agri-food corporations are condemned for ecocide of the Cerrado and genocide of its peoples

People’s control over seeds
- It’s Africa vs African Union
- Hands off our buffel grass! Kenyan herders resist the privatisation of their biodiversity
- GMOs in Asia: What’s happening and who’s fighting back?
- La integralidad de los cuidados: Cuadernos Biodiversidad #7
- El universo y la semillas en el surco: Cuadernos Biodiversidad #8
- Who profits under UPOV?
- The inseparable trio: land grabbing, deforestation, and climate crisis
- An agribusiness greenwashing glossary
- From land grab to soil grab - the new business of carbon farming
- Purchasing land in Niger for carbon credits: the new form of greenwashing sweeping Africa

Organisational development
- Transition time in GRAIN
- Carlos Vicente: A "man-tree"
- Defying patriarchy and other power dynamics: our experience at GRAIN

Supermarket Watch Asia
- Defending People’s milk: same plight, same fight for peasants and fresh milk vendors
- Heat waves and heavier rains: How the climate crisis affects fresh market traders and street vendors
- The urgency to localise food supplies
- One-fifth of total food system emissions comes from global food miles

Revista Biodiversidad, sustento y cultura
- Biodiversidad 111 / 2022-1: el acaparamiento de tierras, la deforestación y la crisis climática, un trío inseparable
- Biodiversidad 112 / 2022-2: Defensoras: la vida en el centro
- Biodiversidad 113 / 2022-3: La defensa del maíz y el trigo
- Biodiversidad 114 / 2022-4: La niñez

Revista Soberanía Alimentaria, biodiversidad y culturas
- 43. El colapso de la agricultura industrial
- 44. Cumplimos 50 años
- 45. Defender el territorio y la agricultura campesina

Languages
- English
- French
- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Hindi
- Chinese
- Arabic