

GRAIN in 2024

Highlights
of our activities

GRAIN

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About GRAIN

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. Since 1990, GRAIN has been active in the global movement challenging corporate power over people’s food and livelihoods. Our work is carried out both globally and on the ground with partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

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.

GRAIN specialises in identifying, monitoring and analysing trends that affect peasant farmers’ and rural communities’ livelihoods, with a focus on the corporate sector. Parallel and interconnected to our research and information work, our movement support work actively bolsters and links partners and allies through networking, strategy development and capacity sharing.

This report highlights our research and information work, as well as our efforts to support movement building across four thematic programme areas. It also reflects our cross-cutting efforts in communications, outreach and organisational development. Additionally, we provide a glimpse into GRAIN’s internal structure. For more information, please visit our website, follow us on social media, subscribe to our mailing lists or contact us directly. Please also consider donating to GRAIN to help sustain our work.

Year in review:

During 2024, systematic attacks on food systems were deployed in conflicts in Palestine, Haiti, Sudan, El Salvador, Myanmar and Ethiopia. Food militarisation and weaponisation escalated. Land was under siege both literally and in boardrooms and stock exchanges. Seeds, that primordial element of all food production, had their genetic essence manipulated in order to be stamped with trademarks and generate corporate profit. And industrial food production from pigs to maize to fish released tonnes of carbon emissions, further heating up the planet already wracked by floods, fires and other disasters.

Farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk and food workers did not stand by idly: they organised themselves, gathered information, held events, planned actions, developed strategies and mobilised in the name of food sovereignty. The many fronts of struggle around the world are a testament to the strength of resistance to corporate takeover of the global food system.

This year, as in the past three decades, GRAIN has been working alongside groups around the world to provide information and support for these struggles: co-hosting a public webinar on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, launching a major new dataset and report on land grabs stemming from carbon offsets projects; bolstering a global week of action to Stop UPOV and co-coordinating a meeting of a Latin American coalition of communities impacted by intensive animal farming .

All of these efforts are part of long-standing struggles and undertaken with partners and allies around the world to advance food sovereignty.

We are grateful for the solidarity and strength shown in what has been another difficult year. Thank you.

The GRAIN team.

GRAIN staff met in Coimbra, Portugal for a week-long strategy and planning meeting.



Corporations, power and the global food system

Confronting corporate control and global trade's impact on small-scale food producers

2024 marked 20 years since the launching of the collaborative and open online platform bilaterals.org. GRAIN is a founding and active member of this tool to visibilise and generate support for struggles against free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties. Over the years, bilaterals.org has supported campaigns against many bilateral agreements as well as regional ones like RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership). The good news is, a number of these deals were stopped or seriously scaled back as the result of effective social movement pressure and resistance. However, in the 30 years since the first modern deal, the [North American Free Trade Agreement](#), the impacts of trade and investment agreements have been accepted in many countries, and new deals are often coated with environmentally-friendly jargon. In order to stop FTAs and bring an end to the regime they have instilled in so many countries, we have to push for food sovereignty, climate justice, local markets, living wages and social protections. We need open platforms like bilaterals.org to accompany us in that struggle, as we reclaim and build a clear and radical political and economic vision.

One current struggle GRAIN and bilaterals.org are working on together is against the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). This year, GRAIN and bilaterals.org developed background documents analysing the AfCFTA and translated our [fact sheet](#) into Shona, Kiswahili, Tsonga, Luganda, Luo, and Kikongo. Bilaterals.org posted the protocols as they emerged and GRAIN and a Malian jurist, Mohamed Coulibaly, prepared [an analysis](#) of the investment protocol of the



Bilaterals.org held a team meeting and regional partners convening in Bandung, Indonesia at the end of October to commemorate its 20th anniversary.

AfCFTA and its impact on access to land. In September, in conjunction with the International Day of Action against the WTO and Free Trade Agreements, GRAIN, bilaterals.org and others convened a [public webinar](#) to better understand the impacts of the AfCFTA on seed sovereignty and small-scale farmers.

LIVE WEBINAR

THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA): FOR WHOSE BENEFIT?

Join us as we seek to understand who really benefits from the AfCFTA—a trade deal aiming to liberalize 97% of African trade while imposing IPRs that could impact seed sovereignty and small-scale farmers.

ON THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2024 **START AT 4 PM EAT / 2 PM GMT+1**

<https://tinyurl.com/45yd7odk>

SPEAKERS

- LARBI HAFIDI** (ATTAC MAROC)
- SABAR MEDDEB** (ASSOCIATION TUNISIENNE DE PERMACULTURE)
- JULIA KAMAU** (SEED SAVERS NETWORK)
- FRANCIS NGIRI** (FARMER (SEED SAVERS NETWORK))
- ALKALI CEESAY** (NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR AGROECOLOGY THE GAMBIA)

MODERATED BY:

- DAVID OTIENO** (KENYAN PEASANTS LEAGUE)

The webinar will be in English with interpretation in French, Arabic and Swahili.

CONVENERS

Attac Maroc, Kenyan Peasants League, Association Tunisienne de Permaculture, CADTM Afrique, WoMin, Seed Savers Network, National Alliance for Agroecology the Gambia, Bilaterals.org, GRAIN.

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Around 250 people connected live to the webinar, including via listening groups in several communities, and recordings have already been viewed nearly 500 times.

GRAIN focused heavily this past year on researching investments and financial actors pushing industrial agriculture - and supporting the efforts of groups to push back against it. For example, communities [impacted by industrial meat and seafood production](#) came together to discuss solutions at a gathering GRAIN co-organised in Quito, Ecuador, in August. Groups from Ecuador, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile and Mexico issued a [public declaration](#) on how the production of pork, poultry, beef, shrimp, salmon and tilapia is passing into the hands of transnational companies, displacing traditional and family-based systems. GRAIN also released reports on the [US\\$300 billion aquaculture industry](#), [10 years of China's Belt and Road initiative](#), and the [UAE's growing power in the global food system](#). Much of this research was possible thanks to the use of specialised corporate databases, which GRAIN has shared access to along with several partner organisations. We also used the databases extensively to draw up internal assessments shared with communities directly affected by investors.

Land grabbing and the struggle for land

Building alliances to stop land, water and territory grabbing

Across the global South, corporations are taking over large areas of land to grow crops or trees to produce carbon offsets that they can then sell on international markets. GRAIN has been investigating the companies involved in these land deals and supporting community efforts, such as helping draft and circulate statements put out by groups in [Senegal](#), [Madagascar](#) and [Sierra Leone](#) this past year.

GRAIN released a [new dataset of carbon offset projects](#) from the voluntary market accounting for over 9 million hectares in the global South. The most affected region, in terms of land area, is Africa, with projects covering over 5.2 million hectares. Our analysis shows how private companies from the global North, including fossil fuel and tech giants, buy carbon credits to show they are taking action on climate change.



GRAIN formed part of an initial strategy meeting in Zambia with around 30 participants from eight countries in Africa where over 15 carbon offset projects are taking place. This meeting was an important first step to exchange information and build strategies to resist carbon offsets.

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As part of GRAIN's long-term work with communities facing land grabs and abuses by industrial plantations, we went and sat in the front row of Socfin's annual general assembly in Luxembourg. GRAIN's interventions raised quite a lot of discussion and direct dialogue with the directors. Afterward, a long-time partner of GRAIN's, SYNAPARCAM of Cameroon, said, "You took our issues to the highest level of power. Now we can follow up." In March 2024, the ethics committee of the Norwegian pension fund (the largest in the world) recommended it divest from Bollore because of various impacts of the Socfin plantations, partly based on inputs that GRAIN and allies shared.



For the past decade, GRAIN has supported the Bunong people's land struggle with Socfin in Cambodia. In 2024, we published an [overview of this case](#) based on the years of work together and interviews done during visits to the community.

Another long term commitment has been supporting the informal alliance against industrial monoculture plantations in West and Central Africa. This year, a women's and general meeting were held in Gabon in November, from which a [declaration](#) was launched. Expanding this work to Latin America, we did [fresh research](#) on the violence and intimidation towards Indigenous, Afro-descendant and peasant communities, land grabbing and deforestation by industrial oil palm plantations.

A common thread in the oil palm industry across the global South is an attempt to greenwash the negative effects through a certification body, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). GRAIN [produced a primer](#) with inputs from many organisations meant to serve as a tool to build alliances and a strategy within and across regions impacted by oil palm and other industrial plantations.

People's control over seeds

Resisting UPOV, the privatisation of seeds and the push for GMOs

For millions of small-scale producers, diverse farmers' seed varieties are crucial to food sovereignty, nutrition, enhancing biodiversity and sustaining livelihoods not just in rural areas but also in urban and peri-urban areas. This is why, building on decades of resistance to seed privatisation and to the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), and marking UPOV's anniversary on 2 December, hundreds of farmers' groups and civil society organisations around the world came together once more to oppose the corporate hijack of seed systems. More than 400 groups were involved in the [Stop UPOV global week of action](#) in 2024, launching reports, hosting workshops, posting on social media, circulating communications and mobilising events. Groups in Argentina, Benin and Zambia also organised throughout the year to prevent their governments from joining UPOV.

This year marked a [historic victory](#) in another act of resisting seed privatisation: the Philippine Supreme Court issued a cease-and-desist order on the commercial propagation of Golden Rice and Bt eggplant.

Since 2001, groups including GRAIN have been organising and working to resist Golden Rice, and other genetically modified organisms (GMOs), across Asia. The fact that Filipino groups were able to tip the scales against the commercial release of this so-called "pro-poor" rice after more than 20 years of struggle shows that these are fundamentally political battles over what is the best direction for agriculture – not a matter of whether a given technology works or not.



“The rejection against Golden Rice has become a symbol of resistance against GMOs and corporate control in agriculture, not just in the Philippines and in other Asian countries but across the world.”

Stop Golden Rice! Network

Another act of resistance is encouraging farmer-managed seed systems. This past year, GRAIN attended several seed exchanges and gatherings to do just that. In April, we attended the seed festival in Sewagram and the Beejotsav in Maharashtra, India. In August, we joined a seeds boot camp organised by the Seeds Savers Network Kenya where 40 participants from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ivory Coast along with Nepal and Canada came together at a two-acre food village.

We also attended the Mesoamerican Meeting in Defence of Maize and Seeds in April in Cartago, Costa Rica. The meeting was attended by long-term GRAIN partners from the Alianza Biodiversidad and Colectivo de Semillas as well as peasant farmers from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Colombia and Ecuador. In September, GRAIN joined a meeting of the Latin American Biodiversity Alliance in Ecuador. The participants reflected on the current context of resistance for biodiversity, agroecology and food sovereignty and opportunities for action across the region.



As many countries in Central America face seed harmonisation laws pushing for UPOV membership, the Mesoamerican meeting in defence of maize and seeds was an important space to build networks and strategies to defend and maintain farmer-managed seeds

systems. At the heart of this struggle is the concept of sowing as a political act.

Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis

Calling out agribusiness greenwashing and positioning food sovereignty and agroecology as important climate solutions

The climate crisis is intensifying, as are corporate schemes to profit from false solutions to address it. We reflected on how this played out at the COP28 in Dubai, where corporate representatives far outnumbered civil society and social movements. With carbon offsets and other false solutions taking the lead, we see a dire need at the coming COPs for social movements to push forward the strong and growing consensus on what the true climate solutions are: food sovereignty, peasant-led agroecology and food distribution systems anchored in local collectives and public control. As part of that preparation work already in 2024, GRAIN participated in sessions of an international dialogue on forests between Brazil and Indonesia with World Rainforest Movement and the Brazilian coalition Agro is Fire, the Brazilian civil society meeting on carbon markets, the G20 social summit with the MST and the National meeting of Brazil's small farmers movement on carbon markets and other false solutions in agriculture. These discussions are informing the plans and strategy for the People's summit in 2025, where GRAIN will be present.



GRAIN speaks on green finance in the agri-food system at the social summit organised alongside the G20 in Brazil in November.

There is no way to deal with the climate crisis without addressing how we produce and consume food, which accounts for one-third of all emissions. GRAIN released an [updated version of its climate poster](#) on how the industrial food system drives climate change and how food sovereignty and peasant agroecology can help stop it. With new data and graphics, the poster serves as a tool to connect the struggles for food sovereignty and climate justice.

The poster was distributed at a training of trainers and agroecology boot camp, both held in Cote d'Ivoire and the Africa climate justice group annual meeting in Cameroon. The poster also made its way around Latin America, as staff travelled to meet partners in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Ecuador. In Asia, staff took copies while visiting communities in Cambodia and Thailand and distributed it widely at the 4th Asia Pacific Feminist Forum.

In all this work, we strive to position agroecology and food sovereignty as climate solutions. This is a lived experience for Mexican indigenous and peasant communities using food sovereignty as resistance to expanding agro-industry. Reflecting on what we saw from field visits in 2023, we released [an article](#) providing testimony that ancestral peasant

farming is not on the brink of extinction, or even in decline, but it is being pushed into a corner. Despite this, communities insist on remaining rooted to their land, to their people, to their seeds, sustained by the conviction that, above all, they must continue to use their own creative and collective means to secure what matters most to them: in this case, food sovereignty and the defence of their lives in their territories.



GRAIN staff shared the new climate poster in French to participants at the Africa climate justice group meeting in Cameroon in April 2024.

Communications and outreach

Communications and outreach is a constant effort to deepen public understanding of the forces shaping the global food system. Over the course of the year, we published two dozen original reports, posters and infographics consistently in three languages (English, French and Spanish), and many materials were additionally translated into Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Chinese, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese and kiSwahili. Some of our climate-related materials were translated to Burmese and Khmer, thanks to increasing engagement with groups. Staff presented research in webinars and took print copies of reports and posters to events around the world. We also continued to serve as editorial members of several collective newsletters. We remained active on social media platforms, regularly posting news, original analysis and statements of partner groups.

GRAIN's publications getting picked up in the media is a key indicator of our aim to amplify the struggles for food sovereignty. Throughout the year, we engaged with journalists on a regular basis for interviews, background content and contacts to support their stories. GRAIN publications, staff or initiatives we formed part of, were cited in over 200 media, including mainstream agencies like [The New York Times](#), [The Guardian](#), [Le Monde](#) and [The Times of London](#) and well-known progressive news blogs like [Mongabay](#), [Grist](#) and [DeSmog](#). It is especially relevant when media outlets from or focused on the global South consult us and share our work and analysis, such as coverage by [La Jornada](#), [Afrique XXI](#), [Liberation](#), [Middle East Eye](#) and [Brasil de Fato](#) this past year. Our work is also picked up by industry outlets and many partner and allies groups in their reports and newsletters.



GRAIN participated in 4th Asia Pacific Feminist Forum organised by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which brought together around 500 participants, a mix of grassroots communities, activists and NGOs from more than 30 countries in the region. GRAIN co-organised a session on “Food as weapon, food sovereignty as the solution” reflecting on the need for strengthening women food producers’ capacities to rebuild from crises, with the focus on strategising towards feminist food sovereignty.

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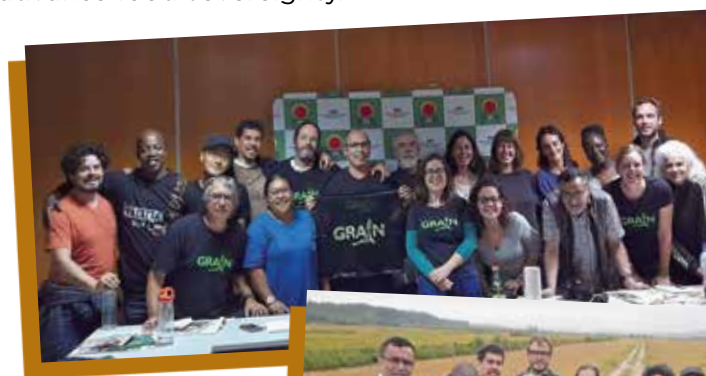
Cultivating GRAIN

This past year, GRAIN consolidated and adjusted to the staff changes we have been going through since 2022. Now with an established team, we fine-tuned our new roles and responsibilities. We also continued to make improvements in our internal tools and communications to increase transparency and collaboration within our team.

In October, we held our annual in-person staff meeting in Coimbra, Portugal. The week was a full agenda of assessing current context and challenges and planning future work. In an effort to minimise costs as well as travel footprint, we held two virtual board meetings this year. Staff also engaged with board members throughout the year on research, network building and fundraising.

We put a strong focus this year on exploring new funding opportunities, an effort that will need to continue into the coming years. We are actively seeking relationships with new aligned funders to fill future funding gaps and assure our stability. We are grateful for the support of all of our funders in providing the resources we need to continue this work, and welcome interest from funders who could support GRAIN’s work to advance food sovereignty.

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During our annual meeting, the GRAIN team visited rice farmers and the offices of the National agriculture confederation (CNA) of Portugal, where we had an energising discussion on experiences, challenges and shared visions for food sovereignty.



GRAIN's team in 2024



For more info see: www.grain.org/pages/staff

Annex: GRAIN publications in 2024

Corporations, power and the global food system

- Expanding markets, undermining food sovereignty: 10 years of China's Belt and Road
- Food inflation: The math doesn't add up without factoring in corporate power
- Whipping up disaster: how Brazil became a lab for financial agro-investments
- Free trade frenzy: the hidden costs of South Asia's economic gamble
- NAFTA at 30: The mother of all free trade agreements
- From land to logistics: UAE's growing power in the global food system
- Declaración de Quito frente al extractivismo de la producción industrial de animales
- The cost of industrial meat: displacement, conflict and environmental destruction
- Techno feudalism takes root on the farm in India and China
- Twenty years of bilaterals.org, twenty years of fighting FTAs
- The pushback against Aquaculture Inc

Land grabbing and the struggle for land

- TUS agribusiness - African Agriculture Holdings - threatens land and water rights in West Africa
- A new wave of land grabs strikes Tanzania
- Oil palm in Latin America: monoculture and violence
- The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil explained
- The Bunong people's land struggle with Socfin
- Genocide and food weaponisation in Palestine: global resistance as hope
- From land grabbers to carbon cowboys: a new scramble for community lands takes off
- Bone dry: Agribusiness' African water grab
- The AfCFTA and land in Africa: towards a surge in land grabbing?

People's control over seeds

- Peoples of Mesoamerica in defence of seeds and maize
- Corporate bioinputs: Agribusiness's new toxic trap
- Seeds, sovereignty & struggle: The ongoing battle against UPOV & seed privatisation

Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis

- The Davos-isation of the climate COP
- Self-management vs agrotoxins: migrants as bridges
- New poster on food and the climate crisis

Cross-cutting and organisational development

- GRAIN in 2023: highlights of our activities

Supermarket Watch Asia bulletin

- Plastic waste in the food system
- Food hygiene guidelines in traditional markets: A hurdle for local markets and street vendors?
- Where do you get your food from?
- The bulletin is going global!

Revista Biodiversidad, sustento y cultura

- Biodiversidad 119
- Biodiversidad 120
- Biodiversidad 121
- Biodiversidad 122

Revista Soberanía Alimentaria, biodiversidad y culturas

- 49. Cohabitar el mundo
- 50. La escuela rural
- 51. Cultura árabe: Memoria y vínculos

- English ● French ● Spanish ● Portuguese ● Italian ● Hindi
- Chinese ○ Arabic ● Bahasa ● KiSwahili



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