GRAIN in 2017
Highlights of our activities
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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. Our support takes the form of independent research and analysis, sustained networking at local, regional and international levels, and active cooperation and alliance building.

For the past 30 years, GRAIN has been a key player in the global movement to challenge corporate control of food and farming. The industrial model displaces small-scale producers and the complex farming and food distribution systems that have nourished humanity for more than 12,000 years. Today, almost one billion people experience hunger, in part due to agribusiness corporations that put profits before people. Seventy percent of those living with hunger are small-scale food producers—a testament to our highly dysfunctional global food system.

GRAIN is best known for its strategic information work and incisive analysis of global trends in the food system. But we also actively support and link social movements around the world that are building food sovereignty and creating more diverse food and farming systems.

Our work is currently organised around four interconnected themes:
  • Corporations, power and the global food system,
  • Land grabbing,
  • People’s control over seeds, and
  • Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis

This publication provides an overview of GRAIN’s activities in 2017, highlighting some of our most significant work and reflecting on our impact. We hope this report provides some insight into what we have accomplished and learned in 2017 and the challenges we face going forward.
In October 2017, the Guardian published a story titled “2017 on course to be deadliest on record for land defenders”. By their count, at that moment, the number of people killed because of their stance against mining, agribusiness and other forms of land grabbing, had reached 150. By the end of the year, the number stood at almost 200.

Indeed, it was a tough year. Not only for land defenders, but for all those involved in the struggle for community-centred and biodiversity-based food systems. In accompanying these struggles, GRAIN staffers mobilised with partners in the peoples’ summit against the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership or RCEP – a huge Asia-wide trade deal-in-the-making which is likely to impact the livelihoods of 420 million small family farmers that produce 80 percent of Asia’s food. We supported peoples’ organisations in Central and West Africa in their struggles against the expansion of corporate oil palm plantations that invade their lands, helping them get together to strategise and plan together. In December, we co-organised the Forum on Food Sovereignty in Buenos Aires, bringing together over 300 people from all over the world to make a common front against the World Trade Organisation’s (WTO) corporate trade agenda and new emerging free trade agreements (FTAs).

While the struggles are harsh, and often painful, there is also good news to draw energy from. The food sovereignty movement is growing and moving forward. This year we saw numerous land grab deals collapse in Africa, we co-produced an inspiring documentary about local seed saving and exchange initiatives in Latin America, and we began documenting the precise role of meat and dairy conglomerates in producing greenhouse gas emissions so that we can address this issue. The amount of people and organisations that are resisting the corporate onslaught of food and farming is growing every year, and so are the number of initiatives coming up with alternatives. At GRAIN, we’re happy and proud to be part of this.

This report shares some of the year’s highlights and the challenges ahead. For more information, please visit our website, follow us on Facebook and Twitter, subscribe to our mailing lists or contact us directly. Please also consider donating to GRAIN to help sustain our work in support of small producers and their struggles against the industrial food system.

In solidarity,

The GRAIN team

April 2018
Corporations, power and the global food system

GRAIN’s central focus is to support social movements across the world in their resistance to the growing corporate control over food production, markets and trade. We undertake research on how corporations – including agribusiness, large retail and the finance industry – displace millions of small-scale food producers and how trade and investment deals impose the legal conditions for it. Apart from our information work, we also support the efforts of partners and peoples’ movements to build capacity, develop strategies and foster cooperation and collective action to challenge corporate power over food.

During 2017, GRAIN worked with partners in Asia to co-publish the quarterly Supermarket Watch Asia bulletin, zooming in on the expansion of corporate retail in the region. In Africa, we analysed how Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the European Union (EU) and African countries are having a disastrous impact on farmers and markets in Africa, as they open the floodgates for cheap processed foods coming from the EU. And in Latin America, a lot of our research and writing on the impact of agribusiness got channelled through biodiversidadla.org, a highly active Spanish-language website, and Biodiversidad magazine, which saw the publication of four new issues in 2017.

The RCEP free trade agreement in Asia: leaving 420 million small family farms out of business

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a free trade agreement under negotiation between 16 Asian countries, including China and India. If signed, RCEP will bring down import duties to zero on most agricultural and industrial goods. Being the world’s largest trade agreement, it will impact half of the world’s population including 420 million small family farms that produce 80 per cent of Asia’s food. GRAIN has been actively researching, writing and raising awareness about the impacts of RCEP since 2016. In 2017, we co-published an op-ed with La Via Campesina South Asia zooming in on what RCEP will mean for India’s 70 million dairy farming households. We also published a poster on how the deal would affect food and farmers in the region and helped translate it from English to six Asian languages - Korean, Khmer, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam. The poster spread far and wide at the Peoples’ Summit against FTAs and RCEP in July, which was attended by hundreds of people in Hyderabad, India, in opposition to the RCEP negotiations that were then taking place. During the mobilisations, GRAIN helped coordinate a workshop on the food crisis with other local organisations which was attended by over a hundred participants coming mainly from women’s farmer groups and dairy farmers. Bilaterals.org, a collaborative project that GRAIN participates in, conducted several interviews with community leaders there to document how they will be affected by RCEP.

Food sovereignty in the spotlight at the Peoples’ Summit against WTO

Buenos Aires hosted the WTO’s 11th ministerial conference in December. Thousands of activists from all over the world converged in the city to reaffirm their rejection of neoliberal trade policies. During the
events, La Via Campesina and GRAIN organised a Forum on Food Sovereignty with over 300 participants from more than thirty countries of four continents - an unexpected diversity and amount of people, given that the Argentine government did what it could to prevent leaders from social organisations to enter the country. Strong declarations and statements empowered the struggle and our materials were widely shared during the events. In the end, the WTO negotiations, as well as efforts to sign an EU-Mercosur FTA, were a failure, giving yet more sense of purpose to the movements.

Together with La Via Campesina, GRAIN organised a Forum on Food Sovereignty as part of the Peoples’ Summit “WTO Out!” in December, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Over 300 people participated.

A regional strategic platform to fight against oil palm plantations in West and Central Africa

Coalition building is a core strategy for GRAIN to achieve its objectives and it is paying off. In Africa, much of our effort last year focused on helping build an informal coalition of grassroots organisations struggling against the expansion of industrial oil palm plantations in Central and West Africa. Together with the World Rainforest Movement, we helped organise capacity- and strategy-building workshops on the issue in Nigeria in 2015, in Cameroon in 2016, and in Gabon and Sierra Leone in 2017, building a regional platform. In the space of three years, collaboration and communication channels were created amongst people and organisations fighting these plantations where people were not connected before. This is leading to stronger organisations, better strategies and more information becoming available.

Our work to strengthen grassroots coalitions against industrial oil palm plantation is also being advanced in Asia and Latin America.
The fight against land grabbing

Ever since GRAIN first exposed the issue and helped place it on the global agenda in 2008, land grabbing has become one of our most active work areas. GRAIN’s contributions take the form of research, information and outreach, as well as networking, capacity building and strategy development together with partners working to put a stop to land grabbing in the agricultural sector. In 2017, our efforts focused on supporting the struggles of different civil society organisations against corporate land deals, especially in Asia and Africa.

Exposing Chinese agribusiness’ assault on indigenous peasants’ lands in Cambodia

Preah Vihear province in northern Cambodia is inhabited by the Kuoy, an ethnic minority engaged in small-scale farming and forest foraging. In 2011, the Cambodian government granted several companies belonging to Hengfu, a Chinese sugar company, economic land concessions covering almost 50,000 hectares. Conflict mounted as the companies started to demarcate villagers’ land and community forests for the development of industrial sugarcane plantations, clearing the area, cutting down valuable resin trees and barring access to the Kuoy’s religious temples. We worked together with the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Ponlok Khmer, Community Network in Action (CNA) and the Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA) to gather testimonies from the affected communities and, in June, released a joint report on the subject. Armed with this report, we worked with journalists and human rights groups to build up the pressure. A few months later, representatives of the communities handed a petition to the Chinese embassy in Phnom Penh. They demanded that the Chinese government review the plantations’ compliance with China’s environment and human rights guidelines for overseas business activity and remove the companies from the community’s land. In November, Reuters published an article about this particular land grab case, highlighting women’s role in Preah Vihear in the fight against the expansion of industrial sugarcane plantations.

“Don’t touch my land”: Ivoirians up in arms against Belgian agribusiness

Like in many neighbouring countries, Cote d’Ivoire has witnessed several cases of land grabbing by corporations producing commodities such as oil palm and rubber, resulting in environmental destruction and entire communities losing their livelihoods. In 2017, GRAIN analysed the manifold impacts these plantations have on villagers and farming communities in the centre-east of Cote d’Ivoire. Here, in 2011, a Belgian agribusiness company SIAT created an 11,000 hectare rubber plantation on land that the communities had neither sold nor ceded. Joining forces with two national civil society organisations – IDEF and JVE Côte d’Ivoire...
- as well as an Ivoirian newspaper – Eburnie Today
- GRAIN produced a report recounting the events and providing testimonies of the communities’ ongoing struggle to fend off SIAT. The report also described the legal loopholes used by the company and brought to light a body of evidence suggesting possible complicity of the government of Côte d’Ivoire in handing the lands to the multinational while trampling the customary rights of local communities. The report and its dissemination in different national and global media outlets helped revive the debate around the governments’ approval of mega-projects on land and resources claimed and defended by local communities.

**Land grabs coming undone**

In 2017, a number of big agricultural land grab projects backfired. They fell apart for various reasons – ineptitude on the side of the investors, resistance on the side of local communities or impatience from government authorities. For example, the Indian agribusiness investor Karuturi announced he was leaving Ethiopia where he had obtained 300,000 hectares of land in the Gambela region. By mid-year, the Italian investor Tampieri sold off all its shares in Senhuile, a company that was involved in a 20,000 hectare land grab in northern Senegal, after years of fightback by the 37 villages affected by the project. In December, Senegal’s president Macky Sall cancelled a 10,000 hectares contract with Moroccan billionaire Anas Sefrioui in the face of strong social mobilisation. GRAIN started analysing these and other cases of “failed” land deals, and will produce a report on the issue in 2018.
People’s control over seeds

When GRAIN got going almost 30 years ago, it centred its information work and movement building around the safeguarding and control of seeds in people’s hands. Today, this issue remains at the heart of our work. Seeds are the key to resisting the industrial food system. They are the first link in the food chain, strongly anchored in local cultures of communities who depend on traditions of seed saving and sharing to survive. Not surprisingly, seed fairs, trainings, exchanges and workshops, as well as legal and political battles, are multiplying across the globe as a concrete way to resist corporate control over our livelihoods and promote people’s food sovereignty.

Fool’s gold: the case of Golden rice

Together with partners, GRAIN has been fighting the development and release of “Golden rice”, a genetically-modified strain that contains high levels of Beta carotene to fight Vitamin A deficiency, since 2001. To date, the rice has still not been released. In 2017, the Stop Golden Rice! Network was revitalised through a strategic campaign workshop in the Philippines. Around 17 regional and national organisations are part of the network, with the secretariat hosted by MASIPAG in the Philippines and GRAIN being part of its steering committee. In September, we warned about a new application for the approval of Golden rice in Australia which resulted in a public request by the network to the Australian authorities to reject the application. We also agreed to carry out research to update the current status of Golden rice in the region, in a report that will be published in 2018. In addition, we are now working to link these developments to what is happening in Africa with the push for “super banana” and “golden cassava” and in Latin America where biofortified potatoes and beans are also being developed. Not all these crops are genetically modified, but the logic is the same – and so is the resistance! We need to actively support the diversification and community control of local farming systems as a much better strategy to achieve health, safe food and clean environments.

Defending indigenous seeds in Latin America: a new video

“Seeds: commons or corporate property?” is a 40-minutes documentary jointly produced by GRAIN and seven Latin American organisations forming the Latin American Seeds Collective. The documentary, available in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese, draws on the experiences and struggles of social movements for the defence of indigenous and native seeds in Ecuador, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Honduras, Argentina, Colombia and Guatemala. An offspring of the above documentary, “Seeds in resistance” is an educational video animation explaining the importance of defending native and indigenous seeds for achieving food sovereignty. Available on different social media and our website in Spanish, the video has quickly become GRAIN’s most viewed video of all time, with 140,000 views on our Facebook page alone.

The documentary was launched at the June 2017 regional meeting of the Alianza Biodiversidad in Mexico, co-organised with the Latin American Coordination of La Via Campesina. The meeting provided a unique space to discuss strategies to protect native seeds, and the freedom peasants need to maintain their diversity and strength. The meeting was instrumental in reinforcing a common vision of the struggle to defend local seeds among members of the Alianza, as well as other organisations from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua.
Food sovereignty to counteract the climate crisis

The growth and consolidation of the industrial food system - from farm to supermarket - is hugely responsible for climate change and the havoc it is wreaking on already vulnerable communities. Over the last few years, together with partners, GRAIN has crunched the data and exposed how and to what extent agribusiness is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions—and how food sovereignty and agroecology are a crucial part of the solution. For us, it is important to get this message out, since it is largely ignored at intergovernmental negotiations and the climate movement is very focused on fossil fuels as the main problem. While the energy sector is obviously important, we also need to understand the role that food and farming play in driving climate change and how we can turn this around.

The supersized climate footprint of industrial meat and dairy

Back in 2011, GRAIN showed that the industrial food system is responsible for about 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Since then, we produced various educational materials to get that message across. In 2017, we zoomed in on industrial meat and dairy, which produce the lion’s share of climate emissions from our food. At the beginning of the year, we produced a detailed report “Grabbing the bull by the horns” in which we looked at how cutting meat and dairy production and consumption could really make a dent in the global climate crisis.

At mid-year, we teamed up with IATP to produce an educational leaflet with a five-step proposal on how to move away from industrial meat and dairy. In November, as the COP 23 climate talks opened in Bonn, GRAIN and IATP, together with the Heinrich Böll Foundation, released “Big meat...”
and dairy’s supersized climate footprint”. In this series of infographics, we exposed how the world’s top 20 meat and dairy corporations emit more greenhouse gases than all of Germany, Europe’s biggest climate polluter by far! If these companies were a country, they would be the world’s 7th largest climate gas emitter. The data and analysis were multiplied through social media and picked up by The Guardian and a number of other national and global news outlets.

**Regional movement building advances**

More and more groups in West Africa involved in the fight against climate change are thinking outside the box and realising that we need to talk more about food issues in the effort to address the climate crisis. GRAIN worked closely with the West Africa convergence against land and water grabbing, as well as several other partners, to move this debate further through several regional meetings last year. As a result, there are plans to make food and energy the two pillars for climate change dialogue in the region in 2018.

**Communications and outreach**

All of GRAIN’s publications and other outputs are posted on our trilingual website, grain.org. In 2017, the site received over 300,000 unique visitors, on average 900 people per day but many more when new content was made available. We started working on a revamp of the site to update the software, provide easier access to our materials, better reflect our evolving programme structure and improve the search capability, all of which will be deployed in 2018.

2017 was a productive year in terms of preparing materials and getting them out to our partners and the broader public. We produced three solid research reports and over 20 other publications including videos, booklets and several joint publications with partners in the South. In addition, we published four issues of each of the two quarterly magazines that we help publish: Biodiversidad and Soberania Alimentaria. We also made a special effort to explain to people what we’re doing and what we stand for, with the publishing of our public GRAIN 2016 activity report. A full list of our outputs can be found in the annex to this report.

GRAIN’s outreach is also carried out through other websites that we are involved in. Bilaterals.org, the site serving people’s struggles against free trade agreements, received 1.1 million visits in 2017, while farmlandgrab.org, focused on land grabbing and people’s resistance to it, received 100,000 visits in 2017.

In 2017, GRAIN amplified its presence on Facebook and Twitter to reach new audiences not typically reached through other channels. By the end of the year, we had 6,000 followers on Twitter and over 16,000 on Facebook—a tremendous increase since we launched both social media accounts back in 2013.

The “New from GRAIN” mailing lists, GRAIN’s primary tool to get news out about our latest publications or other developments, grew to almost 18,000 total subscribers by the end of the year. Our media list also grew, serving 577 subscribed journalists and freelance media workers.
GRAIN’s team in 2017

Virginia Quesada
Barcelona: finance & administration
Henk Hobbelink
Barcelona: coordination & research, global
Antoine Langeard
Barcelona: fundraising
Aitor Urkiola
Barcelona: finance & administration

Devlin Kuyek
Montreal: research, global
Renée Vellvé
Paris: coordination & research, global

Marion Girard Cisneros
Amsterdam: publications & communications, global

Kartini Samon
Jakarta: research & programme, Asia

Carlos Vicente
Buenos Aires: communications & programme, Latin America
Camila Montecinos
Santiago: research & programme, Latin America

Ramón Vera Herrera
Mexico City: Biodiversidad magazine & programme, Latin America

Ange David Baïmey
Accra: research & programme, Africa
Susan Nakacwa
Kampala: research & programme, Africa
The organisation and how to get involved

In 2017, three new staffers joined GRAIN’s team: Marion Girard Cisneros (Amsterdam), responsible for GRAIN’s publications and communications; Antoine Langeard (Barcelona), who helps with fundraising; and Susan Nakacwa (Kampala), working on research and GRAIN’s programme in Africa.

The larger GRAIN team also included several freelancers as well as volunteers who helped us with various tasks, from web development to graphic design to translation.

GRAIN functions as a collective, with horizontal management and participatory decision-making. We are governed by a small board of directors who support us in a personal capacity. The board liaises with staff regarding programme development and implementation, as well as the administration of the organisation. In 2017, GRAIN’s board was composed of three women and one man: Mariann Bassey (Nigeria), Isabelle Delforge (Belgium), Kingkorn Narintarakul (Thailand) and Mark Randazzo (France).

**GRAIN 2017 income (in Euros)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Income (Euros)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th Hour Project (United States)</td>
<td>67,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brot für die Welt (Germany)</td>
<td>124,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brot für Alle (Switzerland)</td>
<td>110,882</td>
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<td>CCFD (France)</td>
<td>60,000</td>
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<td>CFH Foundation (United States)</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of Barcelona (Spain)</td>
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<td>Marin Community Foundation’s TOP Fund (United States)</td>
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<td>Fastenopfer (Switzerland)</td>
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<td>Grace Communications (United States)</td>
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<td>JFGE (Japan)</td>
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<td>KZE – Misereor (Germany)</td>
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<td>Oxfam-Novib (Netherlands)</td>
<td>62,536</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sage Fund (United States)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<td>Silicon Valley Community Fund (United States)</td>
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<td>Swift Foundation (United States)</td>
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<td>Swissaid (Switzerland)</td>
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<td>Synchronicity Earth (United Kingdom)</td>
<td>14,131</td>
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<tr>
<td>Own/other income (donations, publications, etc.)</td>
<td>44,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL INCOME</strong></td>
<td><strong>898,528</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRAIN is mostly financed by grants from NGOs and private foundations. We also generate our own income from services, fees and ad hoc donations. Funders support either our overall strategy and programme or specific parts of our work. GRAIN’s autonomy is essential for our work, and so we strive to maintain a diversified support base.

Help GRAIN thrive as an independent and community-supported organisation!

Maintaining a broad and sufficient funding base is not easy. Mainstream funders tend to stay away from us due to our clear positioning against
agribusiness and the industrial food system, and for peasant-led food sovereignty. And we have our own criteria about who we accept money from, which also limits our field.

In 2017, GRAIN put effort in trying to build a stronger support base from individuals that use and appreciate our work. GRAIN's policy is that everything we produce should be available to the public free of charge. But that doesn't mean we can manage without money. Thanks to donations from individuals, collected mostly online, GRAIN can continue to function as an independent organisation. You can financially support us now through the 'donate' button on our website.

GRAIN also welcomes support from people who wish to share their time and skills with us. If you are interested in helping out as a volunteer, please contact us at volunteer [at] grain [dot] org. We can use help translating materials in various languages and producing websites and research materials. There is a role for everyone!

GRAIN's staff, including Henk Hobbelink, met with Elizabeth Mpofu of La Via Campesina in April, at GRAIN's coordination office in Barcelona, to discuss future avenues for collaboration.
Annex: GRAIN publications in 2017

Corporations and the global food system

- “Large-scale investments and climate conservation initiatives destroy forests and people’s territories”, English, French, Spanish, 4 April 2017.
- “Highlights from the Peoples’ Summit against FTAs and RCEP”, English, 31 July 2017.

Land grabbing and land rights

- “Pressure on at Bolloré’s 2017 Annual General Meeting, English, French, 1 June 2017.

People’s control over seeds

- “20 years of GM soy in the Southern Cone of Latin America, 20 reasons for a definitive ban”, English, French, Spanish, 17 May 2017.
Back cover: In August, leaders of groups of women affected by oil palm plantations met in Sierra Leone to strategise their resistance to the expansion of industrial monoculture plantations. Coming from different countries from West and Central Africa, they released a joint declaration in which they demanded their land and forests back.

**Food and climate**

- “About climate, meat and markets: high time to move towards agroecology and food sovereignty”, English, 27 June 2017.
- “Grabbing the bull by the horns: it’s time to cut industrial meat and dairy to save the climate”, English, French, Spanish, 30 January 2017.

**Soberanía alimentaria magazine**


**Supermarket Watch Asia bulletin**

- No. 5: “‘Cashless’ economy is a blow to small producers”, French, 6 February 2017.
- No. 6: “‘Food safety’ as a weapon against small food vendors and producers”, French, 31 May 2017.

**Biodiversidad magazine**

- Biodiversidad #91 / 2017-01
- Biodiversidad #92 / 2017-02
- Biodiversidad #93 / 2017-03
- Biodiversidad #94 / 2017-04

- OMC y tratados de libre comercio:
  - instrumentos de desvío de poder

- semillas

- Back cover: In August, leaders of groups of women affected by oil palm plantations met in Sierra Leone to strategise their resistance to the expansion of industrial monoculture plantations. Coming from different countries from West and Central Africa, they released a joint declaration in which they demanded their land and forests back.