

# Transitioning away from the industrial food system

## Objective 3.1

To understand the conflicting actors, assumptions, interests, and power relations embedded in the struggle to transition away from the industrial food system. (63 minutes)

### 3.0 Watch “Vandana Shiva: Food System Transformation and Reversing the Climate Crisis.” (43:50)

Vandana Shiva: Food System Transformation and Reversin...



**Shiva, Vandana.** “Food System Transformation and Reversing the Climate Crisis: How Vermont’s GMO Labeling Law is Part of the Solution,” video, 43:50, posted by TheNOFAVT to YouTube, November 2014.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXh3MW25jyo> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXh3MW25jyo>)

Activist-scientist Vandana Shiva is known internationally for confronting the economic, social, and environmental dysfunction of our industrial food system. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandana\\_Shiva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandana_Shiva) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandana\\_Shiva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandana_Shiva))) In the opening video, “Food System Transformation and the Climate Crisis,” Shiva speaks with a large group of Vermont citizens in 2014. The Vermont food movement had just won a political battle requiring food producers to label all food products sold in stores to indicate whether they are GMO free or not: that is, free of genetic modification and unaltered by adding the DNA of another organism or species.

She asks a core strategic question: Will we continue to cultivate most agricultural lands with corn, soya, and other environmentally dangerous commodity products (that provide us with only 30% of our food), or will we grow nutrient rich food closer to home using agro-ecological methods that diversify the food supply and restore soil health and bio-diversity?

Note: The top ten commodities in dollar value are rice, dairy, beef, pork, poultry, wheat, soybeans,

tomatoes, sugar cane, and maize. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_most\\_valuable\\_crops\\_and\\_livestock\\_products](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most_valuable_crops_and_livestock_products) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_most\\_valuable\\_crops\\_and\\_livestock\\_products](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most_valuable_crops_and_livestock_products)))

As you listen to Shiva, identify which issues she elevates that are illustrative of landscape and regime level factors (Module 1). Take note of her description of modern day enclosure, the commodification of life, and the erosion of democracy. Keep a list of the strategies and tactics used to attack her and other critics of the industrial food system. Finally, examine her views on the relationship between grass roots organizing, the role of the state and the potential for food systems change.

### 3.1 Read “World Hunger: Ten Myths.” (~7 minutes)

Lappé, Francis Moore and Joseph Collins. “World hunger: Ten Myths,” FoodFirst.org, August 12, 2015. <https://foodfirst.org/publication/world-hunger-ten-myths/> (<https://foodfirst.org/publication/world-hunger-ten-myths/>)

### 3.2 Read “Land and Seed Laws Under Attack.” (~7 minutes)

The Ecologist, “Land and Seed Laws Under Attack as Africa is Groomed for Corporate Recolonization,” by GRAIN, AFSA, and The Ecologist, February 12, 2015. <https://theecologist.org/2015/feb/12/land-and-seed-laws-under-attack-africa-groomed-corporate-recolonization> (<https://theecologist.org/2015/feb/12/land-and-seed-laws-under-attack-africa-groomed-corporate-recolonization>)

### 3.3 Read “Pathways of Transition to Agroecological Food Systems.” (~7 minutes)

Parsons, Adam. “Pathways of Transition to Agroecological Food Systems,” Resilience.org, June 20, 2016. <http://www.resilience.org/stories/2016-06-20/pathways-of-transition-to-agroecological-food-systems/> (<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2016-06-20/pathways-of-transition-to-agroecological-food-systems/>)

You will hear echoes of Shiva in the next article co-written by Francis Moore Lappé, world renowned for her bestselling book *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971). In “World Hunger: 10 Myths” Lappé and Joseph Collins expose ten myths advanced as self-evident truths by advocates of industrial agriculture. As you read, consider the authors’ counter arguments and how they challenge your beliefs or the popular beliefs they debunk.

However, exploding myths is not enough to change the food system. The Ecologist article “Land and Seed Laws Under Attack” shows how a constellation of powerful international institutions, national governments, and multi-national agribusinesses are systematically working to privatize and expand production of industrial food commodities across Africa. Carefully note the systematic way the three partners are collaborating to change the regime level to favour their long-term industrial strategies.

In “Pathways of Transition to Agroecological Food Systems,” author Adam Parsons breaks down a 2016 report by The International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) that seeks ways to counter these powerful trends. Parsons shows how the PES experts map out the common leverage points for unleashing a radical transition away from industrial agriculture, a system that has “come to represent an existential threat to itself.” IPES-Food’s analysis of the problems is incisive. Their

proposed generative pathways to scale up alternative agriculture systems, however, are less persuasive, appear weak and less well fleshed out. Two points we can agree with, however, are the importance of a decentralized agro-ecological framework and the role of the state and a federated cooperative movement to co-ordinate and facilitate change.