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# Global collective practices advancing food sovereignty in indigenous and peasant communities: a systematic review

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This article examines food sovereignty practices, focusing on the experiences of peasants and Indigenous communities as key actors in both implementation and discourse. A systematic review following the PRISMA methodology was conducted to analyze peer reviewed studies on specific food sovereignty practices between 2019 and 2023. The inclusion criteria emphasized self-organized and collective food cultivation. The search was carried out on August 22, 2023, in the SCOPUS database. Yielding an initial pool of 844 articles. Through a consensus-based screening process among three researchers, narrowing the selection to 163 articles, resulting in 51 research articles after excluding duplicates and unavailable articles. The discussion is structured into five categories: decoloniality, Indigenous communities, peasant communities, community groups, and the theoretical-practical development of food sovereignty. The findings reveal how structural factors related to land access, governance, and power relations shape food sovereignty practices, while highlight social and environmental impacts related with industrial food systems. Key practices identified include local forms of association and cooperativism; sustainable agricultural techniques that enhance food production while addressing health and environmental risks associated with pesticide; small-scale trade initiatives such as bartering, peasant fairs, food exchanges, and local market sales; and the recognition of diverse knowledge systems, particularly the preservation of traditional foods and ancestral wisdom. These results emphasize the need to integrate governance frameworks with social economy approaches, promoting community participation in shaping territorially grounded food systems.

### KEYWORDS

community organization, food practices, food sovereignty, Indigenous communities, peasant communities

## 1 Introduction

Food insecurity is a critical global issue affecting approximately 735 million people who are in severe levels of hunger, according to the [FAO \(2023\)](https://www.fao.org/). This situation is characterized by the lack of access to any type of food for one or more days, significantly affecting individuals' health and well-being. On the other hand, moderate food insecurity, while less severe than acute hunger, also has serious consequences. This level is manifested as skipping one meal a day and is associated with a nutrient-deficient diet, high in calories from sugars, fats, and

carbohydrates (Ramírez et al., 2022). Although these foods may temporarily alleviate hunger, they contribute to nutritional deficiencies that negatively impact human development.

As noted by FAO (2019), inadequate nutrition compromises physical, social, and mental well-being, affecting individuals' daily performance, quality of life, and future well-being. In the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG 2, "Zero Hunger," seeks to eradicate global hunger (Naciones Unidas, 2018). This objective proposes strategies based on an unequal understanding of food access, aiming to address the issue through transformations in food system management, investments, and sustainable agricultural practices.

Among the proposed strategies are the dynamics of food sovereignty. According to Romero et al. (2021), food sovereignty not only focuses on the availability and quality of food but also integrates aspects such as what is produced, how it is produced, and who is involved in production and consumption. This perspective is based on the right to culturally appropriate and sustainably produced food, allowing communities to determine their own food and agricultural policies, promoting local production and control.

If the goal is to confront the structural inequity imposed by the neoliberal food system, food sovereignty emerges as a space for both critique and decisive action (Edelman et al., 2014), where food sovereignty practices incorporate agroecology as a cornerstone for ensuring community control over their own food systems, thereby strengthening their organizational processes and autonomy (Clapp and Isakson, 2018). However, these initiatives unfold in contexts shaped by food security policies that, while addressing food availability and recognizing the importance of community autonomy in production and distribution, fail to acknowledge that the answers to who produces food and for whom are determined by power relations (Patel, 2010).

Furthermore, the widespread use of biotechnologies in agriculture largely poses a threat to the transmission and preservation of ancestral knowledge. It fosters the integration of multinational corporations into the food market by introducing materials and machinery that drive food production and processing, thereby securing control over land, food, and agri-food trade while threatening the planet's biodiversity and the sustainability of life itself (Shiva, 2016).

In parallel, the food sovereignty literature derived from systematic reviews makes it possible to identify both the advances in the field and the specific contribution of the present review. These discussions address, among other aspects, the relationship between the right to food and outcomes in food and nutrition security (Sampson et al., 2021); the identification and comparison of research traditions in food sovereignty and food security through conceptual and epistemological frameworks shaped by the fields of health and public policy, using a meta-narrative mapping approach (Weiler et al., 2015); as well as analyses of the food–nature relationship that categorize agroecological production practices and discourses while advancing critiques of extractivist agro-industrial models.

Regarding population focus and methodological approaches, the literature includes the identification of successful food sovereignty interventions largely restricted to Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States (Gutierrez et al., 2023); analyses of the alignment between food security and food sovereignty principles and nutrition-related intervention practices in Indigenous communities (Maudrie et al., 2021); and assessments of Indigenous food sovereignty evaluation approaches that lack dialog with collective practices (Abdul et al., 2024).

Although this body of literature is extensive, it does not sufficiently examine the patterns, tensions, and gaps involved in the explicit materialization of food sovereignty within peasant and Indigenous communities at a global scale. This omission is particularly significant given that these communities are producers of historically situated, counter-hegemonic knowledge rooted in agro-food practices intertwined with cultural, spiritual, and political fields. This gap represents an opportunity for advancement in the epistemological field of food sovereignty by contributing robust discussions to context-mediated research–action agendas. In this regard, the present review advances the field through the systematization of situated collective food sovereignty practices across multiple regions, articulating four critical, structural, and analytical axes of discussion.

Therefore, developing an ethical food framework within the construction of food sovereignty—one that, from the standpoint of community autonomy, recognizes the collective struggle for social and ecological justice while keeping the debate on food sovereignty open (Pimbert, 2018)—is imperative. This cannot be achieved without strengthening territorial and community-based food sovereignty practices, nor without observing how food sovereignty is debated, addressed, conceptualized, and enacted on a global scale for peasant, Indigenous, and vulnerable communities.

In this context, the hunger problem underscores the need to recognize and analyze the practices and debates that can contribute to creating conditions for food sovereignty. Therefore, this systematic review seeks to understand what is meant by food sovereignty and what recurring food sovereignty practices have been implemented and studied globally to address hunger, social and community organization around food, and emerging discussions on this concept and its forms of action.

## 2 Materials and methods

This systematic review was conducted using the PRISMA 2020 methodology (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) due to its ability to provide a critical, transparent, and reliable assessment, reducing publication bias and providing a balanced view of the results. The review is guided by the question: What are the practices and discussions on food sovereignty in community, peasant, and Indigenous settings that have been implemented and studied globally to address hunger over the past 5 years? This review adopts a qualitative, thematic–interpretive approach, which allows for the systematic characterization of practices and the analytical identification of critical conceptual frameworks shaping debates on food sovereignty in peasant and Indigenous communities.

### 2.1 Research preparation

First, the review was identified as a systematic review following the PRISMA methodology and was checked against the PRISMA 2020 checklist to ensure strict adherence. The search's justification and objectives were clearly defined, allowing for the establishment of specific filters.

#### 2.1.1 Defined inclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria were articles and research that address the specific topic of food sovereignty in community, peasant, and

Indigenous settings; studies published between 2018 and 2023; publications in Spanish and English to ensure cultural and linguistic relevance; articles with a practical focus that demonstrate collective cultivation or organization actions in their methodological structure; and studies that include elements of Indigenous knowledge and decolonization.

### 2.1.2 Defined exclusion criteria

The exclusion criteria included quantitative studies related to land measurement or management; research exclusively focused on environmental or food governance; and publications that do not address practical or theoretical-practical elements of food sovereignty but instead focus on normative and institutional political frameworks.

Another exclusion criterion was open-access availability, based on its compatibility with the core research framework, which centers on community groups, peasants, and/or Indigenous peoples who renew communal-based decolonial knowledge through their practices. This criterion sought to ensure that these groups have access to the findings and that the research remains connected to decolonial knowledge practices.

This delimitation is correlational with the type of review conducted and with the principles of cognitive justice grounded in the epistemological foundations of food sovereignty. It is assumed that the potential exclusion of relevant restricted-access articles in the field of food sovereignty is itself embedded within current tensions of cognitive inequality, affecting both knowledge production and access. Accordingly, this discussion is explicitly positioned as representative of the open-access academic literature and invites further debate and research within the framework of food sovereignty, understood as an opportunity to expand dialog between open knowledge, closed knowledge, and situated knowledge.

The argument is also made from the perspective of historical epistemic violence, which imposes a single form of universally validated knowledge and subordinates other ways of knowing and cultures, affecting cultural diversity and human life (Palermo, 2010). This violence, established since colonial times, forced peoples to abandon their beliefs and knowledge, consolidating a Eurocentric world that perpetuates colonial domination (Quijano, 2000). This remains relevant today, with the suppression of practices and limitations on access, showing a position of subordination within a stereotyped universality, reinforcing the “expert discourse” of conventional science (Cornejo, 2021).

### 2.1.3 Search strategy

The search was conducted in the SCOPUS database, recognized for its reliability and broad coverage within the scientific field, with the aim of identifying publications that provide a global perspective on the research question. However, while acknowledging the scope and interdisciplinarity that SCOPUS offers within the framework of food sovereignty, it is also recognized that this database tends to underrepresent alternative forms of knowledge, particularly Indigenous and peasant knowledges, which are often articulated through contextual documents and scientific and non-scientific circulation spaces.

Nevertheless, the selection of this database constitutes an opportunity to make visible the structural tension between knowledge production deemed valid within global indexing systems and the production of situated knowledge aligned with the decolonial

approach that guides this review. Given the epistemological complexity of the field, delimiting the search to SCOPUS is understood as a starting point for a deeper analysis that may incorporate the integration and harmonization of the field with both situated and restricted-access literatures.

The search was carried out on August 22, 2023, applying temporal filters for the period 2018–2023. This time frame was selected to capture the evolution of theoretical-practical dialog triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, covering 2 years prior and 3 years after that event.

The search strategy included key terms related to food sovereignty, peasant practices, Indigenous knowledge, and decolonization. To ensure comprehensive and relevant results, specific terms such as “food sovereignty,” “indigenous knowledge,” “decolonization,” and “campesino practices” were used. Filters were applied to include publications in Spanish and English, allowing for the incorporation of studies from diverse cultural and linguistic contexts; works published between 2018 and 2023, ensuring the relevance and timeliness of the data; and publications that explicitly include Indigenous knowledge and decolonization elements. Nevertheless, the search strategy incorporated three pilot tests with terminological variations, which enabled the refinement of the search process, the identification of the formulation most closely aligned with the research question, and the maximization of the retrieval of relevant studies.

Below is the Boolean code generated by the research, it was performed on August 22, 2023:

```
TITLE-ABS-KEY (food AND sovereignty) AND PUBYEAR > 2017 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (OA, "all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "Spanish")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Food Sovereignty") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Indigenous Knowledge") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACT-KEYWORD, "Decolonization"))
```

The decision to limit the search to publications in Spanish and English is based on cultural and linguistic relevance, ensuring the inclusion of studies from specific geographic and cultural contexts relevant to the research's development. This selection was justified to include diverse perspectives not dominated by hegemonic Anglo-Saxon knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge represents an essential yet often undervalued perspective in scientific literature, as it invalidates ancestral knowledge regarding human-nature interactions. Its inclusion ensures that social practices are understood from a comprehensive and respectful approach to traditions and knowledge. Furthermore, the decolonial perspective allows for the exploration of how social practices are configured and transformed in historical and contemporary contexts marked by colonial and postcolonial processes, which help understand the dynamics of power and resistance influencing the implementation and evolution of such practices.

Another crucial filter stems from the link to the social sciences, aiming to observe problems, solutions, and discussions that arise within communities on this topic. This provides not only a technical view of food sovereignty but also a holistic understanding that includes socioeconomic and cultural aspects influencing its implementation.

Finally, it was ensured that the selected studies provided a comprehensive and critical vision of food sovereignty practices, allowing

not only a descriptive review but also an in-depth analysis of the social and cultural dynamics involved.

## 2.2 Compliance and review methods

The review process was initially carried out independently by the three researchers, followed by group discussions and consensus meetings. Each researcher reviewed the articles and applied the established inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring a rigorous and objective evaluation of the selected studies. No automation tools were used for the first time, in the review process, opting instead for a manual and detailed assessment to guarantee the accuracy and relevance of the articles included in the final review.

Initially, 844 documents were identified, which were filtered based on the year of publication (2018–2023) and the specific topic of food sovereignty. Applying the thematic area filter limited to social sciences, the number of documents was substantially reduced to 444, as the research focused on understanding the meaning of food sovereignty from a humanistic perspective. The next filter was based on language and text type, limiting the results to articles in Spanish and English, which reduced the number of documents to 338. Finally, specific keyword filters, including “food sovereignty,” “Indigenous knowledge,” and “decolonization,” resulted in a final search of 163 documents.

To prepare the data, a matrix was created with the following categories: title, year, journal, authors, abstract, applies, reason for application, does not apply, and reason for exclusion. This matrix allowed the organization of inclusion and exclusion elements for group discussion. The 163 articles were listed in a matrix where the title, abstract, and conclusion were located, along with the researchers’ comments on their relevance.

After defining and summarizing the list, the abstracts were read by the three researchers, applying the mentioned criteria. Then, articles were selected for consideration with at least two out of three approvals. The selection results were 42 articles with all three approvals and 14 articles with two approvals, totaling 56 articles.

### 2.2.1 Excluding unavailable and duplicate articles

However, it should be clarified that four of the manuscripts included in the review could not be found in full; the search yielded only their abstracts and references, but not the full text, thus determining their definitive exclusion. Additionally, a duplicate article was found and eliminated from the review. In the end, 51 complete articles were located, and an attempt was made to find the four incomplete articles in the databases of the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, which was unsuccessful.

While this situation affected the preliminary corpus established during the initial screening phase, a decision was reached by consensus to exclude the incomplete articles after an extensive search across multiple databases, given the impossibility of assessing the methodological components necessary to inform the analytical discussion. This limitation is thus incorporated into the broader discussion on unequal access to knowledge, which is intrinsically linked to the constraints of the present review.

Below are the four articles that were not found in their entirety, and the duplicated article:

- 1 Bini, V. (2016). \*Food security and food sovereignty in West Africa\*. *African Geographical Review*, 37(1), 1–13. doi:10.1080/19376812.2016.1140586.

- 2 Claeys, P. (2018). \*The rise of new rights for peasants. From reliance on NGO intermediaries to direct representation\*. *Transnational Legal Theory*, 9(3–4), 386–399. doi:10.1080/204140050.2018.1563444.
- 3 Ruiz-Almeida, A., Rivera-Ferre, M. G. (2019). \*Internationally-based indicators to measure Agri-food systems sustainability using food sovereignty as a conceptual framework\*. *Food Sec.* 11, 1,321–1,337 doi:10.1007/s12571-019-00964-5.
- 4 Dunford, R. (2020). \*Converging on food sovereignty: transnational peasant activism, pluriversality and counter-hegemony\*. *Globalizations*, 17(5), 782–796. doi:10.1080/147477310.20200.1722494.
- 5 Duplicated article: Aare, A., Egmose, J., Lund, S., & Nielsen, H. (2021). \*Opportunities and barriers in diversified farming and the use of agroecological principles in the Global North – The experiences of Danish biodynamic farmers\*. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 45:3, 390–416. doi: 10.1080/21683565.2020.1822980.

## 3 Results

To define the results and meet the criteria, it is important to clarify that this study began with a manual review of the articles and then used the automation tool Elicit to cross-check abstracts and the critical and detailed evaluation of each document performed. Accordingly, the use of this tool assisted in the organization and prioritization of potentially relevant elements within the articles in relation to the objectives of the review; however, it did not determine the inclusion or exclusion of studies, nor did it influence the delimitation of the final corpus.

Regarding the matrix of collected and analyzed data, the following elements were considered:

- Title of the article.
- Year of publication.
- Journal.
- Authors.
- Abstract.
- Reason for inclusion.
- Reason for exclusion.

These elements were identified by specific characteristics that enabled their inclusion in the review, allowing their reading with predefined and understood variables as follows:

**Decoloniality:** This concept refers to a school of thought originating in South America that critiques Eurocentric epistemic models and their ways of being in the world. This perspective seeks to break away from power-knowledge hierarchies inherited from the colonialist system, the basis of contemporary capitalism, and advocates for epistemic alternatives that integrate and legitimize other narratives, social subjects, technologies, and moralities beyond the grand narrative of Western culture (Quijano, 2000; Lozano, 2020; Arámbulo, 2021). Eight articles were identified related to critiques of Eurocentric epistemic models and the search for epistemic alternatives.

**Indigenous community:** This notion is primarily defined by the central role of the territory, which acts as an archetype shaping collective cultural identity, merging material and spiritual elements. The

territory embodies the ancestors' lives, the surrounding nature, cosmology, and the community's social relations (Alayza, 2024). In this context, the territory becomes a hybrid platform that integrates the intersubjective social fabric and the landscape, providing meaning to the diverse life trajectories of its members. Nine articles related to practices and discussions regarding Indigenous peoples' food autonomy were identified.

**Peasant community:** Traditionally, the concept of "peasant" has been associated with Indigenous practices and self-subsistence modes centered on independent labor and family-run farming or livestock operations, with a specific cultural identity. However, in the third decade of the 21st century, we have seen increasing social exclusion and territorial displacement of those who have not integrated into new capitalist accumulation logics. This phenomenon has led to the de-agriculturalization of rural environments, where agricultural production is no longer the predominant activity. Instead, a transition toward service activities and the labor market has emerged, resulting in a shift in rural worldviews and identities, characterized by informal labor and the dissolution of symbolic connections with the land. This transformation has exacerbated socioeconomic and health conditions, intensifying rural poverty and destitution (Colla and Valverde, 2024). Six articles examining the relationship between territory and collective cultural identity from an organized peasant group perspective were identified.

**Community group:** This can be defined as a collective of individuals sharing common horizons of meaning, an ethical structure, similar territorial relations, and customs that foster collaborative practices and mutual support. According to Ramos (2023), the community acts as an agent of social transformation, formed by a network of relationships that promotes inclusion, equity, symmetry, and participation. Roberto Esposito (2012) challenges the static view of the community, proposing it as a dynamic and transformative process that influences individuals through their interactions and connections. Michel Maffesoli (González Montero and Uribe Lopera, 2023) emphasizes the emotional and esthetic aspects of the community, highlighting the importance of experiential living and emotional bonds that shape the collective experience. Twenty articles focused on collectives sharing common horizons of meaning, ethical structures, and collaborative practices were identified.

**Food sovereignty:** The evaluation criteria for food sovereignty were based on key definitions provided by various organizations. According to La Vía Campesina, food sovereignty is defined as the "right of peoples, communities, and countries to control their own seeds, land, and water, and to establish their food policies without external threats" (La Vía Campesina, n.d.). In a complementary manner, FAO (2023) describes it as the "right of countries and communities to protect their food production capacity and ensure access to adequate food for all." Unlike food security, which focuses mainly on food availability, food sovereignty is based on the rights of people and self-organization to ensure clean, appropriate, and accessible food through collective and community practices (Altieri and Nicholls, 2012).

The foregoing categorization is grounded in a consensual methodological decision that integrates criteria related to the democratization of knowledge, particularly open access, and is supported by contemporary epistemological discussions in the field of food sovereignty that conceptualize it as an epistemological, political, and community-based project. Within this framework, territory and the

reproduction of life are intrinsically linked to situated collective practices deeply embedded in local and popular forms of knowledge (Altieri and Toledo, 2011; Rosset et al., 2011; McKeon, 2021; Saquet, 2020a).

This approach is aligned with the global academic literature that emphasizes the inclusion of social groups and, accordingly, delimits the study to Indigenous communities, peasant populations, and community groups. From a food sovereignty perspective, these actors consolidate their epistemological foundations through political, community-based, and self-organized processes that resist increasingly aggressive and hostile agro-industrial dynamics of food production and consumption, grounded in decolonial and agroecological approaches.

This aligns with the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) definition, which considers food security as "physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food at all times" (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2020), and with Maxwell and Smith's description of food security as "a situation where all members of a household have access at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life" (Maxwell and Smith, 1992). Thus, the systematic review focuses on these approaches to analyze practices and organizations linked to food sovereignty.

Thirty-five articles addressed food sovereignty through practical food cultivation processes, while five articles combined theoretical and practical approaches to the same topic. Finally, 12 articles examined the critique of access to food and resources, and 22 articles explored the economic aspects of food sovereignty. Below is the geographic location of the studies:

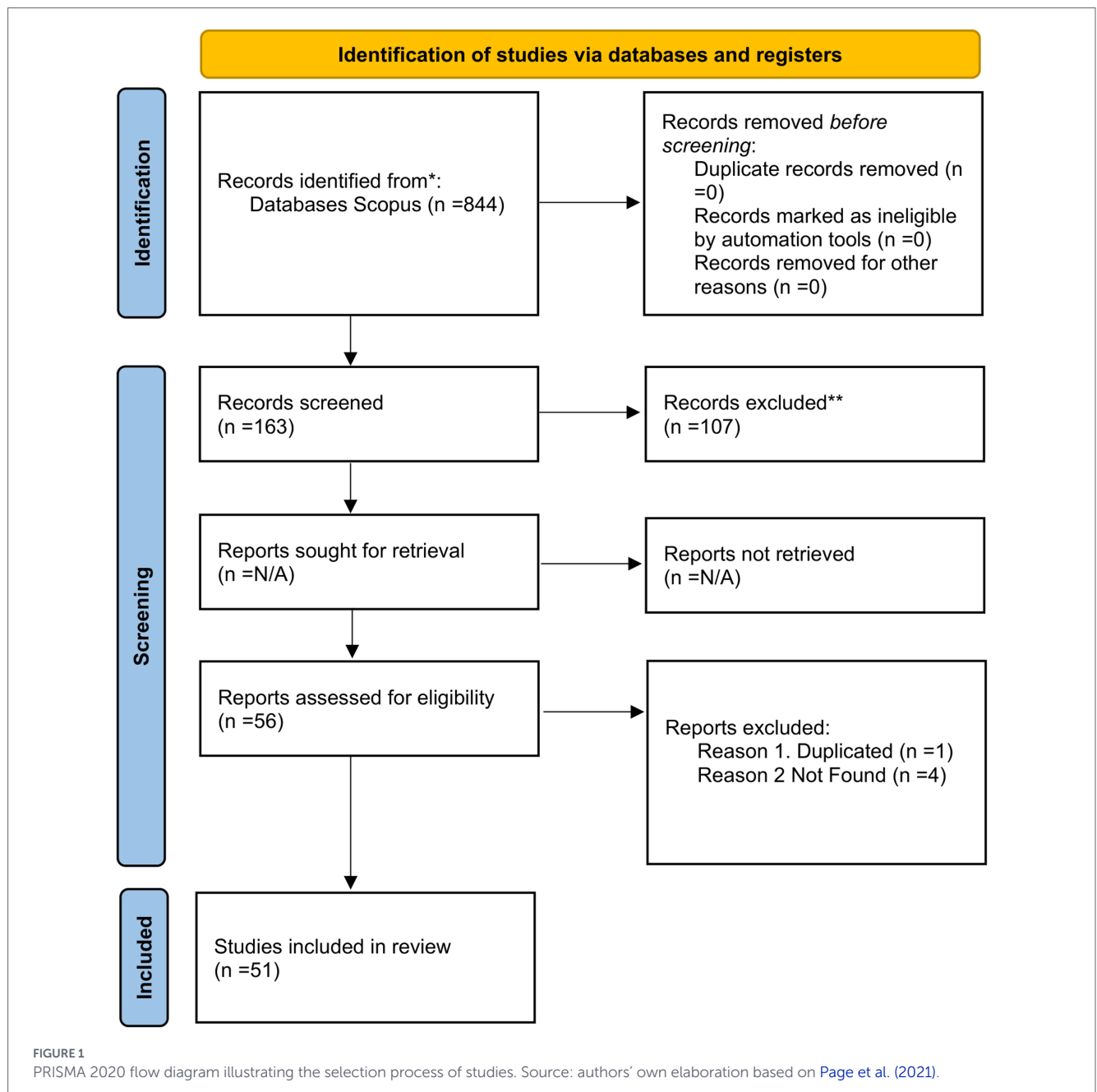
### 3.1 Description of the experimental results

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn. Initially, 844 documents on food sovereignty from the period 2018–2023 were identified. After applying a specific thematic filter for social sciences, the number was reduced to 444, recognizing that the research focuses on the social context of food sovereignty. Subsequently, language and text type filters (articles) were applied, reducing the number to 338 documents. Finally, by refining the search using exact terms such as "food sovereignty," "Indigenous knowledge," and "decolonization," focusing on open-access studies, the total reached 163 relevant documents as of the research cutoff in September 2023. The selection process of studies is illustrated in Figure 1, following the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021).

#### 3.1.1 Geographic distribution of research

Most studies were conducted in North America, representing 17.2% of the total, followed by global studies at 13.4%. Canada accounted for 11.5%, Africa 9.6%, Colombia 7.69%, and Spain 5.7%. The United Kingdom, Argentina, and Fiji each held a 3.84% share, while Denmark, the Philippines, Ecuador, Italy, Honduras, Poland, Russia, and New Zealand each had one study. The geographical distribution of the reviewed articles is shown in Figure 2.

This distribution reveals an indicator of colonial structural asymmetries in the production and circulation of what is considered legitimate knowledge, which, as Quijano (2000) argues, remains



concentrated within institutions of the Global North, despite the fact that the majority of food sovereignty interventions and practices are developed in the Global South and/or in subalternized regions. This division permeates the review, documentation, and analysis of the field, generating gaps in the literature and underscoring the political–epistemological openness of food sovereignty (Pimbert, 2018) in the face of cognitive justice inequalities. It also highlights the need for mediation in terms of open access, validation, and broad visibility of knowledge produced in the Global South and subalternized regions, including Indigenous and peasant communities, among others (Santos, 2010; McKeon, 2021).

### 3.1.2 Categories of research findings

The selected articles were grouped into five key categories, reflecting different aspects of food sovereignty (FS) research. However, many articles were placed in more than one category due to thematic affinity

- **Decoloniality**

Eight articles focus on the intersection of FS practices with economic and agricultural decolonization, feminism, academic activism, and various research methodologies within Indigenous food systems (Anderson, 2019; De Wit et al., 2021; Hanna and Wallace, 2021; Hoddy and Ensor, 2018; Jonas, 2021; MacNeill, 2020; Muller, 2018; Sankey, 2022). These discussions consider threats from agroindustry, development, and market forces, alongside local associations for food sovereignty and agricultural justice. These studies highlight planting and crop preservation activities through decolonial approaches that incorporate alternative research methodologies.

- **Peasant Groups**

Six articles emphasize the agency of peasants in FS scenarios, continually fighting to produce counter-hegemonic food systems, both



FIGURE 2  
Map showing the location of the reviewed articles. Source: authors' own elaboration.

locally and regionally (Brant et al., 2023; Bunge et al., 2019; Clay and Zimmerer, 2020; Hernández et al., 2019; Jefferson and Adhikari, 2019; Jonas, 2021). These studies explore issues of unequal access to land and resistance against corporate powers that impose genetically modified food systems.

#### • Direct Sowing Practices

Thirty-five articles examine agroecological approaches to FS that support sustainable and resilient practices through crop diversification, rotation, and organic inputs. These articles underscore the importance of Indigenous, peasant, and popular knowledge in farming and adapting to environmental changes. Examples include family gardens and horticultural practices that strengthen historical resilience and community relationships, with agroecological production methods such as growing cucurbits and grasses, following the agroecological principle of “giving,” which incorporates local knowledge for collective well-being (Aare et al., 2020; Brant et al., 2023; Bunge et al., 2019; Cameron and Connell, 2021; Clay and Zimmerer, 2020; De Wit et al., 2021; Duncan et al., 2019; Fladvad, 2019; Gallar-Hernández, 2021; Green and Chenarides, 2020; Guell et al., 2021; Hanna and Wallace, 2021; Hernández et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022; James et al., 2021; Jefferson and Adhikari, 2019; Jonas, 2021; Levkoe et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2020; Loaiza-Buitrago et al., 2023; Liru and Heineken, 2021; Nikol and Jansen, 2021; Otero et al., 2018; Oliver et al., 2022; Quimby et al., 2023; Ramírez et al., 2019; Rowe et al., 2024; Hoddy and Ensor, 2018; Romero et al., 2021; Sankey, 2022; Stella et al., 2022; Swiderska et al., 2022; Thiemann and Spoor, 2019; Wegren, 2021)

#### • Community Groups

The significance of community groups is highlighted in 20 articles, (Aare et al., 2020; Anderson, 2019; Brant et al., 2023; Cameron and

Connell, 2021; De Wit et al., 2021; Duncan et al., 2019; Gallar-Hernández, 2021; Green and Chenarides, 2020; Guell et al., 2021; Hanna and Wallace, 2021; Hernández et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022; James et al., 2021; Jefferson and Adhikari, 2019; Jonas, 2021; Levkoe et al., 2019; Loaiza-Buitrago et al., 2023; Otero et al., 2018; Rowe et al., 2024; Hoddy and Ensor, 2018), the majority of which are driven by women and feminist actions. These articles emphasize the creation and maintenance of alternative food networks and the formation of academic and community collectives to promote research and agroecological action.

#### • Agroecology and Feminist Action

These studies reveal the critical role of feminist initiatives in promoting alternative food systems, particularly focusing on community-driven actions. The combination of agroecology and feminist-driven networks offers a powerful framework for resisting industrialized food systems and fostering a more inclusive and sustainable future for food sovereignty.

This systematic review highlights a diverse range of practices, emphasizing the role of agroecology, decolonization, peasant agency, and community-based feminist actions in promoting sustainable and just food systems.

Regarding the emphasis on Indigenous communities, nine articles address the sowing processes and food sovereignty (FS) with a horizontal perspective that recognizes reciprocity in human relationships and with other species (Cameron and Connell, 2021; De Wit et al., 2021; Gallar-Hernández, 2021; Hanna and Wallace, 2021; Hernández et al., 2019; Hoddy and Ensor, 2018; Poirier and Neufeld, 2023; Oliver et al., 2022; Rowe et al., 2024). They also discuss the food insecurity threatening these groups and the need to establish alliances to protect land and natural resources, as well as acknowledging the cultural in nutritional systems.

### • Theoretical-Practical Approaches

Five studies highlight the global capacity for food production, the fair allocation of resources, and the effectiveness of design systems to address agro-industrial system issues (Adelle, 2019; De Wit et al., 2021; Levkoe et al., 2019; López, 2024; Otero et al., 2018). They also reflect on the role of social mobilization in addressing hunger, market monopolization by the agro-industrial sector, and the impact of climate change on food security, advocating for agroecological practices through peasant education.

### • Critical Access Analysis

The critique of access is closely linked to the decolonial category. Twelve articles provide a critical analysis of structural processes concerning access to land and natural resources, as well as the impact of agro-industrial systems, not only on land but also as a threat to small local food businesses (Anderson, 2019; Clay and Zimmerer, 2020; De Wit et al., 2021; Duncan et al., 2019; Gallar-Hernández, 2021; Guttal, 2021; Hernández et al., 2019; Hoddy and Ensor, 2018; Jefferson and Adhikari, 2019; López, 2024; Otero et al., 2018; Thompson, 2019). These articles emphasize the need to rethink food system governance based on human rights to address food insecurity and climate change.

### • Intersection of Food Sovereignty and Economics

Twenty-two articles address the role of the social economy, global food production capacity, resource allocation, food waste, and the impacts of the agro-industrial system (Aare et al., 2020; Brant et al., 2023; Bunge et al., 2019; Cameron and Connell, 2021; Clay and Zimmerer, 2020; De Wit et al., 2021; Duncan et al., 2019; Fladvad, 2019; Green and Chenarides, 2020; Guell et al., 2021; Hanna and Wallace, 2021; Hernández et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022; Jefferson and Adhikari, 2019; Jonas, 2021; Levkoe et al., 2019; Otero et al., 2018; Porter et al., 2020; Rowe et al., 2024; Sankey, 2022; Stella et al., 2022; Wegren, 2021). They also explore cross-cutting themes of community participation in discussions on economic and social challenges related to food and integrated food systems.

### • Identified Practices

The practices identified in the reviewed articles fall into four major categories: forms of association, clean sowing and improved agricultural processes, small-scale commerce, and the recognition of diverse knowledge.

#### 3.1.2.1 Forms of association and cooperativism

These are reflected in the creation of community and family gardens, food exchange networks, and school gardens in collaboration with families and the educational community. These initiatives aim to strengthen local food production through joint work and solidarity among participants.

#### 3.1.2.2 Clean sowing and agricultural improvement

Criticism is noted regarding pesticide use due to its harmful effects on human health and the environment. However, there is a growing community interest in organic, chemical-free foods and the

adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. These include the production of organic fertilizers and techniques for improving soil quality, such as creating trenches, live barriers, and pest control measures, ensuring sustainable crop continuity and improved agricultural productivity.

#### 3.1.2.3 Small-scale commerce

Various forms of community integration in local trade models are highlighted. These include bartering, peasant fairs, food exchanges, and small-scale sales in local markets. It is also emphasized that ensuring those who work the land have access to the food they produce fosters a solidarity economy based on collective effort.

#### 3.1.2.4 Recognition of diverse knowledge

The voices and practices of Indigenous communities are acknowledged, with their valuable legacy of traditional foods and ancestral knowledge. There is also evidence of the interplay between academic, scientific, popular, cultural, agricultural, and peasant knowledge, with a strong presence of female knowledge. This convergence of knowledge is essential for strengthening social and activist movements promoting food sovereignty, contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and equitable food system.

### 3.1.3 Comparative synthesis of results

The results of the review reveal two crucial elements that inform the discussion; first, the differentiation of food sovereignty practices that emerge across regions; and second, the analytical contrast among the categories that give rise to the identified tensions.

In the development of community practices, it is observed that, for Indigenous communities, worldview and the relationship with territory and nature as living entities determine that processes of planting, harvesting, and food consumption extend beyond instrumental actions. Rather, they constitute a political-spiritual-ontological relationship with Mother Earth (Altieri and Nicholls, 2018; Shiva, 2016; Weiler et al., 2015). For example, Indigenous communities in Canada and Peru develop territorial, traditional, and autonomous practices such as fishing, hunting, and local production, while simultaneously promoting cultural revitalization and anti-colonial resistance (Quijano, 2000; Alayza, 2024; Sumner et al., 2023). By contrast, studies of both Indigenous and peasant communities in Colombia show the integration of food sovereignty into state programs, which results in gaps in implementation processes and strong characteristics of governmental dependency.

For peasant communities and community-based groups, planting and harvesting practices link social and collective organization to the fulfillment of basic needs, giving rise to dynamics of subsistence, autonomy of productive food systems, and resistance to expansive agro-industrial systems (Desmarais, 2007; Pimbert, 2018). In communities in Argentina, Italy, and Spain, food sovereignty processes are configured in response to environmental crises associated with the food agro-industry, emphasizing ecological and human sustainability through alternative and solidarity-based economies, local markets, and small-scale production (Colla and Valverde, 2024; Ramos, 2023; González Montero and Uribe Lopera, 2023).

In this sense, the review shows that the implementation of food sovereignty practices is directly aligned with contextual conditions,

drawing on contributions from Brazil, where the emphasis of praxis emerges from alternative territorialities, popular knowledge, and counter-hegemonic community actions (Saquet, 2020b). These are situated practices that conceive food sovereignty as a differentiated process shaped by the territorial, political, and social characteristics of each community (Altieri and Nicholls, 2018), thereby precluding the modeling of global, standardized strategies.

Regarding the contrast among the conceptual categories that informed the review, the literature reveals a relevant tension between the categorical distinction of agroecological practices (35 studies) and explicitly decolonial studies (8 studies). Agroecological practices are recognized as responding to collective projects led by critical actors who challenge industrial food systems and embed political-epistemological debates of agroecology within their community action (Altieri and Toledo, 2011; Rosset et al., 2011), oriented toward a more pragmatic and sustainable dimension. In contrast, decolonial studies foreground the critical and reflexive anti-colonial dimension of knowledge. However, this tension is primarily conceptual, as decoloniality is considered implicit in articles that articulate elements sustaining food sovereignty practices through territorial, political, social, and epistemological frameworks. This, in turn, attests to the robustness of a decolonial corpus of collective food sovereignty praxis (Quijano, 2000; Desmarais, 2007; McKeon, 2021).

## 4 Discussion on food sovereignty

La Vía Campesina movement introduced food sovereignty as a center piece in conversations about reimagining rural development, in the context of food security, at the 1996 World Food Summit. Today, food sovereignty is still being discussed critically in regards to a community's internal organizational structure surrounding the production and consumption of food. Food sovereignty also integrates the right to food within the lens of culture and sustainability (Altieri and Toledo, 2011). From a governance standpoint, this approach needs to consider the issue of land, water, and seed access, as pointed out by Schanbacher (2010). This also includes the need to promote health-focused nutritional interventions that guarantee full access to clean, balanced, diverse, and high quality foods, in order to address the global challenge of malnutrition (Otero et al., 2018).

A food sovereignty approach is intimately associated with the agroecological paradigm, which attempts to blend more and less industrialized forms of community, peasant, and indigenous production system known as “non-neo-liberal” food systems (Altieri and Toledo, 2011). In this case, it evolves through ‘participative and decentralized governance systems which strengthen control by citizens over resources’ (Patel, 2010, p. 89). To solve the external deficit of nutrients and the internal deficit of food, movements that claim food sovereignty emerged that draw attention to the local, rural, and community integration.

These strategies include agroecological community gardens and social horticulture, which emphasize the importance of communitarian work. Out of 35 articles focusing on food cultivation practices, 35 of them approach it from an agroecological viewpoint. These practices are sustainable and resilient because they make use of organic inputs, crop rotation, and crop diversification.

A central idea is that the family gardens and horticulture as agroecological practices reinforces historical community and family

relationships. In particular, the practice of agroecological production with the cultivation of cucurbits and grasses in certain regions demonstrates the agroecology principle of “giving,” as local knowledge is utilized for the betterment of all.

They reveal the organization of communities that encompasses neighborhoods, collective labor, and agroecology, which are all integrated into educational domains from a critical lens that is concerned with food issues. Furthermore, discussions about food sovereignty practices invite some communities to enhance their planting, organizational, and knowledge skills, linking them to the commercialization of food products. This not only allows them to survive but also to expand their access to other foods through exchange and sales. Simultaneously, researchers and academics must collaborate to promote forms of association that contribute to creating fairer food systems.

However, there are well-known and serious barriers to an extended framework of food sovereignty. Some studies highlight obstacles such as the war, land destruction, and the scattering of communities. Moreover, land grabbing, whether through the usurpation of Indigenous or peasant lands, the loss of agricultural land due to private interests, or the aftermath of war, highlights the disconnect between government policies and food realities. This poses a challenge regarding land tenure and its return, which are crucial issues for the future of food sovereignty based on clean production and community practices that combat the eviction of peasants from their land.

Additionally, one of the chronic problems relating to global food systems is the inability to develop local food sources, which undermines food sovereignty and has adverse health implications due to reliance on industrially produced items. Such reliance facilitates the entry of large multinational agribusiness corporations that market genetically modified foods. Additionally, the coupling of poor innovation and extensive imports has also undermined the effectiveness of small-scale food sovereignty initiatives.

Structural and systemic reflection places the need for decolonial practices at center stage and presents critiques of dominant international food models. A key aspect of food production is respect for nature, as seen in the organizational practices of Indigenous communities. These communities share their relationship with the land and how they maintain their traditional food practices. However, they also emphasize the need to expand the debate on Indigenous peoples' right to food, linking this right to cultural empowerment and the recognition of ancestral food-related wisdom.

Communities, through their connection with the land, promote a normative structure in the form of five Indigenous food sovereignty foundational principles: relationality, respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and rights. The structure is interconnected with the food sovereignty movement through the “5 Ds of Redistribution,” which include decolonization, decarbonization, diversification, democratization, and de-commodification. These articles argue that food sovereignty should not only consider community access to edible products but also avoid forms of extended commodification.

The panorama revealed through the selected studies suggests that food sovereignty can be understood as a decolonial epistemological action that requires the integration of autonomous cultural and territorial processes, linking environmental conservation with social justice (Saquet, 2021), and structured around four analytical axes. The first is agroecological reterritorialization, which positions food sovereignty within both the material and symbolic dimensions of local agricultural practices. The second axis, autonomy and reciprocity, sustains the food

systems of peasant and Indigenous communities through cooperative, trust-based, and self-managed relationships. The third, peasant and Indigenous feminisms, highlights the pivotal role of women in reshaping food systems and advancing agroecological and justice-based practices. Finally, the fourth axis, epistemic decolonial governance, emphasizes the democratization of knowledge and the recognition of ancestral wisdom as a foundation for food sovereignty. Each axis is discussed below, followed by an analysis of key risks threatening food sovereignty and a dialog with recent and emerging research in the field.

#### 4.1 Agroecological reterritorialization

The agroecological revolution emerging from Latin America reclaims the value of nature and the empowerment of peasant communities, which collectively ensure a viable peasant sovereignty grounded in sustainable social methodologies (Altieri and Toledo, 2011; Rosset et al., 2011). This counter-hegemonic process integrates agroecological reterritorialization, understood as a material-symbolic practice situated at the core of decolonial action. It involves re-signifying alternative systems of cultivation and harvesting, including the use and preservation of native seeds and small-scale, community-based commercialization that reinforces body-land-community relations.

Examples include the re-peasantization processes in the Basque Country described by Calvário (2023), agroecological practices in the Argentine Pampas analyzed by Cravero (2021), and the collective management of urban gardens in Valencia studied by Palau-Salvador et al. (2019). These local practices of autonomous food production and territorial governance critique the industrial and extractive foundations of global food systems. They demonstrate how reterritorialization of food and knowledge production functions as a decolonial epistemological proposal rooted in local sovereignty.

#### 4.2 Autonomy and reciprocity in food production

The second axis emphasizes autonomy and reciprocity as sustaining principles of peasant and community-based food systems, where bartering and cooperation revalorize collective learning between producers and consumers (Popławska, 2021). In Argentina, cooperative solidarity fosters self-managed food systems (Perez et al., 2018) that recognize diverse citizenships and socio-political configurations (Fladvad, 2019).

Reciprocity also manifests in legal and ethical frameworks that support sustainable proximity trade (Gómez, 2021) and in the ethical foundation of human dignity (Ramírez et al., 2022) that frames food sovereignty as a basic social right in Colombia. The convergence of autonomy and reciprocity promotes the creation and maintenance of community-based networks of care and cooperation. As Vázquez and González (2013) explain through the concept of Sumak Kawsay, these practices embody political, moral, and affective elements that enable communities to imagine and sustain alternative worlds of collective well-being.

#### 4.3 Peasant and indigenous feminisms: practices of re-existence

The third axis focuses on the decisive role of Indigenous and peasant women in reconfiguring local food systems. Their contributions

extend beyond ancestral knowledge to include political commitment, territorial care, and social justice. This is evident among Afro-Colombian women (Turner et al., 2022), in Kenyan women's engagement with climate and food security transformations (Liru and Heinecken, 2021), and in Indigenous women's intergenerational transmission of memory and sovereignty (Budowle et al., 2019).

From a decolonial perspective, critical attention to women's agency in food sovereignty (FS) reveals their resilience in environmentally degraded territories (Liddell et al., 2022) and their leadership in building social economies of sovereignty (Sumner et al., 2023). Likewise, La Vía Campesina represents a form of "globalization from below" (Desmarais, 2007), empowering rural women as political agents in struggles for food justice and agrarian rights (Imperial, 2019). Feminism, therefore, is not peripheral but constitutive of food sovereignty, as women's caring, communicative, and pedagogical work ensures the continuity and intergenerational memory of these practices. This dimension articulates epistemic dialogs between nature, territory, and community as spaces of re-existence and resistance.

#### 4.4 Epistemic decoloniality: knowledge governance within food sovereignty

Colonial knowledge structures surrounding food sovereignty are closely linked to Quijano (2000) notion of the colonality of power, in which peasant knowledge is subordinated to European epistemic hierarchies; Veronelli (2015) colonality of language, which exposes institutional discourses aligned with food security paradigms; and Mignolo (2002) colonial difference, which sustains the illusion of a universal and Eurocentric knowledge.

Transforming food systems toward sovereignty requires rejecting industrial production models that perpetuate epistemic exclusivity (McKeon, 2021) and embracing political democratization of knowledge integrated with sovereignty practices (Adelle, 2019). International bodies such as the United Nations must engage in epistemic dialogs on biocultural diversity and inclusion (Pimbert, 2018; Shiva, 2016; Guttal, 2021) to redefine food security through plural epistemologies. These perspectives echo Santos (2010) call for an ecology of knowledges, underscoring the urgency of maintaining decolonial dialogs in the epistemological construction of food sovereignty and in the transformation of food systems themselves.

#### 4.5 Risks threatening food sovereignty in indigenous and peasant communities

Food sovereignty faces multiple risks, which are exacerbated by the rapid expansion of globalization. One major challenge is the rise of agribusiness and industrialized agriculture, where large-scale enterprises prioritize economic profit, undermining small-scale production, the use of non-GMO seeds, and community control over food production and consumption. Additionally, these practices promote the increased use of agrochemicals and the exploitation of land (Patel, 2010).

In a related but increasingly prominent dimension, another risk identified in relation to food sovereignty concerns the incorporation of standardized industrial technological tools which, although framed within discourses of global food system sustainability, tend to overlook and override community-based, situated knowledge by remaining detached from the specific territorial realities in which food

practices are embedded. Such decontextualized technological integrations risk undermining community control over food production and, consequently, local autonomy, by shifting decision-making power toward corporate actors operating through highly technified processes (Moss, 2025).

It is important to clarify that food sovereignty does not oppose food commercialization per se. Instead, it advocates for trade practices that align with the right to food equity, ensuring fair, healthy, and sustainable access to food while maintaining environmental harmony. Furthermore, food sovereignty opposes the commodification of food, as this fosters speculation and the consolidation of extensive, global industrial supply chains. These dynamics limit access to healthy food by making it less affordable than processed alternatives (Otero et al., 2018).

Another critical challenge is the increasing impact of climate change. Extreme weather fluctuations, including alternating droughts and floods within the same ecosystem, disrupt food production and agroecological systems. These changes disproportionately affect peasant and indigenous organizations reliant on such systems (Otero et al., 2018). Additionally, biodiversity loss presents a major risk. Altieri and Toledo (2011) emphasize that “the genetic erosion of traditional crops, driven by the homogenization of industrial agriculture, limits the resilience of local food systems against pests and diseases” (p. 50), thereby threatening crop diversification and the ancestral knowledge embedded within food cultivation practices.

#### 4.6 Emerging discussions in the contemporary literature on food sovereignty

Food sovereignty is an unfinished field that is continuously shaped by the dynamics inherent to specific territories and by complex, multi-actor organizational arrangements. As argued by Middendorf (2025), beyond being understood solely as a set of primary collaborative practices, food sovereignty finds its sustainability in the construction of situated economic and organizational practices within food systems, mediated by capacities related to production, commercialization, and food provisioning. In this regard, the present review reinforces this perspective by highlighting what can be understood as the intersection between food sovereignty and economics, as expressed through territorial grounded systems.

Aligned with the collaborative construction that emerges from food sovereignty processes, and from an epistemological perspective grounded in open knowledge production, recent debates emphasize the need to examine how the democratization of knowledge contributes to strengthening territorial agroecological practices. As García Marín et al. (2025) suggest, these practices should not be reduced to purely technical processes; rather, understanding them as part of a social–epistemological foundation is essential for sustaining food systems over time.

In this sense, the construction of dialogical bridges between institutional frameworks, academic actors, and community-based organizations becomes particularly relevant. Such bridges require a deep understanding of cultural, territorial, and traditional knowledge processes to support participatory and sustainable food sovereignty frameworks (Rowe et al., 2024). These processes are grounded in a decolonial–relational perspective that integrates political, cultural, and self-determination dimensions aimed at advancing social and

cognitive justice in ways that counter hegemonic food system models (Hansell, 2025). This approach is consistent with the broader discussion developed in this review under the axis of Epistemic Decoloniality: Knowledge Governance within Food Sovereignty.

The studies discussed above indicate that the discussions emerging from this review are closely aligned with contemporary debates that conceptualize food sovereignty as a relational, multi-actor, and context-dependent project, fundamentally decolonial and grounded in epistemological diversity rather than standardized or universal models.

## 5 Conclusion

Across the studies analyzed, the review identified patterns and contrasts that reveal underlying tensions within the field of food sovereignty. A recurrent pattern is the displacement of the focus from food production toward the construction and maintenance of social fabric, which, in turn, largely determines the sustainability of practices. Likewise, a persistent dissonance between legitimized discourse and the material conditions required to operationalize it is evident in studies characterized by institutional dependency. Finally, the prevailing tendency to foreground “successful” cases often renders conflicts within food sovereignty practices invisible or marginal, thereby constraining a deeper understanding of internal tensions shaping these processes.

With regard to the contrasts identified, the review shows that Indigenous communities tend to prioritize the symbolic value of land, whereas community-based groups more frequently integrate food sovereignty practices within contemporary economic and social dynamics. Additionally, discursive differences between studies that approach food sovereignty from an epistemological development perspective and those that focus exclusively on practical dimensions generate analytical tensions. Similarly, distinctions between food sovereignty practices in self-managed communities and those dependent on external institutions highlight divergent dynamics of control and long-term sustainability, further underscoring the heterogeneous configurations through which food sovereignty is enacted.

Building on these identified patterns, contrasts, and tensions, this research, aimed at identifying practices and discussions on food sovereignty, has revealed a wide range of strategies, critiques, and reflections that offer a deeper understanding of the achievements made by communities concerning food, as well as the path that is followed or suggested to be followed in this area.

First, the difficulties of access to food are addressed, particularly in impoverished sectors where access is limited and often lacks effective support policies or adequate food redistribution. In response, many of these communities have opted for forms of association, such as the creation of food networks, cooperatives, and community work, emphasizing the importance of small-space cultivation with species diversification.

Food sovereignty also stimulates discussion about the use of chemicals and their negative effects, which are associated with rising health problems and environmental degradation, particularly of soils. The communities, in a bid to manage the problems, adopt strategies such as crop rotation and exchange that focus on enhancing the soil

quality. Other methods such as infiltration trenches and live barriers that help retain water and boost agricultural productivity are employed. Fertilization methods involve using nettles, fish offal, and, most frequently, composting with animal excreta.

It is crucial to emphasize that food sovereignty cannot be understood from an imposed or colonial perspective that ignores community realities. In this sense, recognizing local and ancestral knowledge, fostering interaction between academia, farmers, and civil society, is fundamental to building inclusive and effective food sovereignty. Indigenous knowledge plays a central role, contributing sustainable practices and rituals associated with cultivation and harvest. These practices not only promote a harmonious relationship between humans and nature but also offer a forward-looking vision that considers nature as a living being with its own spirit. At the same time, the importance of women in planting processes and food sovereignty efforts must be recognized, not only in terms of caring for nature and humans but also in their social and community organizational roles that enable integration and social fabric building around food.

In this sense, food sovereignty does not merely respond to the construction of alternative models of food production and management; rather, it redefines, from within community-based foundations, the ways in which food systems are understood, reflected upon, and produced, thereby dismantling Eurocentric and normative universal paradigms. This perspective contributes to the development of a decolonial epistemological project articulated through the four analytical axes discussed and grounded in collective and multi-actor agency that revalorizes communal, ancestral, popular, and local knowledge. Such agency transforms the autonomous production of knowledge, which is not limited to epistemic creation itself but extends toward sustainable models founded on epistemic and social justice and on care—not only care for the other as a subject, but also for nature as the integrative axis of sovereignty practices.

Finally, it is important to highlight that community processes oriented toward food sovereignty can be linked to other local initiatives, such as commerce. Local trade serves as a basis for food subsistence, allowing cultivated products to be sold and exchanged for other necessary goods. These activities form part of a solidarity economy, where products are traded on a small scale in fairs, markets, and local shops, thus consolidating a community-based network of exchange and subsistence.

## 6 Recommendations for implementing viable food sovereignty practices

As the systematic review points to, various sources, practices, and opinions highlight tackling food sovereignty on a global scale, revealing persistent tensions, patterns, and contrasts within its practical implementation. In order to advance discussions, there is a need to talk directly to grassroots organizations and record their practices. However, traditional academic writing does not typically capture these experiences adequately.

From the early 21st century, food sovereignty debates have been intensified due to the heightened demand for community autonomy, particularly in peasant and indigenous settings.

Increasingly, debates highlight the need for building food sovereignty models that strengthen sustainable and autonomous agro-food systems, with access to clean seeds and foods adapted to local conditions and traditional knowledge. From a reviewer's perspective, it is imperative to recommend greater caution regarding the uncritical transferability of such models. The field of food sovereignty develops in situated ways, integrating specific territorial, social, economic, and organizational elements, as evidenced by Indigenous practices in Canada and Peru and by European community experiences oriented toward alternative economic circuits. This suggests the need to critically revisit current debates on the modeling of food sovereignty and to avoid universalized frameworks that overlook contextual specificity.

This finding highlights the need to critically revisit current debates on the modeling of food sovereignty and to avoid universalized frameworks that overlook contextual specificity. In this regard, the review shows that the agroecological practices underpinning food sovereignty are expressed as forms of collective experimentation, oriented toward the recovery and intergenerational transmission of knowledge, which directly shape community decision-making processes within indigenous and peasant groups.

Additionally, the review indicates the importance of expanding discussion on the implications of incorporating governmental arrangements into community food sovereignty practices. While such arrangements may enhance access and coverage, they also entail risks related to long-term continuity and dependency. Future research and policy-oriented recommendations should therefore critically assess the conditions under which institutional involvement supports or undermines community autonomy and sustainability within food sovereignty processes.

Likewise, based on a significant number of studies within the corpus that frame food sovereignty practices through short food commercialization processes, it is recognized that most of these initiatives are strengthened through multiactor alliances involving peasant movements, peasant cooperatives, social organizations, institutional actors, and academic partners. These alliances enable technical understanding and action without undermining or replacing community autonomy, nor displacing autonomous community processes and community-based territorial knowledge in collective decision-making.

One of the most critical recommendations from this analysis is the necessity of replicating food sovereignty practices. This calls for intergenerational transmission strategies that: (1) reinforce foundational reflections on food sovereignty, (2) preserve and pass down traditional knowledge related to sowing, maintenance, and harvesting, and (3) promote cultural appropriation of these practices to address food-related challenges in communities (Desmarais, 2007).

Finally, additional recommendations derived from the systematic review underscore the importance of creating and strengthening cooperative networks and alliances. Such networks should not only incorporate localized food models but also foster broader policy-oriented discussions on food production and access at the local level (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2008). They should also promote the protection and conservation of native seeds, which are fundamental to the preservation of biodiversity (Rosset et al., 2011), and open spaces for research agendas that expand discussions around conceptual and

practical tensions, patterns, and contrasts within the field. This includes the incorporation of regionally circulating and restricted-access scientific studies, with the aim of enabling open, critical, and contextually grounded debates.

## Data availability statement

The data were obtained from Elsevier's Scopus database (<https://www.scopus.com/>) accessed August 2023.

## Author contributions

YV: Conceptualization, Data curation, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. CA: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. JN: Data curation, Investigation, Writing – original draft.

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