

# **A {Toolkit} for {Hope} ({ASHA}): {Farmers}' {Sovereignty} and {Holistic} {Agriculture} in {India}**

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## ***ABSTRACT ORIGINAL***

The sustainability of agri-food systems is a major concern worldwide in relation to the changing climate, resource depletion and biodiversity loss (FAO, 2018). Civil Society Organisations (CSO) are often seen in polar opposition to the state-corporate coalition when it comes to concerns related to ownership of resources such as land and seeds (Peschard \& Randeria, 2020). There is a lot of growing scholarship on the ways in which civil society groups and networks, especially in the global south, engage in long, confrontational, legal battles with corporate entities (Peschard \& Randeria, 2020; Silva Garzón \& Gutiérrez Escobar, 2020). However, within this scholarship and the activist circles, there is a growing concern that legal battles and confrontational protests are not enough to engage with the skewed power dynamics in favour of big corporations and neo-liberal policies (Pottinger, 2017; Silva Garzón \& Gutiérrez Escobar, 2020). As a result, CSO groups are increasingly engaging in a number of grassroots activities and social innovations that extract agriculture from the exploitative calculation of productivity and economic growth and embed it into a post-growth imaginary of culturally rich practices and relationships of care (McGreevy et al., 2022; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2015). In this chapter, we will discuss the vision of holistic and sustainable agriculture developed and materialised through the network – Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA). ASHA is a large, volunteer-driven informal network of civil society groups, farmers and like-minded individuals that are concerned about the ongoing crisis in agriculture, the plight of farmers, the destruction of biodiversity and environment and the corporate takeover of agriculture enabled by neo-liberal policies. Based in India, the network came into being in 2010 to collectively build a platform to engage with these pressing concerns. In this chapter, we will discuss three innovative ways – Kisan Swaraj Yatra (Farmers' Sovereignty March), Kisan Swaraj Niti (Policy for Farmers' Sovereignty) and Beej Utsav (Seed Festivals) – through which ASHA is co-crafting and mobilising the vision of a sustainable and holistic agricultural future.