

Interview and Food Action together with Food Not Bombs

My name is Petra and we do all together Food Not Bombs. My name is Maaïke. My name is Rikkert

Can you tell u show it all started, the history of FNB and when you got involved?

M: I wasn't involved from the beginning. So I can't tell so much about the history of FNB Utrecht. I heard about it at ACU and I really like the ideology and the initiatives so I decided to volunteer.

P: A group of people who know each other from squatting initiated FNB in Utrecht. It began here 6-7 years ago but of course it has a long history in the US.

It was started here as a reaction to the enormous over consumption so this was a way to spread information about this issue.

What is Food Not Bombs?

M: It is a worldwide organisation. It started in the US during the Vietnam War as a reaction against the war and the huge amount of money the government spent on weapons. Pretty fast it spread all over the world but with different goals in different countries. In Holland the main goal is protesting and spreading information on over consumption and overproduction and the huge amount of good food that are thrown away while in other parts of the world people are dying from hunger.

...We give away meals in front of City Hall. It is a really nice place where people can be social in the public space without money involved.

P: We do this every 3. Saturday monthly

Could you tell a little about the Food Not Bombs action yesterday?

P: Yesterday our action was in support of a 'guided squatting tour' to different squatted buildings around the city.

As I see it squatting and our actions focus on the same issue. There are a lot of empty buildings and a lot of people without a home, and there are people, who has food and some don't. A place to live and food is fundamental for life and everybody should have equal access to that.

M: We have had a long discussion about free food. Earlier it said at our leaflets that food should be for free, but I actually didn't like that line in it.

Of course I think everybody should be able to eat but I don't think food should be free. If food should be free then everything should be free or exchanged or swapped. You can't just offer food for free. Of course I think it is really bad that good food is thrown away when people are still hungry. That doesn't make sense. And that the houses are empty when people are homeless, that doesn't make sense but you can't just say food should be free without looking at what should change then for the rest. Then everything our society is build upon should change then.

Now we give the food for free mostly to make people conscious.

P: For me it is also a way to show people that we can actually change the world a little bit, to show an alternative.

M: I also noticed that during our actions and we hand out flyers people start talking to each other about it, which is a very good way to create a dialogue on these issue.

How do you feel people react when you are in the streets, with leaflets, handing our food?

P: Very differently. Some people like it and come to us and eat and talk. Some people think it is only for poor people or people who are hungry. Some people ignores it completely and don't think it has anything to do with them.

M: For some people it is a very big step going to people you don't know and have food with them. It is kind of unusual. It is also really strange to get food for free in the public space. You are not use to that. I noticed, when you hand our leaflets during the action you make the step much smaller. Then you make already a bridge.

(...)

Yesterday we collected food in this small street in Lombok with small shops with independent owners. What about big supermarkets, factories or big farms? Have you ever thought about involving them or approaching them in anyway?

P: We have asked some big supermarkets like the Alberthein, but they don't want to give food away.

What do the say, what is their reason for not wanting to contribute?

P: It is hard to say. I guess they are afraid it would undermine the whole system they operate upon.

So what about big farms? When the harvest is over there is still something left at the field, potatoes for example?

M: Year but you know for every day there would be lots and lots of food we could get. We could go to farms but we are in the city and these people in the small vegetables stores in Lombok, they are mostly Maroccan and Turkish, they really like to give. I think this is also because of their belief. It says in the Korean that you should give what you have left to people who don't have anything.

R: So already in this small street we could cook every day for 100 people.

M: And we often have something left from what we cook. Earlier we cooked in the kitchen at a shelter for homeless people. This was really good because then we could leave what we had left to them.

R: I think it is really important what Maaïke just said than when we are in the city the best way to go is to approach shops in the city. There is no need to go to farms. They also have the opportunity to compost their left over and in the city it goes right in the dumpster
(...) It is so senseless to produce so much food and to work so much just to throw a huge percentage away especially when this easily could be avoided. But nobody wants to solve this problem because it gives the cooperatives more profit.

(...)

R: We import many products from e.g. Africa. They don't have food to feed their own population and then we throw it away in a container. It is totally un-respect less.

M: Yes or because of governmental subsidies farmers are more or less forced to use their land to grow food for our pigs and cows instead of food for the population.

(...)

M: I saw a drawing of how much we import and export. We import and export an equal amount of meat for example.

P: Yes and also; we export our pigs to Italy, then they make meat from it and export it back to us. Think about how many resources we use on this for example that could be used in a more sustainable way.

M: ... a bottle of Ketchup for example is produced in so many different countries. The lid is made one place, the bottle another, all the ingredients, the etiquette and so on. It is all in different countries all over the world.

(...)

What about subsidies for farmers have you looked into that?

R: A little. The thing is that bigger farms get more subsidies than small farms. This of course means that they can produce more and they can lower the price.

M: And this makes it completely impossible for the small farms to get into/get access to the market, as their prices never can be so low.

P: Yes it is like, it is not real, it's 'artificially' made situation. I also find it really frustrating that the 'normal' farms get all the subsidies and almost nothing goes to the biological farms.

M: Everybody can see that the earth is getting poisoned and we cannot go on like this for very long time. Everybody can see it and still the farms that are poisoning get subsidies. 'They' must have some kind of blind spot. I heard that in 20 years there would not be any clean drinking water in Holland anymore. Year but we all just continue. It is very egocentric.

Who do you think we should interview next and do you have some specific questions for that group or organisation?

R: The Food Bank. It is an organisation working in a lot of countries. It is based on volunteer work. They help and support people with minimum income. They also collect food as FNB but they have agreements with factories and other producers of provisions. It would be nice to ask them how many people they support?

P: It would also be nice to know how they reach people and what are exactly their goals, and who is it for, is it only for poor people or also for?

And your second suggestion for us to interview is?

P: Oosterwarde! It would be nice for us to know how they can plan exactly how to produce the right amount of vegetables – how they avoid to produce too much? Another question would be how it function economically? And what they think is the difference between their system and a regular farm? If they think that their system can inspire other farms to use the same system, I don't know if it really works but this would be my question for them.