



## Milestones

Compiled by  
**Brian O’Riordan**  
(briano@scarlet.be),  
Secretary,  
ICSF Belgium Office

### Ecuador’s new food sovereignty law aims to strengthen the constitutional right to food

Ecuador may be a small country, but it is rich in constitutional history. Since 1830, it has revised its Constitution 20 times, most recently in 2008, when the right to food got enshrined in constitutional legislation. Article 13 states that “the right to food includes free and permanent access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy, high-quality diet, in line with the culture, traditions and customs of the people.” This is an important advance on Article 42 of the 1998 Constitution, by which the State guaranteed the right to health, food security and access to potable water.

The 2008 Constitution has also been hailed by women’s organizations for championing gender equity, and decrying discrimination on grounds of sex, culture, language or place of birth. Ecuador’s attempt to eradicate illiteracy, which is particularly widespread among women, has also been praised, as has the move to grant housewives social security benefits. The first chapter of the 2008 Constitution recognizes the multiracial nature of Ecuadorian society and the vast cultural diversity of Ecuadorian women.

On 17 February 2009, the Ecuadorian National Assembly approved a Bill on Food Sovereignty, whose objective

is to assure self-sufficiency in healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for individuals, communities and indigenous people. The new law defines food sovereignty as the “right of people to define their own food production, storage, distribution and consumption policies and strategies, in line with the right to adequate, healthy and nutritious food for the entire population, respecting their cultures and their diversity of food production methods, trade and the management of rural areas by *campesinos*, fishers and indigenous people, in which women play a fundamental role.”

The Food Sovereignty Law also recommends that rural women workers and small-scale producers should be given equitable access to land. While the law is certainly an important milestone for small-scale producers, including men and women of artisanal fishing communities, how it will be actually implemented remains to be seen. The process received a setback on 20 March when President Rafael Correa blocked several provisions of the new law, such as the requirement for returning to the State illegally acquired lands, including mangroves patches in coastal areas. ❖