

April 2010

RECIPE FOR DISASTER

“WHO IS COOKING THE GLOBAL MEAL?”



Photo: Antonio Olmes, Help Age International

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

A response to the global food crisis

TIME FOR CHANGE

Self-sufficiency and independence

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Trade policies, biofuels, agroecology, land reforms and more...



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EDITORIAL

WHY FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?

LASC's aim is to challenge injustices in Latin America and Ireland through raising public awareness and campaigning in solidarity with the people of Latin America. Food sovereignty as LASC's central theme emerged through a consultation process with our Latin American partners and our supporters in Ireland. The issue had been highlighted in stark terms by the acute food crisis sparked off by sharp increases in prices 2006 – 2008. This crisis was met by popular demonstrations and food riots. Asking the question who controls how food is produced and traded revealed the unequal power relations which underpin the food chain. The aim of LASC's work is to campaign for people in Latin America – and Ireland – to have control over how the food we eat is produced and ends up on our tables. This is crucial if we are to have appropriate, healthy food, produced and traded in equitable and sustainable ways while protecting existing rich local knowledge about food. We hope through reading our magazine you will join with us in our campaign for food sovereignty – in Latin America and Ireland.

By Jean Somers

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FROM FOOD SECURITY TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: AN ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE TO THE GLOBAL 'FOOD CRISIS'



Photo: World Rural Forum

By Tom Campbell, Kimmage Development Studies Centre

The call for 'food sovereignty' is an attempt by many NGOs, social movements and peoples organisations - particularly in countries that are facing hunger and food insecurity at first hand - to offer an alternative policy framework to the dominant market-led agenda. Broadly speaking, this agenda or discourse argues that the solution to the 'global food crises' and growing world hunger is greater liberalisation of agricultural trade, for a new 'green revolution' type push to increase food productivity in areas that need it most (particularly Africa), and for agricultural production to be left to those countries and areas that are well-placed to grow and export large amounts of food (such as Brazil for example), while 'uneconomic' peasant farmers are advised to move out of farming altogether and diversify their livelihoods.

Advocates of Food Sovereignty, on the other hand, would argue that the liberalisation of agricultural trade and increasing concentration of power in the hands of large agribusinesses and supermarket chains is part of the problem, and that the 'rules' that govern food and agriculture at all levels - local, national and international - are designed to facilitate international trade, not local food security. As a result the majority of the world's small-scale food producers, processors and traders (and that includes not just farmers, but pastoralists, forest dwellers and artisan fisherfolk) are being increasingly marginalised and disempowered. At the same time the natural resource base, on which agriculture ultimately depends, is facing unprecedented pressure.

At the core of food sovereignty is the assertion that the production of food is an integral part of people's culture, their self-reliance and the self-determination, or 'sovereignty', of local communities:

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples, communities and countries to define their own agricultural, pastoral, labour, fishing, food, and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies" (NGO/CSO Forum for Food Sovereignty, Rome, June 2002)

This definition reflects the 'right to food' as a fundamental human right, a right already formally recognised elsewhere. What is different is the emphasis on the 'right to produce food' in a sustainable and ecological way, a right that has not been emphasised before.

Food sovereignty has been defined elsewhere as "the right of peoples and sovereign states to democratically determine their own agricultural and food policies" (IAASTD, 2008).

At the heart of FS is local autonomy: not being dependent on the corporations, agri-business, and political elites North and South that, in an increasingly globalised world, dominate every aspect of the food chain - from the control of inputs such as seeds, fertilisers and chemical pesticides - to the distribution, processing and marketing of food across the world.

The concept of FS first came into public domain during the 1996 FAO World Food Summit in Rome when Via Campesina, a Latin American based peasant farmers movement, declared that 'food sovereignty is a precondition to food security'. In 2001, the first 'World Forum on Food Sovereignty' was held in Cuba, with over 400 delegates representing 200 organisations in attendance. A number of similar sized international forums have been held since, most notably in Mali in 2007, when about 500 delegates from more than 80 countries, adopted the Nyéléni Declaration (see page 6), where a particular focus was put on African agro-ecological alternatives to the Green Revolution/GMOs, and on the importance of protecting bio-diverse farmers varieties of seeds and livestock. A similar Declaration emerged from the more recent CSO/Social Movement 'Parallel Forum to the World Summit on Food Security', held in Rome last November. Disillusioned with the deliberations of policymakers at the 'official' FAO Summit, attendees at the parallel forum demanded a alternative policy framework based on the principles of food sovereignty. (peoplesforum2009.foodsovereignty.org)



Photo: Miren Maialen Samper

Although it is difficult to distil a fully-fledged 'Food Sovereignty model' in the sense of a ready-made set of policies already available for national and global governance of rural and agricultural policies, a number of key elements or principles are identifiable and have the support of the wider FS movement. These include:

- ⚡ **Food a Basic Human Right:** everyone must have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity. Each nation should declare that access to food is a constitutional right.
- ⚡ **Agrarian Reform:** absolutely essential – especially in favour of landless and women farmers and indigenous peoples whose land has been stolen – land must belong to those who work it, governments must also invest in socially and ecologically appropriate rural infrastructure and provide support for young people to stay on the land.
- ⚡ **Protecting Natural Resources:** means sustainable care and use of natural resources – especially land, water, seeds and livestock breeds – the protection of genetic diversity, the shift away from industrial chemical and fossil fuel intensive agriculture to ecologically sound systems.

⚡ **Reorganising Food Trade:** policies that prioritise production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency over export-orientated agriculture, the end to export dumping and subsidised exports in the richer countries that distort international markets and displace local production in the poorer countries, and fairer prices (that reflect the true costs of production) paid for the agricultural exports of developing countries ('Fair Trade not Free Trade').

⚡ **Ending the Globalisation of Hunger:** Food Sovereignty is undermined by multilateral institutions and by speculative capital. The growing control of multinational corporations over agricultural policies has been facilitated by the economic policies of multilateral organizations such as the WTO, World Bank and the IMF. Regulation and taxation of speculative capital and a strictly enforced Code of Conduct for TNCs is therefore needed.

⚡ **Social Peace:** increasing levels of poverty and marginalisation in the countryside aggravate situations of injustice and hopelessness for smallholder farmers, often leading to violence and ethnic and communal conflicts.

⚡ **Democratic control:** small farmers and rural women in particular must have their voices heard in agricultural policy making at all levels. Everyone has right to honest, accurate information and open and democratic decision-making. These rights form the basis of good governance, accountability and equal participation, free from discrimination, in public and political life.

Writing in the Food First website in 2003, Peter Rosset argues that "Food sovereignty goes beyond the concept of food security... Food security means that everyone must have the certainty of having enough to eat each day, but says nothing about where that food comes from or how it is produced." Food Security is largely a definition of a goal but does not recommend a specific programme to achieve that goal. Nor does it question where food comes from, who produces and controls it, and under what conditions it has been grown.

Neo-liberalism believes that international trade will solve the world's food supply problem. In contrast to food security, "Food Sovereignty", sets out policy prescriptions which are not against trade per se, however are about strengthening local food security, local autonomy, local markets and community action. Essentially, it is a form of 'resistance' to the dominant neo-liberal policy framework and cannot be separated from social movements that are central to such struggles. In this sense it is highly political, and unashamedly so.

Southern governments and NGOs who are currently advocating within the WTO trade talks for 'Special Safeguard Mechanisms' (SSMs) against agricultural import 'surges', and the designation of key commodities as 'Special Products' (SPs), exempt from tariff liberalisation to protect local production by small farmers, could also be seen as making the case for 'food sovereignty'. In September 2008, Ecuador became the first country to enshrine food sovereignty in its constitution.

Laws are in the draft stages that are expected to expand upon this constitutional provision by banning GMOs, protecting many areas of the country from extraction of non-renewable resources, and to discourage monoculture. The law as drafted will also protect biodiversity as collective intellectual property.

Examples of other struggles to defend local space and food sovereignty include for example: The Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero – a small farmers movement in Argentina, formed in 1990 to defend local farmers against large soybean agriculture which threatened their livelihoods; Protests in recent years by Mexican farmers against heavily subsidised corn imports from USA (under NAFTA) that replace local varieties and put small farmers out of business; the resistance of farmers in several states of Southern India to introduction of genetically modified Bt cotton; the resistance by numerous agrarian communities to monoculture agro-fuel plantations that displace food crops and concentrate power in hands of large land owners, to name just a few.

Food sovereignty is also relevant to urban dwellers that are concerned about either getting enough food in the first place, the increasing prices of food, or the safety and quality of their food and how it is produced. Interest in urban agriculture, organically produced food, 'community supported agriculture', the Cuban model of food production, farmers markets, vegetable box schemes, etc, in Southern and Northern countries is also part of movement towards greater 'localisation' of food systems and food sovereignty.

Many of these movements will argue that that 'traditional' and peasant-based forms of agriculture – far from being 'backward' or unproductive – are often highly complex and bio-diverse agri-ecological systems, that have evolved over thousands of years. Peasant farmers have been the custodians of such biodiversity and local knowledge for centuries and their knowledge must be valued, and defended if necessary. Walden Bello, author of *The Food Wars* (2009),

argues that peasants and small farmers "continue to be the backbone of global food production".

The concept of food sovereignty allows peasant communities from different parts of the world to appreciate - and identify themselves with - each others' struggles. Jose Bove, the French farmers leader and anti-globalisation activist, declares: "For the people in the South, food sovereignty means the right of people to protect themselves against imports. For us it means fighting against export aid and against intensive farming. There is no contradiction there at all".

Food sovereignty is still evolving as both a concept and a policy framework. Although the practical implications and benefits of implementing Food Sovereignty as a development framework has still to be demonstrated at all levels, as a concept it does offer us a very persuasive and highly political argument for refocusing the control of food production and consumption within democratic processes and localized and more sustainable food systems.

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“For the people in the South, food sovereignty means the right of people to protect themselves against imports. For us it means fighting against export aid and against intensive farming. There is no contradiction there at all”



Photo: Sinaltrainal

DECLARATION OF NYÉLÉNI

Mali (2007) www.nyeleni.org



Photo: Antonio Laforgia

Food
sovereignty
promotes
transparent
trade that
guarantees
just incomes
to all peoples
as well as
the rights of
consumers
to control
their food and
nutrition.

We, more than 500 representatives from more than 80 countries, of organizations of peasants/family farmers, artisanal fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, landless peoples, rural workers, migrants, pastoralists, forest communities, women, youth, consumers and environmental and urban movements have gathered together in the village of Nyéléni in Sélingué, Mali to strengthen a global movement for food sovereignty.

We are doing this, brick by brick as we live here in huts constructed by hand in the local tradition and eat food that is produced and prepared by the Sélingué community. We give our collective endeavour the name “Nyéléni” as a tribute to and inspiration from a legendary Malian peasant woman who farmed and fed her peoples well.

Most of us are food producers and are ready, able and willing to feed all the world’s peoples. Our heritage as food producers is critical to the future of humanity. This is specially so in the case of women and indigenous peoples who are historical creators of knowledge about food and agriculture. But this heritage and our capacities to produce healthy, good and abundant food are being threatened and undermined by neo-liberalism and global capitalism. Food sovereignty gives us the hope and power to preserve, recover and build on our food producing knowledge and capacity.

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and

empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations.

In Nyéléni, through numerous debates and interactions, we are deepening our collective understanding of food sovereignty and learning about the realities of the struggles of our respective movements to retain autonomy and regain our powers. We now understand better the tools we need to build our movement and advance our collective vision.

What are we fighting for?

A world where...

- ⚡ All peoples, nations and states are able to determine their own food producing systems and policies that provide every one of us with good quality, adequate, affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food;
- ⚡ There is recognition and respect of women’s roles and rights in food production, and representation of women in all decision making bodies;
- ⚡ All peoples in each of our countries are able to live with dignity, earn a living wage for their labour and have the opportunity to remain in their homes, if they so choose; Where food sovereignty is considered a basic human right, recognised and implemented by communities, peoples, states and international bodies;

Remuneration and labour rights for all, and a future for young people in the countryside

- ⚡ We are able to conserve and rehabilitate rural environments, fish populations, landscapes and food traditions based on ecologically sustainable management of land, soils, water, seas, seeds, livestock and all other biodiversity;
- ⚡ We value, recognize and respect our diversity of traditional knowledge, food, language and culture, and the way we organise and express ourselves;
- ⚡ There is genuine and integral agrarian reform that guarantees peasants full rights to land, defends and recovers the territories of indigenous peoples, ensures fishing communities' access and control over their fishing areas and ecosystems, honours access and control by pastoral communities over pastoral lands and migratory routes, assures decent jobs with fair remuneration and labour rights for all, and a future for young people in the countryside; where agrarian reform revitalises inter-dependence between producers and consumers, ensures community survival, social and economic justice, ecological sustainability, and respect for local autonomy and governance with equal rights for women and men.
Where agrarian reform guarantees rights to territory and self-determination for our peoples;
- ⚡ We share our lands and territories peacefully and fairly among our peoples, be we peasants, indigenous peoples, artisanal fishers, pastoralists, or others;
- ⚡ In the case of natural and human-created disasters and conflict-recovery situations, food sovereignty acts as a form of "insurance" that strengthens local recovery efforts and mitigates negative impacts.

- ⚡ Where we remember that communities affected by disasters are not helpless, and where strong local organization for self-help is the key to recovery;
- ⚡ Peoples' power to make decisions about their material, natural and spiritual heritage are defended;
- ⚡ All peoples have the right to defend their territories from the actions of transnational corporations;

What are we fighting against?

- ⚡ Imperialism, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism and patriarchy, and all systems that impoverish life, resources and ecosystems, and the agents that promote the above such as international financial institutions, the World Trade Organisation, free trade agreements, transnational corporations, and governments that are antagonistic to their peoples;
- ⚡ The dumping of food at prices below the cost of production in the global economy; The domination of our food and food producing systems by corporations that place profits before people, health and the environment;
- ⚡ Technologies and practices that undercut our future food producing capacities, damage the environment and put our health at risk. These include transgenic crops and animals, terminator technology, industrial aquaculture and destructive fishing practices, the so-called White Revolution of industrial dairy practices, the so-called 'old' and 'new' Green Revolutions, and the "Green Deserts" of industrial bio-fuel mono cultures and other plantations;
- ⚡ The privatisation and commodification of food, basic and public services, knowledge, land, water, seeds, livestock and our natural heritage;
- ⚡ Development projects/models and extractive industries that displace people and destroy our environments and natural heritage;
- ⚡ Wars, conflicts, occupations, economic blockades, famines, forced displacement of peoples and confiscation of their lands, and all forces and governments that cause and support these;
- ⚡ Post disaster and conflict reconstruction programmes that destroy our environments and capacities;
- ⚡ The criminalization of all those who struggle to protect and defend our rights;
- ⚡ Food aid that disguises dumping, introduces GMOs into local environments and food systems and creates new colonialism patterns;

- ⚡ The internationalisation and globalization of paternalistic and patriarchal values that marginalize women, and diverse agricultural, indigenous, pastoral and fisher communities around the world;

What can and will we do about it?

Just as we are working with the local community in Sélingué to create a meeting space at Nyéléni, we are committed to building our collective movement for food sovereignty by forging alliances, supporting each others' struggles and extending our solidarity, strengths, and creativity to peoples all over the world who are committed to food sovereignty. Every struggle, in any part of the world for food sovereignty, is our struggle.

We have arrived at a number of collective actions to share our vision of food sovereignty with all peoples of this world, which are elaborated in our synthesis document. We will implement these actions in our respective local areas and regions, in our own movements and jointly in solidarity with other movements. We will share our vision and action agenda for food sovereignty with others who are not able to be with us here in Nyéléni so that the spirit of Nyéléni permeates across the world and becomes a powerful force to make food sovereignty a reality for peoples all over the world.

Finally, we give our unconditional and unwavering support to the peasant movements of Mali and ROPPA in their demands that food sovereignty become a reality in Mali and by extension in all of Africa.

Now is the time for food sovereignty!

2009 Hunger Map



Almost one billion people regularly suffer from hunger; most are women and children.

One child dies every six seconds from hunger-related causes.

On any given day, WFP has an average 5,000 trucks, 70 aircraft and 30 ships delivering food across the globe.

More people die of hunger every year than from AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.



Category	1	2	3	4	5	Insufficient data
Undernourished	<5%	5-9%	10-19%	20-34%	≥35%	
Description	Extremely low	Very low	Moderately low	Moderately high	Very high	



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THE GREEN REVOLUTION

Source: Eric Holt-Gimenez, & Loren Peabody "From Food Rebellions to Food Sovereignty" www.foodfirst.org

The first major development in the rise of the agri-foods complex was the spread of the industrial model of food production through the "Green Revolution."



Photo: Philip de Roos

Starting in the 1960s, the Green Revolution marketed "technological packages" of hybrid seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, to developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. A project of Ford and Rockefeller Foundations (thereafter financed with public money), the Green Revolution raised yields per acre by developing rice, wheat and maize hybrids that could be densely planted and responded to irrigation and high applications of fertilizer. In the West, world per-capita food production increased by 11%. But the number of hungry people also increased by 11%.⁸ This is because the Green Revolution's technologies were more easily adopted by large-scale farmers who took over rich bottomlands, displacing peasants. Many smallholders, pushed out of agriculture, migrated to the city slums now common throughout the Global South. Others, encouraged by government "land reforms" cleared new agricultural land in tropical forests and on fragile hillsides. Development projects soon followed, offering cheap credit so smallholders could buy the Green Revolution technological packages. In fragile forest and hillside conditions, Green Revolution packages degraded soils rapidly, requiring higher and higher fertilizer applications. Yields fell, and the tremendous diversity of local varieties planted by traditional farmers was reduced by as much as 90%, destroying centuries-old agro-biodiversity. To compensate, more and

more forest and hillside land was brought into production, causing massive environmental damage. The Green Revolution, ostensibly a project to save the world from hunger, undermined the ability of the poor to feed themselves by displacing them from their land and degrading the agroecosystems they depended on to produce food.

Green Revolution: Winners and Losers

The germplasm collected from peasants in Asia and Latin America by Green Revolution scientists contributed \$10.2 billion/yr to U.S. corn and soy production in the 1970-80s. Fully one third of the seed produced by the International Center for Maize and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT in Spanish) was appropriated by private northern seed companies including Pioneer Hy-Brid, and Cargill. Farmers and the environment fared less well from the spread of the Green Revolution.

Central America is a case in point: From 1979-97, fertilizer use increased from 80 to 120/kg-ha and grain production increased by 45 million t/yr. However, average yields actually dropped by 50% from 1980-96. How did grain production increase even as yields dropped? By expanding the "agricultural frontier." During the heyday of the Green Revolution in Central America, the region lost half of its tropical forests and almost doubled its CO₂ emissions.

FAMILY FARMING: FEEDING THE WORLD, LOOKING AFTER THE PLANET



Photo: Sinaltrainal

By Conchi Quintana, World Rural Forum

Over the years we have seen how the agro-industrial farming model has been enforced in many regions in the world and how its expansion has resulted in the uprooting of thousands of small family farms.

The main characteristics of this agricultural model are

- ⚡ A high dependence on inputs, which have to be bought in
- ⚡ Increased single-crop farming
- ⚡ The extensive use of fertilizers and pesticides
- ⚡ Scant attention paid to conservation of natural resources and to protecting the biodiversity of the environment.

Industrialised farming – far from providing enough food for humanity – has distorted our perception of rural production, and despite its apparent productivity, it has not achieved the agro-ecological viability it claims.

The recent crisis in food prices, which has affected all countries on the planet to different degrees, proves this point. This crisis has also shown clearly how sensitive this model of production is to fluctuating world prices and in particular its huge dependence on petroleum-based materials.

This model prefers the production of a small number of products which are more profitable on the market, to the detriment of products that are basic foodstuffs for a large number of consumers. This has led to increased food insecurity for many of the world's population.

The intensive agro-exporting model has encouraged each region to specialise according to its comparative advantage over other regions, or to prioritise products that have been launched successfully on the international market. This has had a bad effect on domestic production which, in turn, has caused major difficulties for the local

population in trying to procure a secure supply of food at reasonable prices. Thus it appears evident that intensive production for exporting purposes is not the way to go in order to guarantee the supply of food for an ever-increasing world population.

Massive agro-industrial production has also negative repercussions on the environmental front, in relation to for example, the emission of greenhouse gases and the scant or non-existent conservation of the region in question. Fewer and fewer companies supply inputs and these few companies have an ever-increasing share of the market for seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, harvesting products and even value-added products. The increasing monopolising of production by a few companies is forcing small producers to abandon their own operations and become employees in big companies. The social repercussions for the affected communities are numerous and of a serious nature.

Small Farmers as Key Actors for Regional Food Security

By Miguel Altieri

In Latin America, there were about 16 million peasant production units in the late 1980s, occupying close to 60.5 million hectares — 34.5 percent of the total cultivated land.

The peasant population includes 75 million people representing almost two-thirds of Latin America's total rural population. The average farm size of these units is about 1.8 hectares, although the contribution of peasant agriculture to the general food supply in the region is significant. These small units of production were responsible for 41 percent of the agricultural output for domestic consumption and for producing at the regional level 51 percent of the maize, 77 percent of the beans, and 61 percent of the potatoes.

Family Farming is much more than a Guarantee of a Secure Food Supply for Humanity. In spite of the vulnerability of industrial farming, millions of people are experiencing serious problems as a result of small alterations on a global scale. Nonetheless, the general tendency appears to be to continue supporting this production model, which focuses exclusively on compliance with market rules and has little to do with people, families or communities.

Family farming represents much more than a model of agrarian economy. It is the foundation stone of sustainable food production, which guarantees the security and sovereignty of food, the environmental management of each region and its biodiversity. It adds enormously to the cultural dimension of life in each village and all in all is a fundamental pillar for the complete development of each nation. Millions of small agrarian producers, especially in the South, produce the largest number of basic foodstuffs which are the staple diet of both urban and rural populations.

Many experts highlight the advantages of family farming as a diversified production model which, among other things, improves the stability of the environment, achieves high profitability in related activities and above all is more stable when faced with the ups and downs of the external market and is less dependent on external supplies. According to Professor Altieri, "small operations are more productive and conserve more resources than single crop farming on a large scale." Despite the belief that family farming is synonymous with backwardness and low productivity, research has shown that it is more productive than the intensive model, when the total number of products is taken into account and not just the output achieved per unitary crop.

Small Farms Are More Productive and Resource Conserving

By Miguel Altieri

Although the conventional wisdom is that small family farms are backward and unproductive, research shows that small farms are much more productive than large farms if total output is considered rather than yield from a single crop. Maize yields in traditional Mexican and Guatemalan cropping systems are about 2 tons per hectare or about 4,320,692 calories, sufficient to cover the annual food needs of a typical family of 5-7 people. In the 1950s the chinampas of Mexico (raised growing beds in shallow lakes or swamps) had maize yields of 3.5-6.3 tons per hectare. At that time, these were the highest long-term yields achieved anywhere in Mexico. In comparison, average maize yields in the United States in 1955 were 2.6 tons per hectare, and did not pass the 4 tons per hectare mark until 1965.¹⁰ Each hectare of remaining chinampa can still produce enough food for 15-20 persons per year at a modern subsistence level.

As a result of diversified production, more food is produced and there is an increased resistance to weeds, illnesses and plagues. In addition, small operations are more profitable, more multifunctional and have less of a negative impact on the environment. They also contribute with greater effect than large operations. The communities where small operations exist have a superior economy to under-populated communities which depend on large highly mechanised operations.

To summarise, the big advantages of the agrarian family operation model are in its elevated level of agro-diversity which, due to a reduced use of external inputs, generates a bigger volume of outputs and enables families to earn money at different times of the year by producing a variety of crops. This makes it less susceptible to the risks and the ups and downs of the market and above all, it is not just another production method but works for humans and their well-being.

Protecting Farmers and Promoting Family Farming

Despite these multiple functions and advantages, in reality, family farming cannot count on the support of either the government or society in general. When the subject of family farming is broached, some people talk about it as if referring to an antiquated, irrelevant activity which does not have a great future. And this is the kind of treatment that this basic activity, a way of life

for 2,000 million people, has received in recent decades.

As long as agriculture continues to be treated simply as a merchandise, a bargaining tool in economic and political negotiations, it will not be possible to include in these negotiations ethical government criteria which respect the human right of each individual to an adequate standard of living. This includes the Right to Food as outlined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We can divide the compromises necessary to protect family farming into two categories: policies needed to protect the family and policies necessary on a national and global level. If it is recognised that in a family operation, the farmer is both enterprising and hard-working, institutions will reassess how this production model contributes to economic and social development. On a national and local level we simply must favour the development of a political environment which supports sustainable and competitive family farming. For this we need to recognise and strengthen the role of rural organisations and strengthen investment in agriculture, infrastructure and associated services which allow inhabitants of rural areas to have a decent life-style.

Small Farms Are More Resilient to Climate Change

By Miguel Altieri

Surveys conducted in hillsides after Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in 1998 showed that farmers using sustainable practices such as the legume “mucuna” cover crop, intercropping, and agroforestry suffered less “damage” than their conventional neighbours. The study spanning 360 communities and 24 departments in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala showed that diversified plots had 20 to 40 percent more topsoil, greater soil moisture, less erosion, and experienced lower economic losses than their conventional neighbours.¹⁹ This points to the fact that a re-evaluation of indigenous technology can serve as a key source of information on adaptive capacity and resilient capabilities exhibited by small farms — features of strategic importance for world farmers to cope with climatic change. In addition, indigenous technologies often reflect a worldview and an understanding of our relationship to the natural world that is more realistic and more sustainable than those of our Western European heritage.

It will likewise be necessary to work with society in general and with Consumer Associations to promote the responsible consumption of local products, or of those that are culturally more acceptable. This is one means, albeit not the only one, of beginning to

boost agrarian family production.

It is necessary to establish on a supranational level a system of checks and balances to ensure that the commitments made at International Summits are acted upon. The political will to do this has often been lacking.

We cannot continue to rely on vague commitments. We need a real global effort and leadership which establishes commitments and clear goals which will be subject to a results check, especially on the part of rural associations and civil society, on a national as well as on an international level.

Campaign in Favour of Family Farming

We would like to take advantage of this space given to us by LASC to seek support for a campaign which the World Rural Forum (along with more than 200 organisations from all over the world) is promoting: to obtain a declaration from the UN for an International Year of Family Farming.

The fight against poverty is real and can be won, but a big part of the battle needs to be won in rural areas. The majority of the 1,020 million people, who live in extreme poverty, live in rural areas, as confirmed by figures from the FAO. The development of these areas has to come from family farming, which along with other activities can become a means of diversified income and a source of food supplies to local markets. The diversification of activities and the improvement of agrarian production need strong political and social support. It is fair to say that this support will not be in vain, even though the most developed societies are initially only interested in the promotion and protection of their own agrarian sectors, as in the case of the United States or the European Union. The Director General of the FAO recorded that the increase in GDP from agriculture is twice as effective in the fight against hunger as that from other sectors.

In this globalized world in which we live we have to realise that local development translates into global well-being and we should not see it as a threat.

Family farming is a model of farming that exists in each and every region of the world. It is for this reason that this type of initiative can help highlight the demands of thousands of millions of people, who far from having their basic needs met, must cope with the effects of political decisions which do not at all reflect their reality.

We need to support, to recognise and to promote Family Farming.

THE MEANING AND PRINCIPLES OF AGROECOLOGY

Source: Miguel Altieri, Peter Rosset & Lori Ann Thrupp: "The Potential of Agroecology to Combat Hunger in the Developing World" www.agroeco.org



Photo: Sinaltrainal

Agroecology is a scientific discipline that defines, classifies, and studies agricultural systems from an ecological and socioeconomic perspective. It is also considered the scientific foundation of sustainable agriculture as it provides ecological concepts and principles for the analysis, design, and management of productive, resource-conserving agricultural systems. Agroecology integrates indigenous knowledge with modern technical knowledge to arrive at environmentally and socially sensitive approaches to agriculture, encompassing not only production goals, but also social equity and ecological sustainability of the system. In contrast to the conventional agronomic approach that focuses on the spread of packaged uniform technologies, agroecology emphasizes vital principles such as biodiversity, recycling of nutrients, synergy and interaction among crops, animals, soil, etc., and regeneration and conservation of resources. The particular methods or technologies promoted by agroecologists build upon local skills and are adapted to local agroecological and socioeconomic conditions. The implementation of such agroecological principles within the context of a pro-poor, farmer-centered rural development strategy is essential for healthy, equitable, sustainable and productive systems.

Today there are thousands of examples where rural producers in partnership with NGOs and other organizations, have promoted and implemented alternative, agroecological development projects which incorporate elements of both traditional knowledge and modern agricultural science, featuring resource-conserving yet highly productive systems such as polycultures, agroforestry, the integration of crops and livestock, etc.

There is enough evidence available today—despite the fact that researchers have paid scant attention to these systems—to suggest that these agroecological technologies promise to contribute to food security at many levels. Just how productive and sustainable they are is to some degree still an empirical question. But it is likely that the prevalence of similar systems among smallholders is a factor in the universally observed inverse relationship between farm size and production, whereby smaller farms make far more productive use of the land resources than do large farms. Yet, even medium and large scale producers are increasingly making use of the agroecological approach, recognizing the advantages of these principles and techniques over conventional approaches.

Critics of such alternative production systems point to lower crop yields and in high-input conventional systems. Yet all too often it is precisely the emphasis on yield—a measure of the performance of a single crop—that blinds analysts to broader measures of sustainability and to the greater per unit area productivity obtained in complex, integrated agroecological systems that feature many crop varieties together with animals and trees. There are also cases where even yields of single crops are higher in agroecological systems that have undergone the full conversion process.

Assessments of various initiatives in Africa, Asia and Latin America show that agroecological technologies can bring significant environmental and economic benefits to farmers and communities. If such experiences were to be scaled up, multiplied, extrapolated and supported in alternative policy scenarios, the gains in food security and environmental conservation would be substantial. In this article we summarize some cases from Latin America to explore the potential of the agroecological approach.

Agroecology in the Andean Region

In Peru, NGOs have studied pre-Columbian technologies in search of solutions to contemporary problems of high altitude farming. A fascinating example is the revival of an ingenious system of raised fields that evolved on the high plains of the Peruvian Andes about 3,000 years ago. According to archaeological evidence, these waru-warus, platforms of soil surrounded by ditches filled with water, were able to produce bumper crops despite floods, droughts and the killing frosts common at altitudes of nearly 4,000 meters.

In 1984, several NGOs and state agencies created the Proyecto Interinstitucional de Rehabilitación de Waru-warus (PIWA) to assist local farmers in reconstructing the ancient systems. The combination of raised beds and canals has proven to have important temperature moderation effects, extending the growing season and leading to higher productivity on the waru-warus, compared to chemically fertilized normal pampa soils. In the district of Huatta, reconstructed raised fields produced impressive harvests, exhibiting a sustained potato yields of 8-14 t/ha/yr. These figures contrast favorably with the average Puno potato yields of 1-4 t/ha/yr. In Camijata, potato yields reached 13 t/ha/yr and quinoa yields reached 2t/ha/yr in waru-warus.

Elsewhere in Peru, several NGOs in partnership with local government agencies have engaged in programs to restore abandoned ancient terraces. For example, in Cajamarca, in 1983 EDAC-CIED together with peasant communities initiated an all-encompassing soil conservation project. Over 10 years they planted more than 550,000 trees and reconstructed about 850 hectares of terraces and 173 hectares of drainage and infiltration canals.

The end result is about 1,124 hectares of land under conservation measures (roughly 32% of the total arable land), benefiting 1,247 families (about 52% of the total in the area). Crop yields have improved significantly. For example, potato yields went from 5 t/ha to 8 t/ha and Oca yields jumped from 3 to 8 t/ha. Enhanced crop production, fattening of cattle and raising of alpaca for wool, have increased the income of families from an average \$ 108 per year in 1983 to more than \$ 500 today.

In the Colca valley of southern Peru, PRAVITIR (Programa de Acondicionamiento Territorial y Vivienda Rural) sponsors terrace reconstruction by offering peasant communities low-interest loans or seeds and other inputs to restore large areas (up to 30 hectares) of abandoned terraces. The advantages of the terraces are minimizing risk in times of frost and/or drought, reducing soil loss, broadening cropping options because of the microclimate and hydraulic advantages of terraces, and improvement productivity. First year yields from new bench terraces showed a 43-65% increase of potatoes, maize and barley, compared to these crops grown on sloping fields. The native legume *Lupinus mutabilis* is used as a rotational or associated crop on the terraces; it fixes nitrogen, which is available to companion crops, minimizing fertilizer needs and increasing production. Though yields are greater in chemically fertilized and machinery prepared potato fields, energy costs are higher and net economic benefits are not necessarily greater than the agroecological system. Surveys indicate that farmers prefer this alternative system as it optimizes the use of scarce resources, labor and available capital, and is accessible to even poor producers. These kinds of methods are being scaled up and multiplied, showing great potential for improvements in productivity and sustainable food security throughout the region.

Integrated Production Systems

In Cuba, the Asociación Cubana de Agricultura Orgánica (ACAO), a non-governmental organization formed by scientists, farmers and extension personnel, has played a pioneering role in promoting alternative production modules. In 1995 ACAO helped establish three integrated farming systems (called 'agroecological lighthouses') in cooperatives (CPAs) in the province of Havana. After the first six months, all three CPAs had incorporated agroecological innovations (i.e. tree integration, planned crop rotation, polycultures, green manures, etc.) to varying degrees, which, with time, have led to enhancement of production and biodiversity, and improvement in soil quality, especially organic matter content. Several polycultures, such as cassava-beans-maize, cassava-tomato-maize, and sweet potato-maize were tested in the CPAs. Productivity evaluation of these



Photo: Sinaltrainal

polycultures indicates 2.82, 2.17 and 1.45 times greater productivity than mono cultures, respectively. The use of *Crotalaria juncea* and *Vigna unguiculata* as green manure have ensured a production of squash equivalent to that obtainable applying 175 kg/ha of urea. In addition, such legumes improved the physical and chemical characteristics of the soil and effectively broke the life cycles of insect pests such as the sweet potato weevil.

At the Cuban Instituto de Investigaciones de Pastos, several agroecological modules with various proportions of the farm area devoted to agriculture and animal production were established. Monitoring of production and efficiencies of a 75% pasture/25% crop module, reveals that total production increases over time, and that energy and labor inputs decrease as the biological structuring of the system begins to sponsor the productivity of the agroecosystem. Total biomass production increased from 4.4 to 5.1 t/ha after 3 years of integrated anagement. Energy inputs decreased, which resulted in enhanced energy efficiency (from 4.4 to 9.5) Human labor demands for management also decreased over time. Such models have been promoted extensively through field days and farmers cross visits. Similar results have been obtained by ICLARM researchers in Philippines, where integrated rice-based systems with livestock, aquaculture, tree and vegetable components have proven to be productive, efficient and profitable, given labor availability and secure tenure.

The particular methods or technologies promoted by agroecologists build upon local skills and are adapted to local agroecological and socioeconomic conditions

“ONE DOES NOT SELL THE EARTH UPON WHICH THE PEOPLE WALK”

TASHUNKO WITKO:
(1840-1877)

By Fergal Anderson, Via Campesina Europe

Land, la tierra, an talamb, la terre...in every society the land is hugely important – and we have developed somenbat of an obsession with its ownership. The earth around us is the source of all natural resources, food, materials and the ongoing survival of our species. Increasingly land is reduced to “property”; an artificial unit of human production, which is traded, exchanged and speculated upon in order to profit a minority.

Land – The Root of the Problem

In Latin America the struggle for land has been going on for many years. Reforma Agraria ya! or Agrarian Reform Now! has been the rallying cry across Latin America as peasant farmers and rural dwellers demand more access to land and productive resources.

Liberalization of agricultural markets through the World Trade Organization and free-trade agreements (such as NAFTA between Mexico, the US and Canada, or the array of bilateral agreements the EU is currently negotiating) require governments to remove common ownership of land and allocate it to individuals in a community - weakening the tendency towards common management, as well as forcing countries to open their borders to cheaper (often subsidised) products from overseas.

Land concentration and resource privatisation are being pushed by transnational corporations, which see resource control as a clear economic winner in the future – and it is in no way limited to Latin America. The privatisation of the commons (water, soil, seeds) and the increasing concentration of land and property ownership are global trends which should set alarm bells ringing. Privately owned land and resources are exploited for the private good, not for the good of society as a whole. The argument that many private goods can contribute to a collective good for all is made solely by the minority who stand to gain.

The struggle for agrarian reform in Latin America has in fact developed into something more. The same forces which push peasants off their lands, liberalize markets and turn vast

areas of biodiverse landscape into monoculture plantations of genetically modified plants are active all over the world, from Mozambique to Mayo, from Bolivia to Borneo. These forces are transnational corporations - rootless entities, managing enormous amounts of capital, which flows constantly through the world's tax havens and hedge funds.

Many of these corporations are faceless – it is difficult to find points of contact where social movements can build arguments and struggles. However there is one important area where corporations are particularly exposed – and it is an area which is of fundamental importance to every human being on the planet – that of food and agriculture.

Who Owns the land?

The key to understanding the huge inequalities that exist worldwide (and are well-illustrated in Latin America) is this concentration in ownership of land. The figures for land ownership in many Latin American countries are quite astonishing: in Brazil for example around 1% of the population own almost half the arable land. In the primarily agrarian and rural economies of the south however, such concentration has proved devastating – as it did in 19th century Ireland. The huge boom in urban populations in the south (often in slums outside big cities or into areas with little or no public services or infrastructure) can be attributed to the concentration of land ownership and WTO policies of market liberalization.

So why this concentration of land ownership?

In the post-war period the United States began to really industrialize its agricultural production – farming huge tracts of land using heavy industrial machinery and chemicals. Countries such as Brazil and Argentina quickly began to see the agricultural potential of their vast prairies and began to expand their production. The result was a huge increase in agricultural production for export there – particularly in



Photo: World Rural Forum

the production of soy. The vast mono cultures of soy – which are still expanding in Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina today – are the products of these decisions. The conversion of local communities from food production to monoculture plantation for export meant huge increases in food imports – in this case cheap subsidized wheat and maize from the US and Europe.

The current spate of “land-grabbing” is an extension of this process. Governments and transnationals are buying up lands around the world at an alarming rate – as much as 100 million hectares (15 times the land area of Ireland) since 2006. This land is mostly being bought or leased to grow staple foods directly for export, but it is also providing a comfortable and stable investment opportunity for capital looking for “secure” investment in the wake of the financial crisis. Generally the land is managed by agri-business firms (which produce, then export) and owned by private intermediate investors (hedge funds, pension funds, private equity groups, holding companies, investment banks). These deals often purchase or lease land in countries which already have huge problems of food insecurity – exacerbating the difficulties faced by local farmers (concentration of land, resources, water etc).

Corporate Food – Nature for Sale?

The dominance of agri-business extends far beyond land issues however. The struggles of peasants in Latin America and around the world have found common ground and have begun to articulate their analysis and alternatives through an international movement called La Via Campesina (The Way of the Peasant).

The closer
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inevitability.

Apart from land concentration, companies around the world have profited massively from another area: the huge field of inputs – seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and other chemicals which the agro-industrial food system lives off. The process of concentration in this sector puts the entire world food system at risk – meaning that the processes from “farm to fork” are increasingly controlled by private speculators and investors, not by the public. One of the most important areas at risk is the seed industry. It is estimated that the top ten seed companies control 67% of the seed market – a control which allows them to define what kind of seeds are sown and where. Control of seeds means control of the basis of our food system, and of the varieties of foods available not only to farmers, but to consumers too.

The last link that ties the land, the inputs and the people together are the distribution chains; the supermarkets. WalMart, Carrefour (France) and Tesco are the three largest supermarket chains in the world – and sell some of the “cheapest” food on the planet. As always, there are innumerable hidden costs which conspire to make things so “cheap”. Supermarkets and wholesalers put huge pressures on farmers to produce food for less and less, making the kind of sustainable, small-scale production we may once have been familiar with here in Ireland (and which is so desperately needed now) almost economically impossible. Supermarkets can dictate and control prices and monitor and control food resources, while making enormous profits along the way.

The Alternative – Food Sovereignty

The struggles of the world's billions of peasants have coalesced around an alternative framework for the world's food and agricultural systems. Food Sovereignty. Food Sovereignty is based first and foremost on reclaiming power over food production – and in doing so struggling against transnational corporations (Cargill, Monsanto, Bayer, BASF, Syngenta and so on) who are trying to profit from the world's daily bread.

In order to understand the concept of food sovereignty it is also important to first recognize that decisions taken on agricultural and food issues are not only economic, but are also vital political questions. Understanding how societies feed their populations, how cultures and varied ecological environments

interact with one another, are also important. The basis of the Food Sovereignty framework is that peoples must be able to define their own food and agricultural systems. It is a call for autonomy, for relocation, and for redistribution of power from a rigid, mechanical chain to an organic, flexible web.

Lastly, it is important to note that worldwide, the agro-industrial food system does NOT provide the food the world eats. It is estimated that peasant farmers (including urban food producers) provide up to 70% of the food eaten by the world's population. In spite of these figures the world is also manifestly failing to feed itself – the numbers of hungry people are over 1 billion, while as many as 1.3 billion are considered overweight or obese. These contradictions are another illustration of how far out of balance our food system has become. The closer you look the clearer it becomes - allowing hunger to continue in the world is a political and economic choice, not an structural inevitability.

Land Reform in Bolivia:

The Bolivian government has pursued land reform since the election of Evo Morales in 2006. Early attempts to include measures in the draft constitution that would confiscate and redistribute landholdings above 5,000 or 10,000 hectares (a number to be decided by popular vote) were violently opposed by the rich landowning and business elites in eastern Bolivia.

These elites (many the descendants of Utashi Croats driven out of Yugoslavia and Nazis fleeing a defeated Germany in the post-war period) hold enormous amounts of land. In Bolivia 400 families own 70% of the country's productive land, and the concentration of land in the fertile eastern plains is intense. In spite of the overwhelming support for land reform (79% voted for the stricter 5,000 hectare limit) the process will be difficult due to the fierce opposition among rich landowners. The governor of Santa Cruz, Ruben Cruz, alone owns 15,000 hectares of land.

In spite of this, the Bolivian voters approved a new constitution in 2009 limiting the size of new landholdings and giving indigenous groups rights over their culture, territory and other issues.

FACT SHEETS



Developed countries' total support to their own domestic agriculture is more than three times higher than the official development assistance of developed countries. The support provided by developed

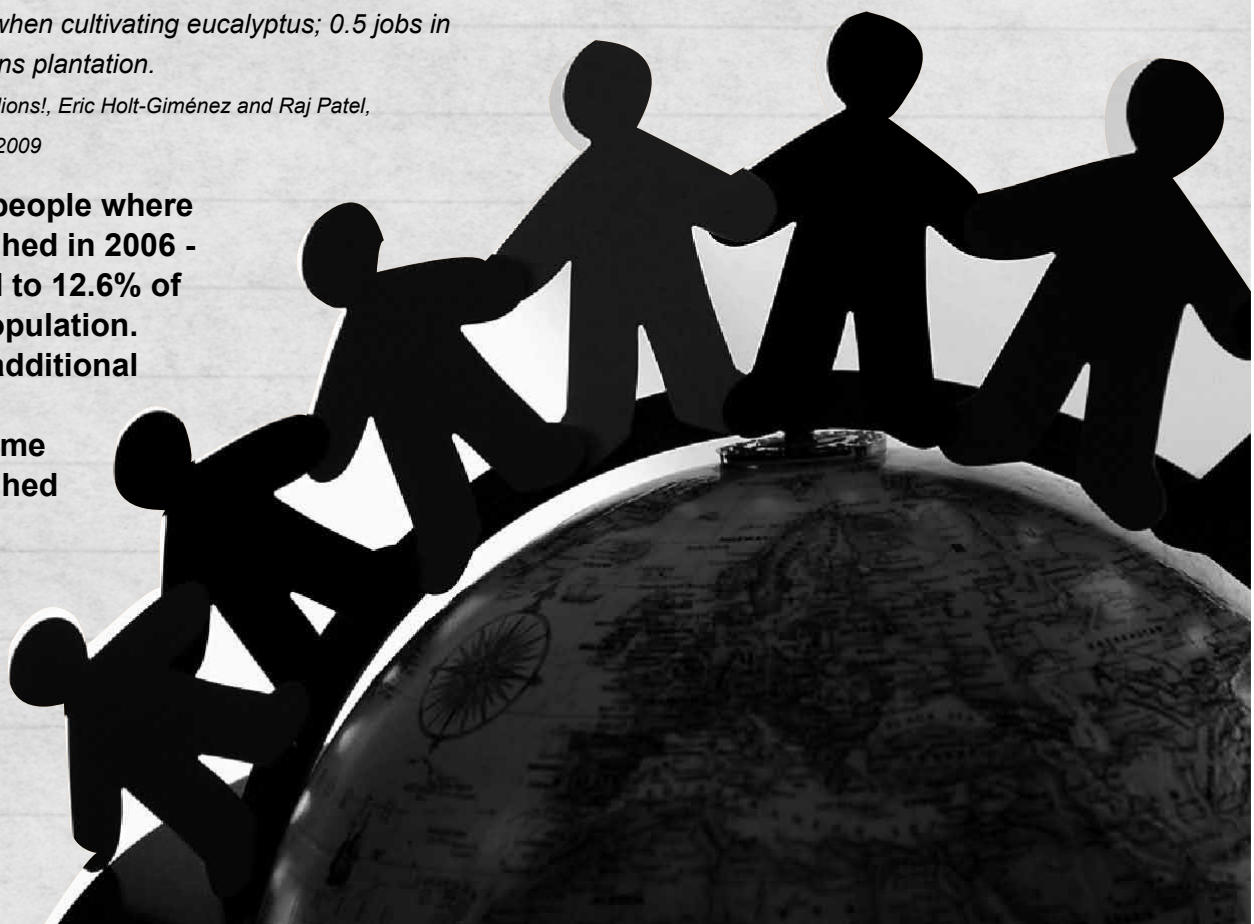
countries to their own agricultural sector continued at a time when developing countries have been encouraged to end all public support to their agriculture. (United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*)

World food facts

- ⚡ *In 2008 the World Bank reported that global food prices had risen by 83% over the previous three years.*
- ⚡ *While food production in the last 20 years has been going up steadily at over 2% a year, population growth has dropped to 1,14% a year –so overpopulation is not a satisfactory explanation for the food crisis*
- ⚡ *It takes between 7 to 8 kilos of beef to produce just 1 kilo of beef in feedlots!*
- ⚡ *Seven out of ten people in the world affected by hunger are women and girls.*
- ⚡ *In the 1960s Africa was a net exporter of food. Today it imports 25% of the food it consumes.*
- ⚡ *100 hectares provide more or less jobs depending on how the land is used: 35 jobs when used for family farming; 10 jobs when growing palm oil or sugar cane; 2 jobs when cultivating eucalyptus; 0.5 jobs in soybeans plantation.*

Source: Food rebellions!, Eric Holt-Giménez and Raj Patel, Pambazuka Press 2009

864 million people were undernourished in 2006 - this equated to 12.6% of the world population. In 2007, an additional 50 million people became undernourished as a result of rising food prices (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2000-2008).



Bananas: Just five companies (Dole, Del Monte, Chiquita, Fyffes and Noboa) control 80% of the international banana trade. Companies relocate from country to country in search of ever cheaper bananas and European supermarkets are helping this trend through their banana price wars.

Coffee: Coffee farmers earn as little as 4 cents per pound of hand-picked coffee. They earn less today than their ancestors did 100 years ago (www.behindeverycup.com)

Cacao: Producers get only 5 per cent from every dollar spent on chocolate, while companies get 70 cents.

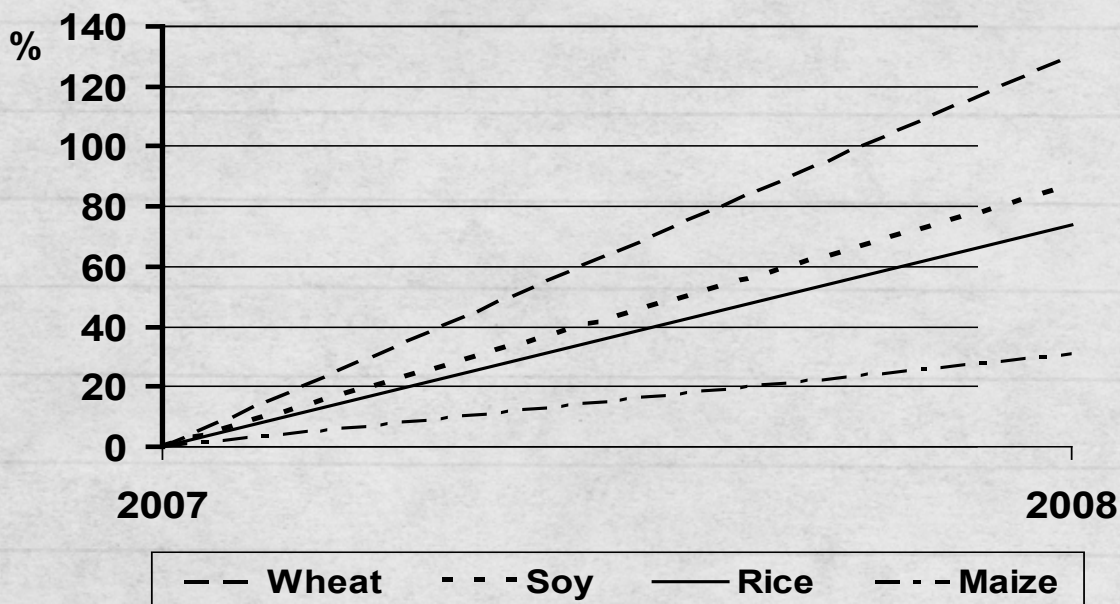
Rice: In 2003, subsidies for rice producers in the US totalled \$1,3 billion, more than double Haiti's entire GDP for that year... and they call it fair competition!



Food facts: Ireland and Latin America

- ⚡ *Much of what Ireland now produces are products for export such as alcohol, beef and dairy products.*
- ⚡ *The average food basket we buy in a supermarket has travelled over two thousands miles to get here.*
- ⚡ *Ireland is heavily reliant on oil. It takes oil to grow the food we eat, be it in the form of pesticides and fertilisers, plastics and other protective covering, and it takes oil to cultivate and transport the food.*
- ⚡ *If the food supply chain collapses, it will take Ireland 5-7 years to rebuild its food growing capability to a level compatible with feeding its population. (Sustainable Institute, Mayo)*
- ⚡ *Four per cent of the Irish population can sometimes not afford to buy enough food for their household (SLÁN Survey, 2007)*
- ⚡ *A 2008 study published by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimated that the 2007-2008 food crisis would lead to a further 15 million Latin Americans living in extreme poverty. There were already 70 million!*
- ⚡ *In 2007 in Haiti the price of food went up between 50-100% forcing people to eat mud cookies, leading to food riots in April 2008. (Food rebellions!, Eric Holt-Giménez and Raj Patel, Pambazuka Press 2009)*

the Rise in Food Prices



Source: Food rebellions!, Eric Holt-Giménez and Raj Patel, Pambazuka Press 2009

RURAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AGROECOLOGY, AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Source: Miguel Altieri, "Agroecology, Small Farms and Food Sovereignty",
Monthly Review, July-August 2009



Photo: Sinaltrainal

Niche markets for the rich in the North exhibit the same problems of any agro-export scheme that does not prioritize food sovereignty, perpetuating dependence and hunger.

The development of sustainable agriculture will require significant structural changes, in addition to technological innovation, farmer-to-farmer networks, and farmer-to-consumer solidarity. The required change is impossible without social movements that create political will among decision-makers to dismantle and transform the institutions and regulations that presently hold back sustainable agricultural development. A more radical transformation of agriculture is needed, one guided by the notion that ecological change in agriculture cannot be promoted without comparable changes in the social, political, cultural, and economic arenas that help determine agriculture.

The organized peasant and indigenous-based agrarian movements — such as the international peasant movement La Vía Campesina and Brazil's Landless Peasant Movement (MST) — have long argued that farmers need land to produce food for their own communities and for their country. For this reason they have advocated for genuine agrarian reforms to access and control land, water, and biodiversity that are of central importance for communities in order to meet growing food demands.

Vía Campesina believes that in order to protect livelihoods, jobs, people's food security, and health as well as the environment, food production has to remain in the hands of small-scale sustainable farmers and cannot be left under the control of large agribusiness companies or supermarket chains. Only by changing the export-led, free-trade based, industrial agriculture model of large farms can the downward spiral of poverty, low wages, rural-urban migration, hunger, and environmental degradation be halted. Social rural movements embrace the concept of food sovereignty as an alternative to the neoliberal approach that puts its faith in an inequitable international trade to solve the world's food problem. Instead, it focuses on local autonomy, local markets, local production-consumption cycles, energy and technological sovereignty, and farmer-to-farmer networks.

"Greening" the Green Revolution will not be sufficient to reduce hunger and poverty

and conserve biodiversity. If the root causes of hunger, poverty, and inequity are not confronted head-on, tensions between socially equitable development and ecologically sound conservation are bound to accentuate. Organic farming systems that do not challenge the monoculture nature of plantations and rely on external inputs as well as foreign and expensive certification seals, or fair-trade systems destined only for agro-export, offer very little to small farmers that become dependent on external inputs and foreign and volatile markets. By keeping farmers dependent on an input substitution approach to organic agriculture, fine-tuning of input use does little to move farmers toward the productive redesign of agricultural ecosystems that would move them away from dependence on external inputs. Niche markets for the rich in the North exhibit the same problems of any agro-export scheme that does not prioritize food sovereignty, perpetuating dependence and hunger.

Rural social movements understand that dismantling the industrial agrifood complex and restoring local food systems must be accompanied by the construction of agroecological alternatives that suit the needs of small-scale producers and the low-income non-farming population, and that oppose corporate control over production and consumption. Given the urgency of the problems affecting agriculture, coalitions that can rapidly foster sustainable agriculture among farmers, civil society organizations (including consumers), as well as relevant and committed research organizations are needed. Moving toward a more socially just, economically viable, and environmentally sound agriculture will be the result of the coordinated action of emerging social movements in the rural sector in alliance with civil society organizations that are committed to supporting the goals of these farmers movements. As a result of constant political pressure from organized farmers and others, politicians will, it is hoped, become more responsive to developing policies that will enhance food sovereignty, preserve the natural resource base, and ensure social equity and economic agricultural viability.

TRADING HUNGER: THE CASE OF RICE IN HAITI

By Chloé Saint-Ville

Food security has been an issue in Haiti since the mid 1980s, when dictator Baby Doc started to liberalise the economy. In the past 30 years, Haiti has become one of the most open countries with an average import tariff of 2.9% in 2003 according to the WTO. In an essay, Bonny Jean-Baptiste has demonstrated that the successive liberalisation policies carried out in Haiti have damaged the agricultural sector.

Haiti is heavily dependent on rice as a staple food - the national meal is red beans, rice and meat - and as a crop. One fifth of the Haitian population earns its living from the cultivation of rice. In 1990 Haitian peasants grew 130,000 tonnes of rice. In 2002 this production fell to 104,000 tonnes. With the opening of the Haitian market, rice importation has increased from 198,000 tonnes between 1985 and 1990 to 1,323,900 tonnes between 1997 and 2002. In the mean time, the amount of rice grown in the country decreased from 759,446 tonnes to 723,320. Thus Haiti has become a net importer of rice and is actually the first US trade partner in the world in terms of import per inhabitant.

The Haitian market has been swamped by heavily subsidised imports. This has had a negative impact on Haitian peasants. The decrease in the price of locally grown rice in order to compete with the price of the imported rice has weakened the agricultural sector chronically. The lack of resources to invest in technology and infrastructure makes the sector very labour intensive. Furthermore, there is a general increase in fertilizers and transportation costs. The weakening of the sector made many peasants decide to abandon agricultural life and look for another future. This increased the number of people living in the slums of Port-au-Prince and of emigrants who went to the Dominican Republic or the US in search of a better life.

Another factor that destabilised the agricultural sector in Haiti, is the distribution of free food as part of food aid programmes. The distribution of free food happened without a social-economic analysis on the effects of the food aid programmes on the Haitian peasants. Furthermore, the

Haitian government was not involved in the distribution schemes. An effect of the free distribution was that peasants could not sell their rice anymore because people were fed for free. In some areas the free food programmes were highly necessary, but in other areas, where a lot of peasants live, the food aid destabilised the agricultural sector because peasants could not sell their products or not sell it at a proper price that would cover their production costs. As a result the Haitian rice producer could not earn a decent income from his hard labour. This shows that a badly organised food aid programme leads to reduced local production. Moreover, it eventually causes a mindset in which people rely more and more on aid.

Due to the free rice and the rice sold for very low prices, the liberalisation process has caused an increase in the consumption of rice. This is, in the short run, positive for a hungry population as the Haitian. But in the long run, the liberalisation contributes to a chronic food insecurity that is mainly benefiting the US and the Haitian elite, who control the import market. The liberalisation policies made the revenues for Haitian peasants less and contributed to a massive loss of employment in the agricultural sector. This drives the unemployed and impoverished population towards the city, adding to both personal as socio-economic insecurity and to a rise in social delinquency.

In conclusion, the liberalisation policies are in the long run not positive for the Haitian population. Local production now only represents 50% of Haitian consumption. Haiti has thus lost its capacity to provide food for its own population. Moreover, it has lost its capacity to organise its economic sector, it has lost a major source of revenues to Haitian inhabitants, and it has lost tariffs revenue that could have funded investments in the agricultural sector. Haiti gave away its autonomy and thus its sovereignty to importers, aid agencies and US producers. Being dependent on others to provide one's basic needs, is to lose one's identity and one's freedom.



Photo: Women News Network

Making a killing from hunger?

As part from the convergence of transnationals in seed, fertiliser and pesticide markets, there has been enormous growth in the last number of years in the trading of "food futures". Cargill, the world's largest trader of "agricultural commodities" saw profits rise 87% in 2008 – just as the world was going through a crisis in food prices.

Current proposals of the EU Commission to "solve" the current crisis in milk prices in Europe centre around the establishment of a "futures market" for milk – allowing speculation and market-based systems to control the livelihoods of European peasants.

With the collapse of the financial markets last year, traders quickly began to shift trillions of dollars from now unstable mortgages to food and raw materials markets – speculation on "commodities" which pushed the number of hungry people in the world over the 1 billion mark by last November. The control these organisations hold over the world's food supply – and the fact that their focus is on profit, and not on feeding people – make them some of the guiltiest players in the global food system.

MOBILISING WOMEN FLOWER WORKERS IN COLOMBIA

By *Omaira Páez Sepúlveda, Cactus Corporation*

Colombia is the second largest exporter of flowers after Holland. There are around 200,000 people employed by the flower industry, many in La Sabana, just outside the Colombian capital city Bogotá, a major flower-producing region. Two-thirds of the flower workers are women, the majority of whom are lone parents. Discrimination against women is common throughout the flower industry. Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable: Most companies insist on pregnancy tests, sack women without due process because of pregnancy, require the same productivity from pregnant women as from other workers and subject women to psychological abuse. In addition, flower workers, and other women workers, have to put up with demanding workloads in precarious working conditions while still being responsible for the “double-shift”—i.e., household tasks and the care of children and older people, care that neither the employers nor the state is willing to take on.

While the expanding flower industry may lead to job creation, women continue to be employed in the lowest position of the supply chain. Another issue is the clash between the dynamics of competition in the international marketplace, which is based on lowering the costs of production and driving prices down, and workers’ human rights. Cactus Corporation, a Colombian NGO that addresses issues related to the production and commercialization of fresh cut flowers for export, has observed a slow deterioration of workers’ economic and social rights in the flower industry. For example, labour costs are lowered through the elimination of benefits, such as overtime pay for Sunday work and extra hours. Some companies are paying salaries that are lower than the minimum wage; they do this by using sub-contractors or temporary agencies that do not pay the workers’ social security or other social contributions.

In addition, there has been a rise in productivity through increased workloads. In the 1970s, each worker was expected to tend an average of eight flower beds within each greenhouse per day; in the 1980s, it rose to 24 beds and in the 1990s, it was 42. Nowadays, each worker is expected to tend 60 flower beds or more for the same salary and in the same number of working hours. As a result, many flower workers suffer chronic health problems.

Only 6 out of the 600 flower companies in Colombia allow the operation of independent trade unions.

The Flower Industry, Free Trade Agreements and Food Sovereignty

Cactus believes that the flower industry in Colombia must be considered within the wider picture of Colombia’s development model, and in particular within its relationship with the United States. Not only are the inequities in the employer-worker relationship enormous, and the impact of industrial flower cultivation on the environment extremely harmful, but the focus on export of cut flowers is having a huge impact on Colombia’s own food production (food sovereignty). Trade with the United States is vitally important to Colombia’s economy: In 2005, 39% of Colombia’s exports went to the United States, and 29% of Colombia’s imports were supplied by the United States. Colombia’s trading relations with the United States are governed by a series of “free trade agreements”: The free trade agreements allow for non-traditional agricultural goods, such as flowers, to be exported more freely from Colombia to the United States and this has encouraged the expansion of cut-flower production in the region. But the increase in flower production has taken place in parallel to a decrease in food production.



Photo: Comel Capa

The current economic model disadvantages traditional agriculture in favour of goods aimed at the export market.

This is because the current economic model disadvantages traditional agriculture in favour of goods aimed at the export market. The free trade agreements with the United States oblige Colombia to reduce its import taxes in order to allow more U.S.-produced agricultural goods into the country. The U.S. government has a policy of subsidising agriculture; agricultural subsidies lower the costs of production so that goods can be sold more cheaply. Colombian farmers who cultivate grains and livestock for local markets are unable to compete with these cheaper subsidised U.S.-imported goods, and so their livelihoods are endangered. This raises concerns about food security (the availability of food and one's access to it) and food sovereignty (the right of peoples to define their own food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries systems, in contrast to having food largely subject to international market forces). Based on our consultations with people in the region, Cactus believes that the continued emphasis on flower production in Colombia must be called into question.

Cactus's Vision for Development and Human Rights

Cactus concentrates its efforts and its activities on promoting processes whereby citizens can become involved and participate meaningfully in social movements and at the political level. This means they can take action and participate in developing their own visions of sustainable human development. Cactus aims to empower those who have traditionally been excluded and had no voice in decision making—in particular, young people and women. It is critically important that awareness is raised, at the international level, about the abuses of women's human rights in the flower industry and of the environmental impacts of the industry. In this way, the voices of women in the North can support those of women in the South so that the current exploitative model of production is replaced with a just and equitable model constructed with the participation of the women and men who live in the flower-producing regions.

Community Promoters of Women's Human Rights

Cactus aims to inform and build the capacity of women in the municipalities of La Sabana. This entails examining the links between women, work and the economy. Our goal is for women to participate in the political arena and take leadership roles in proposing policy changes—to be active in the decision making, control and management of local resources. Cactus also conducts participatory research, analysing the labour rights and working conditions of the women in the region, and compiles evidence of violations of workers' rights, particularly the rights of women in the flower industry. We are currently advocating the idea of Community Promoters of Women's Human Rights—that is, women leaders in the flower-producing areas who, after training in labour rights, can give guidance on legal issues to other women workers in the area. Through training courses in relation to public policy, legal issues and accountability, Cactus aims to develop the capacity of the women of La Sabana de Bogotá to engage in lobbying and advocacy in order to promote and defend their economic, social, cultural and environmental human rights.

Solidarity with Flower Workers—To Buy or Not to Buy?

Seventy percent of all annual earnings from the global flower industry are generated from St. Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. It is ironic that the flowers sent on these days represent love, respect and consideration for women in European countries and in the United States, yet they are produced by women who work in appalling conditions. It is time that the women flower workers in Colombia get the same consideration, respect and affection that are felt by the people who give and receive these flowers.

The flower workers do not want consumers in Ireland to stop buying the flowers because they need this source of work. But Irish consumers can take other actions. For example, they can pressure supermarkets and raise awareness with other consumers

so that they demand that the producers respect the flower workers' labour rights.

To focus attention on the situation of the women who work in the flower industry, Cactus and other local, national, and international organisations have renamed February 14th as the International Day of Flower Workers. In this way, on Valentine's Day, the world not only speaks of flowers and bouquets, but also of the faces and realities of the workers that make the industry possible.

Omaira Páez Sepúlveda is a lawyer with Cactus Corporation, www.cactus.org.co.

Cactus aims to empower those who have traditionally been excluded and had no voice in decision making.

BIOFUELS AND THE FOOD CRISIS

By Camila Moreno, Terra de Direitos

How do bio-fuels affect the food crisis?

Bio-fuels were renamed agrofuels by social movements during the World Food Summit held in Mali in February 2007. This summit was organised on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the launch of the concept of Food Sovereignty. “Agrofuels” is a term which better highlights the intrinsic link between the so-called “green fuels” and the corporate agribusiness system worldwide. Basically the production of agrofuels depends on the same monocultural industrial agriculture model that has been for the last 50 years the main cause of deforestation, soil and water contamination by agrochemicals and pesticides, the erosion of biodiversity and the loss of traditional knowledge associated with diversified local food systems.

Agrofuel production as a new driving force competing for land and water greatly increases the risk of violation of land rights in the South. The fundamental problem with agrofuels is that they require fertile, arable land and water to feed cars not people, in a context where world hunger affects over 1 billion people. It has been calculated that filling the tank of a SUV requires enough corn to feed a family of four for a year.

This agrofuel-inspired financial speculation caused the prices of staple foods to skyrocket and was the main cause of the widespread “food crisis” in 2008, with riots and social unrest in many countries. An early chapter of this crisis took place from December 2006 to January 2007 in Mexico, dubbed the “tortilla crisis”. When the price of corn, a staple food in this country, where the vast majority of the population consumes as much as 400 grams of corn flour a day, increased 400%. Mexico the world centre of corn cultivation, is currently dependent on US corn imports due to the effects of the FTAA (Free Trade American Agreement); as the US diverted its corn production to domestic ethanol production, Mexican imports disappeared and speculation and hunger were widespread.

Competition by agrofuels for arable land is also considered to be the main reason for “land grab”. Especially in the tropics, a recent trend is

the buying of land by countries, companies, investment funds and private investors in southern countries. The competition for land, as an emerging investment asset sought after by powerful actors, undermines local struggles for land reform. Moreover, it undermines access to land, a structural condition necessary to realise food sovereignty. Countries like Colombia and Indonesia have witnessed the increased presence of paramilitary groups evicting the local population in order to secure land for plantations.

New fuels based on the use of corn, soya and palm oil for fuel do not create new markets. Instead, the use of these crops to produce energy consolidates and concentrates power, especially the alliance of agribusiness and corporate energy sectors.

As well, agrofuel production leads to the increased use of GMOs and the related monoculture based, agrochemical model leads to more patents on seeds, more privatisation of the means of productions of agriculture and the erosion of peasant rights.

Are bio-fuels a green alternative?

Small scale agrofuel production of native non-GMO crops as part of diversified sustainable agriculture for local consumption could be part of a strategy for people’s food and energy sovereignty. However, the dominant model of agrofuels of its nature concentrates power in the hands of existing elites and is designed to supply the energy needs of the industrialised countries of the North. Therefore, large scale industrial monoculture is necessarily the mainstay of the dominant agrofuel paradigm. Although agrofuels are aggressively promoted as a green alternative to fossil fuels, agrofuels are in fact a false solution to climate change. The main argument is that, if one reviews the full energy equation and the full life cycle analysis of agrofuels, it immediately becomes apparent that more fossil fuels are consumed in



Illustration: Carlson www.theroadtothehorizon.org

the production and distribution of agrofuels than the emissions that agrofuels purport to reduce. Rather than being a tool for achieving carbon neutrality, agrofuels can actually result in increased emissions.

Furthermore, the agrofuels model does not propose a reduction of GHG emissions but instead a change in the source of the supply. In this regard, it avoids the real solution to climate change which is to drastically reduce emissions and it encourages the growth in demand for cars and fuel. The underlying paradigm of replacing the entire petrochemical industry (fuels, plastics, agro-chemicals) with a biomass based energy matrix. Brazil is the country that has advanced most in the transition from petrochemical to ethano-chemical. Risky and dangerous experimental technologies are being launched as part of this transition including synthetic biology. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that this transition is driven by the same multinational corporations that imposed the “green revolution” which undermined food sovereignty and social and cultural structures and that ensure our continued reliance on fossil fuels.

What’s the solution to the fuel crisis and the food crisis then?

The current dominant agro-alimentary system is 100% fossil-fuel dependent for energy and inputs (fertilisers, agrottoxins, heavy machinery, transportation, processing, distribution, consumption,) It is this system that needs to be totally transformed by reverting to agro-ecological sustainable food production and consumption with democratic decision making a.k.a. food sovereignty based on local and traditional food cultures and agro-biodiversity.

COLOMBIA: AN EXAMPLE OF AN UNSUSTAINABLE MODEL

By Diego Alejandro Cardona

Events in Colombia concerning the production of agrofuels are sufficiently clear to make us realise that the proposed model is unsustainable and actually makes the food crisis more acute without providing any real alternative to the energy crisis. This is not a transition towards a new energy model but rather a continuation of the exploitative and acquisitive model.

The government of Colombia continually refers to its intention of increasing the production of agrofuels in the country and wants to have 3 million hectares solely used for their production, increasing by a factor of eight the daily production of ethanol from sugar cane, which currently stands at 1,050,000 litres – with the express aim of complying with the ruling requiring a mixture of 85% ethanol in new vehicles from 2012 onwards.

This decision is being imposed in spite of the serious impact this model of biofuels will have in the country. In environmental terms, this expansion of monoculture continues, in spite of deforestation and/or environmental destruction, specifically in the case of palm oil in the Pacific region, where previous deforestation of the humid tropical forests continues, while it is planned to expand production to a further one million hectares in the Orinoco region, an extremely sensitive environmental region. Here existing monoculture has caused enormous damage to hydrological cycles.

As regards cane sugar, current cultivation is concentrated in the Valley of the River Cauca, where more than 450,000 hectares are under cultivation, resulting in soil degradation, alterations to the water table, contamination of riverbeds and atmospheric pollution. Now that almost all available land in the aforementioned region is being cultivated, the monoculture of sugar cane is spreading to the Orinoco

region, where many companies producing sugar and ethanol already have plantations and are building factories.

Ownership of the land is at the root of this concentration of monoculture and the land is procured by the use of violence. This leads to the intimidation of the inhabitants in the selected areas, assassinations and other violations of human rights. People are forced to leave their lands and move to other parts of the country, after which the lands are used solely for the production of palm oil. A concrete example of this practice is the region of Atrato in the basin of the rivers Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó. Communities of African descent, natives and peasants are the main victims of these violations.

These practices mean that local communities lose both their means of sustenance and also jobs and hence any possibility of food security from local production and also the ability to meet their needs from their own lands.

The violation of human rights is a practice which never ceases in the various regions where the cultivation of one crop only for agrofuels takes place, a violation linked to the presence of paramilitary groups, who facilitate economic control over the regions.

Given the conditions already described, it is impossible to say that the production of agrofuels is sustainable or that it is a solution to the energy crisis. Neither can one say that it is just from a societal and environmental perspective. As long as human and environmental rights are being violated in the occupied areas, local communities will continue to be displaced and jobs wiped out, so that the possibility of a sustainable life for millions of people with sovereignty over their own food disappears.



Photo: Sinaltrainal

People are forced to leave their lands and move to other parts of the country

INTERVIEW WITH BETY CARIÑO

By Miren-Maialen Samper

Alberta (Bety) Cariño is a Mixteca human rights activist working for CACTUS (Centre for Community Support Working Together). CACTUS is a civil society organisation that conducts alternative education projects with farmers and indigenous people in the Sierra mountains of Oaxaca (Mexico). Furthermore, the organisation advocates gender equality issues. Bety has been playing an active role in The National Campaign “Sin Maiz no hay País” [There is no country without corn]. Bety’s community runs an Agrarian School called Ricardo Flores Magón. The mission of the school is to recover traditional and autonomous food systems.

How is free trade affecting the capacity of indigenous communities to feed themselves?

The free trade directly affects the lives of the indigenous communities in Southern Mexico. The launch of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) ruined for a large part the local food production. The local farmers can’t compete with the very low prices of import products that are highly subsidised. Another problem related to free trade refers to the case of Genetically Modified products (GMOs). Our farming communities are thousands years old. It took more than ten thousand years of local acculturation and acclimatization. The introduction of GMOs into the environment causes the loss of the culture of corn. We are made of corn, the basis of our food is corn. The corn is the symbol of our country, it is central to our existence, to our indigenous heritage and it’s grown to feed our people. Without corn there is no Mexico. That’s why it is very important that we keep food sovereignty. We plant corn for the well-being of the communities, if we don’t cultivate corn, we have no life.



Photo: LASC

What is the impact of the food crisis on women in your community?

The first effect of the food crisis is in the basic basket of food. In our communities the women are historically responsible for bringing the food to the table and finding out what we have to eat on a daily basis. If food prices go up, poverty goes up because we can’t manage to buy products for our families. This translates into hunger.

What is the impact of the food crisis on the indigenous/ancestral communities?

We currently have a problem of “migration” to the US. Many of the indigenous people from our region have started to migrate to the US in search of work. This problem started in the nineteen forties. We are now taking care of our families. Because when our husbands emigrated to the US. We have always managed to resist to the crisis, and to resist to the culture of consumerism, to resist capitalism.

What are the women doing to tackle the food crisis?

We are currently trying to battle the crisis and move forward, towards food sovereignty, by growing food in our courtyards, rescuing our local products, with barter (exchanging corn for beans and other products) and techniques for the reuse of rain water. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically

sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. We are sowing seeds on a daily basis, we are sowing the seeds of the future. Autonomy is the cornerstone of our Mixteca culture, a struggle of indigenous communities.

Our organisation, CACTUS, does extensive work in the area of food sovereignty. We promote sowing for local consumption and local barter, community water management, soil conservation, women’s productive collectives, etc. We organize workshops on herbalism, growing a variety of medicinal herbs. We believe in valuing traditional, local knowledge and the importance of growing your own food.

What would you say to our “compañeros/as” in Ireland after your recent visit?

Irecall the potato crisis in Ireland and how many lives were lost. We are obliged not to repeat again these stories of pain and suffer of our communities. We are building a space of resistance. I encourage the “compañeros/as” in Ireland to continue with their community gardens and dream about alternative worlds.

Sembramos sueños y cosechamos esperanzas (we sow dreams and we reap hope)

Bety Cariño was one of the speakers at Latin American Week 2009. Recently Bety visited Ireland and shared experiences with the members of the South Circular Road Community Gardens.

*More info:
www.sinmaiznohaypais.org
www.southcirculargarden.blogspot.com*

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND DEBT

By Nessa Ní Chasaide, *Debt and Development Ireland*

From Haiti to Senegal to the Philippines, recent years have seen protests on the streets of countries of the Global South as a result of threats to their food sovereignty. These widespread protests show how food – access to it, the price of it, its impact on your local economy, environment, and on your health – is fundamental to people's lives and survival. Yet, as the protests demonstrate – there is a massive, active power struggle between the people of the Global South, and governments, companies and global financial institutions that control decision-making about food.

The food industry is controlled by these powerful actors in a range of important ways such as through rich governments failing to stop climate change which is destroying the lands of farmers in the Global South or through World Trade Organisation trade rules favouring access to food markets of farmers and corporations in the Global North. The debt cancellation movement is particularly concerned about the roles of global financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in denying – often detrimentally – the food rights of people of Southern countries. This is through the damaging practice applied by both institutions of attaching policy conditions to funding agreements with Southern governments. This is done in two ways: firstly, through attaching policy conditions to loan agreements and secondly, through attaching policy conditions to debt cancellation agreements. Often, neither the loans nor the debt cancellation can be activated until the agreed policy conditions are implemented by the Southern government. Many of these policy conditions have destroyed local food economies in the Global South.

Take the deeply unjust example of Haiti. Haiti, as the whole world now knows, is a country that has been manipulated by foreign exploitation for centuries. In 1995 the IMF forced Haiti to cut its rice tariff (a tax on imported goods) from 35% to 3% per cent as part of a loan negotiation. This destroyed the rice industry in Haiti as it had the result that rice imports increased by more than 150% between 1994 and 2003. Three out of every four plates of rice eaten in Haiti now come from the U.S.. As Oxfam highlighted, "This is

good news for Riceland Foods of Arkansas, the biggest rice mill in the world. Riceland's profits jumped by \$123m from 2002 to 2003, thanks, in large part, to a 50% increase in exports, primarily to Haiti and Cuba. But it has devastated farmers in Haiti, where rice-growing areas now have some of the highest levels of malnutrition and poverty'.

Despite these injustices the Irish government does not have a clear policy on the practice of policy conditionality at the World Bank and IMF, even though Ireland is a paying member of both institutions. This is despite the fact that the government has prioritised 'tackling hunger' as its overseas development priority. Ireland is currently writing a new debt policy where it will develop its position on this issue. If you would like to take action to ensure that Ireland supports an end to policy conditionality see: www.debtireland.org

Price Wars – Farming Casualties

Farmers receive an ever-diminishing portion of the price paid by consumers. In Spain for example, the difference between farm gate prices and consumer prices can be staggering – prices in shops can be as much as 1600% more than that paid to farmers.

Supermarkets do much more than put pressure on farmers however. Their position also dictates to a great extent what we can eat – and constructs consumer choice through marketing, offers and other measures. It has been through these mechanisms that supermarkets have given us a taste for "unseasonal" foods – strawberries all year round, and constant supplies of "fresh" fruit and vegetables from thousands of miles away, nicely wrapped in cellophane packets.

The irony of entering an Irish supermarket in September (when apples are traditionally in season) and finding only two or three varieties of apple grown in New Zealand or South Africa (where it would theoretically be Spring) illustrates the kind of imbalances in a food system dictated by the hidden hand of the market. These apples from the southern hemisphere may be "cheaper" in monetary terms, but when we include them in the bigger picture of the global food system they represent a classic anomaly – and their hidden costs (social and environmental) are what urgently need to be addressed.



Photo: Antonio Laforgia

Often, neither the loans nor the debt cancellation can be activated until the agreed policy conditions are implemented by the Southern government. Many of these policy conditions have destroyed local food economies in the Global South.

EUROPEAN FOOD DECLARATION

Towards A Healthy, Sustainable, Fair And Mutually Supportive Common Agriculture And Food Policy

We, the undersigned, believe that the European Union needs to meet the urgent challenges Europe is facing regarding food and agriculture.

After more than a half-century of industrialisation of agriculture and food production, sustainable family farming and local food cultures have been substantially reduced in Europe. Today, our food system is dependent on under-priced fossil fuels, does not recognize the limitations of water and land resources, and supports unhealthy diets high in calories, fat and salt, and low in fruit, vegetables and grains. Looking ahead, rising energy costs, drastic losses in biodiversity, climate change and declining water and land resources threaten the future of food production. At the same time, a growing world population faces the potential dual burden of widespread hunger and chronic diseases due to overconsumption.

We will only be able to address these challenges successfully with a completely different approach to food and agriculture policies and practices. The European Union must recognize and support the crucial role of sustainable family farming in the food supply of the population. All people should have access to healthy, safe, and nutritious food. The ways in which we grow, distribute, prepare and eat food should celebrate Europe's cultural diversity, providing sustenance equitably and sustainably.

The present Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) is currently being debated and is due for change in 2013. After decades of the domination by transnational corporations and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in determining food and agriculture policy, it is time for people in Europe to re-appropriate agriculture and food policy: it is time for food sovereignty. We believe a new Common Food and Agriculture Policy should guarantee and protect citizens' space in the EU and candidate countries and their ability

and right to define their own models of production, distribution and consumption following the principles outlined below.

The new Common Food and Agriculture Policy:

- ⚡ Considers food as a universal human right, not merely a commodity.
- ⚡ Gives priority to growing food and feed for Europe and changes international trade in agricultural products according to principles of equity, social justice and ecological sustainability. The CAP should not harm other countries' food and agriculture systems.
- ⚡ Promotes healthy eating patterns, moving towards plant-based diets and towards a reduced consumption of meat, energy-dense and highly processed foods, and saturated fats, while respecting the regional cultural dietary habits and traditions.
- ⚡ Gives priority to maintaining an agriculture all over Europe that involves numerous farmers producing food and caring for the countryside. That is not achievable without fair and secure farm prices, which should allow a fair income for farmers and agricultural workers, and fair prices for consumers.
- ⚡ Ensures fair, non-discriminatory conditions for farmers and agricultural workers in Central and Eastern Europe, and promotes a fair and equitable access to land.
- ⚡ Respects the local and global environment, protects the finite resources of soil and water, increases biodiversity and respects animal welfare.
- ⚡ Guarantees that agriculture and food production remain free from GMOs and fosters farmers' seeds and the diversity of domestic livestock species, building on local knowledge.
- ⚡ Stops promoting the use and the production of industrial agrofuels and gives priority to the reduction of transport in general.
- ⚡ Ensures transparency along the food chain so that citizens know how their food is produced, where it comes from, what it contains and what is included in the price paid by consumers.
- ⚡ Reduces the concentration of power in the agricultural, food processing and retail sectors and their influence on what is produced and consumed, and promotes food systems that shorten the distance between farmers and consumers.
- ⚡ Encourages the production and consumption of local, seasonal, high quality products reconnecting citizens with their food and food producers.
- ⚡ Devotes resources to teaching children the skills and knowledge required to produce, prepare, and enjoy healthy, nutritious food.



Photo: Juan Gnecco/FreeDigitalPhotos.net

FIRST SIGNATORIES

Europe

European Coordination Via Campesina

Friends of the Earth Europe

European Attac Network

AEFJN (Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network)

A SEED Europe

MIJARC Europe

Seattle to Brussels Network

Food and Water Europe

International

FIAN International

Transnational Institute

AUSTRIA

ÖBV-Via Campesina Austria

Global 2000

Südwind

Dreikönigsaktion

Attac Austria

Slow Food Linz

SOL – Menschen für Solidarität, Ökologie und Lebensstil

Agrarbündnis

FIAN Austria

PRO-GE

ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung

BELGIUM

FUGEA

Movement d'Action Paysanne (MAP)

Vredeseilanden

vzw 't Uilekot

Wervel

VODO

Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken

Attac Vlaanderen

Broederlijk Delen

EVA vzw

Friends of the Earth Vlaanderen en Brussel

Velt

Ecolife

Missionarissen van Steyl (Commissie Gerechtigheid, Vrede en Heelheid van de Schepping)

Bioforum Vlaanderen

Attac Bruxelles-Wallonie

Bevrijde Wereld

DENMARK

Frie Boender

Attac Denmark

FINLAND

Attac Finland

FRANCE

Confédération Paysanne

ATTAC France

CFSI

Peuples Solidaires en association avec ActionAid

GERMANY

Buko Agrarkoordination (D)

Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND)

Agrarbündnis

Bestes Bio - Fair für Alle e.V.

Naturland

Biofair

GREECE

NEAK

IRELAND

Latin American Solidarity Centre

ITALY

Italian Committee for Food Sovereignty (> 200 organisations)

Associazione Rurale Italiana

Attac Italia

Fair

LUXEMBOURG

SOS Faim Luxembourg

THE NETHERLANDS

Afrika-Europa Network

XminY Solidariteitsfonds

NORWAY

Norske bonde-og Smabrukarlag (Norwegian Farmers' and Smallholders' Union)

POLAND

Attac Poland

PORTUGAL

CNA

Plataforma Transgénicos Fora

MARP - Associação Das Mulheres Agricultoras e Rurais Portuguesas

ARP - Aliança para Defesa do Mundo Rural Português

ACOP - Associação de Consumidores de Portugal

SPAIN

Sindicato de obreros del campo, Andalucía

Sindicato Labrego Galego

Federación Estatal de Pastores

Attac Spain

SWEDEN

Attac Sweden

SWITZERLAND

L'autre Syndicat

Plateforme pour une agriculture socialement durable

TURKEY

CIFTCI-SEN- Farmers' Union Confederation: "Union of Tea", "Union of Hazelnut", "Union of Olive", "Union of Grape", "Union of Tobacco", "Union of Sunflower", "Union of Grain", "Union of Animal Breeders"

TARIM OR KAM- SEN / Union of Public

Employees In The Agriculture And Forestry Branch

Initiative for Rural Development (38 organisations)

No To GMOs Platform (75 organisations)

KECI - Urban Initiative in solidarity with Farmers

Ecological Farmers' Association

IMECE Eco-village, Natural Life and Ecological Solutions Association

Turkish Agricultural Economics Association

Bogatepe Environmental Life Association

Bogatepe Development Co-operative

Kuyucuk Village Development Co-operative

Kuyucuk Village Bird Sanctuary Protection and Tourism Development Association

Buyukatma Natural Food Producers' Association

Yolboyu Village Development Co-operative

Bogazkoy Development Co-operative

Slow Food Convivium: Adapazari, Alacati-Cesme, Ankara, Fikir Sahibi Damaklar, Gaziantep, Igdir, Izmir Bardacik, Kars, Samsun, Tire, Urla, Yagmur Boregi.

UNITED KINGDOM

War on Want

UK Platform for Food Sovereignty

Scottish Crofting Federation

One Planet Food Scotland

Munlochy Vigil

World Family

EU TRADE POLICY & FOOD CRISIS

By Alfred Hickey M'Sichili, EU Trade policy officer, Comblámb

The 2007 – 08 food crisis was characterized by a surge in food prices that led to a wave of food protests in more than 60 countries as global wheat prices almost doubled and rice prices almost tripled. In countries with poor governance institutions, more than half of the protests turned violent. There is a global interest in preventing such events from recurring, and the EU could play a constructive role in this respect by rethinking many of its trade policies.

The recent food crisis was caused by the coming together of a number of factors. These included:

- ⚡ Linking food prices to energy prices
- ⚡ Liberalization of agricultural markets
- ⚡ Speculation
- ⚡ Growing middle class in emerging markets
- ⚡ Lack of investment in food production
- ⚡ Rising agricultural production costs

One key factor behind rising food prices has been the greatly increased price of energy. Energy and agricultural prices have become increasingly intertwined, especially as a result of the use of biofuels. Increases in ethanol and biodiesel production, which largely draws on maize and oilseeds, has had a strong effect on agricultural prices and there is now a close correlation with energy prices. With the US and EU subsidizing agriculture-based energy, farmers have massively shifted their cultivation toward crops for biofuel. This has reduced global food stocks. Second, in the last three decades many countries (either by choice or coercion) have undertaken rapid liberalization of their agricultural markets. This has led many governments, especially in developing countries, to abandon their grain reserve programs as these were seen as unfairly distorting the market. This has resulted in a situation in which the world now faces one of the tightest margins in recent history between food reserves and global demand, with global reserves estimated to be at their lowest in 25 years. Third, the relaxation of regulation regarding the amount of funds that non-commercial parties (i.e. investors) could

invest in staple foods has led to a flood of speculative funds into this sector of the commodities market resulting in increased price volatility. Fourth, both increasing population and purchasing power of the middle-class in developing countries has led to increased demand for agricultural produce, thus pushing prices upward. Fifth, investment in agricultural production has not kept up with demand. For example, output declined in Australia owing to severe drought and stagnated in China, the EU, India, and the US. In addition, with most agricultural markets in developing countries liberalized, the dumping of highly subsidized US and EU agricultural products has driven local farmers out of business thus reducing domestic productive capacity in most developing countries. Lastly, rising energy cost has inevitably led to rising agricultural production costs as energy forms a large portion of production costs especially in developed countries. These global forces working in tandem have been behind the recent food crisis.

What the EU can do:

- ⚡ Change biofuel policies: The US & EU should scrap subsidies for biofuel production. Subsidies for biofuels that use agricultural production resources act as an implicit tax on basic food, which constitutes a large share of the expenditures of the poor. In addition, measures should be considered to make more grains and oilseeds currently used for fuel available for food and feed, e.g. by temporarily suspending the use of grains and oilseeds for biofuel production, as well as supporting the development of bioenergy technologies that do not compete with food.
- ⚡ Tighten regulation of commodity markets, especially speculation by non-commercial parties, e.g. by limiting the amount of funds that non-commercial parties can invest in staple foods in commodities market.
- ⚡ Increase investment in agricultural production, especially in poor countries, e.g. by expanding smallholder access to finance, risk management strategies, inputs, services, as well as increased investment in rural infrastructure. The EU should also permit developing countries policy space

to limit the dumping of highly subsidized EU agricultural produce on their domestic markets, and to establish national or regional grain reserve systems to help stabilized prices.

- ⚡ Adopt rights-based trade agricultural policies, i.e. policies that incorporate a right to food for everyone. This for example would prevent the EU from seeking the elimination of agricultural export bans and restrictions (a policy tool employed by many developing countries to shield their populations from rising food prices) in its trade negotiations.

European Peasants and the CAP

There is an urgent need for radical reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in Europe and a reappraisal of the terms of existing WTO agreements. These agreements for example stipulate that the EU must import certain quantities of animal feeds (preventing growth of native feeds in Europe and favouring soy production in the Latin America and the US). Currently much of the money in the CAP budget goes to agri-business interests, towards “modernisation” and industrialisation of production, and proportionately towards “larger” farms. The EU continues to “dump” products in third world countries through the system of export refunds.

Meanwhile “peasants” in Europe are disappearing too. In Europe a farm disappears every three minutes – the CAP needs to reverse this trend so we see more farmers, not less – and focus on feeding Europe as opposed to dumping overseas.

Peasants in Europe say the CAP should end dumping and all subsidies to agri-business, and favour relocalisation of production, focusing on growing local and eating local – and making living as a peasant farmer a reality and not an economic impossibility.

Europe is the world's biggest importer AND exporter of food. Many say this is good as it “provides a market for farmers in the south”. However if those farmers are buying imported food, they are essentially trapped as indentured labour – growing food to feed Europeans and not themselves, their families or their communities. In all regions of the world, basic food should be produced locally where possible – all regions should therefore have the right to protect themselves against low-cost imports that destroy their local markets. Food Sovereignty not only confers rights, it also implies a duty to not damage agricultural or food economies in other regions of the world. The upcoming reform of the CAP in 2013 should base a new Food And Agricultural policy for Europe on Food Sovereignty – not WTO rules, and should value farmers and farming in Europe, and not industrial, intensive overproduction.

OLDER PEOPLE – IMPACT AND SOME SOLUTIONS TO THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIES



Photo: Antonio Olmes, Help Age International

By Adrienne Boyle, Age Action Ireland

In the current food crisis, it is the most vulnerable households that are hardest hit. These include older people, in particular those caring for children. Many older headed households, as a result of limited labour capacity, even outside the current crisis, could not find enough to eat and the current situation has made their position worse. They are now forced to spend an increasing proportion of household income at the expense of other essentials and are often buying less nutritional food.

Many older people living in the global south lack any type of basic income, have no access to income generation activities and hence are one of the groups most vulnerable when prices rocket. 'As small scale producers of food, carers of children and respected members of communities, they are also key to a successful response' (Help Age International

briefing, p6). Older headed households are particularly vulnerable as they are usually poorer than average households; for instance in Malawi poverty rates among older headed households are 5% higher than average. Hunger levels rise as food prices have risen.

However the food crisis provides an unprecedented opportunity to bring about significant change which will transform the lives of the world's poorest people. The international community needs to commit to working with countries in the global south to set up comprehensive social protection schemes which reach all poor people, and in particular the most vulnerable. Social Pension Schemes established by such countries as South Africa and Brazil are excellent examples of how social protection schemes can eliminate chronic poverty and hunger. Since Lesotho introduced a social pension in 2004, the pro-

portion of older people who reported feeling hungry some of the time has fallen from 48% to 19% by 2008. Income security is therefore a critical way to meet food security needs.

80% of the world's people lack any access to basic social security and this leaves them deeply vulnerable to shocks such as the current food crisis. Social pensions for older people provide them with a predictable and reliable income. This enables them and their families, including children, to improve their diet, boost the local economy, support local food production and help offset the effect of high food prices.

Sources:

Briefing: *Facing the Global Food Crises*. Help Age International. August 2008

The Food Crises- Reaching the most vulnerable. Help Age International Website. January 2010.

OLDER PEOPLE IN QUITO, ECUADOR

By Adrienne Boyle, Age Action Ireland.

In this short article we will see how one community of older people in Quito, Ecuador adapted their new situation in the city to improve their own and their family and communities food security. With poverty worsening in Ecuador, with over 50% of the population living off less than \$2 a day, families including older people have moved from the rural areas to the city. The older people have been used to working on rural farms and in an urban setting have felt they can no longer contribute to family finances. They feel isolated and are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

A new project set up by Age Action International (partner of Help Age International) provided 94 older members of the community with both agricultural equipment and training in sustainable agricultural techniques, food preservation and marketing. They have grown tomatoes, lettuces and herbs, built a greenhouse, organised a water tap which collects rain water, and have set up a shop to sell produce to the local community. Profits from the product have been used to finance a community saving fund. This covers a variety of the older people's basic needs, such as emergency medicine,

medical consultations and transport costs.

The overall impact of the scheme has been that whole families have improved security and nutrition, the community kitchens where many older people eat now include fresh vegetables. Older people have also become more involved in their communities through the sale of their produce and this has improved their self esteem and status within their families and the community.

Source:

Help Age International Website. January 2010.

FOOD SECURITY IN IRELAND

Source: LASC Strategic Planning 2009-2012

The true price for our cheap and varied food supply is not being paid by us, but by those small farmers who can't make ends meet.



Photo: Joni Uhlenbeck

Although Ireland is a historically food producing nation, much of what we now produce is alcohol, beef and dairy related produce for export. Conversely all it takes is a walk around any supermarket to see that a huge percentage of what we eat everyday is imported. This process is extremely reliant on both the ability of other countries to produce what we eat and on oil. It takes oil to grow it, be it in the form of pesticides and fertilisers, plastics and other protective covering, or fuel to cultivate and transport it. The average food basket we buy in the supermarket has travelled over two thousand miles to get here.

Ireland is therefore very vulnerable to food supply chain disruption from fossil fuel depletion, possible fossil fuel supply interruption in the case of war or conflict and climate change induced crop failures both here and abroad. Indeed the global food crisis itself may impact sooner or later on our own food consumption. Research undertaken by the Sustainability Institute, a Mayo based organisation committed to the propagation of ideas central to the concept of sustainability, and to providing a forum for appropriate training and instruction, suggests that in the event of a supply chain collapse, it will take at least 5-7 years for Ireland to re-build its food growing capability to a level compatible with feeding its population.

Food prices and Ireland

The control exercised by transnational agribusinesses, and the monopolies enjoyed by large supermarket chains, mean that Irish consumers have felt the effects of price hikes on basic foodstuffs, something of particular concern to the poorest sectors of society. In a 2007 SLÁN survey (Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition), one in 25 respondents (4%) sometimes could not afford to buy enough food for their household. While the percentages in certain places in Latin America are much higher, there are people in our midst who know what it is like to go hungry. Prices may go up further. When a foodstuff like sugar, corn, palm oil (many of its uses are in edible products) or soybean goes up, it has a knock on effect in the price charged to the consumer for any of the foodstuffs in which they are ingredients.

That said, the percentage of our incomes we in Ireland spend on food has decreased since the 1950s and we are now working for less time to put food on our tables. Also, our food prices have not gone up in line with inflation. (Source: AgriAware Information from the charitable Agricultural Awareness Trust). However the true price for our comparatively cheap and varied food supply is not being paid by us, but by those who have been displaced by large export orientated farms in the developing world, the small farmers who no longer can make ends meet, the urban poor in the developing world who cannot pay for their staples as prices rise and the planet itself.

FURTHER READING

Websites

www.viacampesina.org

www.eurovia.org

www.farmlandgrab.org

www.etcgroup.org

www.landaction.org

www.foodfirst.org

www.agroeco.org

www.irishseedsavers.ie

www.fao.org

www.debtireland.org

www.giyireland.com

www.papda.org

www.cactus.org.co

www.foodandwaterwatch.org

Books in LASC's Library and Bookshop

- ⚡ Food Rebellions!, Eric Holt-Giménez and Raj Patal, Pambazuka Press, 2009
- ⚡ The No-Nonsense Guide to World Food, Wayne Roberts, New Internationalist, 2008
- ⚡ Stuffed & Starved, Raj Patel, Portobello Books, 2007
- ⚡ Hungry Planet, Peter Menzel and Faith d'Aluisio, Material World, Books & Ten speed press, 2005
- ⚡ It's all for Sale, James Ridgeway, Duke University Press, 2004
- ⚡ Feeding the Market, John Hellin and Sophie Higman, ITDG Publishing, 2003
- ⚡ From the Rural Heart of Latin America, Ebbe Schrøler, Future Harvest, 2002
- ⚡ Rigged Rules and Double Standards, Oxfam International, 2002
- ⚡ King Sugar, Michelle Harrison, Latin America Bureau, 2001
- ⚡ Genetic Engineering, Food, and our Environment, Luke Anderson, The Lilliput Press, 2000
- ⚡ The Paradox of Plenty, ed. Douglas H. Boucher, Food First Books, 1999
- ⚡ The Flavour of Latin America, Elisabeth Lambert Ortiz, Latin America Bureau, 1998
- ⚡ The Political Economy of Food and Agriculture in the Caribbean, Belal Ahmed and Sultana Afoz, Ian Rande Publishers Limited, 1996
- ⚡ World Hunger: Twelve Myths, Frances Moore Lappé et al., Grove Press, 1988

The Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC), founded in 1996, is an initiative for development education, campaigning solidarity and cultural action, linking Ireland and Latin America

LASC VISION

LASC believes in a Latin America and an Ireland based on equality, social justice and an equal expression of cultural, social, political and economic rights for all human beings.

LASC MISSION

LASC's mission is to expose and challenge the current economic, social and cultural injustices in Latin America and Ireland, through public awareness raising, education, information exchanges and campaigns in solidarity with the people of Latin America who resist oppression and struggle to create a fair and inclusive society.

LASC WORK

Campaigning Solidarity

LASC is primarily a campaigning organisation aimed at organising solidarity in Ireland with the people of Latin America and the Caribbean in their struggle for independent development and control of their resources. With its campaigning work, LASC hopes to bring about changes in the attitudes, policies and practices of individuals and institutions.

LASC is committed to stand together with the popular movements that struggle for social justice. Our actions must be led by them, responding to needs identified by individuals and communities, especially ones that experience poverty and marginalisation.

Development Education

LASC realises that development education is essential for effective campaigning and awareness raising. Through participatory methodologies LASC provides the tools for analysis of the development issues raised, and encourages learners to participate in finding solutions to them, including the possibility of participating in LASC campaigns.

Cultural Action

LASC values cultural diversity and engages in activities and actions which raise real awareness of Latin American cultures. LASC wishes to reflect the true multi-faceted nature of human experience in Latin America and celebrates the expression of the resilience and survival of its peoples.

Join LASC!!

MEMBERSHIP PER CALENDAR YEAR

WAGED €35

UNWAGED €15

Name:

Address

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If you would like to be notified about LASC events please tick the box to subscribe to our weekly electronic bulletin



PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Cheque / Postal Order.** Please send us a crossed cheque payable to the Latin America Solidarity Centre at the address below. Please do not send cash.
- Standing Order.** We would prefer payment by Standing Order as it would give us an indication of future income with which to plan our activities. Also, payment by cheque through the Post has led to loss in the past.

STANDING ORDER FORM

To the manager of (name and address of bank) _____

Please pay LASC, Bank of Ireland, 5 Merrion Row, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2

Account no. 75989044: Branch Sort Code 90-00-84

The sum of (in writing) _____

Annually / quarterly / monthly (please cross off as appropriate) starting on

/ / and thereafter every year / quarter / month (please cross off as appropriate) until further notice debiting my account number (your account number) _____

Your Signature _____ Please return to LASC, 5 Merrion Row, Dublin 2