



Building Sustainable Futures for Farmers Globally

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*The **Building Sustainable Futures for Farmers Globally** campaign asks farm organizations and other civil society groups around the world to sign onto to the following call in support of agriculture, trade and food policies that support a sustainable livelihood for farmers and assure food for all. To add your organization to this call, please email [Patty Kupfer, pkupfer@ruralco.org](mailto:Pkupfer@ruralco.org). For further information, contact us at www.globalfarmer.org.*

Building Sustainable Futures For Farmers Globally: A Call for Action

U.S. agriculture and trade policy has become a lightning rod for criticism of broader U.S. economic policies worldwide, as well as a source of widespread concern among farmers, consumers, and taxpayers in the United States. We must change these existing policies in order to create a food system that supports, rather than undermines, family farmers and farmworkers, and that enables sustainable agriculture and food production to thrive, both in the United States and around the world.

Small to mid-sized farmers both at home and abroad are suffering the adverse effects of an export-oriented agriculture system that has become increasingly dominated by global food corporations. Market deregulation has facilitated growing market concentration in the agriculture and food industries. It has also encouraged costly and unsustainable overproduction and dumping of strategic agricultural commodities onto world markets at prices substantially below the cost of production. This practice, in turn, has resulted in sustained downward pressure on world commodity prices, threatening farmers and farmworkers around the world.

This dumping of agricultural commodities seriously undercuts the ability of small farmers and peasants in developing countries to sell their goods at fair prices in their own domestic markets. U.S. and other developed country farmers are partially buffered from these artificially low prices by direct government subsidy payments. Unfortunately, farmers in developing countries are disproportionately impacted, because their governments cannot afford such expensive direct subsidy payments to farmers. Worse, in trade negotiations developed countries, representing the agenda of the same global food corporations, demand that developing countries dismantle their remaining quotas and tariffs in the name of “market access,” despite the fact that such border controls are the only mechanism through which developing countries can shield their agricultural markets from below-cost imports.

We are now experiencing the widespread impacts of this agricultural crisis all around us as rural communities are coming under severe strain due to low prices. In the United States, commodity overproduction is creating widespread environmental damage and major agribusiness corporations are reaping unfair profits by denying fair prices to farmers, while taxpayers are forced to foot the bill. Meanwhile, small farmers in developing countries, such as

Mexico and Central America, are facing substantial economic pressure as a result of agricultural dumping that force domestic crop prices ever lower. Unable to compete with below-cost imports, many farmers have no choice but to migrate to cities or to the U.S., adding to the wave of immigration that has recently sparked heated debate in the U.S. Congress. Once in the United States, immigrant farmworkers frequently face economic exploitation and unhealthy working conditions.

While inequitable agricultural subsidies are one of the factors that contribute to the crisis in agriculture, the elimination of subsidies in and of itself will not solve the crisis. Indeed, unless new farm policies are first put in place that curtail overproduction and thereby provide fair prices to farmers from the market, eliminating U.S. farm subsidies could in fact harm many smaller-scale family farmers in the United States and lead to further market concentration. As a result, the ***Building Sustainable Futures for Farmers Globally*** campaign advocates a broad platform to address the overproduction and low prices that are harming small farmers in the U.S. and abroad.

We pledge our support for alternative agriculture and trade policies that will provide sustainable livelihoods for farmers in the United States and around the globe, by helping to ensure that global food corporations pay family farmers a fair price for their products in the marketplace and promote socially and environmentally sustainable farming.

We call for U.S. agricultural and trade policies that:

- ***Ensure food sovereignty.*** International agreements should be reached that respect and ensure the right of all countries to achieve food sovereignty by developing their own domestic farm and food policies that respond to the needs of their farmers, consumers and communities. We advocate for access to adequate and nutritious food for all people.
- ***Curtail overproduction, raise low commodity prices and end dumping abroad.*** We support a worldwide ban on dumping and believe that all countries should take immediate steps to develop and implement this ban. In the United States, we support the establishment of a price floor for commodities in conjunction with emergency food, crop acreage and strategic energy reserves that will mitigate food emergencies, insure farmers against crop disasters, ensure energy security and meet environmental stewardship goals. We also call for strengthened antitrust enforcement to reverse current trends towards the concentration of agricultural markets and further industrialization of our food system.
- ***Advance sustainable bioenergy production.*** The production of energy from biomass feedstocks offers the potential to decrease U.S. dependency on oil, while also decreasing dumping of corn and other commodities that hurt developing country producers. We support programs that would promote domestic production of sustainable biomass crops to meet growing demand; foster local ownership of and investment in processing facilities to benefit local economic development; and encourage sustainable agricultural production practices to ensure long-term ecological integrity for future generations of farmers producing biomass energy crops.
- ***Promote healthier food through community-based food systems.*** The next farm bill should promote community-based food systems by supporting policies that reform public procurement programs for public institutions to substantially increase the

purchasing of healthy foods from local farmers. It should ensure that food purchased through public procurement programs meets dietary health guidelines, and that such food does not contain unacceptable levels of antibiotics. It should encourage greater consumption of healthier food by enabling federal nutrition program beneficiaries to purchase food at local farmers markets and other retail food outlets. It should adequately fund school child nutrition programs to implement wellness policies and expand nutritional education. And, it should expand technical assistance and networks to address the needs of underserved neighborhoods.

- ***Diminish inequalities both among and within countries and support small scale, family oriented agriculture.*** Commodity-oriented, industrial agricultural support programs in many countries exclude small-scale, indigenous and minority farmers, especially women. Many of these farmers have also historically been denied land and credit. In addition, the current trend towards exploitative contract farming forces producers to sell at unfair prices and under unfair terms. We support domestic and international programs that serve diverse and sustainable farms and ranches, and that promote ethnic and gender equity and the preservation of rural livelihoods both in the United States and abroad.
- ***Transform U.S. food aid policies to promote more flexible and comprehensive aid to developing countries.*** Rather than requiring that food aid be sourced from U.S. commodities, we support a transition to more flexible cash aid so that food aid can be purchased and delivered at the lowest cost and greatest speed. This would help to prevent the abuse of food aid programs being used as a tool to dump surplus commodities, while enabling local farmers to become economically viable producers of their nations' own food supply. We also support the participation of local governments and civil societies in decision-making on food aid and call for an approach to development assistance that addresses the root causes of food crises.
- ***Respect the rights of immigrants and farmworkers.*** The dumping of agricultural products in developing countries has resulted in the displacement of many small-scale farmers, forcing them to migrate in search of work. In addition to supporting programs that would curtail such dumping, we support comprehensive immigration reform that allows economic migrants a pathway both to citizenship, and a pathway back to farming. In a just food system, farmworkers should have the rights to organize, to receive fair wages, to decent and safe working conditions and to basic labor protections. We support identifying mechanisms in the 2007 Farm Bill to assure that these labor rights and conditions are respected, and that the fundamental civil rights of immigrant workers are protected; and new farmer programs that provide farmworkers with the opportunity to become farmers.

Domestic Endorsements

Action Aid USA, Washington DC

Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, Atlanta, GA

Friends of the Earth US, Washington DC

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minneapolis, MN

National Family Farm Coalition, Washington DC

Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural, Washington DC

Farm & Food Policy Diversity Initiative, Washington DC
National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, Pine Bush, NY
American Corn Growers Association, Washington, DC
Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, Washington, DC
Alliance for Responsible Trade, Washington, DC
Church World Service, Elkhart, IN
Heifer International, Little Rock, AK
RAFI-USA, Pittsboro, NC
NETWORK/A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Washington DC
Agricultural Missions, New York, NY
Grassroots International, Boston, MA
Family Farm Defenders, Madison, WI
World Hunger Year, New York, NY
SHARE Foundation: Building a New El Salvador Today, Washington, DC
Quixote Center/Quest for Peace, Hyattsville, MD
International Labor Rights Fund, Washington DC
Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, Oakland, CA
World Neighbors, Oklahoma City, OK
Food & Water Watch, Washington DC
Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA), Washington, DC
Organization for Competitive Markets, Lincoln, NE
Land Stewardship Project, White Bear Lake, MN
Land Loss Prevention Project, Durham, NC
Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Columbia, MO
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment,
Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition, Minneapolis, MN
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Des Moines, IA
Oakland Institute, Oakland, California
The Second Chance Foundation, New York, NY
Sustainable Agriculture of Louisville, Louisville, KY
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Oklahoma City, OK
Center of Concern, Washington, DC
Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, IN
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries, Cleveland, OH
California Black Farmers and Agriculturalists, Sacramento, CA
Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice, Pleasant Hill, TN
Caney Fork Headwaters Association, Pleasant Hill, TN
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility, United Church of Christ, Pleasant Hill, TN
Corporate Agribusiness Research Project, Everett, Washington
Center for a Livable Future, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD
Columban Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Office, Washington, DC
OhioPIRG, Oberlin College Chapter, Oberlin, OH
Ladies of Charity of Chemung County, Elmira, NY
Church Women United of New York State, NY
Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Corning/Elmira, NY
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office, Washington, DC
Washington Fair Trade Coalition, Seattle, WA
Community Alliance for Global Justice, Seattle, WA
Farmworker Association of Florida, Apopka, FL

International Endorsements

National Farmers Forum, New Delhi, India

Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, Mexico City, Mexico

Instituto Runa de Desarrollo y Estudios sobre Género, Lima, Peru

Small Farmers of Jalapa Cooperative, Jalapa, Nicaragua

Lokoj Institute, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Fiji AgTrade, Suva, Fiji

Observatorio de la Deuda en la Globalización, Cataluña, Spain

Munlochy GM Vigil, Edinburgh, Scotland

Krisoker Shor (Farmers' Voice), Barisal, Bangladesh