



U.S. Farm Bill and the EU Common Agriculture Policy at Crossroads - A Global Dialogue on U.S., Canadian and EU Agriculture policies

Conference Report

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Charles Sumner School, Washington D.C.**

The conference was support by:



Gathering in Washington, D.C. in mid-May 2007, representatives from farm, developmental, environmental and consumer groups in the U.S., EU, and Canada participated in a dialogue on agriculture policies. Joining the dialogue were representatives from farm advocacy groups in Mexico, Brazil and Senegal.

The meeting took place at a moment when reforms of the agriculture policies are under way in the U.S. and EU. In the U.S., a new Farm Bill is under consideration and likely to be decided upon this year. In the EU, a review of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) will start in 2008.

The conference report contains the following elements:

A) Objectives of the meeting

B) Results and conclusions of the meeting

- Impacts of agriculture and trade policies for farmers, consumers and environment in the U.S., Canada and the EU.
- Impacts of current agriculture and trade policies for farmers, consumers and the environment in the Global South (cases of Mexico and Senegal).
- U.S. Farm Bill 2007 – Proposals for Policy Reform.
- European Common Agriculture Policy – Review 2008 – Perspectives and Policy Reform Debates.
- Biofuels – potential positive and negative impacts on agriculture and food security in the U.S., EU and Global South?
- Main challenges and next steps.

C) Appendices (list of participants, final agenda of meeting, biographies of speakers, publications list)

A) Objectives of the meeting

General objectives of the two-day dialogue were to jointly assess the impacts of the respective agriculture policies in North America and Europe, to get insight into current policy debates in these regions and to have a critical discussion on reform proposals. The forum also offered a space to develop ideas of a sustainable future for those around the world who have a direct stake in agriculture and food production.

In particular, the objectives of the transnational dialogue were:

- To gain a better understanding of agriculture policies in the U.S., Canada and EU by sharing experiences and examining impacts on farmers, food workers, consumers and the environment.
- To examine key policy reform proposals in the U.S. Farm Bill and CAP Review by identifying potential problems and challenges with regard to farmers income, food security, consumer concerns (food quality, prices, health and nutrition, etc.) and the environment (biodiversity, water, etc.). A special emphasis was given to the emerging issue of biofuels.
- To define key challenges and objectives that should guide agriculture and food policies. These included global competition, export orientation, access to safe and healthy food, viable farm incomes and sustainable farm practices.
- To explore issues and themes that would develop an agenda of joint work and collaboration among North American, European and Southern groups working to effect positive change on national agriculture and trade policies.

When the meeting took place in mid-May Congress had yet to consider the 2007 Farm Bill. In late July, the House of Representatives approved its version of the Farm Bill. In the Fall, the Senate will write its version of the Farm Bill. Then, representatives from the House and Senate will meet to merge the two versions of the Farm Bill into one, to again be voted on by both legislative bodies and ultimately submitted to the President for signature. We include a brief overview and general assessment of the House Farm Bill at the end of the U.S. Farm Bill section.

B) Results and conclusions of the meeting

Impacts of agriculture and trade policies for farmers, consumers and environment in the U.S., Canada and the EU

Participants agreed that current agriculture and trade policies in the U.S., Canada and the EU are functioning within a void. They do not represent the interests of the average farmer, consumer or environmentalist. Moreover, they are unsustainable and costly. During past decades, governments have supported deregulation in agriculture to further growth and increase exports. Key aspects of this have included the abolition of supply management regulations, such as stable farm gate prices, protective tariffs, and import quotas. In the U.S. key measures were abolished with the 1996 Farm Bill (e.g. production controls and price floors). The reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in the past decade have moved in the same direction.

The general assessment was that in all three countries, deregulation has led to a deep crisis in farm prices and a decline of the number of family farmers. Meanwhile, the food processing industry has increased its wealth and market power. Industrialization and monoculture of agriculture, concentration of land and production, and corporate concentration of the food system have further advanced. This has had a negative impact in a variety of areas including the environment, food safety and food quality, health, employment and rural development. Consumers at large have not benefited from these developments. On the one hand, decreasing commodity prices have only partly been passed on to them. On the other hand, low commodity prices, in conjunction with corporate control of the grain market and increasing prices of fruits and vegetables, has led to an unprecedented health crisis (with more people suffering from obesity and related diseases). Unhealthy food products containing fat and sugar are increasingly consumed. To date, the shift to industrialized agriculture and food production has been more intense in the U.S. and Canada than in the EU. Geographic conditions (available land), different agriculture and food traditions as well as regulatory frameworks are among the reasons for this.

Participants identified market concentration and the increasing control of agribusiness in food and agriculture as the most important problems today for farmers, consumers and the environment.

In this sense, a new vision for agriculture and trade policies in these countries/regions is needed, one that supports a decent income for farmers and farm workers, the production of healthy food, sustainable agriculture and a healthy environment – both at home and abroad.

Participants affirmed that it is not necessary to “reinvent” the wheel. A variety of policy instruments including price controls, grain reserves, state marketing boards, cooperatives, etc. need to be reviewed and re-introduced as a means to achieve this vision. Many of these domestic policy instruments have been implemented in the past and have shown

positive results. It is important to recognize what policies have worked in what regions and to identify region-specific solutions.¹

Impacts of current agriculture and trade policies for farmers, consumers and the environment in the Global South (cases of Mexico and Senegal)

Farmers in the South, who comprise the majority of workers in many countries, have been hurt severely by U.S. and EU farm policies.

Structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have played a key role in pressuring countries to deregulate and open agriculture markets in the Global South. Trade liberalization has undercut national production and has allowed the U.S. and the EU to dump their overproduced commodities into many of these countries. As a result farmers have lost access to their own markets due to cheap imports. They have experienced a drop in income as commodity prices have gradually declined and commodity agreements aimed at stabilizing prices (e.g. coffee, cocoa, sugar etc.) were abolished. Failed policies in many countries have resulted in revenue loss, an increase in poverty, food insecurity, and a rural exodus among others. Many developing countries have become food dependent as the domestic productive capacity of peasants and family farmers has dropped. The increased privatization of land in support of unsustainable production methods as well as increased monoculture production has worsened biodiversity and increased environmental degradation.

Agribusiness interests increasingly control different aspects of the food and agriculture production chain. Supermarkets have emerged as a key factor in this dynamic, particularly in the South where they are rapidly expanding. The recent food price crisis in Mexico (Tortilla crisis), provides a clear example of the power of a few transnational corporations (TNCs) and domestic food monopolies to control and manipulate grain prices that hurt not only farmers but also the consumer. Participants from the Global South reiterated that agriculture and trade policies in their countries and regions should be oriented towards building productivity for domestic and regional markets. Instruments and mechanisms to ensure and protect access to their own markets are needed rather than a continuation of failed trade policies. Moreover, internationally traded commodity regulation is needed to ensure a stable and cost covering price.

¹ For example, historically price support policies coupled with grain reserves and mandated conservation plans have contributed to diversified agriculture in the U.S. Subsidies linked to ecological farming and rural development, have contributed to sustainable agriculture production methods in the EU. Collective marketing tools (e.g. provincial or national marketing boards, coops etc.) have also been utilized to counter market concentration.

U.S. Farm Bill 2007 – Proposals for Policy Reform

Every five to seven years, agriculture policies are evaluated and reauthorized through the U.S. Farm Bill. The last bill was passed in 2002. Currently a new Farm Bill is about to be passed in the U.S. Congress. It will most likely be voted on by the end of 2007. While the U.S. Farm Bill historically aimed at addressing market distortions inherent in agriculture, reforms of the last decades subsequently abolished supply management measures targeted to ensure a stable and remunerative income for farmers. The 1996 “Freedom to Farm” Bill marked a special moment, with many supply management policy measures being eviscerated. Today the U.S. government simply spends billions to make up some of the difference between what food processors pay and what farmers need to stay economically viable.

There is a growing awareness in the U.S. that the Farm Bill is not just about farmers, but also impacts rural communities, the environment, health, hunger and even immigration. As such, new constituencies are taking an interest in its impacts and direction. There is an opportunity in the U.S. for awareness-building and advocacy around a reform of U.S. agriculture and trade policy that is now part of the national Farm Bill debate. Several coalitions have been built in recent years to jointly work towards a new Farm Bill addressing farmers, consumers and the environment in the U.S. and abroad, such as “Building Sustainable Futures for Farmers Globally.”²

Key issues in the current Farm Bill debate include: competition, energy, conservation, local food procurement, food stamps, health, and mandatory labeling.

Competition

Increased market concentration, both vertically along the same sector and horizontally along different sectors, has deeply affected U.S. farmers and consumers. Fewer and fewer companies sell the inputs farmers need and buy the crops farmers produce. The price squeeze has meant that farmers’ costs have gone up, while prices they receive have steadily declined. In early 2007 organizations from different backgrounds wrote Congress asking that they address market concentration in agriculture through a new Competition Title, which would strengthen antitrust enforcement, provide fairness in contracts and improve price transparency.

Energy

Stunning growth in the ethanol market poses both threats and opportunities. The current Farm Bill will determine who will be the winners and losers in the fast growing bioenergy markets. If a proper regulatory framework in the 2007 Farm Bill around this issue could be achieved, many groups consider that it could provide prosperity to farmers and rural communities while safeguarding soil, water and biodiversity both in the United States and abroad. Furthermore domestic demand for bio-energy is seen as a means to

² See also www.globalfarmers.org.

address the dumping of U.S. commodities on the global market and as a way to increase income for farmers.

Health

The public health community is stepping into the Farm Bill debate with recommendations for improving access to healthier food. The current obesity crisis has triggered the involvement of this community into the Farm Bill debate. While sugars and fats have become cheaper, prices for healthier choices like fruits and vegetables have steadily increased. U.S. farm policy sets a number of disincentives for health food, including a lack of support for local food systems and incentives for grain-fed over healthier grassfed livestock. Also food safety is an imminent issue in the U.S. as unsatisfactory regulatory policies have contributed to poor food standards policies and implementation measures. Many groups are calling for increased regulation and labeling. There is also congressional support for local food initiatives.

Conservation

From programs that take land out of production to providing incentives for farmers to implement good environmental practices, the Farm Bill has become one of the most important policy vehicles for protecting soil and water quality. The Conservation Reserve Program currently takes about 35 million acres of sensitive land out of production and requires the landowner to implement specific conservation practices. The 2007 Farm Bill will consider whether to expand or reduce support for this and other conservation-related programs.

U.S. Farm Bill Update as of September 2007

On July 27, the House of Representatives passed its version of the 2007 Farm Bill. In October, the Senate is expected to write its version of the Farm Bill. Then, representatives from the House and Senate will meet to combine the two versions of the Farm Bill into one final bill to be voted on again by both bodies, and if approved sent to the White House for signature. The President has the option of signing the legislation or vetoing it, which occurs very rarely. If it is vetoed, the House and Senate can override the President's veto with a two-thirds majority vote – also very difficult given the relative balance between Democrats and Republicans in both the House and Senate.

The House version of the Farm Bill includes the same basic farm commodity programs as the 2002 Farm Bill, but also includes some additions. One of the major issues for both the House and Senate is budgetary limits. They are trying to stay within tight budget constraints set by the White House. The other major factor is high commodity prices for most major commodity crops due to increased domestic demand for ethanol. Several of the U.S. farm subsidy programs are linked to market prices – if prices dip below the government's set price, then subsidies kick in. When market prices are high, subsidy levels are low. Farm subsidies under the 2002 Farm Bill were well below projections. Because commodity prices for most crops are projected to be high – government payments in the 2007 Farm Bill are projected to be even lower than the 2002 Farm Bill.

The savings from these subsidies have been put into a number of different programs in the House Bill.

The Energy Title of the House Farm Bill has been increased, and will promote biofuel development, including efforts to shift away from a corn-based system to a cellulosic system. And there are provisions to support community-ownership of biofuel facilities. There is also additional money to support farmers growing fruits and vegetables. The House Conservation Title does not include any money for one of the strongest environmental programs – the Conservation Security Program (CSP) – which supports farmers growing in a sustainable manner. It is expected that the Senate will include money for CSP in its Farm Bill.

Another new area of discussion for the House and Senate has been an effort to shift countercyclical payments (based on market prices) to countercyclical revenue assurance (based on a farmers' overall revenue). Countercyclical payments have been determined to be trade-distorting under WTO rules. The Bush Administration believes that tying the payments to revenue, rather than market prices, will make them WTO-legal. The House Bill gives farmers the option to sign up for either program, but not both. The Senate Agriculture Chair, Tom Harkin, is expected to make countercyclical revenue assurance a central part of his commodity proposal, although such a proposal will face much opposition.

Another contentious issue related to subsidies involves efforts to tighten the caps on how much farmers can receive. The House Bill closes some loopholes and places the maximum cap at \$1 million per farm. The White House and Senate Agriculture Chair Harkin would like to see it lowered to \$250,000.

Finally, the House Farm Bill relies deeply on high commodity prices continuing into the future. If commodity prices drop, government payments could soar just as they have in past.

European Common Agriculture Policy – Review 2008 – Perspectives and Policy Reform Debates

The European Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), was last reformed in 2003. EU member states agreed to begin a full review of the 2003 CAP starting in 2008. EU participants emphasized that CAP reforms over the past 15 years be aimed at complying with the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), while at the same time not jeopardizing the interests of large agricultural producers and the food industry in Europe. While the CAP initially aimed at addressing economic and social interests of farmers and consumers, its main policy objective now is to achieve global competitiveness of European agriculture.

The review, also referred to as the “Health Check,” will precede the next CAP reform to be finalized in 2013. The next EU budget, to be agreed upon by member states in 2010, will be a major milestone for the CAP reform.³ It is expected that due to the lack of social, environmental and international legitimacy of the current CAP, a radical questioning of the CAP will take place during the debate around the next EU budget.

Additionally, the level of agricultural support and market regulation as well as the scope of the CAP will be reviewed. Some are advocating that the CAP be replaced by national rural development policies that connect to the EU framework but remain separate.

Currently, one major contention relates to regulation of the European milk sector. The European Commission seeks to abolish milk quotas by 2015. To date, milk production is still characterized by small production units all over Europe. More than one million people work in the EU dairy sector, including processing. Many milk farmers are concerned that lifting the quotas to increase competition will destroy the livelihoods of small producers and consolidate corporate control of this industry. The European milk industry is almost completely protected against exports from non-European countries; only a few countries, such as New Zealand, can export dairy products into the EC on the basis of specific bilateral trade agreements. Family farmers strongly advocate a milk policy for peasant dairy farms in the North and the South, protects sources of income in rural areas, and guarantees milk production while securing sustainable use of natural resources and animal welfare. Keeping market regulation for the dairy sector and lowering milk quotas is one key objective of farmers working in this sector.

The outcome of this political fight over what kind of regulation for the milk sector will have a major influence on the future of supply side market regulations within the CAP.

With a view to mobilize around the next CAP reform, European representatives indicated several of the challenges they face. Given the political and institutional realities of the EU – out of its 27 current member states, 9 joined the Union in 2004, two at the beginning of this year, a common reflection among different civil society groups (farmers, consumers, environmental groups etc.) across the member states is greatly needed to better understand the different realities and interests in the different countries and to work out joint proposals and alternatives. However for historical reasons, civil society is organized differently in each of the 27 member states. In the newer member states strong civil society structures are still missing or are in their early stages of development. Creating a European debate and dynamic with groups coming from 27 different political cultures, historical experiences and almost the same amount of different languages (few people from rural areas speak foreign languages), is a further considerable challenge. Funds and resources to support European coalition building are still limited.

³ In the budget discussion, EU member states will agree upon how large to make their contribution to the EU and how this money will be used. Currently, the EU budget reins in 1% of GDP from each of the EU member states. Agriculture is the most “integrated policy” in the EU.

Food (health food, fair traded food etc.) is increasingly used as the entry point for advocacy and alliance building work on agriculture policy. In addition, current debates around climate change provide opportunities to explore the links between free trade and global warming, and to promote policy alternatives for agriculture and trade in support of local food economies.

Biofuels – potential positive and negative impacts on agriculture and food security in the U.S., EU and Global South?

With increased oil prices and the potential of reaching “peak oil” soon, biofuels⁴ have emerged in industrialized countries as a proposed alternative to fossil fuels. According to the country or region, the potential and impact around production and trade in biofuels is very differently interpreted. The discussion at the seminar provided a brief overview of these differences. Biofuels have been touted as an alternative to fossil fuels and part of a solution to mitigate oil dependency as well as climate change. They have also been sold as an opportunity for developing countries to develop new projects that will contribute to a large inflow of needed resources to rural landscapes as well as an opportunity to develop domestic energy industries and increase export earnings. Yet many observe that corporations are guiding much of the international investment in this emerging sector. This dynamic has the potential to undermine any benefits for developing countries and their populations. Others point out that liquid fuels have only small – if any - environmental advantages, due to the high energy demands in processing. Rather, biogas and decentralized electricity generation are much more efficient.

Participants agreed that the creation of a global market in biofuels based on the free trade model holds great risk for the world. Developing a model of locally controlled, sustainably produced bio-energy, in which jobs are created and wealth is retained in the local community has the potential to have a positive impact on our social and environmental well-being. Biofuels should be part of a new energy mix that includes other alternative energy sources such as wind, solar and water energy as well as increased energy efficiency in developed countries.

There is still a need to better understand how trends in biofuels production will impact core issues such as price, production, and trade. Part of this analysis is identifying the policies coming from countries in the North in relation to the Global South.

⁴ While developed countries largely use the term “biofuels,” social movements in the South increasingly use the term “agrofuels.” Via Campesina for instance argues that oil is also a product that results from living beings, and hence is also a “bio” fuel. Other groups argue that while “bio” suggests “life” or “sustainability,” the reality of biofuels trends in developing countries for instance does not match this term.

Biofuels in the U.S.

In the U.S., biofuels are considered by many farmers groups, including family farmers, as a means to support sustainable agriculture and renewable energy, provide fair prices to farmers, spur rural development and decrease dumping of commodities on the world market. So far, U.S. demand for ethanol has had the secondary impact of reducing dumping as domestic demand for fuel production has increased.

After years of low commodity prices, the biofuels boom has led to an increase of commodity prices which has led to farmers receiving a fair price for their crops for the first time in decades. Currently biofuels in the U.S. are produced to a large extent based on corn. It is expected that “second generation” cellulosic biofuels will be developed for future use.

Much of the way the Bush administration and Congress is marketing biofuels to the U.S. public is in terms of “energy security” and “energy independence.” This is different rhetoric than that what is being used in the EU, where it is touted as more of a response to global warming.

U.S. corporations are heavily engaged in advocating for a global market for biofuels. This would include abolishing the ethanol import tariff in the U.S., which would open the country to an increase in imports from the South to supply the U.S. market. This policy is hotly debated among civil society groups who are concerned that removing the tariff will damage the potential for a domestic industry.

Biofuels in the EU

In the EU, biofuels in the public debate is promoted as an environmentally cleaner option than fossil fuels. While in the U.S. ethanol production is promoted, in the EU it is more biodiesel. Energy security and independence is rhetoric less used in the public debates.

Overall, farmers in Europe have had a positive response to increasing biofuels production. They have welcomed the price increase that has resulted from an increased demand for biofuels. They are open to diversifying their production to include more energy crops.

Environmental and developmental groups strongly contest the positive impacts of biofuels for Europe and the Global South. They warn that large-scale biofuels production will lead to a loss of biodiversity throughout Europe and will negatively impact sustainable development in the South in order to supply European demand.

One reason for a more intense debate in Europe about the development impacts of biofuels is linked to the fact, that contrary to the U.S., Europe does not have as much available land. 16 to 18 million hectares of land would be needed if all biofuels stocks were to be grown in the EU, representing about 17% of total arable land. 2.8 million

hectares are currently set aside and a further 3 million hectares of land is not in agricultural use at all. Biofuel targets as set recently at the EU level, cannot be achieved without imports.

Overall, the debate around biofuels is triggering a critique in Europe around an unsustainable model of production and consumption. There is an emerging European voice calling for models that encourage local food and energy production and consumption.

Biofuels in the Global South

The participants from the South expressed a growing concern that a global market in biofuels further encourages monocrop farming, the destruction of forests, increased competition over land used for growing food, inequitable relationships and unfair power dynamics – to name a few. TNCs stand to gain more than farmers due to their market power in agriculture. It is expected that TNCs will advance the use of GMO technology to expand the global biofuels market at the expense of traditional knowledge and biodiversity. It is clear that the move toward a global biofuels market is expanding, that it will be based on production from the South, and that it will lead to an increase in corporate control over natural resources such as water and land.

In the case of **Brazil**, it was reported that Brazilian social movements, trade unions and NGOs across sectors are organizing to challenge corporate expansion of ethanol in the country and to advance an alternative model of locally owned and controlled food and energy production.

Existing ethanol production has had significant social, environmental and political impacts. Production sites are not owned by family farmers, but by large plants with 15,000 to 50,000 hectares of land surface. These production sites are referred to as “green deserts” because they are uninhabitable. Working conditions in some ethanol production sites can be described as modern slavery. Sugar cane production in general has been intrinsically linked with the concentration of land.

Currently, 90 new ethanol production sites are planned to satisfy domestic consumption. Ethanol production has displaced food production in Brazil – both of family farmers and larger producers (e.g. coffee), leading to the interesting situation that even some of the larger producers oppose the ethanol expansion plans. More ethanol production sites are expected as a consequence of the Bush-Lula Deal on Ethanol signed in March 2007, with the aim to expand ethanol production.

In the **Mesoamerican** region (**Mexico and Central American countries**) the expansion of ethanol and biodiesel production is targeted towards satisfying U.S. demand. Many governments in the region actively support the establishment of a global biofuels market and are increasingly exploring regulations and standards for production (in many cases with the advice of Brazil). In addition to farming and exporting business groups, a

growing number of small producers are switching their agricultural crops to produce biofuels.

Nonetheless, there is a growing resistance within Mesoamerica relative to biofuels – both at the local and regional level. Civil society groups are concerned that they will undermine food sovereignty as well as increase and consolidate their food dependency on the United States and Canada. Civil society in the region is also closely monitoring the Farm Bill debate because of the affect U.S. agriculture policy has on the dynamics in their countries. With corn at the center of culture and history in this region, and this crop increasingly being used for ethanol production rather than to ensure food security, people in the region are alarmed about the possible consequences.

In **Western Africa**, the top priority and challenge for most farmers in this region today is to secure sufficient food production for their population. However, farm groups fear that some of their governments could fall into the trap of jumping into the “biofuels fashion” as the latest fad that is supposed to reduce poverty rather than to take the time to understand the implications for the region. Biofuels produced out of residuals could be an interesting option, without jeopardizing agricultural production for food.

Main challenges and next steps

The dialogue provided a space to share experiences and insights relative to current debates and reform proposals in agriculture policies. Several issues and questions were mentioned as key challenges by groups from the different regions, in particular those from the U.S. and the EU. Meeting participants agreed on the need to continue a Global Dialogue around the following issues:

Corporate control, market regulation, trade - Alternative models

Participants discussed the need to strengthen alternatives to the current model of food and agriculture. This would entail a vision to support local food and energy economies while at the same time linking sustainable agriculture policies with food, health, energy, the environment, development and human rights. The current reality of global warming offers an opportunity to question the current model of production and consumption and help to promote new approaches.

There is a need

- To highlight the nature and impacts of corporate concentration of food and agriculture on farmers, producers and consumers.
- To build stronger networks between researchers, farmers groups and other stakeholders to strengthen the analysis and develop alternatives.
- To develop policy proposals and specific alternatives to challenge corporate control in food and agriculture.
- To explore in a more structured way the possibilities of structural and regulatory changes in agriculture that are supportive for an alternative model of agriculture

- and food production based on the realization of human rights and emphasizing on local food and energy economies.
- To develop trade rules supportive of sustainable agriculture policies.
 - To share existing local experiences as a means to help build alternatives.

Biofuels

Biofuels are changing the debates around agriculture, energy and development. There is a need for

- better analysis and knowledge about key actors in the sector in particular corporations - particularly as it relates to the EU and the U.S. agendas for renewable energy.
- better understanding of short term and long term developments as well as potential impacts of this trend on core issues such as price, production, trade etc. – both in the North and the South
- the development a vision/model on how biofuels production can be shaped in the interest of family farmers and sustainable production and being based on locally owned and controlled food and energy economies
- a more in depth discussion on issues and debates such as national policy space, border controls, the use of energy and national security needs, as arguments used to promote biofuels in particular in U.S.

C) Appendices (List of participants, Final Agenda of Meeting, Publications list, bios of speakers)

List of Participants

ACDI/VOCA
Olutayo Akingbe
US
oakingbe@acdivoca.org
www.acdivoca.org

Action Aid Brasil
Celso Marcatto
Brazil
celso.marcatto@actionaid.org
www.actionaid.org.br

Action Aid US
Karen Hansen-Kuhn
US
Karen.Hansen-Kuhn@actionaid.org
www.actionaidusa.org

Agribusiness Accountabilitiy Initiative -
Commodities group
AAI Commodities group
Tom Lines
UK
tlines@globalnet.co.uk
www.agribusinessaccountability.org

Agribusiness Accountability Initiative
AAI
Bob Grosnki
US
nrcrlcg@mchsi.com
www.agribusinessaccountability.org

Agriculture Policy Analysis Center,
University of Tennessee
APAC
Daniel de la Torre Ugarte
US
danieltu@utk.edu
<http://apacweb.ag.utk.edu/>

Aktionsgemeinschaft baeuerliche
Landwirtschaft
ABL
Bernd Voss
Germany
thomsen@abl-ev.de
www.abl-ev.de

Amercian Corn Growers Association
Larry Mitchell
US
dcplowboy@aol.com
www.acga.org

American Federation of Labor and
Congress of Industrial Organizations
AFL-CIO
Mark Froemke
US
mfroemke1@aol.com
www.aflcio.org

Black Farmers and Agriculturalists
Association
Khubaka,
Michael Harris
US
blackagriculture@yahoo.com
<http://bfaa-us.org/>

Bread for the World
Larry Goodwin
US
lgoodwin@bread.org
www.bread.org

Canadian Broiler Hatching Egg
Marketing Agency
CBHEMA / l'OCCOIPC
Tim Nikita
Canada
tnikita@cbhema.com
www.cbhema.com

Canadian Federation of Farmers
Justin To
Canada
Justin@cfafca.ca
www.cfa-fca.ca

Center for Studies of Rural Change in
Mexico
CECCAM
Ana de Ita
Mexico
anadeita@ceccam.org.mx
www.ceccam.org.mx

Center of Concern
CoC
Kristin Sampson
US
ksampson@coc.org
www.coc.org

Center of Concern
CoC
Maria Riley
US
mriley@coc.org
www.coc.org

Church World Service
Kathy McNeely
US
kmcneely@churchworldservice.org
www.churchworldservice.org

Confederation Paysanne
Rene Louail
France
rene.louail@wanadoo.fr
www.confederationpaysanne.fr

Coordination Paysanne Europeenne
CPE
Gerard Choplin
Europe
cpe@cpe.org
www.cpe.org

Coordination SUD
Henri Rouille d'Orfeuil
France
rouille@cirad.fr
www.coordinationsud.org

Embassy of Indonesia
Metrawinda Tunus
Indonesia/US
offy@embassyofindonesia.org

European Food Sovereignty Platform
EFSP
Gert Engelen
Belgium/Europe
gert.engelen@vredeseilanden.be
www.efsp.eu

Family Farm Defenders
John Kinsman
US
www.familyfarmdefenders.org

Food and Farm Files
Alan Guebert
US
agcomm@sbcglobal.net

Food and Water Watch
Patrick Woodall
US
pwoodall@fwwatch.org
www.fwwatch.org

Food Systems Integrity
Molly Anderson
US
mollydanderson@earthlink.net

French Embassy in Washington D.C.
Christian Joly
France/US
christian.JOLY@diplomatie.gouv.fr

Germanwatch
Tobias Reichert
Germany
tobias.reichert@gmx.net
www.germantwatch.org

Heifer International
Dianne Forte
US
dianne.forte@heifer.org
www.heifer.org

Heinrich Boell Foundation
Christiane Chemnitz
Germany
chemnitz@boell.org
www.boell.de

Heinrich Boell Foundation
Liane Schalatek
US
liane@boell.org
www.boell.de

Heinrich Boell Foundation/U.S.
Daniela Werner
US
daniela@boell.org
www.boell.de

Institute for Agriculture and Trade
Policy - IATP
Alexandra Spieldoch
US
aspieldoch@iatp.org
www.iatp.org

Institute for Agriculture and Trade
Policy - IATP
Alexandra Strickner
Austria/US
astrickner@iatp.org
www.iatp.org

Institute for Agriculture and Trade
Policy - IATP
Celine Delayen
US
cdelayen@iatp.org
www.iatp.org

Institute for Agriculture and Trade
Policy - IATP
Dennis Olson
US
dolson@iatp.org
www.iatp.org

Institute for Agriculture and Trade
Policy - IATP
Mark Muller
US
mmuller@iatp.org
www.iatp.org

Mary Knoll
David Kaue
US
dkaue@maryknoll.org
www.maryknoll.org

Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais
Sem Terra
MST
Pedro Christoffoli
Brazil
pedroivanc@gmail.com
www.mstbrazil.org

National Family Farm Coalition
NFFC
Kathy Ozer
US
kozer@nffc.net
www.nffc.net

National Family Farm Coalition
NFFC
Jessica Roe
US
jroe@nffc.net
www.nffc.net

Network of Farmers' and Agriculture
Producers' Organisations of West Africa
ROPPA
Saliou Sarr
Senegal
saliou.sarr@asprodeb.org
www.roppa.info

Red Mexicana de Accion Frende al
Libre Comercio
RMALC
Alejandro Villamar
Mexico
alvillamar@prodigy.net.mx
www.rmalc.org.mx

Research and Technological Exchange
Group GRET
Arlene Alpha
France
alpha@gret.org
www.gret.org

Research and Technological Exchange
Group
GRET
Maryline Cailleux
France
cailleux@gret.org
www.gret.org

Societe Francaise d'Economie Rurale
SFER
Lucien Bourgeois
France
lucien.bourgeois@apca.chambagri.fr
www.sfer.asso.fr

The Washington Office on Africa
WOA
Adeline Amaizo
US
aadeline@woafrica.org
www.woafrica.org

Tufts University
Tim Wise
US
tim.wise@tufts.edu
http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae/about_us/researchers.html

Wageningen University
Roel Jongeneel
Netherlands
roel.jongeneel@wur.nl
<http://www.wur.nl/UK/>

Western Organisation of Resource
Councils
WORD
Gilles Stockton
US
gillesstockton@gmail.com
www.worc.org

World Bank/CIRAD
Bruno Losch
France
blosch@worldbank.org
www.cirad.org

World Hunger Year
WHY
Christina Schiavoni
US
christina@worldhungeryear.org
www.worldhungeryear.org

Final Agenda

U.S. Farm Bill and the EU Common Agriculture Policy at Crossroads - A Global Dialogue on U.S., Canadian and EU Agriculture policies

U.S. and EU agriculture policies at crossroads

Both in the US and the EU, reforms of the agriculture policies are under way. In the US a new farm bill will most likely be decided upon in 2007, in the EU a review of the existing Common agriculture policy (CAP) will start in 2008. Agriculture policies in these countries/regions have led to a deep crisis in farm prices, corporate concentration, unsustainable environmental practices, poor food quality, and rural unemployment or low waged work. On both sides of the Atlantic, progressive groups are engaging in policy work, mobilization and campaigning to shape future US and EU farm policies, in the interest of farmers, consumers and the environment – both for its own populations as well as those in the South.

This two-day meeting will offer groups active in both regions – farmer groups, environmental and consumer organizations, and development organizations a space to start a dialogue across the Atlantic. It will assess the negative impacts of existing farm policies in the respective regions, and examine specific proposed alternative solutions to address the clear failures of existing policies. Finally, the meeting will offer a space to begin a discussion of the need for a more broad based approach towards developing a sustainable future for all of us who have a stake in agriculture around the world

Objective of the meeting:

- To gain a better understanding of agriculture policies in the U.S., Canada and EU based on the sharing of experiences and the examination of impacts for farmers, food workers, consumers, environment in these countries/regions.
- To examine key policy reform proposals and processes in the 2007 Farm Bill and CAP Review through the mapping of potential problems and challenges with regard to farmers income, food security, environment (biodiversity, water, etc.), consumers (quality of food/health, consumer prices etc.) in these countries/regions and worldwide. A special emphasis will be given to the emerging issue of biofuels.
- To define key challenges and objectives of agriculture and food policies that should guide agriculture and food policies: From “global” competitiveness and export orientation to securing access to healthy and safe food for all, to viable farm incomes and sustainable farming and food processing.
- To Build an agenda of joint work and collaboration among North American, European and Southern groups working to effect positive change on agriculture and trade policies in the U.S. and the EU.

Date: 14 and 15 May 2007

Venue: Charles Sumner School Washington D.C.

Monday 14 May 2007

8.30 to 9.30

Welcome of participants, setting the context and introduction to objectives of dialogue and agenda of meeting

Alexandra Strickner, IATP

Welcome notes of Co-sponsors of the meeting

Coordination Sud, French Embassy, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Action Aid US, Agribusiness Accountability Initiative, Germanwatch

9.30 to 11.30

The reality of U.S. Farm Bill, Canadian Farm Bill and the EU Common Agricultural Policy at home. The impacts of agriculture liberalization on farmers, consumers and the environment in their own countries.

- **Daniel de la Torre Ugarte, Agriculture Policy Analysis Center (APAC), University of Tennessee**
- **Mark Muller, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)**
- **Justin To, Canadian Federation of Agriculture**
- **Roel A. Jongeneel, University of Wageningen, Netherlands**

Facilitation: Liane Schalatek, Heinrich Boell Foundation

11.30 to 12.30

The impact of U.S. Farm Bill and the EU Common Agricultural Policy in the Global South. Impacts of overproduction, Dumping, Food Aid and agriculture trade liberalization on farmers, food workers, consumers and the environment in the Global South.

- **Ana de Ita, Center for Studies for Rural Change in Mexico (CECCAM), Mexico**
- **Saliou Sarr, Western African Network of Farmers and Agricultural Producers Organisations (ROPPA), Senegal**
- **Tim Wise, Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University, US**

Facilitation: Arlene Alpha, GRET (Research and Technological Exchange Group), France

12.30 to 14.00

Lunch Break

14.00 to 16.30

US Farm Bill 2007 – Proposals for Policy Reform and Process

Aim of this session: understand the current reform proposals discussed, including the policy process in the US and critically discussing the potential positive and negative impacts of the reform proposals (which problems might be solved, which will remain – for farmers, consumers, the environment in US and in the world

General Overview on Farm Bill

Alan Guebert, Food and Farm File

On the National Family Farm Act

Kathy Ozer, National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC)

Energy

Dennis Olson, IATP

Competition

Gilles Stockton, Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)

Building Sustainable Futures

Karen Hansen Kuhn, Action Aid US

Facilitation: Robert Gronski, National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC)

16.30 to 17.00 **Coffee break**

17.00 to 18.30

European Common Agriculture Policy – Review 2008 – Perspectives and Policy Reform Debates

Aim of this session: understand the current debate, perspectives and processes in relation to CAP as well as the processes ongoing and critical discussion on the potential positive and negative impacts of these reform proposals

Overview on CAP review

Lucien Bourgeois, Assemblée permanente des Chambres d’agriculture (Permanent Assembly of Agriculture Chambers), France & Gerard Choplin, Coordination Paysanne Europeenne (CPE), Belgium

On Milk Quotas

Bernd Voss, Working Group for Peasant Agriculture (AbL), Germany

Rural Development

Gert Engelen, Vredeseilanden & Facilitator of the European Platform for Food Sovereignty, Belgium

Facilitation: Tobias Reichert, Germanwatch, Germany

Tuesday 15 May 2007

9.00 to 11.30

Biofuels – potential positive and negative impacts on agriculture and food security in the U.S., EU and Global South?

Aim of the session: to present the current debate/efforts in the U.S. around biofuels (20/20 initiative, biofuels in the farm bill etc.) and to discuss its possible impacts within the US and globally

Inputs by:

- **Daniel de la Torre Ugarte, APAC, University of Tennessee**
- **Mark Muller, IATP**
- **Pedro Christoffoli, Landless Movement (MST), Brazil**
- **Alejandro Villamar, Mexican Action Network against Free Trade (RMALC), Mexico**
- **Roel A. Jongeneel, University of Wageningen, Netherlands**

Facilitation: Alexandra Spielloch, IATP

11.30 to 12.00

Coffee Break

12.00 to 13.00

Conclusions of the debates of the first one and a half days – assessment of the perspectives for change with current proposals and policy alternatives needed

Each stakeholder group, representatives will give a brief final assessment on the current proposals on the table as well as on policy alternatives needed.

- Farmers Perspectives
- Environmental Perspectives
- Consumer Perspectives
- Health Perspectives
- Development Perspectives

Facilitation and Conclusions:

Alexandra Strickner, IATP and Henri Rouille d'Orfeuille, Coordination Sud

End of Public Part

13.00 to 14.30

Lunch

Tuesday 15 May 2007 - Afternoon Program

14.30 to 18.30

Building an agenda for joint collaboration: Identifying interests and issues for enhanced dialogue and collaboration

In the light of the current agriculture reform processes in particular in the U.S. and the EU, the continuous push for further agriculture trade liberalization (with a potential US-EU Free Trade Area in sight), this session aims to identify issues that are hot spots and around which intensified dialogue and collaboration can support ongoing CSO processes that work towards alternative agriculture policies in the U.S. and the EU.

14.30 to 15.30

Review of the hot spots and main themes in the U.S. and the EU in the context of agriculture reform processes that were raised during the conference before
Summary by Karen Hansen Kuhn & Alexandra Strickner
Adding and Discussion

15.30 to 17.00

Potential working groups to identify first elements of joint collaboration and strategies for the future such as

- Managed agricultural production
- Market Concentration
- Biofuels
- Rural Development

17.00 to 17.30

Coffee Break

17.30 to 18.30

Presentation of Working Group results
Definition of next steps
Closing of meeting

Biographies of Speakers

Daniel de la Torre Ugarte, Research Associate Professor, APAC - Associate Director
Agriculture Policy Analysis Center (APAC), University of Tennessee, USA

apacweb.ag.utk.edu/
danieltu@utk.edu

Dr. De La Torre Ugarte has been involved with APAC since its inception and has served as APAC's associate director since 1994. He completed his PhD. in agricultural economics at Oklahoma State University in 1992. His primary areas of research have been in commodity and energy policy. Dr. Ugarte recently has focused on the price and income impacts of increased use of various types of biomass for energy production. He also has worked with the USDA to expand the number of commodities included in APAC's national policy simulation model and to evaluate the supply responsiveness of agricultural commodities before and after the 1996 Freedom to Farm legislation.

Mark Muller, Director Environment and Agriculture Program
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minneapolis, USA

www.iatp.org
mmuller@iatp.org

Mark is Director of the Environment and Agriculture Program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. The Program addresses environmental concerns through the development of regional food systems, the emerging bioeconomy, and forging partnerships with public health professionals. The challenges and opportunities in the forthcoming Farm Bill have been a focus of much of Mark's recent work. He has co-authored two recent reports on biofuels; the first on ethanol's water consumption and the second on how ethanol is diverting corn away from export markets. He has worked at IATP for nearly ten years. Prior work experience includes positions as an environmental engineer, high school science teacher, and farm hand. He has a master's degree in environmental engineering.

Justin To, Executive director
Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Canada

www.cfa-fca.ca/
Justin@cfafca.ca

Justin To is currently the Executive Director of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and has been with the organization since 2004. With its member organizations from across Canada, Justin works with various Canadian governments advocating for strategic development of farm income programming, farm taxation, rural development, trade, and innovation policy.

Justin holds a B.Sc. in Forest Science from the University of British Columbia, an M.Sc. in Soil Science and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Guelph.

Roel A. Jongeneel, Researcher
University of Wageningen, Netherlands
www.wageningenuniversiteit.nl/UK/
Roel.jongeneel@wur.nl

Roelof A. Jongeneel holds a PhD in economics. He works as a researcher at the Research Unit Management of Natural Resources of the Agricultural Economic Institute (LEI) in The Hague and has a position as assistant professor at Wageningen University, Wageningen, both in The Netherlands. He has a particular research interest in dairy and sustainable agriculture and participated/participates in several EU projects (two on dairy among which the EDIM project and two on Cross-Compliance). He has an extensive experience in modelling and policy analysis, both due to empirical studies done, as well as a teacher of economic modelling, international trade and agricultural policy courses. He regularly operates as an adviser of politicians and NGOs and writes articles in the popular press on economic topics. He contributed to the political program on agriculture of the ChristenUnie, one of the political parties in the current Dutch coalition government.

Ana de Ita,
Center for Studies for Rural Change in Mexico (CECCAM), Mexico
www.ceccam.org.mx
anadeita@ceccam.org.mx

Saliou Sarr,
Western African Network of Farmers and Agricultural Producers Organizations
(ROPPA), Senegal
www.roppa.info/
saliou.sarr@asprodeb.org

Timothy A. Wise, Deputy Director and Researcher
Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University, USA
ase.tufts.edu/gdae/
tim.wise@tufts.edu

Timothy A. Wise is Deputy Director and Researcher at the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University. He is the former executive director of Grassroots International, a Boston-based international aid organization, and co-author of *Confronting Globalization: Economic Integration and Popular Resistance in Mexico*. His current research focuses on globalization's impact on small farmers and the environment. His paper, "The Paradox of Agricultural Subsidies," calls into question the finding that reducing rich country agricultural subsidies will bring significant welfare gains to small-scale farmers in the global South.

Alan Guebert, agricultural journalist
Farm and Food File, Delavan, Illinois, USA
agcomm@sbcglobal.net

Alan Guebert is an award-winning free-lance agricultural journalist who was raised on an 800-acre, 100-cow southern Illinois dairy farm. After graduation from the University of Illinois in Dec. 1980, he worked as a writer and senior editor at Professional Farmers of America and Successful Farming magazine.

In 1984, Guebert returned to Illinois to establish his free-lance writing business and to serve as a contributing editor to Farm Journal magazine. He began his syndicated ag column, "The Farm and Food File," in June, 1993, and it now appears weekly in more than 70 newspapers throughout the US and Canada. Guebert also writes a second column, called "Letter from America," which appears monthly in magazines and newspapers in a dozen countries throughout Europe and Asia.

Throughout his career, Guebert has won numerous awards for his magazine and newspaper work. In 1997, the American Agricultural Editors' Association honored him with its highest awards, "Writer of the Year" and "Master Writer." In 2002, he began writing The Final Word. In this week-ending column, he brings his unique perspective to bear on the events and people most shaping agriculture.

Alan resides with his wife and two children in Delavan, IL.

Kathy Ozer, Executive Director
National Family Farm Coalition, Washington, DC, USA
www.nffc.net
kozer@nffc.net

Kathy Ozer is the executive director of the National Family Farm Coalition. The NFFC (founded in 1986) represents family farm and rural groups whose members face the challenge of the deepening economic recession in rural communities. The combination of member groups' grassroots strength and NFFC's experience working on the national level enables them to play a unique role in securing a sustainable, economically just, healthy, safe and secure food and farm system. Additional power comes from collaborative work with a carefully built network of domestic and international organizations that share similar goals. NFFC chooses its projects based on the potential to empower family farmers by reducing the corporate control of agriculture and promoting a more socially just farm and food policy.

R. Dennis Olson, Senior Policy Analyst
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minneapolis, MN, USA
www.iatp.org
dolson@iatp.org

R. Dennis Olson is a Senior Policy Analyst in the Trade & Global Governance Program at the Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy in Minneapolis, MN. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy promotes resilient family farms, rural communities and ecosystems around the world through research and education, science and technology. The institute also advocates for farmers and peasants both in the U.S., and around the world, within the context of global trade debates. Olson works on U.S. agricultural trade policy and biotechnology issues among domestic and international farmer, rural advocacy and other social justice networks. Before coming to IATP, he worked as a community organizer for seventeen years with grassroots farmer and environmental organizations in North Dakota and Montana on agricultural, environmental and other social justice issues. In 1994, he spent three months in the former Soviet Union networking with environmental and agricultural activist organizations. Olson graduated from the University of Montana in 1983 with a combined degree of history/political science and a minor in Russian.

Gilles Stockton, rancher
Grass Range, Montana, USA
gillesstockton@gmail.com

Gilles is a sheep and cattle rancher from Grass Range Montana with off-farm income from consulting in East Africa and Middle East on livestock and pastoralist development issues. Currently he splits his time between ranching and advising the United States Agency for International Development. He has been active with Northern Plains Resource Council and the Western Organization of Resource Councils since the 1980s in promoting measures, such as the Captive Supply Reform Act, which are designed to restore market competition to the United States beef industry.

Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) is a regional network of seven grassroots community organizations that include 9,500 members and 45 local chapters. WORC helps its member groups succeed by providing training and coordinating issue work. WORC's mission is to advance the vision of a democratic, sustainable, and just society through community action. WORC is committed to building sustainable environmental and economic communities that balance economic growth with the health of people and stewardship of their land, water, and air resources.

Northern Plains Resource Council, a grassroots conservation & family agriculture group, organizes Montana citizens to protect water quality, family farms and ranches, and Montana's unique quality of life.

Karen Hansen-Kuhn, Food and Hunger Policy Analyst
ActionAid International, Washington, DC, USA
www.actionaidusa.org
Karen.Hansen-Kuhn@actionaid.org

Karen has over fifteen years of research, coalition building and advocacy experience on trade, integration and economic policy. She has published articles on US trade and agricultural policies, the impacts of structural adjustment programs in Latin America, and women and food crises. Prior to joining ActionAid International USA, she was the international coordinator of the Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART), a U.S. multi-sectoral coalition promoting just and sustainable trade, and a founding member of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA). A former Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay, she speaks fluent Spanish. She holds a B.S. in International Business from the University of Colorado and a masters degree in International Development from The American University. Located in Washington, DC, ActionAid International USA's mission is to create change on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised worldwide. In so doing, AAI USA advocates reforms that speak directly to decision-makers on key policies such as poverty reduction, trade, education, agriculture, and the expenditure of federal, IMF, and World Bank funds.

Robert Gronski, Policy Coordinator

National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Des Moines, Iowa, USA

www.ncrlc.com

ncrlcg@mchsi.com

Robert Gronski serves as the policy coordinator for the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in the areas of agriculture, global trade, rural development and the environment. Gronski has extensive work experience overseas, mainly in the Asia-Pacific region; his doctorate is in rural sociology from the University of Missouri-Columbia where he examined the impact of the global food system on rural communities, both in the U.S. and Southeast Asia. His current policy work is focused on the intersection of the U.S. Farm Bill and world trade negotiations. The National Catholic Rural Life Conference is a membership organization grounded in a spiritual tradition that brings together the Church, care of community and care of creation.

Lucien Bourgeois, Deputy director

Assemblée permanente des Chambres d'agriculture (Permanent Assembly of Agriculture Chambers), France

www.apca.chambagri.fr

lucien.bourgeois@apca.chambagri.fr

Lucien Bourgeois is deputy director and he is in charge of Economic studies and prospective. He is member of the "Commission des Comptes de l'Agriculture". He is also member of the CNIS (National council of statistic ionformation). Since 1993, he is general secretary of SFER (French society of rural economy), which regroup 400 people interesting in rural economy and sociology. Since 1993, correspondent member of the Agriculture Academy. He was member of the INRA-SAD's scientific comity between 1989 and 1997.

Gerard Choplin, Coordinator
Coordination Paysanne Europeenne (CPE), Belgium
www.cpefarmers.org
cpe@cpe.org

Coordinator CPE (Bruxelles) since 1986
Agronomist

Bernd Voss, Member in the bureau of AbL
Working Group for Peasant Agriculture (AbL), Germany
www.abl-ev.de/
thomsen@abl-ev.de

Born and growing in 1954 on a farm in Schleswig-Holstein

- Professional way:

Study of agriculture ending with Dipl-Ing. In 1976.

Since that time up to now building up a dairy farm now in the regional size of 80 cows, young cattle, 70 % of the field is grassland the other part is wheat, rap, maize and barley.

Starting a fermentation gas technology on the base of grass together with 14 other farmers. Member in the bureau of a regional milk production.

- Political way Starting in 1972:

Member in different bureaus of the land-youth-organisation. Initiatives against nuclear power stations and later other regional and national initiatives. Member of a regional parliament from 1994- 2003. Member of the European Economic- and Social Committee from 2002-2006. Member in the bureau of the German working group for peasant agriculture (AbL) since 1998, main issues: agriculture reform, milk, renewable resources, GMO-free policy

Gert Engelen,
Vredeseilanden & European Platform for Food Sovereignty, Belgium
www.agriculture-durables-solidaires.org/
www.vredeseilanden.org/
Gert.engelen@vredeseilanden.be

Gert Engelen has been responsible for more than 10 years for the program for sustainable agriculture of the Belgian NGO Vredeseilanden. This program is initiating and facilitating several direct farm links and has been involved in several research projects and mobilisation projects. Since five years working on agricultural policies, and now responsible for advocacy within Vredeseilanden. Gert Engelen is chairperson of the Flemish Platform for sustainable agriculture, facilitator of the European Platform for Food Sovereignty and linked with the International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty.

Pedro Ivan Christoffoli, Member of Production and Environmental MST Sector
Landless Movement (MST), Brazil

www.mstbrazil.org/
pedroivanc@gmail.com

- MST activist since 1987
- member of Production and Environmental MST Sector
- agronomist graduated in 1986
- Master in Administration (Management) by the Universidade Federal do Parana (UFPR Brasil)
- Student of Doctorate at Universidade de Brasilia (UnB - Brasil) in Sustainable Development

Alejandro Villamar, Analyst and activist member of RMLAC
Mexican Action Network against Free Trade (RMALC), Mexico
www.rmalc.org.mx
alvillamar@prodigy.net.mx

Since 1991 is an analyst and activist member of the RMALC (Mexican Action Network on Free Trade), is member of the executive council of RMALC and coordinator of the campaign against SPP (North America, Security and Prosperity Partnership) a new political model of FTA. He is co-author of several publications on NAFTA's impact in the Mexican economy and environment. He was involved in the campaign against FTA Mexico-EU, Plan Puebla Panamá and FTAA, as also against WTO negotiations. Currently is also advisor of the Rural Development Committee in the Mexican Congress on FTA and alternatives.

Further Reading

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