

A stylized graphic of a plant with long, flowing, leaf-like shapes in black and olive green, positioned on the left side of the cover.

The International Commission  
on the Future of Food and Agriculture

# MANIFESTO ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD

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**MANIFESTO ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD**  
**Produced by The International Commission**  
**on the Future of Food and Agriculture**

2006

THIS MANIFESTO IS THE OUTCOME OF A JOINTEFFORTAMONGPARTICIPANTSINTHE MEETINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD DURING LATE 2002 AND EARLY 2003 IN TUSCANY, ITALY. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REGION OF TUSCANY ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN AND SUPPORTED THE COMMISSION'S WORK. THE MANIFESTO IS INTENDED AS A SYNTHESIS OF THE WORK AND THE IDEAS ESPOUSED BY HUNDREDS OF ORGANIZATIONS AROUND THE WORLD, AND THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUALS, ACTIVELY SEEKING TO REVERSE THE PRESENT DIRE TREND TOWARD THE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION OF FOOD PRODUCTION. WHILE THE MANIFESTO INCLUDES A CRITIQUE OF THE DANGEROUS DIRECTIONS OF THE MOMENT, MOST IMPORTANTLY IT SETS

OUT PRACTICAL VISION, IDEAS AND PROGRAMS TOWARD ENSURING THAT FOOD AND AGRICULTURE BECOME MORE SOCIAL- LY AND ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE, MORE ACCESSIBLE, AND TOWARD PUTTING FOOD QUALITY, FOOD SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH ABOVE CORPORATE PROFITS. WE HOPE THIS MANIFESTO WILL SERVE AS A CATALYST TO UNIFY AND STRENGTHEN THE MOVEMENT TOWARD SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, BIODIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL DIVERSITY, AND THAT IT WILL HELP THEREBY TO ALLEVIATE HUNGER AND POVERTY GLOBALLY. WE URGE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES TO TRANSLATE IT AND USE IT, AS APPROPRIATE TO THEIR NEEDS, AND TO DISSEMINATE THE PRINCIPLES AND IDEAS IT CONTAINS, IN AS MANY WAYS AS POSSIBLE.

## MANIFESTO ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD

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## Part One

### PREAMBLE: FAILURE OF THE INDUSTRIALIZED AGRICULTURE MODEL

The growing push toward industrialization and globalization of the world's agriculture and food supply imperils the future of humanity and the natural world. Successful forms of community-based local agriculture have fed much of the world for millennia, while conserving ecological integrity and continues to do so in many parts of the planet. But it is being rapidly replaced by corporate controlled, technology-based, monocultural, export-oriented systems. These systems of absentee-ownership are negatively impacting public health, food quality and nourishment, traditional livelihoods (both agricultural and artisanal), and indigenous and local cultures, while accelerating indebtedness among millions of farmers, and their separation from lands that have traditionally fed communities and families. This transition is increasing hunger, landlessness, homelessness, despair and suicides among farmers. Meanwhile, it is also degrading the planet's life support systems, and increasing planet-wide alienation of peoples from nature and the historic, cultural and natural connection of farmers and all other people to the sources of food and sustenance. Finally, it helps destroy the economic and cultural foundations of societies, undermines security and peace, and creates a context for social disintegration and violence.

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Technological interventions sold by global corporations as panaceas for solving global problems of "inefficiency in small-scale production," and to supposedly solve world hunger, have had exactly the opposite effect. From the Green Revolution, to the Biotech Revolution, to the current push for food irradiation, technological intrusions into the historic and natural means of local production have increased the vulnerability of ecosystems. They have brought pollution of air, water and soil, and a new and spreading genetic pollution, from genetically modified organisms. These technology and corporate-based monocultural systems seriously exacerbate the crisis of global warming by their heavy dependence upon fossil fuels and release of gases and other material. This latter

fact alone—climate change— threatens to undermine the entire natural basis of ecologically benign agriculture and food preparation, bringing the likelihood of catastrophic outcomes in the near future. Moreover, industrial agriculture systems have certainly not brought increased efficiency in production, if one subtracts the ecological and social costs of this manner of production, and the immense public subsidies required. Nor do they reduce hunger; quite the opposite. They have, however, stimulated the growth and concentration of a small number of global agriculture giants who now control global production, to the detriment of local food growers, food supply and its quality, and the ability of communities and nations to achieve self-reliance in basic foods.

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Already negative trends of the past half century have been accelerated by the recent rules of global trade and finance from global bureaucracies like the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Codex Alimentarius, among others. These institutions have codified policies designed to serve the interests of global agribusiness above all others, while actively undermining the rights of farmers and consumers, as well as the ability of nations to regulate trade across their own borders or to apply standards appropriate to their communities. Rules contained in the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (of the WTO), for example, have empowered global agricultural corporations to seize much of the world's seed supply, foods and agricultural lands. The globalization of corporate-friendly patent regimes has also directly undermined indigenous and traditional sui generis rights of farmers, for example, to save seeds and protect indigenous varieties they have developed over millennia. Other WTO rules encourage export dumping of cheap subsidized agricultural products from industrial nations, thus adding to the immense difficulties of small farmers in poor countries to remain economically viable. And by invariably emphasizing export-oriented monocultural production, an explosion of long-distance trade in food products has had a direct correlation with increased use of fossil fuels for transport, thus further impacting climate, as well as the expansion of ecologically devastating infrastructure developments in indigenous and wilderness areas, with grave environmental consequences.

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The entire conversion from local small-scale food production for local communities, to large-scale export-oriented monocultural production has also brought the melancholy decline of the traditions, cultures, and cooperative pleasures and convivialities associated for centuries with community-based production and markets, thereby diminishing the experience of direct food-growing, and the long celebrated joys of sharing food grown by local hands from local lands.

Despite all the above, there are many optimistic developments. Thousands of new and alternative initiatives are now flowering across the world to promote ecological agriculture, defense of the livelihoods of small farmers, production of healthy, safe and culturally diverse foods, and localization of distribution, trade and marketing. Another agriculture is not only possible, it is already happening. For all these reasons and others, we declare our firm opposition to industrialized, globalized food production, and our support for this positive shift to sustainable, productive, locally adapted small-scale alternatives consistent with the following principles.

## Parte Two

### PRINCIPLES TOWARD AN ECOLOGICALLY AND SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEM

#### 1 The Ultimate Goal

The ultimate solution to the social, economic and ecological problems cited above is a transition to a more decentralized, democratic and cooperative, non-corporate, small-scale organic farming as practiced by traditional farming communities, agroecologists, and indigenous peoples for millennia. Such communities have practiced a sustainable agriculture based on principles of diversity, synergy and recycling. All rules and policies at every level of governance should be aligned to encourage such solutions as well as changes in other sectors of society to emphasize sustainability.

#### 2 Food is a Human Right

All human beings on the planet have a fundamental human right to access and/or to produce sufficient food to sustain their lives and communities. All rules and policies should be aligned to recognize this basic right. Every government—local, regional, national, international—is obliged to guarantee this right. It may not be denied in the interests of international commercial or trade processes, or for any other reason. Where localities are unable to fulfill their obligations—by reason of natural catastrophe or other circumstances—all other nations are obliged to provide the necessary help, as requested.

#### 3 Decentralized Agriculture is Efficient and Productive

We reject the notion that the globalization of industrial technological agriculture and the homogenization of farms brings greater efficiencies than local diverse community farming, or traditional agriculture deeply embodied in local cultures. Neither can industrial agriculture reduce world hunger. Countless experiences and studies show the opposite to be the case, as the industrial monoculture system drives farmers from their lands, brings abhorrent external costs to the environment and to farming communities, and is itself highly susceptible to pests and a myriad of other intrinsic problems. Also, by most standards of measurement, small-scale biodiverse farms have proven at least as

productive as large industrial farms. All policies at every level of society should favor small farms and the principles of agro-ecology to increase food security and insure robust, vital rural economies.

#### **4 Putting People, not Corporations, on Land**

As the loss of small holder farmlands to wealthier landlords and global corporations is a primary cause of hunger, landlessness and poverty, we support all measures to help people remain on or return to their traditional lands. Where peoples and communities have been deprived of their traditional lands and abilities to grow their own foods, or to live in a self-sustaining manner, we strongly support distributive land reform to put people back on the land, and the empowerment of local communities to control their lives.

#### **5 Food Sovereignty**

We support the fundamental principle of national, regional and community food sovereignty. All local, national and regional entities and communities have the inherent right and obligation to protect, sustain and support all necessary conditions to encourage production of sufficient healthy food in a way that conserves the land, water and ecological integrity of the place, respects and supports producers' livelihoods, and is accessible to all people. No international body or corporation has the right to alter this priority. Neither does any international body have the right to require that a nation accept imports against its will, for any reason.

#### **6 Application of the Precautionary Principle**

All human beings have the right to food that is safe and nutritious. No technological interventions in food production should be permitted until proven to meet local standards of safety, nutrition, health and sustainability. The precautionary principle applies in all matters.

#### **7 Certain Technologies Diminish Food Safety**

Some technologies such as genetic engineering, synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, and food irradiation are not consistent with food or environmental safety. They each bring unacceptable threats to public health, irreversible environmental impacts, and/or violate the inherent rights of farmers to protect their local plots from pollutants. As such their use is incompatible with the viability of sustainable agriculture. No international body has the right to

make rules that require that any nation accepts any foods or other agricultural imports across its borders that have been produced in this manner, or that the nation considers detrimental to public health, environment, local agriculture or cultural traditions, or for any other reason.

#### **8 Imperative to Protect Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health**

All healthy food and agricultural systems are dependent upon the protection of the natural world, with all its biodiversity intact. This protection must be a priority for all governments and communities and all rules should be aligned with this purpose, even where this implies changes in land tenure and farm size. No commercial or trade considerations, or any other values, may supercede this one. The principles of reduced "food miles" (distance food travels from source to plate), emphasis upon local and regional production and consumption of foods, and reduced industrial high-input technological interventions, are all derivative of the larger goal of environmental health and the vitality of natural systems.

#### **9 The Right to Cultural and Indigenous Identity**

Agriculture and traditional systems of food production are an integral aspect of cultural and indigenous identity; In fact, agrobiodiversity largely depends upon cultural diversity. All human communities have the right to preserve and further develop and enrich their diverse cultural identities, as historically practiced and expressed, and passed on through generations. No international or national body has the right to alter these practices and values or seek to change them.

#### **10 Humane Treatment of Animals**

Industrialized "factory farm" and similar systems for beef, pork, chicken and other animal production, are notorious for inhumane conditions, as well as tragic ecological and public health consequences. Large scale production for export increases the severity of the problems, and brings the added use of irradiation and anti-biotic technologies to try and stem inherent problems of disease. All such practices must be banned, and all global and domestic rules that stimulate this manner of production must be actively opposed at every level of society.

#### **11 The Right to Control and Enjoy Inherited Local Knowledge**

All communities, indigenous peoples, and national entities have the inherent right and obligation to conserve their biological diversity, inherited local



knowledge about food and food production, and to enjoy the benefits of this diversity and knowledge without outside interventions. This knowledge is key for preserving sustainable agriculture. All peoples also have the right to set their own goals for research and development, using local standards. No global trade or intellectual property rights rules should be allowed to require that local communities conform to any standards on these matters beyond their own. No global trade rules or corporations should be allowed to undermine local farmers or communities' rights to indigenous seeds, collective cumulative innovation and knowledge or that promote "biopiracy," the robbing of local knowledge and genetic diversity for commercial purposes. Farmers rights to save, improve, sell and exchange seed is inalienable.

#### **12 Primary Relationship of Farmers and Environment**

We recognize, support and celebrate the role of small scale traditional and indigenous farmers as the primary sources of knowledge and wisdom concerning the appropriate relationship between human beings, the land, and long term sustenance.

Their direct experience of the nuances of interaction between plants, soil, climate, and other conditions and their crucial relationship with their communities must be protected, supported, and where necessary, recovered. This historic role should no longer be threatened or interrupted by large scale corporate systems run by absentee landlords operating on models that ignore local conditions and replace them with unworkable "one-size-fits-all" formulas.

#### **13 The Right to Know and to Choose**

All individuals, communities and national entities have an inherent right to all relevant information about the foods they consume, the processes used to produce them, and where the food comes from. This recognizes the sovereign right of people to make informed choices about risks they are willing to take regarding safety and health, both in terms of human welfare and the environment.

This right notably applies to foods subjected to such technical interventions as pesticides, other chemicals, biotechnology and food irradiation. No governmental entity including international bodies has the right to withhold information or to deny mandatory labeling and other disclosure of all risks, including those of malnutrition. Denying such rights should be prosecuted as a crime.

#### **14 Voluntary, Fair, Sustainable Trade**

We support the many diverse new trade initiatives within and among communities that are non-coerced, fair, sustainable, mutually beneficial to producers and consumers and where communities voluntarily exchange goods and services of their own free accord, and based on their own standards. No international body has the right to require that any nation or community must allow investment or trade across its borders, or to undermine local priorities. Every trade opportunity should be evaluated solely on its individual merits by each affected party.

#### **15 No Patents or Monopolies on Life**

We oppose the commercial patenting and/or monopolization of life forms. All international or national rules that permit such practices are violations of the inherent dignity and "sanctity" of all life, the principles of biodiversity, and of the legitimate inheritance of indigenous peoples and of farmers worldwide. This applies to all plant life, animal life, and human life.

#### **16 Bias of WTO, Codex et al Toward Global Corporations**

The inherent bias of international rule-making bodies such as the WTO and Codex Alimentarius toward large-scale, export-oriented monocultural production in agriculture, as in all other production, is a direct cause of social dislocation, environmental devastation and the undemocratic concentration of global corporate power to the detriment of communities everywhere. All such rules should be immediately nullified, and reversed to favor sustainable systems, local production and local control over distribution. If such reverses are denied, then the bodies should be abandoned as destructive to sustainable systems. Also, international bodies (such as the United Nations) should be encouraged to create new regulatory systems that act as effective international "anti-trust" or anti-corporate-concentration institutions, in an effort to minimize corporate domination and its harmful effects.

#### **17 Favoring Subsidiarity: Bias Toward the Local**

Tariffs, import quotas and other means by which nations attempt to further their own self-reliance—many of which have been made illegal or undermined by global bureaucracies—should be re-instituted to help re-establish local production, local self-reliance and long-term food security. The principle of

subsidiarity must apply. Whenever local production can be achieved by local farmers, using local resources for local consumption, all rules and benefits should favor that option. Trade will continue to exist but should be comprised mainly of essential commodities that cannot be locally produced, or that have unique appeal unavailable locally. Long distance trade must always be an available option, but not the *raison d'être* of the system. One imperative goal is a major reduction in overall long-distance trade, and specifically of the distance between food producers and consumers (food miles), thus reducing social and ecological harms.

#### **18 Safety Standards Floor, Not Ceiling**

All laws and rules concerning food agreed upon in bilateral/multilateral agreements among nations, must reverse prior WTO priorities by creating a floor for safety standards, rather than a ceiling. No international body should make rules that require any nation or community to lower their own standards for trade, or for any other reason. Such standards may include export and import controls, labeling, certification and other matters. Any country or community with standards higher than international bodies agreed-upon should experience positive discrimination in terms of trade. Poorer countries for whom such standards are at present too expensive should receive financial aid to help improve their standards.

#### **19 Protection From Dumping**

The right to regulate imports to prevent dumping, and to protect the livelihoods of domestic farmers, and to insure a fair return for farmers' labours and contribution to food security is a fundamental element of just, fair trade rules. This reverses prior WTO rules that effectively permit and encourage dumping by large nations.

#### **20 Compatible Changes**

We recognize that the kinds of reform suggested above may be more rapidly achieved over time as part of a larger set of changes in prevailing worldview and systemic practices, so that ecologically and socially sustainable systems can take priority over corporate interests. Compatible changes may also be required in other operating systems of society, from global to regional, from corporate to community. Energy systems, transport, manufacturing systems, for example, must be examined and reformed at the same time as farming recovers its small

scale, locally viable form. And all of this must be within the context of the principles of subsidiarity that brings political power back from the global toward appropriate local and regional governance.

#### **21 Adoption of These Principles**

We urge all communities, municipalities, counties, provinces, states, nations and international organizations to adopt the principles listed above and to work in concert to bring them to realization.

The following sections give examples of positive activities already underway that apply some of the principles, as well as specific proposals for new rules of trade governance consistent with these goals.

### Parte Three

#### LIVING ALTERNATIVES TO INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE

On every continent, communities are awakening to the devastating effects of corporate-driven food and farming systems which have turned agriculture into an extractive industry and food into a major health hazard. Movements are emerging – many with parallels and linkages across international borders – that are re-knitting the historic relationships among food, farming, and community values. These movements are restoring food and food production to their proper places in culture and nature — after a devastating estrangement that stands as an aberration in the human experience.

Here we only have sufficient space to hint at the breakthroughs these movements have made in the last several decades. The fact that few of these changes could have been predicted in advance should give pause to anyone who now argues that industrial agriculture is the inevitable way forward. Change — very rapid change — is possible. Indeed, it is underway. The following are a few of the areas where circumstances are rapidly changing:

#### **Democratizing access to land.**

While it has long been recognized that access to land by the world's rural poor is a key to ending hunger and poverty, many believed reform to be politically impossible. This was true in Brazil, where less than two percent of rural landholders held half the farmland (most of it left idle), and where even small gatherings were outlawed and efforts for change were met with violence. Yet today this country leads the way toward democratizing access to land. During the last 20 years, the Landless Workers' Movement, called by its Portuguese acronym MST, has settled a quarter-million formerly landless families on 15 million acres of land in almost every state of Brazil. Taking advantage of a clause in the new constitution mandating the government to redistribute unused land, the MST has used disciplined civil disobedience to ensure this mandate's fulfillment. The MST's almost 3,000 new communities are creating thousands of new businesses and schools. Land reform benefits are measured in an annual income for new MST settlers of almost four times the minimum wage, while still-

landless workers now receive on average only 70 percent of the minimum. Infant mortality among land reform families has fallen to only half the national average. Estimates of the cost of creating a job in the commercial sector of Brazil range from two to 20 times more than the cost of establishing the unemployed family on the land through land reform. Democratizing access to land is working.

#### **Democratizing access to credit**

Bankers long held that poor people were unacceptable credit risks. But that barrier is falling. In Bangladesh two decades ago, the Grameen Bank created — a rural credit system based not on property collateral but on small-group mutual responsibility. Grameen's microcredit loans program, made to 2.5 million poor villagers, mostly women, has been adopted in 58 countries. With a repayment rate far superior to traditional banks, democratizing access to investment resources is proving viable.

#### **Relinking city and country, consumer and grower**

On every continent, practical steps are underway to make local production for local consumption viable. "Buy local" campaigns are appealing to consumers in Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere. One innovation is the community-supported agriculture (CSA) movement in which farmers and consumers link and share risks. Consumers buy a "share" at the beginning of the season, entitling them to the fruits of the farmers' labors. CSAs emerged in the mid-60s in Germany, Switzerland and in Japan. Seventeen years ago, no CSAs existed in the U.S.; today, there are more than 3,000 serving tens of thousands of families. The U.S. example has helped inspire a CSA movement in the United Kingdom, which has won local government support. Similar movements have simultaneously developed in Japan and elsewhere. Other burgeoning initiatives are urban and rural farmers' markets, which have grown by 79 percent in the last eight years in the U.S. alone. These have enabled local farmers to sell directly to their publics without expensive intermediaries. Family and school gardens — from kitchen gardens in Kenya to school children growing their own meals in California — are also spreading.

#### **Good food becomes a citizens' right**

Although 22 countries have enshrined the right to food in their constitutions, Belo Horizonte, Brazil's fourth largest city, is doing more. In 1993 its government

declared food no longer merely a commodity but a right of citizenship. This shift did not trigger massive food handouts, but ignited dozens of innovations that have begun to end hunger: Patches of city-owned land are now available at low rent to local farmers as long as they keep prices within the reach of the poor; the city redirects the 13 cents provided by the federal government for each school child's lunch away from corporate-made processed foods and toward buying local organic food, resulting in enhanced nutrition. To enable the market to function more fairly, the city teams up with university researchers who, each week, post the lowest prices of 45 basic food commodities at bus stops and broadcast them over radio. These are only a few of the initiatives, all of which consume only one percent of the municipal budget. Other Brazilian cities' officials have come to Belo to learn.

#### **Organic and ecological farming is spreading**

Organic farming and grazing is spreading rapidly, now covering 23 million certified organic hectares worldwide, with Australia, Argentina, and Italy in the lead. Defenders of the failing industrial, chemical approach to farming argue that organic farming can't work; but millions of sustainable farm practitioners are proving the naysayers wrong. Recent research examined over 200 sustainable farming projects in 52 countries, covering approximately 70 million acres and 9 million rural farmers. This university-sponsored survey found that sustainable practices can "lead to substantial increases" in production. Some root crop farmers realized gains as great as 150 percent using more sustainable methods. Of course with much lower input costs of organic production, organic farmers often reap higher profits, even in rare cases where "yield" is slightly lower. (In general, organic farming yields have proved higher in most cases when measured "per acre." Industrial systems, misleadingly tout yields "per worker," but in industrial systems, most workers are actually sacrificed to intensive machine and chemical production, thus falsely making it seem that an efficiency exists that does not. The distortion of measurements in industrial production are also magnified by its failure to account for "external" [subsidized] costs from environmental damage to land, soil, and public health.)

Increasingly, governments are providing direct support to organic farmers, and to those converting, in order to meet growing consumer demand as well as for environmental and other benefits. In 1987 Denmark became the first

country to introduce such national support; soon after that Germany began supporting conversion to organic farming. By 1996, all EU member states, with the exception of Luxembourg, had introduced policies to support organic farming. The region of Tuscany, Italy, has stood firmly against transgenic seeds and taken the lead in policies fostering small farm, ecological farming and local consumption. Austria and Switzerland each have 10% of farm production organic, while Sweden has 15%. One Swiss Kanton has a 50% share of production in organic, and Germany's Minister of Agriculture has set a goal of 20% by 2010.

### Protecting biodiversity

Internationally, the Convention on Biological Diversity now has 187 parties and 168 signatories. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has 48 parties and has been signed by 103 states. While multinational corporations have spread monocultures of small numbers of commercial, and now transgenic, seeds, a worldwide citizens' movement, working with responsive governments, is showing ways to protect seed diversity. Citizen-education campaigns, for example, led by Greenpeace and others have contained GMOs to basically four countries, primarily North American. The Slow Food Movement, now with 80,000 members in 45 countries, is successfully reviving threatened seed varieties and generating renewed appreciation of local and regional food specialties. Spelt wheat, to pick just one example, the oldest cereal known --cultivated in Italy since the Bronze Age but displaced by more commercial grains-- is gaining consumers there. At the same time, indigenous peoples' movements are growing in the Global South to protect biodiversity, resist transgenic seeds, and opposing the patenting of life forms. Nayakrishi in Bangladesh, a movement of 50,000 farmers, is reviving traditional crops -- saving, storing, and sharing seeds they carefully breed as the basis of household food security. In India, Navdanya, a project of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, has helped 100,000 farmers return to traditional, organic farming methods in villages now dubbed "freedom zones." The Foundation and its network have successfully fought transgenic seeds and the patenting of indigenous knowledge. In large measure because of its efforts, Indian government officials recently refused to allow Bt cotton to be sold in the Punjab and other northern states after southern Indian farmers were hurt by its adoption.

### Insuring fair prices for producers

A burgeoning world-wide fair trade movement is showing that the dominant system is not "free trade" and that a fair system is possible. The fair trade movement began in Europe in the 1980s and has taken hold in 47 countries. The system covers 12 products -- most significantly coffee, on which 20 million households worldwide depend. Fair trade puts a floor (now \$1.26) under prices coffee farmers receive--no matter what the perturbations of the world market. The "Fair Trade Certified" label indicates the coffee meets specific criteria--that, for example, the coffee is produced by democratically organized small farmers with full knowledge of market prices. In four years U.S. demand for fair-trade coffee has quadrupled to 10 million pounds. Worldwide fair trade, even in its short life, has kept an additional \$18 million in the hands of producer families. The importance of fair trade cannot be overstated in a world economy where, in just one decade, the share of total coffee value remaining in the producing countries has fallen from one-third to one-thirteenth. Farmers are also successfully using producer cooperatives to reap a fairer return. Dairy cooperatives in Italy offer extensive varieties of dairy products. Today in India 75,000 dairy cooperative societies dot the country, with a membership of 10 million. Of the five biggest "companies" in the dairy business, the first three are cooperatives, among them the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, born in 1946 in response to monopoly control over distribution and unfair return to producers. Similarly, in the United States, Organic Valley, launched only 15 years ago with a handful of farmers, today has 519 member farmers and more than \$125 million in sales. Last fall Organic Valley members in Wisconsin received almost twice the standard market price for their milk.

### Making corporations accountable to democracy

Throughout the world, citizens are recognizing that huge global corporations with resources greater than most governments are essentially functioning as unelected public bodies. They must be brought within the controls of democratic governance and there are significant movements to do so. For example, the majority of the world's governments have rejected the commercialization of genetically modified seeds. Even within the corporate-dominated United States, nine states, and two Pennsylvania townships, now ban non-family owned corporations from owning farms or engaging in farming. Additionally,

a movement is beginning in the U.S. that challenges the notion of “corporate personhood,” which gives corporations constitutional rights overriding the rights of people and communities. Triggered by the ruinous effects of large hog-confinement operations, two municipalities in Pennsylvania, U.S.A., now have ordinances denying corporations the constitutional protections of persons. Some school districts in the United States are rejecting the intrusion of corporate processed foods, tied to that country’s epidemic of childhood obesity and related diabetes. In a similar vein, localities in various parts of the world are rejecting the commodification of water.

### **The new emerging agriculture – beyond market fundamentalism**

Such diverse but interrelated developments as indicated above point beyond “market fundamentalism,” to the notion that all aspects of life should no longer be subordinated to global market considerations, and the welfare of world-spanning corporations. In its place, these developments suggest a more open-ended democratic path. They point not to a new dogma, but to what many are calling “living democracy” – suggesting that the well being of all life must be counted. Living democracy, attuned to peculiarities of place and culture, assumes the essential engagement of citizens seeking solutions together and evolving with lessons learned.

#### **Parte Four**

### **TRADE RULES TO ACHIEVE THE AIMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD**

This section provides specific principles and suggestions for changes in the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) so that they are consistent with the goals of the Commission.

Current trade rules of the WTO have forced the continuous lowering of tariffs and other barriers that formerly protected the domestic economies of member nations. These more open borders have resulted in social and economic conditions that are detrimental to the majority, but to the benefit of large corporations. To achieve the aims of the Commission we advocate that these WTO rules must be replaced by new trade rules, to achieve the following goals:

#### **1. Permit Tariffs and Import Quotas That Favour Subsidiarity**

Most international trade rules now favour export production and the global corporations that dominate it. New rules must again permit the use of trade tariffs and import quotas to regulate imports of food that can be produced locally. They must emphasize support for local production, local self-reliance, and real food security. This means applying the principle of subsidiarity: whenever production can be achieved by local farmers, using local resources for local consumption, all rules and benefits should favour that option, thus shortening the distance between production and consumption.

This is not to suggest that there should be no trade at all in food products but only that trade should be confined to whatever commodities cannot be supplied at the local level, rather than export trade being the primary driver of production and distribution.

#### **2. Reverse the Present Rules on Intellectual Property and Patenting**

The World Trade Organisation attempts to impose the US model of intellectual property rights protection on all countries of the world. This model strongly favours the rights of global corporations to claim patents on medicinal plants, agricultural seeds, and other aspects of biodiversity, even in cases where the biological material has been under cultivation and development by indigenous

people or community farmers for millennia. Most of these communities have traditionally viewed such plants and seeds as part of the community commons, not subject to ownership and fee structures imposed by outside corporations. These WTO rules on intellectual property should be abandoned to permit reassertion of rules that favour the needs of local and domestic communities and the protection of innovation and knowledge developed over the centuries, as well as to deal with public health crises.

### **3. Localise Food Regulations and Standards**

With the false excuse of providing food safety, many international rules, such as the WTO's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) and the Codex Alimentarius, have enforced a kind of industrial processing of foods that works directly against local and artisanal food producers, whilst favouring the global food giants. Among other things, the rules require irradiation of certain products, pasteurisation, and standardised shrink- wrapping of local cheese products.

Such rules increase enormously the costs for small producers and also negatively affect taste and quality. In fact, the greatest threats to food safety and public health do not come from small food producers, but from large industrial farms and distributors. Their practices have accelerated the incidences of salmonella, e. coli infection and other bacteria in foods, as well as Mad Cow and Foot and Mouth Disease. Such homogenised industrialized global standards have the primary goal of benefiting global corporate producers. We favor rules and food production standards that are localised with every nation permitted to set high standards for food safety.

### **4. Allow Farmer Marketing- Supply Management Boards**

Currently disallowed by the WTO and NAFTA, these price and supply regulations let farmers negotiate collective prices with domestic and foreign buyers to help ensure that they receive a fair price for their commodities. Less than two years after NAFTA went into effect, Mexican domestic corn prices fell by 48% as a flood of cheap US corn exports entered the country. Stable prices for Mexico's domestic corn growers, as well as stable supply, could have been achieved by the government price regulation agencies that were dismantled by NAFTA. Without these, thousands of farmers have been forced to sell their lands. Trade rules must allow the reinstatement of such agencies.

### **5. Eliminate Direct Export Subsidies and Payments for Corporations**

Although the WTO has eliminated direct payment programmes for most small farmers, they continue to allow export subsidies to agribusinesses. For example, the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation funded by US taxpayers, provides vital insurance to US companies investing overseas. Even loans from the IMF to Third World countries have been channelled into export subsidies for US agribusiness. Such subsidies help multinational corporations dominate smaller local businesses both domestically and abroad. All export subsidy policies should be eliminated. But programmes that permit and encourage low interest loans to small farmers, creation of domestic seed banks, and emergency food supply systems should be allowed.

### **6. Recognise and Eliminate the Adverse Effects of WTO Market Access Rules**

Heavily subsidised Northern exports to poor countries have destroyed rural communities and self-sufficient livelihoods throughout the South. Many people now working, for example, for poverty wages at Nike and other global corporate subcontractors are refugees from previously self-sufficient farming regions. This entire model of export-oriented production is destructive to basic self-sufficient traditional farming.

The dominant theory that exports from the South to North can be a major route for development ignores the inevitability of adverse competition between poor exporting countries for these rich markets, and the hijacking of national priorities in the interest of cheaper exports. Also damaging to poor countries are the adverse working and environmental conditions demanded by the mobile corporations that dominate the global food export trade. To reverse this trend countries must have new international trade rules that allow them to re-introduce constraints and controls on their imports and exports.

### **7. Promote Redistributive Land Reform**

Although predominantly a domestic decision, for the above changes in trade rules to really benefit the majority in a region, the redistribution of land to landless and land- poor rural families is a priority. This has been shown to be an effective way to improve rural welfare at different times in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China. Research also shows that small farmers are more productive and more efficient, and contribute more to broad-based regional development than do the larger corporate farmers. Given secure tenure, small farmers can



also be much better stewards of natural resources, protecting long-term productivity of their soils and conserving functional biodiversity. Truly redistributive land reform has worked where it has been fully supported by government policies. These include debt free government grants of land, full rights of title and use of land for women, the reallocation of only good quality land, and easy access to predominantly local markets. The power of rural elites must be broken and reforms must apply to the majority of the rural poor, so they have sufficient strength in numbers to be politically effective. There must be a highly supportive policy framework, reasonable credit terms and good infrastructure for sound local environment technologies.

## Conclusion

### SUMMARY OF TRADE RULE CHANGES TOWARD ACHIEVING A SUSTAINABLE AND MORE EQUITABLE WORLD

The end goal of the following specific proposed global trade rules is to promote a more sustainable and equitable economic system by strengthening democratic control of trade, and stimulating food and agricultural systems, industries and services that benefit local communities, and rediversifying local and national economies.

Protective barriers should be introduced to enable countries to reach maximum self-sufficiency in food, where feasible, with long distance trade primarily focussed on food not available in the country or region.

Quantitative restrictions that limit or impose controls on exports or imports through quotas or bans should be permissible. For those products which are imported, preferential access should be given to food, goods and services going to and coming from other states which in the process of production, provision and trading respect human rights, treat workers fairly, and protect the environment

Trade controls that increase local employment with decent wages, enhance protection of the environment, ensure adequate competition and consumer protection, and otherwise improve the quality of life should be encouraged. States are urged to give favourable treatment to domestic food, products and services that best further these goals.

States should make distinctions between food and other products that they choose to import on the basis of the way they have been produced in order to further the aims of sustainable development.

Controls on trade should contribute to a wide range of purposes that further sustainable development, e.g. sanctions against human rights violations; tariffs for the maintenance of environmental, food, health, and animal welfare standards; enforcement of treaties on environment and labour rights.

All international laws and regulations that concern food and food safety and environmental and social standards should be considered as effectively creating a floor for governing the conditions for trade between parties. Any country with

higher levels should experience positive discrimination in terms of trade. Poorer countries for whom such standards are at present too expensive should receive financial support to help them improve their standards, and once setting a future date for such improvements, should experience positive discrimination in trade terms.

The 'precautionary principle' is a justifiable basis upon which to establish regulatory controls affecting trade when the risks warrant action, even in the face of scientific uncertainty about the extent and nature of potential impacts. Global patenting rights should not override the rights of indigenous communities to genetic and biological resources that are held in common. For food and other products, fees should be able to be levied to cover the cost of development, plus a reasonable level of profit, but such patenting rights must have a limited timeframe and fully reimburse the parties whose knowledge contributed to the patented entity.

No individual investor may invoke international enforcement mechanisms against investment regulations of the nation states. The implementation of domestic investment regulations shall not be constrained by trade rules, provided that the former improve social and environmental regulations domestically and further such advances in trade relations.

## Appendix

## **INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

### **A joint initiative of**

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Printed in october 2006  
at Sesto Fiorentino (FI) by Press Service Srl  
On behalf of Arsia - Regione Toscana



Edited by

