



1st April 2016 - Polytechnic University of Valencia

WORKSHOP 8: INTERNATIONAL TRADE, AUTONOMY, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AT DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL SCALES AND FOOD SYSTEMS

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EVALUATION

The international market for agricultural products - where products are traded between countries - represents only 15% of production and world consumption of agricultural products.

Prices of basic commodities traded in this market are very low because the farms that supply it are highly mechanised and capable of producing at very low cost.

Under the effect of the liberalisation of trade, this market pits all food producers against each other, including those whose products are consumed locally. Farmers who provide the bulk of the world's food are forced to lower their prices and bring their revenues down as low as possible.

The liberalisation of trade in agricultural products creates mass poverty. Five hundred million family farms, or 3 billion people, at the forefront of which are farms in so-called 'developing' countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, are put into competition with a minority of companies and are gradually ruined and forced into the rural exodus.

The liberalisation of trade in agricultural products is contradictory to the objective to eliminate hunger in the world, which strikes mainly rural people whose incomes are insufficient to produce or buy their food. It is inconsistent with the need to maintain and create more jobs, which only family farming can allow at the present time in the so-called 'developing' countries. It maintains and pushes the world further into economic crisis. According to some estimates, the confinement of rural people to poverty through trade liberalisation deprives the market of a demand for goods and services worth 3 000 to 4 000 billion dollars a year.

Destroying family farming and the potential for a local, diversified food supply, the liberalisation of trade changes food systems to the point that some countries become dependent on outside supplies for their food.

By promoting the development of a highly mechanised agriculture where monocultures of standard varieties are practised and which depend massively on inputs, and by harming family-based agriculture, trade liberalisation leads to the waste of natural resources and the destruction of farm biodiversity, and impedes the development of ecological farming. Free trade agreements also have a negative effect on health, in many communities linked to the use of local varieties.

Free trade agreements limit agricultural and food policy choices, as they impose the deregulation of prices on imported products. They prevent countries from maintaining the prices on their internal market at a level which allows agricultural producers to survive.

Even in Europe and the United States, citizens are forced to organise to resist the destruction of the local fabric of production (associations or local government policies for direct supply from local producers). Europe compensates for the reductions in income suffered by its farmers due to international competition by providing subsidies. But the distribution of these subsidies favours larger operations.

The Transatlantic Trade Partnership under negotiation between North America and Europe aims to deepen the liberalisation of trade in agricultural products between these regions. It is a threat to family farming, as are the other trade agreements being negotiated between other regions, including the European Union - Africa Caribbean Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement (ACP - EU) whose effects concern an even greater number of people.

The initiatives *Climate Smart Agriculture* and New Alliance for Food Security in Africa are involved in the development of the large agricultural and agribusiness corporations at the expense of family farming.

Liberalisation can generate significant violence due to land access conflicts, provoked by the monopolising of natural resources by capitalist farm corporations, which take advantage of the liberalised trading system.

Adoption of agreements relating to 'intellectual property', which means appropriation of biodiversity

cultivated by large seed companies, often goes hand in hand with the liberalisation of trade. They contravene the freedom of farmers to select and reuse their own seeds. Some agreements even expose them to sanctions based on a simple 'presumption' of a violation of intellectual property.

Who is at the origin of this general self-destructive political direction? It is in particular the big transnational companies in the agri-food sector which influence political choices much more than citizens are able to, citizens who are largely left out of the decision-making process.

Conclusion

Agricultural policies in favour of family farming have been implemented in all so-called developed countries and in most of the so-called emerging countries. It is largely thanks to them that they were able to reach this level. The absence or weakness of such policies in many countries of the world for decades has had dramatic economic, social, ecological and political effects.

To ensure that family farmers are paid a decent compensation for their work, they must be protected against unequal competition caused by the liberalisation of trade. Agriculture should no longer be subject to the liberalised trade regime and public policies need to regulate agricultural prices in order to ensure the sustainability of rural family farms.

PROPOSALS

Countries must regain the right to protect their family farms and food systems, without this causing dumping, which is harmful to family farming in other countries. **The trading system imposed by the Agricultural Agreement and free trade agreements must be brought to an end, and in its place be substituted other international regulations, which are just as binding, in order to effectively ensure food sovereignty.**

Necessary policy measures

- Regulate the prices of agricultural products through trade policies applied to imports and exports (quotas, levies) and, if required, production management policies (dairy quotas, etc);
- Ensure the access of family farmers to land and natural resources, as well as to other means of production, including credit at preferential rates;
- Guarantee supplies of healthy and local food to populations by all measures which promote the relocalisation of trade. Some examples: create 'equalisation funds' funded by tariffs to buy food on the local market and redistribute them at preferential prices for the urban poor; favour or partially impose agreements for the supply to collective restaurants (hospitals, schools, administrations) from local producers; encourage the maintenance of family farming associations directly linking consumers and producers; promote 'green purchasing' by establishing a labelling system to provide specific information to consumers on the origin and the quality of the products.

Citizen action

To operate this general policy shift, a global movement of an unprecedented scale is needed:

- We need to form a broad coalition around an agricultural and trade policy proposal, coordinated at the international level in favour of small-scale family farming, and an ever-present strength of conviction to counterbalance the food industry lobbies in their relations with policy makers and international institutions (including the United Nations and the European Commission). This may be through the creation of a broad-based platform of all the small-scale family farming stakeholders and by setting up expert consulting agencies dedicated to promote alternative policies.
- This movement should firstly prevent the conclusion of free trade agreements affecting the trade of agricultural goods and services which are currently being negotiated (EPA, CETA, TTIP...). A statement denouncing these treaties should be drafted and offered to the greatest possible number of organisations and citizens for signing;

INTERVENTIONS

The following list is not exhaustive. We apologise to the workshop speakers and participants whose names do not appear, and invite you to contact us at the following address, to enable us to update this summary with the full list: secretariat@landaccessforum.org

Introductory interventions:

BOEHM, Terry, Farmer, former President of the National Farmers Union (NFU), Canada
BUISSON, Michel, Agronomist, Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and for Citizen Action (ATTAC), France
DAVID, Michel, Farmer, Confédération paysanne, France
HERNANDEZ, José, SlowFood Saragossa, Spain
MAZOYER, Marcel, Emeritus Professor, Agroparistech, France,
WARTENA, Sjoerd, Founder and former President of Terre de Liens, France

Interventions from participants:

BAYLAC, Michel, President of the European Association for Rural Development (AEIAR), France
BOTELLA RODRÍGUEZ, Elisa, Lecturer in Latin American Economics (PhD), University of Salamanca, Spain
DIEZ, Vera, Agronomist, Centre for International Rural and Agricultural Research (CERAI), Spain
HYEST, Emmanuel, President of the National Federation of Land Management and Rural Development (FNSAFER), France
J. ESCRICHE BUENO, Pedro, President of the Centre for International Rural and Agricultural Research (CERAI), Spain
LUNAS COSTA, Alessandra, National Federation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), Brazil
MARIANI, Maurizio, Eating Cities Project, President of the RISTECO Consortium, Italy
MUNTING, Monique, Researcher, Consultant and Filmmaker, AGTER, SCAM, Amnesty International, COTA, Belgium
PLUVINAGE, Jean, researcher, Fondation Terre de Liens, France
SUAREZ, Victor, National Association of Rural Commercialization Enterprises (ANEC) Mexico

Moderator:

Laurent Levard, Parti de Gauche, France

Rapporteur:

Raluca Batagoiu, Rural Development Consultant, Romania