

## **Building Sustainable Futures for Small-Scale Farmers Globally**

U.S. agricultural policy has become a lightning rod for criticism of U.S. economic policies worldwide. Family farmers and peasants in developing countries are suffering the effects of historically low commodity prices caused by global overproduction and the dumping of US agricultural goods on their markets at low prices. Family farmers in the U.S., meanwhile, also continue to be hurt by depressed prices and an inequitable agricultural support system that does not address their needs.

The Building Sustainable Futures for Small Farmers Globally campaign seeks to expand the public debate and change public policy on trade and agriculture. We will address the underlying causes of dumping and identify and support solutions that would serve to foster global economic development and poverty alleviation in the agriculture sector.

There is little doubt that U.S. agricultural subsidies allow the production of very cheap commodities that are then exported and “dumped” on developing countries at prices below the cost of production. But subsidies are not the only factor that leads to dumping. Market deregulation and growing concentration in the agricultural and food industries has enabled agribusiness corporations to exact low commodity prices from farmers. Depressed prices have contributed to the pressure on many farmers to overproduce, which exacerbates a cycle of low prices.

Meanwhile, low prices leave small-scale farmers in the United States vulnerable to policy changes. The elimination of U.S. farm subsidies could harm many small-scale farmers in the United States and lead to increased market concentration unless new farm policies that provide fair prices and support for small-scale farmers are put in place.

As a result, if we are to successfully tackle the challenges of depressed prices and overproduction and reform an agricultural system that creates many damaging social and environmental impacts, we believe that a comprehensive approach to agricultural reform is needed that will address the many interrelated aspects of farm policy.

### **Campaign Approach**

- Advocate for reforms of U.S. agriculture policies to reduce overproduction, low commodity prices and dumping abroad. We will develop policy proposals such as shifts in government support to sustainable energy crops; production limiting and land reserve programs; an emergency food reserve program; and policies to provide adequate, sustainable and fair prices and incomes for small farmers, including new small farm programs developed through input with domestic and international partners.
- Advance agriculture and trade policies and programs that would serve to reduce inequalities both among and within countries. Small-scale and minority-owned farmers are too often excluded from many agriculture-support programs. The Campaign for Sustainable Futures will promote the preservation of rural livelihoods both in the United States and abroad.

- Promote global trade policies that would enable local governments to ensure food sovereignty. These efforts will include coordinated work with partners in other countries to protect essential food sectors from trade liberalization in the WTO and bilateral trade agreements.
- Transform US food aid policies to promote aid for small farmers in developing countries that would enable them to become economically viable producers of their nations' food supply. Rather than requiring that food aid be sourced from US commodities, support the purchase of food from other regions within a developing country or from other nearby countries. Press for the elimination of sales of food aid, which often unfairly compete with local farmers. Document the inefficiency of current food aid programs and the effectiveness of alternative proposals.
- Build constituencies for change in U.S. agriculture and trade policies based on shared interests. Expand and strengthen connections among family farm, development, environmental, women's, religious and other communities in the United States to work for changes in US agriculture and trade policies.

### **Next Steps**

The Campaign for Sustainable Futures will develop a set of initial policy proposals that will be presented to key constituencies, including during farmer-to-farmer exchanges over the summer of 2006 in California, Wisconsin, Alabama and Mexico. These exchange events will provide a venue to discuss the concrete impacts of the current commodities crisis on U.S. and developing country farmers and to explore new ideas to address those problems. Participating farmers from all countries, as well as representatives of other relevant constituencies, will be asked to comment on alternative farm policies, including proposals developed and supported by this campaign.

The resulting proposals will be presented at a public forum to be held in Washington, DC in September 2006. They will serve as the basis for continued public educational events, materials and advocacy related to trade agreements and US agricultural policies.

### **Founders**

**ActionAid International USA** is the U.S. affiliate of ActionAid International. Located in over 40 countries worldwide, its work is organized around six thematic areas: education; HIV-AIDS; emergencies and human security; women's rights; governance; and food and hunger.

**Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund** is a thirty-eight year old membership organization with programs in 13 southern states; its offices and staff are located in Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina and Georgia.

**Friends of the Earth - U.S.** A leading national environmental advocacy organization in the United States, Friends of the Earth - U.S. also is part of the Friends of the Earth International network, the world's largest grassroots environmental federation with groups in 70 countries worldwide.

**Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy**, a 20 year old, Minneapolis-based research and advocacy that promotes resilient family farms, rural communities and ecosystems around the world through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.

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### **National Family Farm Coalition**

**Rural Coalition**, an alliance of more than 80 rural community-based organizations of African-American, Asian-American, American-Indian, Euro-American, Latino and women farmers, farm workers and rural communities in the U.S. and campesino and indigenous groups in Mexico.