



Factsheet: Farming and Trade Policy – What Is the Impact on Family Farmers?

The first U.S. Farm Bill passed in the 1930s was intended to protect our nation's farmers and stabilize agricultural markets. But subsequent Farm Bills and free trade agreements have steadily removed those protections and promoted excessive grain production for animal feedlots and the export market. The result has been that harvest prices to small farmers have dropped dramatically while food processors can buy inputs cheaply for products like corn syrup. Agribusiness profits while small farmers around the world earn less and are pitted against one another.

Farmers can't make a decent living

- The impact of these policies can be seen in the drop in the farmers' share of the retail dollar. In 1956 the farmer received 8% of the price of a box of corn flakes, but by 1979, the farmer received only 1.7% of the retail dollar. (Source: USDA Econ Service)
- In the 1930s there were close to seven million farmers in the U.S. Today, only two million remain and only one fourth of those farmers are able to support themselves on farm income alone. (Source: Farm Aid "10 Ways to Ensure Healthy Food for You and Your Family")
- Since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, farmer out-migration from Mexico (resulting from failed farms there) has skyrocketed.

The U.S. Farm Bill supports factory farms

Access to cheap grain and the government's refusal to enforce anti-trust laws have fueled the growth of giant grain corporations and livestock factory farms, also called Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Farmers are increasingly becoming contract employees for large agribusinesses, rather than independent operators.

- From 1997 to 2005 the four largest broiler chicken companies—producing more than 40 percent of all U.S. broilers – paid \$5 billion less than the cost of production for their feed. Giant hog and cattle farms and dairy feedlots also benefit from this system. (Source: George Naylor, "The 2007 Farm Bill: What We Need and Why," National Family Farm Coalition www.nffc.net)
- Each new factory farm forces 10 family farmers out of business. (Farm Aid "Factory Farms: the worst of industrial agriculture" www.farmaid.org)

Rural communities are losing local control of their economies

Local control means that locally elected officials have the power to establish policies that guide farm development, and protect health standards or local air and water quality. Yet, under pressure from large corporations and the U.S. Farm Bureau, some states are considering bills that would remove the rights of farmers and property owners to challenge factory farms.

- Iowa studies revealed that children living next to CAFOs have higher rates of asthma than do other farm children. 19.7% of children who attend schools near CAFOs had asthma, while only 7.3% of children attending school at least 10 miles from a CAFO had asthma (Source: Missouri Rural Crisis Center Factsheet: "Don't Believe the Hogwash! You deserve to know the FACTS about CAFOs, Local Control and Health Ordinances")





Factsheet: Food Sovereignty for Family Farmers Means Fair Prices and Local Control!

There is a better way! Food sovereignty is the right of nations and communities to control their own food systems. For farmers, this includes the right to fair prices, the right to produce food for local and regional markets, and true control over their lands, water, seeds and livelihoods.

Fair Prices for Farmers

Fair prices for farmers could be ensured through a U.S. Farm Bill that provides:

- A provision to make processors that use products like corn syrup pay farmers a fair price in the first place, rather than placing the burden on taxpayers to subsidize growers.
- Reserves of storable commodities to ensure food security in times of scarcity and price stability in times of plenty.
- Conservation set-asides that take land out of production when there would be an overabundance of production on the market. (Source: National Family Farm Coalition, "A Family Farm Policy Agenda" www.nffc.net)

Support for Family Farmers and Local Control for Rural Communities

- Anti-trust laws against vertically integrated agribusinesses should be strengthened and enforced to level the playing field for small and independent producers and restore truly fair and open markets. (National Family Farm Coalition "Our Food Bill in Congress" www.nffc.net)
- We've had anti-trust laws against meatpackers on the books since 1921 but they are not being enforced. Banning the ownership of livestock by meatpackers would ensure competition and prevent packers from manipulating prices. This would help ranchers and farmers remain independent and retain control of their operations. (National Family Farm Coalition www.nffc.net)
- We need to reaffirm the right of democratically elected state and local officials to regulate CAFOs. We should also enact federal legislation that makes biotechnology companies, not farmers, liable for genetic contamination. (www.nffc.net)

Fair Trade Not Free Trade

- Trade agreements should respect each country's need to provide fair prices and market access for their farmers. Food sovereignty means keeping the World Trade Organization out of agriculture.
- Ensure that all farmers, including farmers of color, have equal access to the United States Department of Agriculture farm and credit programs through effective outreach, education, fairness-in-debt restructuring and appeals. (Source: www.nffc.net)
- Increase support for farm-to-cafeteria programs and other local procurement policies that will strengthen market access for local and regional farmers and help U.S. fruit and vegetable growers.

For More Information:

U.S. Farm Bill: National Family Farm Coalition www.nffc.net

CAFOs, Local Control and Pre-emptions: Missouri Rural Crises Center www.inmotionmagazine.com/rural.html

International Food Sovereignty Movement: Via Campesina www.viacampesina.org

