



Factsheet: Why Is a New Agricultural Policy Relevant to Environmentalists?

Agricultural policy is environmental policy: In recent decades, the U.S. Farm Bill and free trade agreements have encouraged cheap imports and low prices to farmers for their basic grains. These policies have favored corporate interests over community and environmental concerns and have fostered the consolidation of our food system in the hands of a few multinational agribusinesses. Our industrialized food system consumes increasing amounts of the earth's finite resources and pushes family farmers – environmental stewards when farming agroecologically – off their lands.

Agroecology is good for the environment: When farmers are supported in using agroecological techniques—agriculture that works with, rather than against, nature – they can help solve many of the world's environmental challenges: water scarcity and pollution, soil loss and climate change. Agrobiodiversity—protecting domesticated (planted) species in addition to wild species – is a key component of agroecology and is essential to combating shrinking biodiversity.

Industrial agriculture contributes to global warming and pollution:

- With its reliance on pesticides, fertilizers, machinery, and long-distance transport, industrial agriculture is responsible for 25% of the world's greenhouse gases. (Source: The Institute of Science in Society, "Feeding the World under Climate Change" 6-10-04 <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/FTWUCC.php>)
- Below-cost animal feed has fueled the growth of factory farms, known as Confined Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs. Livestock production contributes both methane and nitrous oxide, two powerful greenhouse gases. A CAFO of 18,000 hogs can generate as much waste as the city of St. Louis. (Source: Missouri Rural Crisis Center Factsheet: "Don't Believe the Hogwash! You deserve to know the FACTS about CAFOs, Local Control and Health Ordinances")

Industrial agrofuels damage the environment

Agrofuels are touted as the green alternative to fossil-fuels and a solution to global warming. Yet the large-scale industrial model of agrofuel production promoted by agribusinesses, oil companies and governments causes more environmental problems than it solves. To meet growing fuel needs, countries – at the urging of transnational corporations – replace rainforests with plantations of soy, sugarcane, palm oil and genetically engineered trees. These biologically sterile plantations destroy biodiversity, take land out of food production, and push family farmers and indigenous peoples – effective environmental stewards – off their lands.

- Oil, grain, auto and genetic engineering corporations are forming partnerships around agrofuel production. Partnerships between ADM and Monsanto, Chevron, Weyerhaeuser and BP promise to further concentrate ownership of food and energy companies. (Source: Eric Holt-Gimenez, Food First Backgrounder: Biofuels—Myths of the Agrofuels Transition" <http://www.foodfirst.org/node/1711>)
- The logging and burning of peat bogs and rainforests to convert them to agrofuel plantations releases CO₂ and methane and destroys carbon sinks. Every ton of palm oil produced results in 33 tons of carbon dioxide emissions – 10 times more per ton than petroleum. (Source: Rainforest Action Network, "Getting Real about Biofuels" http://ran.org/campaigns/rainforest_agribusiness/spotlight/getting_real_about_biofuels/)





Factsheet: Food Sovereignty for the Environment Means Sustainable Food Systems and a Cooler Planet!

There is a better way! Food sovereignty is the right of nations and communities to define their own food and agriculture to achieve sustainable development objectives. The food sovereignty movement supports a type of agriculture called agroecology that works *with* nature, rather than against it. The movement seeks diversified agriculture that protects and advances biodiversity, small-scale farmers who identify themselves as environmental stewards, localized food systems, organic and sustainable methods and agriculture for food over fuel production.

Strong local food systems mean a smaller environmental footprint:

- Increased funding for farm-to-cafeteria programs and other local sourcing programs will encourage buying food from local farmers. Food distributed through local food programs can reduce the distance traveled by the average meal from 1,500 miles down to 45 miles. (Source: Pirog, R. T. Van Pelt, K. Enshayan and E. Cook 2001. Food, Fuel and Freeways: An Iowa Perspective on How Far Food Travels, Fuel Usage, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University)
- Conservation programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) should be linked to a farm's sustainability, not its scale of production. Circumscribing the EQIP program will control the expansion of factory farms. (Source: National Family Farm Coalition, "A Family Farm Policy Agenda," www.nffc.net)
- Increased funding for sustainable agriculture and helping farmers transition to organic will mean fewer environmental toxins in our soil and water.

Agrofuels for communities, not corporations:

- There is a place for agrofuel production if it is done correctly. This means local ownership and investment in processing facilities for domestic consumption and sustainable production methods.

For example, Cooperbio is an agricultural cooperative of 25,000 family farmers in Brazil that has proven that community-scale agrofuel production can work. Farmers plant a wide range of local crops using organic methods, combining energy crops with food crops. They currently produce 400,000 liters of agrofuels per day.

- To halt the spread of industrial agrofuels, a moratorium (http://www.grassrootsonline.org/news-publications/articles_op-eds/moratorium-agrofuels) is needed on incentives for large-scale agrofuels development, limits on the type and amount of land planted in agrofuels, and enforced anti-trust laws to prevent the further concentration of food, fuel and agriculture in the hands of a few corporations.

Seed sovereignty not GMO's in agriculture:

- At its most basic level, the right to define food production means the right to save seed and to keep our agricultural and forestry resources safe from the unintended consequences of genetically engineered organisms.
- The food sovereignty movement calls for keeping genetically engineered organisms out of agriculture, and reversing the World Trade Organization's Trade-Related Agreement on Intellectual Property (TRIPS), which gives corporations the right to patent life forms.

For more information on sustainable agriculture, agrofuels and climate justice:

Rainforest Action Network: www.RAN.org

Friends of the Earth: www.foe.org

Global Justice Ecology: www.globaljusticeecology.org

