

Module Four

Food Sovereignty for Small Farmers and Farmworkers





Farmer Reflection Exercise: How Did We Get Here? Understanding the Policies that Created Industrial Agriculture – And How We Can Change Them

▶▶ Introduction

This exercise asks participants to make connections between policies or events that have shaped our food system as well as their own lives – connections they may not normally see. It also prompts people to share personal stories so they can discover common experiences and interests and how they are agents of change. Finally, it asks them to think internationally by seeing how some of the same food-related policies and events that have affected communities in the North may also have affected farmers and communities in the Global South.

 **Time: 90 minutes**

Materials needed

- Several large pieces of newsprint taped together for timeline (about 3 pieces for every 5 people)
- An additional 3 or 4 pieces of newsprint
- Photocopies of historical events (see Module 4, p. 3)
- Colored markers and tape
- Four handouts: *Food Sovereignty for Farmers Factsheet* located at the end of this module and copies of the Evaluation Form, *What I/We Can Do*, and *Principles of Food Sovereignty* (see Overview, pages 15, 16 and 17)

Preparation

- Make one blank timeline for each small group (each group should have 3 - 5 people). Do this by taping a few pieces of newsprint together and drawing a thick, horizontal line through the middle that indicates the timeline.
- Write the questions below (in procedure # 3) on a sheet of newsprint.

Procedure

1. Ask people to break into small groups of 3 - 5 people. Make sure the oldest folks, or the people with the most lived experience, are scattered among different groups, as they may have lived through some of the events described in this exercise.
2. *Making the timelines / 30 min.:* Explain that groups have been given a lengthy list of historical events. The groups should look these over and select no more than 6 for transcription – the ones that are most meaningful to them or the ones they know about – and write these up on their timeline. The list provided includes just some of the significant events that have affected agriculture and food production in the last few decades – it is by no means comprehensive. Importantly, each group should also choose additional food-related policies, people and events (especially state and local policies/events) that have most affected their lives or communities, and write them on the timeline as well.



Farmer Reflection Exercise, continued

↔ Procedure, continued

3. Beneath each event/policy, participants should add a few words or phrases that describe how the event or policy affected them or their communities. These should be discussed within the group. Questions they might want to consider are:

- How did this policy/event affect me?
- How did I/we affect the policy or event?
- How did it affect other parts of my community – schools or local businesses, for example?
- Did these policies/events move us towards or away from local control of our food supply?
- How did people respond to these policies/events? Did they try to resist or change them?

Remind people that it's important to include positive as well as negative impacts.

4. *Gallery walk / 5 - 10 min.:* Explain that people will have 5 - 10 minutes to do a “gallery walk” to look at the timelines created by the different groups. Ask people to consider the following questions:

- What common themes emerge from among the timelines?
- What are some of the common political, economic and social forces behind the events and policies?
- Which of the events or policies might have affected farmers in other parts of the world?
- Over which of these events or policies have we been able to propose or make effective change?

5. *Discussion and sharing of food / 30 min.:* Back in plenary, ask people to zero in on the people, policies or events that seemed most commonly mentioned across the timelines, and how these people, policies and events might have impacted farmers in other countries. The facilitator can fill out their responses on newsprint, using this matrix:

1. Policy/Event/Person (make a star if someone in your group had some positive influence here)	2. Impact on farmers in U.S.	3. Impact on farmers in Global South

Then ask people to reflect:

- How do these timelines make you feel?
- Where do you see signs of hope?
- How have you or your group/community contributed to making history?
- What are examples of farmers and allies in the U.S. working together in their common interest? What about farmers from different countries working together with allies in their common interest?
- If you could see into the future, what events or policies would you like to put on the timeline that would have a positive effect on farmers and consumers everywhere?

6. *Closing / 5 min.:* Hand out the *Food Sovereignty for Farmers* factsheet and the *Principles of Food Sovereignty*. Briefly go over the principles and encourage folks to remember they can/are making history in their work. Engage in the Wrap-Up Exercise (see Overview, p. 14) and leave enough time for people to fill out the evaluation forms.



List of Possible Policies and Events for Timeline

1920s

- Farmers demand government involvement in agricultural policy
- Rubber tires, tractors displace draft animals
- 1922: Copper/Volstead Act passed: farmers and ranchers able to legally form cooperative associations
- 1929: Depression hits, Dust Bowl: migration from Midwest to California

1930s

- Franklin Delano Roosevelt is president
- Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans photographs feature tenant farmers
- Corn hybrids become widespread
- 1933: Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, passed as part of New Deal: initiates crop and marketing controls, and allows many farmers to survive Depression
- 1935: Soil Conservation Act passes

1940s

- 1941: Stegall Amendment provides for price support to expand production of non-basic commodities
- National School Lunch Act signed
- Research and Marketing Act provides for research in improving marketing and distribution of agricultural products
- 1948: United Nations founded, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) established
- 1949: First Farm Bill authorized to protect farmers and stabilize rural economies; establishes price floors, non-recourse loans and grain reserves to manage supply and guarantee farm income

1950s

- Fossil fuel-based pesticide and fertilizer use becomes widespread
- Civil Rights Movement
- Food farm inspections increased – upgrades in hygiene and food safety required
- Farmers' unions persecuted because of claims of communism and lack of war support
- 1954: Dwight Eisenhower signs Public Law 480: for funding the purchase of U.S. food for overseas aid to expand exports of our agricultural products



Timeline, continued

1960s

- *Silent Spring* written by Rachel Carson; beginning of environmental movement
- Green Revolution initiated, promoting high yielding seeds that depend on high inputs
- 1962: Caesar Chavez founds United Farm Workers (UFW)
- 1963: Clean Air Act established; affects emissions from farms
- 1964: Food Stamp Act passed
- 1965: UFW starts consumer grape boycott to fight for higher wages for farmworkers

1970s

- Beginning of alternative sustainable agriculture with no middlemen (farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture or "CSA's")
- Arab Oil Embargo
- Earl Butz, Secretary of USDA, encourages farmers to plant "fencerow to fencerow"
- 1973 Farm Bill: promotes increasing instead of controlling production
- 1975: Kent and Diane Whealy found Seed Savers Exchange
- 1977: American Agriculture Movement forms to protest farmers being paid prices below cost of production

1980s

- Financial crises for farms due to heavy debt loads
- Railroad and trucking industries deregulated
- Farmers Home Administration oversees loan foreclosures
- First Farm Aid rally staged to draw attention to the plight of family farms
- Border Agricultural Workers founded to help farmworkers improve their wages, working and living conditions
- 1980: Bayh-Doyles Act: Allows crop research done at land grant universities to be 'bought' by corporations and patented; spurs growth of biotech industry
- 1985 Farm Bill: (Food Security Act) lowers government farm supports, promotes exports, and sets up the Conservation Reserve Program
- 1986: National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) founded
- Chapter 12 - Bankruptcy Relief for Family Farmers enacted
- Uruguay Round of GATT begun, lasts until 1994, results in establishment of World Trade Organization (WTO)
- Concerns about Alar in apple juice prompt increased interest in organics
- 1988: Organic farming standards
- 1989: Carlo Petrini founds Slow Food Movement in Italy



Timeline, continued

1990s

- Mad cow disease raises consumer awareness of factory farms
- E.coli contamination acknowledged in industrial food system
- Monsanto buys up dozens of smaller seed companies
- Threats of new plant diseases and pests such as Asian soybean rust, soybean aphids, herbicide resistant weeds, etc.
- Indian activist Vandana Shiva advocates seed sovereignty
- World takes note of tens of thousands of small-farmer suicides in India due to high debt; mass demonstrations against Cargill
- Coalition of Immokalee Workers formed; wins anti-slavery case for Florida farmworkers
- Wal-Mart spreads, competing with independently-owned businesses
- Introduction of genetically modified seeds: Bt corn and RoundUp Ready
- Concern about Confined Animal Feeding Operations grows
- Consolidation of railroad lines leaves rural farmers and elevators without transportation options
- Food imports from China double
- 1990 Farm Bill adds:
 - Organic Act
 - Provisions for minority farmers rights
 - Extension agents on Indian reservations
- 1990: Cary Fowler and Pat Mooney publish *Shattering*, documenting loss of genetic diversity in agriculture
- 1992: Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity signed to conserve and ensure sustainable use of biodiversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources; includes Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, allowing countries to ban imports of genetically modified organisms
- 1994: In southern Mexico, EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) rises up against NAFTA and globalization
- Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) allows patenting of life forms
- Posilac / rBST / rBGH approved by Food and Drug Administration
- FDA approves FLAVRSAVR tomato, first whole food produced through biotechnology
- International network of small farmers – the Via Campesina – is founded
- 1996: USDA officially admits that it discriminated against minority producers
- 1996 Farm Bill:
 - Removes price floors and production controls in favor of a free market model
 - Wildlife Habitats Incentives Program (WHIP) creates cost-sharing program for farmers to devote land to wildlife
- 1998: Record low hog prices – down to \$8 per hundredweight



Timeline, continued

1990s, continued

- 1998: European nations pass moratorium on genetically modified crops; overridden by WTO
- 1999: Battle of Seattle to protest World Trade Organization (WTO), release of Farmer Declaration on Genetically Engineered Products
- Monsanto accuses Percy Schmeiser of illegally saving and replanting patented biotech seed

2000s

- Via Campesina begins U.S. involvement
- Starlink corn contamination discovered
- 9/11 raises fears about “food security”
- Increase in price for diesel fuel and fertilizer prices
- 2001: *Fast Food Nation* published
- 2002 Farm Bill:
 - Country of Origin Labeling passed, but industry lobbyists persuade Congress to delay implementation until 2008 for all foods except seafood
 - Conservation Security Program provides landowners with incentives for incorporating conservation practices
- 2005: Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) defeated
- U.S. and Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) agreement passes
- 2006: National Animal Identification System (NAIS) introduced
- Michael Pollan’s ground-breaking book, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, published
- Eat Local movement takes off
- Rice farmers in the U.S. south sue Bayer over Liberty Link GMO rice
- Global Summit on Food Sovereignty held in Mali, West Africa
- 2007 Farm Bill passes: How does it affect you?

Much of this list was generated as part of a workshop/training held at the NFFC Summer Meeting – 2005, facilitated by the Beehive Collective

Additional Sources: USDA-CSREES, Agriculture in the Classroom program “A history of American Agriculture” timeline www.agclassroom.org/gan/timeline/index.htm; Schmeiser, “Monsanto vs. Schmeiser” www.percyschmeiser.com; Rural Coalition, “Brief Background and History of the US Farm Bill: 1949 to Present” www.ruralco.org/library/admin/uploadedfiles/Farmbill_History.doc; George Naylor, personal comments; Iowa State University, “History of the Farm Bill” www.public.iastate.edu/~tbuckley/NREM%20385/history_of_the_farm_bill.htm; Prairie Public “Public Policy in Agriculture” www.prairiepublic.org/features/changing/pastpolicy.htm; American Agriculture Movement “History of the American Agriculture Movement” www.aaminc.org/history.htm; “History and Outlook for Farm Bill Conservation Programs by Zachary Cain and Stephen Lovejoy, Choices Magazine,” www.choicesmagazine.org/2004-4/policy/2004-4-09.htm



Farmer Action Exercise: Mapping the Political Landscape

▶▶ Introduction

This exercise involves political analysis, organizing and alliance building – important steps in movement building. It asks participants to identify who has power (targets) and how they are using it. Participants identify decision-makers standing in the way of food sovereignty and actors helping us move towards food sovereignty.

This exercise can be done in two different ways. **Option I: Drawing Power Maps** is the most straightforward, takes the least amount of time, and is the easiest option for facilitators who are not familiar with “clumping” sticky notes. **Option II: Sticky Note Power Map** is a little more complicated but can lead to richer discussions and analysis.

 **Time: 60 - 90 minutes**

Materials needed

- Both options: newsprint, markers and tape
- Option II: large (4 x 6 inch) sticky notes and colored sticky dots for voting
- Copies of Evaluation Forms and *What I/We Can Do* sheets (see Overview, pages 15 and 16)

Preparation

Depending on the group you are working with, it's probably best to focus on *one* aspect of food sovereignty – an aspect that the group is grappling with. That is, it's not possible to organize for food sovereignty in its totality – it must be broken down into smaller campaigns. For example, anti-dumping legislation, breaking up of Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's), genetic engineering of seeds, and creating farmers' markets, etc. You might need to talk with some people in the group beforehand to find out what issues they are most concerned about.

Procedure

Option I: Drawing Power Maps 45 - 60 min.

1. Ask people to break into small group of no more than 5 people per group. Give each group newsprint and markers.
2. *20 min.:* Tell participants their task is to draw a map or diagram of the political landscape that surrounds their particular issue. This means they should first identify the three most important actors or players involved in this struggle (3 each for opposition, targets, and allies). Then they should draw lines indicating the relationships between these different actors and the participants' own relationship/access to these actors. The message here is that participants will need to influence these actors and enlist the support of allies in order to create policy change, thus it is important to map all relationships. Encourage people to let their creative juices flow – the map or drawing does not have to be boring!
3. *10 min.:* When people are done, have them post their maps on the wall and do a short gallery walk (people walk around, observing everyone's map).



Farmer Action Exercise, continued

↳ Procedure, continued

4. *15 - 30 min.:* Facilitate a full group discussion on what folks learned from the exercise and how understanding the political landscape of their issue might help them strategize. Record the answers on newsprint. Share locally grown or fairly traded food and drinks.

Possible questions for discussion:

- Was it easy or difficult to identify targets and allies?
- Where are the opportunities for change?
- What are the most important 3 next steps we could take to influence the allies and opposition described in these maps (e.g. lobbying, research, education, base building...)?
- What actions seem the *most necessary*?
- What actions might be the *easiest* to take?
- If the group is considering a campaign: when can we engage in systematic campaign planning? Are there other advocacy groups out there already involved in a campaign of this nature? Could we join them?

Option II: Sticky Note Power Map 60 min.

1. Before the workshop, put up some sheets of newsprint on the wall. You will be attaching the sticky notes to these. If you have a large group, you may want to have people break into small groups of no more than 10 people each. If you do this however, you will need someone to facilitate each small group, and you should include a gallery walk so people can look at each others' sticky maps.
2. *5 - 10 min.:* Participants should brainstorm the actors standing in the way of their goal. They should put the name of each actor (potential target) on a sticky note. The actors can be working at any level – local, federal, or international – but folks should try to name actual *people*, e.g. a specific county official, the shareholders of Monsanto, the leaders of the G8 countries, etc.
3. *2 - 3 min.:* As people are shouting out actors, record them and stick the names onto the newsprint. When it seems as if the most of the actors have been identified, rearrange the sticky notes so that actors are clumped together by category. Label the categories. You should do this very quickly. For example, you might clump them by type of institution – corporation, government, social group – or by scale – local, national, international. The point is that by grouping them, you can begin to see relationships between people and institutions, and this will affect strategies to bring about change.
4. *5 - 10 min.:* Starting with fresh sheets of newsprint, ask people to brainstorm actors who are *helping* to move our struggle forward (potential allies) or who could help. Who are our allies and potential allies? Again, these can be at the local, national or international level. Make sure to put yourselves on this power map. Where do you fit?
5. *5 min.:* Once the group has identified most of the important allies, you can ask them to help you clump them by category. Again, try to do this fairly quickly without getting bogged down in debate about the categories; the point is to see relationships, not determine whether this is the best way to clump them. Label the categories.
6. *30 min.:* If you have broken into small groups, have everyone come back into plenary. Pose the questions for discussion listed under Option I: Drawing Maps. Record the answers.
7. *5 min.:* Engage in the Wrap-Up Exercise (see Overview, p. 14) and leave enough time to for people to fill out the evaluation forms.



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

