



In whose hands?

Food sovereignty – putting people and planet before profit

Food is a basic need. There is more than enough safe and healthy food to feed the world. Yet one in seven people globally can't get enough to eat. This leaflet explores the right of people to define their own food and agricultural policies – ensuring access to adequate, healthy, locally produced food that offers rural people a living wage and preserves the environment. Rich nations should not be allowed to dictate corporate-driven food and agricultural policies that undermine sustainable development around the world.

Friends of the Earth supports food sovereignty
To take action visit www.foe.co.uk/trade



**Friends of
the Earth**



People first

In many parts of the developing world, securing enough food depends on having access to natural resources including land, seeds and fish.

In the global food economy communities are struggling to compete with large transnational corporations for access to basic needs – and our environment is also losing out.

Large-scale intensive agriculture often uses pesticides, damages soil and is harmful to biodiversity. Small-scale local farming can be better for the land. It also reduces the distance food travels, lessening its contribution to climate change.

Leading the way

In some parts of the world, people have been taking back control of their food supply – from allotments to co-operative farms, from seed banks to GM-free zones.

The price of the global trade in food should not be hunger and environmental destruction

Food sovereignty is about people taking control over their food and agriculture. Friends of the Earth believes that countries and communities should be able to:

- decide their own food and agricultural policies
- choose locally produced GM-free food
- support family farmers and their domestic markets.



"Farmers in Ghana are already suffering. They cannot compete with the cheap produce being imported from overseas. How are farmers in this country supposed to make a living – and feed their families – if our markets are flooded with cheap rice and poultry?"

George Awudi, Friends of the Earth International's Trade Co-ordinator for Africa

Dumping on the poor

In Africa the global food trading system is creating problems for farmers.

Rich countries are dumping subsidised food on African markets – often at very low prices. This makes it impossible for local farmers to compete.

Europe has proposed Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with some of the world's poorest countries. These signal even greater market access for European corporations – threatening the livelihoods of millions of farmers in the developing world, particularly throughout Africa.

Friends of the Earth believes that new rules are needed in the world trading system to allow countries to protect their farmers and agriculture – and stop agri-business destroying livelihoods.



GM is not the answer

Family farmers in poor countries depend on traditional seed-saving methods to feed their communities. Genetically-modified (GM) seeds prevent this.

Biotech companies patent and take control over the seed supply which forces farmers to buy new seeds every year. This has led to huge debts for many farmers in the developing world, driving some to suicide.

But attempts by Monsanto and other biotech companies to open up new markets in the South, promoting GM crops as the solution to hunger and poverty, have met with resistance.

Food aid scare

In Zambia farmers rejected food aid donated by the World Food Programme because it contained GM maize. Instead, locally-grown cassava was donated to areas where food was scarce.

GM rice from the United States has now been found in food aid in Ghana and Sierra Leone. GM-contaminated rice has also been detected in European supermarkets, including in the UK where consumer resistance has stopped GM from getting a foothold.

Friends of the Earth supports the rights of communities to choose GM-free seeds, crops, livestock and food.



Solange lives in a co-operative farm with 22 other families. She is married and has three children.

“Movimento Sem Terra campaigns for agricultural reform through land redistribution to combat hunger in Brazil. We carry out sustainable family farming – growing healthy, organic food free from GMOs and pesticides rather than producing food for export.”

Reclaiming the land in Brazil

In rural Brazil most of the land is owned by big companies and rich landowners taking advantage of export-led agriculture, as promoted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Meanwhile millions of poor farmers attempt to make a living from tiny plots.

Building communities

The Landless Workers' Movement, MST (Movimento Sem Terra), has been challenging this situation, by moving on to agricultural land which is not being used (such peaceful occupation is allowed under Brazilian law).

MST can then establish communities by setting up co-operative farms, schools and housing. More than 250,000 families have been successfully resettled in this way.

MST – a key member of Via Campesina (the global alliance of family farmers and indigenous peoples) – is an inspiring example of people taking control over their food and agriculture.



The power is in our hands

Take action

The World Forum for Food Sovereignty in Mali, February 2007, created a unique opportunity for individuals, small farmers and grassroots organisations from around the world to take steps to establish control over food and agriculture.

Communities, many of whom have gained little from global markets, are challenging the root causes of poverty, hunger and environmental damage.

Friends of the Earth is championing food sovereignty. For it to become a real solution we need:

- new trade rules to protect communities and the environment
- a global framework for corporate regulation
- the right for countries and communities to decide whether GM foods are grown or imported.

To take action go to www.foe.co.uk/trade

Community farming, Mauritania - Clive Shirley / Panos Pictures
Front cover: Simon Rawles / Friends of the Earth

Making life better for people by inspiring solutions to environmental problems

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