

HUNGRY FOR JUSTICE?

Stopping world hunger and poverty begins in your school's dining hall

Increased yields from industrial agriculture and its "Green Revolution" were supposed to bring an end to worldwide hunger and poverty. In reality, consumption has increased in wealthy nations, while the world's 800 million hungry and malnourished have become victims of this "revolution." As transnational corporations take control in developing countries, traditional farmers suffer. Farmers are forced to sell their land and work for low pay on large plantations. Food security is also in jeopardy. Communities are losing control of their food supply, as people must buy food instead of growing it. Many experience hunger and poverty and the food that's produced gets exported to wealthier nations.

- There is a growing gap between the rich and the poor. The wealthiest fifth of the world's people consume 86% of all goods and services, while the poorest fifth consumes one percent (*United Nations*, 2002).
- Seventy-eight percent of all malnourished children under the age of five in the developing world live in countries with food surpluses—surpluses that are exported. India ranks near the top among third-world agricultural exporters, and yet more than a third of the world's 800 million hungry live there (*Andrew Kimbrell*, 2002).
- In the case of several of the biggest Green Revolution successes—India, Mexico, and the Philippines—grain production and in some cases, exports, have climbed, while hunger has persisted and the long-term productive capacity of the soil has degraded (*Food First*, 2002).
- Local farmers in Third World economies are forced to compete with cheap, government-subsidized food dumped there from wealthy grain-exporting countries. This drives down farm prices, forcing small, indigenous farmers to sell their property and concentrates more farm land in the hands of a few (*Food First*, 2002).

Promote a more just world food system by starting at home

Fighting hunger and resolving the plight of small farmers worldwide begins with the food you choose to eat. Buying local food not only keeps money out of the pockets of wealthy global corporations, but it upholds the worldwide tradition of family farms. Such traditional farms can lessen world hunger and poverty by helping people feed themselves.

- USDA data shows that small farms in the US are many times more productive (in dollars per acre) than large ones (*USDA*, 1992). Similarly, a study of fifteen countries in the third world showed that relatively smaller farms are 2 to 10 times more productive than larger ones (*Cornia*, 1985). Economists now widely recognize this as the "inverse relationship between farm size and output" (*Barret*, 1993; *Ellis*, 1993; etc).
- Independent farming can feed the world. Once traditional farmers are given back sovereignty of their land, farming will once again be profitable, increasing the cash flow in local economies, improving the job market and decreasing hunger and poverty worldwide.

What can I do?

- Start a Farm to College project; get your university to buy food from small local farmers.
- Vote with your food dollar—*Buy Local Food!* Shop at a local farmers market, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm, or farm stand. Also encourage your local grocery stores and area restaurants to purchase more of their products from local farmers.
- Visit www.foodroutes.org for more tools, tips, and resources and to find a farmer or local food outlet near you.

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