

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS:

You care about where your clothing comes from —what about your food?

In our global economic system, consumers are clueless as to the origins of most everything they own. Shoppers, for instance, do not know that low-paid sweatshop workers made the clothes they buy. Likewise, the US food system hides the economic injustices perpetrated by wealthy agribusinesses at the expense of local family farmers, local communities, and farm laborers. Consider:

- Today four firms control over 80 percent of beef slaughter in the US (*Henrickson-Heffernan, 2002*).
- 95 percent of American consumers' food is now manufactured by corporations (*Al Krebs, 2002*).
- The ten largest US based multinational corporations account for over half of the sales of food and beverages to the United States (*Thomas A. Lyson & Annalisa Lewis Raymer, 2000*).
- Corporate agribusiness profits increased 98 percent during the 1990s; meanwhile, in 2002 farmers earned their lowest real net cash income since 1940 (*USDA, 2000 & 2002*).
- Modern industrial agriculture is making farming unprofitable for many. "For more than 60 percent of farm households in 1998, farming actually lowered the household's before tax-income" (*USDA, 2002*).
- Due to corporate pressure to "get big or get out," we have lost nearly 67% of our farms since 1920. There are now more prisoners in the US than full-time farmers (*USDA, 2002; Leopold Center, 2001*).
- In 1999 the median hourly wage for U.S. farm workers was \$6.05 with a median annual wage of \$12,150, well below the current poverty level (*Al Krebs, 2002*).

Economic justice: the local solution

Local, sustainable, family farms provide a more economically just system for everyone. By purchasing food from local farmers at competitive prices, you bring economic prosperity to your farmer, create local jobs, and strengthen the economic base of your community.

- Buying local food reduces the portion of your food dollar going to corporate agribusiness and gives farmers a fairer share, allowing them to stay profitable.
- Buying local food increases the circulation of your food dollars locally, in effect "creating" money and economic prosperity in your region.
- Buying local food gives economic control back to your community in the face of globalization and provides an agricultural system that distributes food more fairly.
- Buying local food contributes to a diverse local economy, dampening the effects of global economic recessions.

What can I do?

- Start a Farm to College project to get your university to buy food from local farmers.
- Vote with your food dollar—*Buy Local Food and Buy Fair Trade Products!* 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.

