

NEWS *and* VIEWS

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GET ON THE BUS!

JOIN THE CALIFORNIA ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS BUS TOUR

To build a national movement for economic human rights in the United States, Food First is organizing the 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour in California, to be held from May 29 to 31. This follow-up to our successful 1999 Georgia Bus Tour will draw public attention to growing poverty and hunger in this country, and the powerful grassroots campaigns that address these injustices. We are pleased to be joined in this effort by the fifty-four member Congressional Progressive Caucus and more than two hundred organizations from across the country.

Representative John Conyers called Food First's 1999 tour "the most important thing I've done this year." With this in mind, the 2001 tour will again bring congressional representatives, state legislators, local officials, and the national media on the bus. They will hear first-hand testimonies and policy recommendations, emphasizing the need for bolder initiatives and a greater community role in policy making.

The tour will highlight campaigns for justice in California and expand the call for economic human rights to a national level. Planned stops include a kickoff event at the St. Mary's Center in Oakland, a downtown Oakland walking tour hosted by Building Opportunities for Self

FOOD FIRST

398 60th Street, Oakland, CA 94618

Phone: (510) 654-4400

Fax: (510) 654-4551

Email: foodfirst@foodfirst.org

Web site: www.foodfirst.org

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www.focusweb.org

FOOD FIRST empowers citizens to address the root causes of hunger, poverty, and environmental decline. Our research and educational materials reveal how anti-democratic institutions and belief systems promote hunger and environmental destruction.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR REAL LAND REFORM

On February 3–5, 2001, Food First hosted a meeting in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, of four organizations working on the struggle for land and true agrarian reform in the Third World. The National Land Committee from South Africa, the Center for Global Justice from Brazil, our sister institute Focus on the Global South from Thailand, and Food First met to strategize on how to support grassroots movements fighting for access and control over land in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

A major issue that cropped up repeatedly is the World Bank's push for 'land market' policies in many countries. Despite Bank rhetoric to the contrary, most on-the-ground movements see these policies as making it harder for the poor to get land. Fancy policy studies by the Bank rain down on government officials, extolling the virtues of the official policy packages. Landless movements have issued a call for committed researchers and analysts to respond to Bank studies with carefully conducted, more objective research results and analyses.

With that in mind, our four organizations agreed to convene the Land Research Action Network (LRAN) to link activist researchers with each other and with grassroots movements. This network will effectively mobilize their intellectual work where it is most needed, to empower the land access movements.

The event received wide coverage in the Mexican national press. In addition to the working sessions, visitors and Mexican experts gave public presentations, which were enthusiastically received by a broad array of local Chiapas activists, organizers, researchers, and policy makers. In the coming months a LRAN Web page will be created, and we will begin to build the network.



PHOTO BY JOSUE RAMIREZ

Food First co-director Peter Rosset at the February land reform meeting in Chiapas.

OPPOSING GENETIC ENGINEERING AROUND THE WORLD

In February 2001, Anuradha Mittal, co-director of Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, presented testimony and answered questions by the Royal Commission on Genetic Engineering (GE) in New Zealand on the social and economic impact of biotechnology on Third World communities and farmers. Ms Mittal was a part of a team of experts from around the world assembled by Greenpeace New Zealand. Greenpeace made the case that at the conclusion of its year-long hearings the Royal Commission should recommend to the New Zealand government that they enact laws to make the country GE-free.

Markets for GE foods are collapsing around the world as the many problems of this technology are at last coming to light. New Zealand's civil society sought international expertise and experience to present to the commission, so that the same mistakes are not made in their country. The public is overwhelmingly against the adoption of genetic engineering. A recent survey found that 70 percent of New Zealand farmers believed the future of farming lay with organic production and only 15 percent thought the future was with genetic engineering.

The Royal Commission was set up by New Zealand's new Labor government to inquire into the role GE products and technologies may play in the country's future. Parallel to this process, on June 15, 2000 the government declared a voluntary moratorium on field and commercial releases of GE organisms.

Food First's testimony focused on how the pro-GE corporate lobby wants to use hunger, 'poor washing,' and 'green washing' as levers to pry open markets for their products in the Third World. Like the Green Revolution, genetic engineering is likely to further disrupt environmental diversity, long standing agricultural practices, and the use of the local seed varieties that small farmers rely upon. Farmers will then be forced to buy expensive GE seeds they will not be able to easily afford, pushing them further away from self sufficiency.

Food First made the case that even the most hungry countries have enough food to feed their people right now. The problem is one of access and distribution, not production. According to our research, enough food is produced in the world to provide every person with about 4.3 pounds of food per day. Genuine land reform and a living wage will end hunger, not biotechnology.

Our Royal Commission witness statement is available at:
www.foodfirst.org/progs/global/biotech/rci-brief.html

For more information on the Royal Commission, see:

www.foodfirst.org/progs/global/biotech/rci-ge.html

FUNDRAISING FOR 2000-2001

During our 25th anniversary year, our goal is to raise \$600,000 from individual member contributions. As we pass the three quarter mark of the fiscal year, we just need \$60,000 in tax deductible donations to reach our goal. If you have not given to Food First recently, sending your gift now will help us meet this goal. Even if you have given recently, here's your chance to further strengthen Food First's current program work.

BUS TOUR...

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Sufficiency (BOSS), of low income workers' housing that is slated for destruction and business development, the Day Laborers' Center in San Francisco, and the fields of Salinas to witness the United Farm Workers' fight for fundamental economic human rights to safe working conditions and access to basic health care.

Assaults on our country's working poor continue to accelerate, and the California Economic Human Rights Bus Tour is a timely and dynamic opportunity to strengthen our networks in support of justice. Join us in demanding economic human rights in the United States.

To support and participate in the California Bus Tour and our domestic campaign, *Economic Human Rights: The Time Has Come!*, please contact us at humanrights@foodfirst.org or call (510) 654-4400.

LEAVE A LEGACY

It's simple to include Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy in your will. You have the option of specifying a certain amount of assets (stocks, bonds, CDs) or real estate, and such gifts often reduce estate taxes. For assistance or more information, call Marilyn Borchardt, development director, at (510) 654-4400, ext. 234 or drop her a note at marbor@foodfirst.org

TO JOIN FOOD FIRST

Join Food First and Tell Your Friends

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Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, 398 60th Street, Oakland, CA 94618

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