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New Food First Backgrounder Highlights Five Global Threats to Family Farmers

Special Issue publication for the International Year of Family Farming

OAKLAND, Calif., Mar. 13, 2014 – On November 22, 2013, the United Nations launched the International Year of Family Farming - IYFF (2014) with the goal of highlighting “the potential family farmers have to eradicate hunger, preserve natural resources and promote sustainable development.” The IYFF is justifiably billed as a long-overdue “celebration” of family farming’s persistent contributions to development, food security and ecological resilience. Nonetheless, it comes at a time when family farmers worldwide face perhaps the steepest challenges ever to their survival.

A new Backgrounder published by Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy based in Oakland, CA, highlights five of the most severe threats family farmers face today: land grabs and lack of access to land; trade liberalization and financial deregulation; militarism and the criminalization of farmers’ movements; global climate change; and “top-down” development schemes that fail to address the real needs and realities of family farmers and rural communities.

Among the specific threats identified by the report are new trade and investment deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) due to be adopted by twelve Pacific Rim states, and the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA) between the US and the European Union. These agreements, notes report author Tanya Kerksen, threaten to override national laws—such as land-use guidelines and regulations on genetically modified organisms (GMOs)—that protect family farmers. Those who stand to benefit most, says Kerksen, “are the large industrial farmers and the corporate seed, feed and trading giants like Monsanto, Cargill and ADM.”

Food First’s Executive Director Eric Holt-Giménez commented: “Unlike much of the flood of celebratory ink being spilled over the International Year of Family Farming, Tanya Kerksen minces no words about the struggles family farmers face to provide 70 percent of the world’s food.” Kerksen is the Research Coordinator at Food First and author of the 2013 book *Grabbing Power: The New Struggles for Land, Food and Democracy in Northern Honduras*.

With a 38-year reputation for hard-hitting analysis of the global food system, Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy has been called one of the country’s “most established food think tanks” by the New York Times. Food First Backgrounders are widely used in university courses and community reading groups around the world. This Special Issue Backgrounder for the International Year of Family Farming confirms Food First’s position as a leading voice guiding a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by both food producers and consumers worldwide.

This Special Issue Food First Backgrounder can be downloaded for free by visiting:

<http://foodfirst.org/publication/five-global-threats-to-the-survival-of-family-farms-in-the-international-year-of-family-farming/>

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