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International Tug of War Over How to End Hunger

By Eric Holt-Giménez

Dublin was unusually sunny and warm last May when the High Level Task Force (HLTF) on the global food security crisis held a consultation at the Malahide resort just north of the city. Dr. David Nabarro, coordinator of the High Level Task Force sought comments from civil society organizations on the Comprehensive Framework for Action to end hunger (CFA). The CFA, hastily written a year ago by a team of experts from 23 bureaucracies within the U.N. system, is a multilateral attempt to create a plan to deal with the growing global food crisis.



Farmers in the *Campeño a Campeño* movement work together for sustainable agriculture, see story on page 2
photo: R. Bunch

Dr. Nabarro, an energetic showman, literally took off his coat and tie and rolled up his sleeves before some 100 representatives from farmer's organizations, think tanks, non-profits, human rights and food security organizations from around the world. It was a lively two days of struggle around just how the South's food systems will be rebuilt, who will pay, and who will actually benefit. Getting this right will largely determine whether or not world hunger—now increasing by 100 million people a year—will ever be ended.

Who participated in the Dublin Dialogue and who didn't, speaks reams about the deep divide over how to end hunger. *La Vía Campesina*, the international peasant organization fighting for the rights of farmers, pastoralists and fishers around the world, refused to attend; sending a scathing letter denouncing the Dialogue as merely "an exercise of style... to get comments on a set of preset replies." *Vía's* letter quickly got to the point:

"[For the CFA] the solutions to the food insecurity are global market, increase in productivity and investments in agriculture by means of industrial inputs and technology, reduction of tariff barriers allowing for a greater circulation of goods, a quick conclusion to the Doha round, and development of private investments to produce agrofuels in developing countries. The goal is to transform peasant agriculture into industrial agriculture as quickly as possible. Yet for many organizations from civil society, those so-called answers are the very causes of the critical food situations encountered by many countries."

Most of the participants in the Dialogue (as well as many of the organizers, and possibly even Dr. Nabarro himself) agreed on the need to curb global markets and prioritize investments in agroecology over GMOs. Most wanted agriculture out of the WTO and believe Southern countries need to protect their farmers from U.S. and E.U.'s decades-long policy of dumping surplus grain on their national markets. There was much said against both land grabbing and the spread of agrofuels.

But it soon became very clear that this Dialogue would not get the High Level Task Force to drop their assumptions that the global market is the solution rather than the cause of hunger, and priority must be given to the private sector rather than public institutions. The Task Force has yet to seriously address the rash of land grabbing and is unable to control the expansion of agrofuels. Despite the Dublin Dialogue, the HLTF is unwilling (or unable)

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The Institute for Food and Development Policy - known as Food First - is a member-supported, nonprofit "peoples' " think tank and education-for-action center. Our work highlights the root causes and value-based solutions to hunger and poverty around the world, with a commitment to establishing food as a fundamental human right.

to allow civil society—the thousands of farmers organizations and civil society organizations actually working on the ground—to play a lead role in the fight against hunger. Everything is up for dialogue, but, as it turns out, few things can be negotiated.

This is because Dr. Nabarro and the High Level Task Force (a team of bureaucrats with no budgetary or decision-making power), for all their good intentions, cannot stray far from the mandates of the World Bank—whose bureaucrats were conspicuously absent from the Dialogue. To do so would result in rejection. By whom? Most likely by the GAFSP-The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program.

The GAFSP is the multilateral trust-fund being set up by the U.S., Canada and Spain under the leadership of the World Bank to span the gap between the \$40 billion a year needed to end hunger, the \$20 billion promised by the G-8 countries, and the \$14 billion that is actually forthcoming on these promises. The GAFSP framework is based on the World Bank's 2008 World Development Report on Agriculture. In direct opposition to the IAASTD (which the Bank funded, but now refuses to support), the 2007 World Development Report recommends more free trade and more public money for the spread of new agricultural biotechnologies.

Unable to win the Global South's support for these positions, the GAFSP reflects a strategic move by the Bank to shift the locus of the war on hunger from Rome and New York to Washington—firmly under the control of the World Bank. In the image of World Bank operations, the GAFSP will divide support between the public and private sector, with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in charge of long and short-term loans, credit guarantees and equity to support private sector activities. In typical World Bank fashion, the results of the GAFSP will never directly measure reductions in the number

of hungry people or measurable improvements to livelihoods. Rather, success will be measured by the numbers of people participating in GAFSP-supported programs. Their faulty assumption is that doing more of the same—i.e., free markets and technology packages—with more people, will end hunger.

Since the World Bank will be holding the purse strings, it appears the High Level Task Force has no choice but to buckle under to the GAFSP. However, there is another important player that may well tip the agenda in another direction: The U.N. Committee on World Food Security—CFS.

The Committee on World Food Security it is not a collection of bureaucracies, but a political body representing 192 governments. Recently reformed, the Committee is a global policy forum on food in which Civil Society Organizations are autonomous and self-organizing. The Coordinating Committee of the Civil Society Advisory Group is run by representatives from the International Policy Committee on Food Sovereignty (IPC), Oxfam and Action Aid.

The possibilities for unleashing the tremendous development potential of farmers and civil society in the war on hunger are more likely with the Committee on Food Security than with either the High Level Task Force or the World Bank's deep pocketed GAFSP. If civil society is not allowed to lead, the tug-of-war between Rome, New York and Washington D.C. over who will end hunger will end in "business as usual"—not a hopeful prospect for the world's billion hungry people.

**Agroecology: agriculture
of the future—not the past**

By Eric Holt-Giménez

A number of Green Revolution champions are actively equating agroecology with 19th century agriculture. Political scientist, Robert Paarlberg confuses agroecology and

organic agriculture with the low-input farming systems of Africa that have been destroyed by centuries of colonization: “The one part of the world that comes closest to feeding itself organically is actually Africa... and Africa is the worst-fed continent on earth.” But the gulf between Africa’s impoverished peasant food systems and the thriving farms restored with agroecological practices (many in Africa) could not be wider.

I remember Vicente Guerrero, Mexico in the 1970’s. The degraded soils and dry, brittle environments are similar to those in sub-Saharan Africa. When I arrived 30 years ago, the Green Revolution had already swept through Mexico, leaving most small farmers in debt with declining yields, eroded soils and a rash of pesticide poisonings. Everywhere tepetate, lifeless weathered dirt the consistency of brick, pushed through the topsoil, making the ground impenetrable. Work was hard, and farming, a mix of traditional cultivation with hybrid seeds, laced with ever-increasing doses of chemical fertilizer and pesticide, was risky. Yields were declining, and if crops failed, farmers migrated to Mexico City to work as day laborers.

The Campesino to Campesino Movement for agroecology changed life in Vicente Guerrero. Farms now produce three to six times as much as they did before. The eroded hillsides are now bright green terraces with deep topsoil, planted in a diverse mix of crops. Farms use less water, produce more, drastically reduce chemical inputs, and restore biodiversity. But agroecology has not stopped there. In Cuba, farmer-led agroecological practices saved the island from famine after the Soviet petroleum subsidy disappeared—and conventional farming crashed. Cuban scientists and smallholder innovators introduced a flood of agroecological innovations that raise and stabilize yields, diversify production, and provide for quality livelihoods in

the countryside. In fact, throughout Latin America, Asia and Africa the “science of sustainable agriculture” has consistently succeed in the harsh environments where conventional agriculture fails.

Recently, farmers of the Campesino a Campesino movement began restoring habitats for native pollinators. Working with an entomologist, 125 indigenous promoters began extensive “pollinator-plant inventories” in their communities, and mounted a region-wide farmer-driven information campaign for restoration of natural pollinators in Puebla, Guerrero, Tlaxcala and Oaxaca.

Building biodiversity, conserving water, reducing pesticide use and raising yields are possible—all with farmer-led agroecological practices. This is something the Green Revolution’s outdated chemical and seed packages—and GMOs—can never do.

Since my early days in Vicente Guerrero, the field of agroecology—originally developed when ecologists carefully observed traditional farming systems—has evolved into a cutting-edge science that works with farmers to inquire into and inform the practice of sustainable agriculture. Far from a romantic leap backward into an unproductive past, millions of farmers see it as the best pathway forward to end hunger and environmental degradation.

Food First at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit

By Annie Shattuck

The U.S. Food Justice movement comes out in force at the second U.S. Social Forum in Detroit June 22-26. Food First and the Community Alliance for Global Justice, Biowatch South Africa and IRPAD



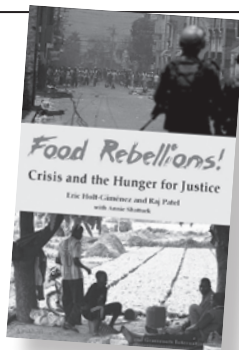
in Mali presented on the new Green Revolution and African solutions to the food crisis. Food First also collaborated with the Community Food Security Coalition to share our research on local food policy councils. Dozens of food justice workshops and strategic planning sessions were held in the food justice canopy space.

In the past year Food First has played a key role in The U.S. Working Group on the Food Crisis which has been moving forward on two fronts—organizing around the U.S. Department of Justice antitrust hearings on monopolies in agribusiness, and building a strong food justice focus at the U.S. Social Forum to support our campaign to fight poverty by rebuilding local food economies. The U.S. Working Group has also continued to work on foreign aid reform, federal nominations and other aspects of national food policy. This past year, our work shifted toward longer term solutions to hunger and poverty that call for building a strong food sovereignty movement in the U.S. The forum offered an opportunity for U.S. food and farm groups as well as Via Campesina leaders to explore the possibility of merging the U.S. Working Group on the Food Crisis into an activist network for food sovereignty in America.

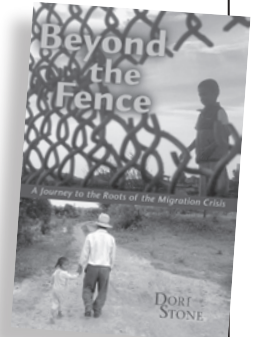
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Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice by Eric Holt-Giménez and Raj Patel, with Annie Shattuck. Today there are over a billion hungry people on the planet, more than ever before in history. Why, in a time of record harvests, are a record number of people going hungry? And why are a handful of corporations making record profits? *Food Rebellions!* tells the real story behind the global food crisis and documents the growing trend of grassroots solutions to hunger spreading around the world. Official plans to solve the world food crisis call for more free trade and technical fixes—solutions that have already failed. *Food Rebellions!* is a trail marker on the journey to end hunger and build food sovereignty. \$19.95

To book one of the authors for a college or other community event, contact Martha Katigbak-Fernandez at (510) 654-4400 ext. 221



Beyond the Fence: A Journey to the Roots of the Migration Crisis by Dori Stone, informs the immigration debate in the U.S., which is highly controversial, emotional, and often confusing. She explores migration issues that are largely unnoticed by the public in the U.S. and the mainstream media - the stories and surprising possibilities that get lost in the debate over fences and undocumented migrants exploited at below minimum wage. They are the tales of people's desperation and irretrievable loss, but also



their growing visions of hope. They are the stories of farmers, politicians and activists on both sides of the border. "The book is ideally suited for students, but I can think of few people who would not benefit from reading it." - Angus Wright, author of *The Death of Ramon Gonzales: The Modern Agricultural Dilemma*. *Beyond the Fence*, \$16.95

BOOKS FROM FOOD FIRST

Agrofuels in the Americas edited by Richard Jonasse, explores the impact of agrofuel production in the Global South, where the rural poor and indigenous populations are losing their access to land, and with it, the ability to feed themselves coupled with rising food prices due to the diversion of land to fuel crops.

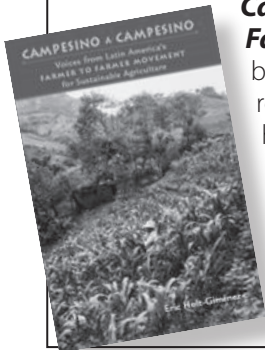


Caminos: The Immigrant's Trail The companion 20-minute documentary DVD, suitable for classroom use, includes a study guide. \$20.00

Alternatives to the Peace Corps edited by Caiti Hachmyer, is the original resource for finding community-based, grassroots volunteer work-the kind of work that changes the world, one person at a time. \$11.95



Campesino a Campesino: Voices from Latin America's Farmer to Farmer Movement for Sustainable Agriculture by Eric Holt-Giménez, tells the inspiring story of a true grassroots movement: poor peasant farmers teaching one another how to protect their environment while still earning a living. The first book in English about the farmer-led sustainable agriculture movement in Latin America, *Campesino a Campesino* includes lots of first-person stories and commentary from the farmer-teachers, mixing personal accounts with detailed analysis of the political, socioeconomic, and ecological factors that galvanized the movement. \$19.95



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