

FOOD SECURE CANADA SÉCURITÉ ALIMENTAIRE CANADA

Where agriculture, environment, health, food and justice intersect
Le pont entre l'agriculture, l'environnement, la santé, les aliments et la justice

DISCUSSION PAPER 8 International Food Policy

Food Secure Canada is a national membership-based organization committed to fighting against hunger and to building a healthy, fair, and ecological food system. Our vision is encapsulated in *Resetting the Table: A People's Food Policy for Canada*.

FOOD SECURE CANADA DISCUSSION PAPERS

The People's Food Policy is based on ten detailed discussion papers. These discussion papers were generated through 350 Kitchen Table Talks, hundreds of policy submissions, dozens of tele-conferences, online discussions, and three national conferences. Over 3500 people participated in their development. These papers cover a breadth of issues and include detailed policy recommendations for rebuilding Canada's broken food system. Unlike *Resetting the Table*, they are not consensus documents and not every member of Food Secure Canada has signed on to every recommendation in them. Rather, they are living documents, intended to inform debate, stimulate discussion and build greater understanding of our food system and how it should be—and must be—fixed.

- 1) Indigenous Food Sovereignty
- 2) Food Sovereignty in Rural and Remote Communities
- 3) Access to Food in Urban Communities
- 4) Agriculture, Infrastructure and Livelihoods
- 5) Sustainable Fisheries and Livelihoods for Fishers
- 6) Environment and Agriculture
- 7) Science and Technology for Food and Agriculture
- 8) International Food Policy
- 9) Healthy and Safe Food for All
- 10) Food Democracy and Governance



Contact:

FOOD SECURE CANADA
SÉCURITÉ ALIMENTAIRE CANADA

CP 48020 BP Bernard
Montreal, QC H2V4H0
Canada

(514) 271 7352
info@foodsecurecanada.org
www.foodsecurecanada.org

International Food Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canadian aid and trade policies remain stuck in a policy paradigm, pursued by most governments over the past few decades, that privileges free trade, industrial agriculture for export, and corporate control. This has come about through policies, which promoted the production of cash, and non-traditional export crops at the expense of domestic food production; and that removed subsidies for staple food production; dismantled commodity price controls on staples; and reduced the availability of credit (where it existed) to local farmers. This was achieved through such measures as structural adjustment programmes, trade agreements, and agreements that apply intellectual property rights to life forms.

Policy options include:

- Remove agriculture from the negotiations for free trade and investment agreements. Seek broad alliances with groups in other countries and other sectors struggling against these agreements.
- Take a strong stance against the global land grab and develop a solid and coherent policy in Canada to prevent foreign investors and national financial speculators from acquiring agricultural land.
- Ensure that trade and aid policies contribute to real solutions to climate change.
- Pursue policies that safeguard small producers' rights to save and control seeds and adopt legislation to prevent patents on life.
- Work to strengthen the Convention on Biological Diversity and ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.
- Consider the positive impact of agro-ecological approaches to food production on local economies, ecosystem health, and social equity.
- Implement the recommendations of the Canadian Civil Society Organizations' strategy called "Pathways to Resilience" that outlines ways to promote ecological farming that builds resilient food systems.

INTRODUCTION

The world is faced with unprecedented challenges when it comes to food and agriculture. Hunger is on the rise, with over 1 billion people now without enough food to eat. Over three-quarters of these people are rural food producers and workers. Climate change threatens to make things much worse, with a decrease to global agricultural yields by as

much as 16 per cent before the end of this century. In a globalized economy, Canadian policies on agriculture and food are affected by and have an impact on the rest of the world.

Our food exports, our trade and investment relationships, our foreign aid (both short-term food aid and long-term development assistance), and our role in multilateral processes are all shaped by Canadian policies that have a direct impact on global hunger.

It has therefore never been more vital for international policy and cooperation to focus on ensuring resilient and equitable food production systems, access to safe food for all, decent livelihoods for food producers, and long-term environmental sustainability. These should be the guiding objectives of Canada's international policies.

Unfortunately, Canadian aid and trade policies remain stuck in a neoliberal policy paradigm, pursued by most governments over the past few decades, that privileges free trade, industrial agriculture for export, and corporate control. A Canadian food policy based on food sovereignty must break with this pattern that has been destructive to family farming in Canada, as well as indigenous peoples, small farmers and local food systems the world over. Absolutely necessary are new international relations and agreements that allow countries and communities to protect their food systems from the encroachment of powerful corporate actors and that prioritize people over profits. This requires, first and foremost, a shift away from free trade and investment agreements and toward international cooperation focused on the development of policies and programs around the world based on a food sovereignty framework.

FREE TRADE VERSUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: FROM STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS TO BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

Structural Adjustment

Until recently, agricultural policy was treated primarily as a domestic matter and, for the most part, was kept out of the international policy arena. Most countries, to varying extents, protected their agricultural sector from foreign competition in an effort to defend their country's food self-sufficiency and the needs of their food producers. However, since the early 1980s dramatic changes have been introduced which have deeply altered the rural landscape and displaced millions of peasant families. Through structural adjustment programs and multiple free trade agreements -- beginning with the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture and deepening through a long list of bilateral deals -- countries have been forced to open up their markets and rewrite their national rules and regulations to facilitate increased production of export crops and support the encroachment of global agribusiness.

In many ways, the structural adjustment programs – imposed on poor countries by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – prefigured many of the provisions of the trade and economic agreements that were soon to emerge. In the name of poverty reduction, economic growth and debt servicing, and as conditions for further loans, structural adjustment programs opened up agriculture in the South with devastating effects. To access the loans, governments were required to significantly change existing policies in the following ways: remove tariffs on agricultural products; increase the production of cash and non-traditional agro-export crops at the expense of domestic food production; remove subsidies for staple food production; dismantle commodity price controls on staple crops (i.e. rice, corn and beans); reduce the availability of credit (where it existed) to local small farmers; introduce market-determined measures rather than state defined fixed prices; and other regulations on the food commodities markets.

The results of these measures were devastating. Food imports of basic staples soared in many countries as heavily subsidized agricultural imports from the North flooded markets in the Global South, national trading enterprises were dismantled, government staff and resources in agricultural departments and services for farmers were slashed, and trading monopolies and cartels that manipulated supply and prices consolidated their power and control over the global food system.

Haiti was one of the countries subjected to the structural adjustment programs of the IMF and World Bank. A few decades ago, it was self-sufficient in rice. However, conditions on foreign loans, particularly a 1994 IMF package, forced it to liberalize its agricultural market. Cheap rice flooded in from the US, backed by subsidies and corruption, and local production was wiped out. With the food price crisis of 2008, prices for rice suddenly jumped by 50%, pushing rice out of reach of the average Haitian. Meanwhile, farmers could not ramp up local production because of the rising costs of imported inputs on which they had come to depend. People had few choices but to take to the streets in protest. Côte d'Ivoire, similarly, was a net exporter of rice in the 1970s, but today, largely because of a number of structural adjustment programs, this country of 18 million imports more than half the rice it consumes. In fact, while in the 1970s few so-called developing countries were net importers of food, today roughly 70% of them are.

World Trade Organization

The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the flurry of bilateral trade and investment agreements that have followed it have broadened, deepened, and locked-in the processes initiated by the structural adjustment programs. Until the Uruguay Round (1986-1994) of negotiations on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which established the WTO, agriculture did not feature as an “international trade issue”; instead, it was viewed as a domestic affair. Nevertheless, by the 1980s, with the Northern agribusiness and food corporations saddled with overproduction and saturated markets, some players within the GATT began to lobby aggressively for the expansion of GATT to include agriculture and

food. For many countries this meant an end to measures (such as tariffs and non-tariff mechanisms) that had been used to control the import of agricultural products and the beginning of being able to help develop and protect local and national farming sectors.

The WTO's Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) was heralded as a means to provide greater access to world markets in agricultural products for all countries by reducing tariffs, farming subsidies, and other trade barriers. Yet, while the WTO stipulates the withdrawal of domestic production support and export subsidies, the AOA supports direct-income payments to farmers, which make up between one-fifth to one-third of US farm income, and many EU subsidies. In one of the most glaring examples of hypocrisy in world trade, US and EU agricultural markets remain protected – a situation that benefits large industrial farmers and agribusiness but not US and European family farmers, who are often pitted against industrial agriculture and corporate agribusiness. Southern governments, meanwhile, are prohibited from introducing new programs, such as subsidies, to protect their local agricultural producers, even as small farmer livelihoods are undermined by the dumping of cheap subsidized imports with which they cannot compete.

In June 2000, a group of 11 developing countries told a WTO Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture that the trade liberalization triggered by the Uruguay Round had broken the agricultural backbone of many countries. It was undermining food security, peoples' health, and national sovereignty. At the WTO Ministerial Conference held in September 2003 in Cancun, Mexico – a gathering once more surrounded by peoples' movements protesting neoliberal globalization -- the G21, led by India and Brazil (the G20 +1) sought drastic cuts of farm subsidies and trade barriers in the Global North. The G21 actions were spurred in part by the intolerable pressure on Southern governments from the social and economic crisis of domestic agriculture after years of structural adjustment programs and trade liberalization under the WTO. The G33 (the Alliance for Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanism) sought crop exemption from the AOA in areas vital to food security and rural livelihood, and the use of special safeguard mechanisms against import surges of cheap crops. Yet, Northern governments have yet to significantly alter their subsidies, even as they persist with demands for more tariff cuts and comprehensive liberalization in the South, through multilateral, regional, and bilateral agreements. Internal tensions in the WTO continued to simmer, boiling over in July 2006 when negotiations came to a grinding halt from which they have yet to budge.

The WTO was always about much more than market access. Essentially, it sought to create the global architecture for a corporate global food system. Beyond tariffs and quotas, the WTO's AOA commits member countries to harmonize food safety standards. This makes it difficult for individual countries to pursue food safety models that differ from the standards that regulate the industrial food systems dominant in Northern countries. For example, the US, Canada and the few other countries that have pushed ahead with GMO crops continue

to use the WTO's provisions on sanitary and phytosanitary standards to push other countries into accepting their GM food exports.

Another WTO agreement heavily backed by agribusiness and of major concern to farmers is the Agreement on Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). TRIPS, which took effect in January 1995, requires member governments to guarantee a 20-year minimum protection term for all patents. Prior to the Uruguay Round, most nations did not recognize patents on food, pharmaceuticals, or other products considered as basic human needs. TRIPS was the first international instrument to require IPR protection on life-forms; it forces governments to allow microorganisms and microbiological processes (as well as biological processes) to be patented and governments must ensure plant variety protection by patents or an "effective" sui generis system (some other form of plant variety protection) or a combination of the two. In practice, this has meant that countries have been arm-twisted into implementing a system of plant variety protection based on the UPOV (International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants) model. UPOV, and its 1991 Convention in particular, provides patent-like protection to seed companies for varieties suited to industrial agricultural systems. The hundreds of thousands of varieties developed by farmers are not covered by UPOV criteria and UPOV bars or restricts farmer practices, such as saving seeds, which are essential to the livelihoods of small farmers and to the functioning of their diverse farming systems.

TRIPS, much like the AOA, was greatly shaped by a concerted lobby of corporations, in this case from the biotechnology, pharmaceutical and entertainment industry, seeking to standardize global intellectual property rights (IPR) laws along US lines, and make them enforceable under the WTO.

Bilateral trade agreements

With negotiations at the WTO in gridlock since 2006, the more powerful governments and their corporate allies have stepped up efforts to seal bilateral free trade deals, as the capacity of the multilateral level talks for further liberalization and deregulation remains in doubt. The bilaterals strategy is quite clearly a way to push weaker countries into going further and faster in adopting what are essentially corporate wish lists. Laser-guided liberalization – bilateralism – allows the US, the EU and other rich countries to single out selected countries and restrict the potential for alliances like the G21 to stand up to US bullying and WTO double standards. Bilateral deals enable the powerful to target specific policies or other government measures while severely constraining the rights of governments to maintain sovereign economic, social, and environmental policy frameworks.

When it comes to agriculture, Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are being used to try to force open markets for agricultural products that have been exempted in previous multilateral, regional or even bilateral trade negotiations, and to also target non-tariff barriers like

product standards that relate to food. Bilateral FTAs are also being used to force governments to go further than what TRIPS demands, often obliging governments to accede to the UPOV 91 Convention. What is more, FTAs and Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) contain broad definitions of investment, which throw the door wide open for disgruntled corporations based in one signatory country to take a case against the other signatory government to a dispute tribunal. Perhaps most notoriously, such disputes have become one of the most controversial features of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the US and Mexico, which came into force in 1994.

Chapter 11, NAFTA's powerful investment chapter, provides foreign corporations with rights to sue governments for enacting public policies or laws which corporations claim to affect their profitability. It matters little that the public policies are geared to protecting the environment, health and safety, or supporting local small businesses and jobs.

The clear winners from these past decades of free trade agreements and neoliberal agricultural policies are corporations. Corporate power has been effectively consolidated and profits have grown by leaps and bounds. Meanwhile, farmers and consumers have suffered badly. Take NAFTA, for example. In Mexico, after NAFTA came into effect in 1994, local markets were flooded with cheap corn from the US, driving down the farm gate price below the costs of production and forcing peasants off their farms to look for sources of income elsewhere. Yet, for consumers, the retail price of corn went up over this period. The price of corn-based food, especially the tortilla, increased 279 per cent during the first five years of NAFTA. In Canada, the Canadian US Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA did lead to a substantial expansion of Canadian exports -- agriculture exports, for example, tripled from \$11 billion to \$33 billion from 1988 to 2007. Yet, according to a survey by the National Farmers Union, net farm income fell by more than half over this same period while Canadian farm debt doubled.

WHAT IS CANADA'S ROLE IN ALL OF THIS?

The Canadian government has been a vocal and active promoter of free trade in agriculture. During the WTO negotiations, it was part of the Cairns group, a group of countries with a common agenda of opening markets around the world to their agricultural exports and removing certain subsidies deemed unfair in other WTO member countries. Yet Canada itself has come under attack by corporations and various governments for its long-standing supply management programs and the Canadian Wheat Board, which, it is argued, is a form of unfair subsidization to Canadian farmers, and there is always a danger that the Canadian government may cede to pressure in order to reach a global deal.

Free trade negotiations are always about sacrificing one set of interests for another. Typically, a set of social interests are sacrificed for the interests of some powerful

corporations. There is every reason to believe that, without strong social pressure from Canadians, the Canadian government will trade-off the interests of its farmers and consumers in order to gain some benefits for Canadian banks, mining companies, or forestry companies looking to expand their markets abroad.

The Canadian government has used the WTO and its bilateral trade agreements as a venue to push governments into accepting Canadian exports of GM crops, although with mixed results. In its bilateral trade agreements with other countries, the Canadian government also typically insists that the WTO's Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures serve as the basis for bilateral negotiations. Meanwhile, the Canadian government has consistently sought to advance the interests of the biotech industry in the negotiations of the UN's CODEX Alimentarius, the main reference for the WTO on food safety issues, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture under the UN'S Food and Agriculture Organisation.

It is important to note that in the Canadian government's current negotiations for an FTA with the EU, the EU has categorically refused to allow GMOs to be part of the negotiations. The EU, however, as the stronger party to this deal, is demanding that Canada accede to UPOV 91 in order to protect the interests of European seed companies. Currently, Canadian legislation on plant variety protection is based on the 1978 UPOV Convention, which is much less restrictive on what farmers can do with the seeds of protective varieties.

Canada also plays a role in the imposition of structural adjustment policies on Southern countries, as Canada is an influential member and major donor of the World Bank and the IMF. Canada's commitments for funding to respond to the food crisis of 2008 have largely been directed to the World Bank, whose policies and programmes based on a neoliberal ideology have changed little over the past thirty years.

More recently, in addressing issues of international development, the Canadian government has emphasized the importance of agriculture and food, while CIDA has recently made increasing food security one of its three thematic priorities for the disbursement of international aid. The G8 commitments made to food security in L'Aquila in 2008 are also to be commended. However, much needs to be done by Canadians to ensure that these funds are actually made available, and to support the kind of smallholder agriculture that will have a lasting impact on food security.

Indeed, one of the major fault lines in Canadian food and international trade policies is coherence. While Canadian institutions like CIDA and IDRC have rejuvenated their support for food security, they are more about promoting large scale industrial agriculture than agro-ecological principles. More concerning is the fact that Canada's international trade and investment stances are often detrimental to any development objectives set out in

CIDA. In other words, any small gains made through aid policies can be easily wiped out through trade and investment policies. Therefore a whole-of-government approach to thinking about food is needed, one that takes into account the impacts of food, technology, investment, trade, environmental and social policies.

Indeed, there is a real danger that Canadian aid and trade policy will become increasingly beholden to the agribusiness corporations that have come to dominate the country's agriculture and food system over the past decades. Canadian-based companies such as Saputo or Viterra are now global corporations trying to build markets and supply channels far beyond their Canadian bases; they have an interest in Canadian aid and trade policy that supports free trade and protects their investments. So too do the foreign TNCs, such as Cargill, ADM and Monsanto, that increasingly control Canadian agriculture who also have numerous lobbying tools and mechanisms at their disposal.

The Canadian public has a different set of interests. For many Canadians, food is not a simple commodity. Food and agriculture policy must be transformed based on the principles of social justice, human rights and environmental/social sustainability that are reflected in the concept of food sovereignty. This approach must form the basis of Canada's international policies as well.

A CANADIAN POLICY ON TRADE AND AID TO ADVANCE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?

Trade

Canada is a major exporter of food, including grain, oilseeds and meat products. These food exports can contribute to greater food security in food-insecure countries, but only if our exports do not undermine local producers and the markets they rely upon for their survival. Canadian policies on trade and investment have a profound impact on global food security and seriously risk undermining Canada's global food security objectives. While the CIDA-led *Food Security Strategy* aims to improve the viability of smallholder farming in developing countries, the Government of Canada advances policies in multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations – such as the rapid liberalization of agricultural tariffs – that would undercut the viability of smallholders.

Access to productive resources, such as land, credit, farm inputs and market infrastructures remains vital to the survival of farming communities, as does genuine agrarian reform and state investment in rural infrastructure and agricultural services. But the macroeconomic neoliberal policies explained earlier in this chapter are locking present and future governments into commitments that prevent them from intervening to effectively support local agriculture and farmers. Hence, these policies must be strongly resisted. Farming and food are far too important to be left to the vagaries of the 'market', and many farmers'

movements and their allies are calling for agriculture to be removed from international free trade negotiations altogether.

This is clearly the first step in moving towards an international policy for Canada that is coherent with food sovereignty. While some argue that there is a need to make free trade agreement negotiations more transparent and more inclusive, it is important to note that, fundamentally, these agreements are oriented towards a model of agriculture and a form of decision-making at odds with genuine food sovereignty. It cannot be overstated that food sovereignty requires that food not be treated as a commodity and that governance be rooted in local communities. Clearly, the democratization of our food system will not be easy, but Canadian social movements and non-governmental organizations are already connected and working closely with others from many different countries who are seeking the same goal.

- Remove agriculture from the negotiations of global, multilateral and bilateral free trade and investment agreements. Seek broad alliances with groups in other countries and other sectors struggling against these agreements.

Commodity Markets

Measures that stabilize commodity markets and support fair prices for farmers should be promoted and defended. Canada should work with G20 countries to address speculation in commodity prices, which contributed to sharp price spikes in 2008 and pushed millions more people into hunger. Such measures should include greater oversight and regulation of financial liberalization and new financial instruments such as hedge funds. In the longer term, Canada should build alliances in support of international supply management approaches, including commodity agreements supported by sound national policies.

- Pursue international measures to regulate trade and speculation in agricultural commodities that support access to food and the livelihoods of food producers.

International agreements

The Canadian government has actively sought to ensure, in the negotiations of other international treaties, agreements, and conventions, that the WTO and other free trade agreements take precedence. This means that free trade agreements, which privilege the interests of transnational corporations, trump other international agreements that focus on such things as the environment, human rights and/or indigenous peoples. The world is facing profound crises -- food, water, climate, poverty, etc -- that have been exacerbated if not caused by the narrow pursuit of commercial interests. International policy should focus on genuine efforts and mechanisms geared to resolve these crises, rather than continuing to advance corporate interests.

- Canadian international policy must stop seeking precedence for trade agreements over other international agreements. The priority for Canada's international food and agriculture policy should be on resolving the food crisis, not increasing exports. Furthermore, emphasis needs to be placed on compliance with international human rights legislation, such as the human right to food, water, indigenous rights, women's rights, etc. As a practitioner of multilateralism, Canada should play an active role in improving governance and coherence between international food institutions and instruments, such as FAO, IFAD, WFP, and research institutions like the CG centres. Canada should support a reformed Committee on World Food Security as the appropriate mechanism for coordination amongst these agencies.

The global farmland grab

The food and financial crises of 2008 triggered a global farmland grab that continues to spread. Certain governments facing food insecurity issues are looking to buy land abroad to outsource their food production while private investors are looking to buy farmland as a secure way to make profits and hedge against inflation. Upwards of 50 million hectares are known to have been already acquired, and an estimated \$100 billion has already been mobilized for these deals. Similar land grabs are also occurring for the production of biofuels.

In the face of growing controversy over these investments, the World Bank, with backing from the relevant agencies of the United Nations and the G8, is leading a process to promote Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (RAI). This is intended to eventually facilitate the elaboration of guidelines for large-scale investments in farmland.

However, such a set of guidelines, if it were to materialise, would only be voluntary. More importantly it would do little to address the more fundamental issue. Today's farmland grab is not about improving agriculture or resolving the food crisis. It is a massive transfer of land and water from poor, rural communities to wealthy, foreign investors, and a transformation of small-scale ecological food production systems for local markets into large-scale plantations for export. Even the World Bank's own study of the phenomenon, released in September 2010, found few benefits for local communities affected by the large-scale agriculture investments that have so far been implemented. Rather than spending effort with the development of voluntary international guidelines, some countries, such as Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Benin, Kenya, Australia and New Zealand, concerned by what this rush for farmland could mean to their long-term food security and sovereignty in the context of climate change and growing global demand for food, are now examining changes to their laws to prevent foreigners and even national investors from acquiring large tracts of farmland.

Canadians have many reasons to be concerned about this global trend, and not only for its international implications. Canadian companies, such as Lawrence Asset Management and

Sprott Resources of Toronto, are buying farmland overseas. Canada is also a target for farmland acquisitions, from both Canadian and foreign investors. Chinese and US investors are known to be buying or seeking to acquire farms in Quebec for example. Such developments clearly undermine the achievement of food sovereignty, both here and abroad, and the Canadian government should act decisively towards putting an end to the global farmland grab.

- Take a strong stance against the global land grab, thus not engaging in the development of voluntary guidelines through the RAI process. Also, follow the lead of other countries to develop a solid and coherent policy in Canada to prevent foreign investors and national financial speculators from acquiring (ownership or lease) agricultural land. This policy should include consideration of Canadian policies on renewable fuels.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Farmers in developing countries are already feeling the effects of a changing climate, and more dramatic changes are expected: changes in rainfall patterns (most African agriculture is rain-fed); changes in flooding (much of Asia's agriculture depends upon predictable flooding of rivers); changes in storm intensity; rise in sea level, and more. Canada has started and must continue to fund its fair share of climate change adaptation, with special attention to the most vulnerable people, including smallholder farmers. At the same time, Canada should take the initiative on domestic mitigation measures, as our high *per-capita* emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHG) are a significant contributor to climate change.

There is much scope for improvement in agriculture, both domestically and internationally. Agriculture currently contributes about 14% of global GHG emissions, not including emissions from the manufacture of fertilizer. Promotion of ecological agriculture as an alternative would produce a win-win situation. Experience shows that it can reduce GHG emissions through decreased use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and tillage, and increased sequestration of carbon in the soil. It can make farmers more resilient to climate change by diversifying their livelihoods; and it can improve the soil's ability to withstand drought and erosion. For many farmers in the developing world, ecological farming methods would improve their food security directly by boosting production. For many farmers a major obstacle to engaging in more ecological farming is the lack of secure land title. When people have secure title they plant trees and restore marginal soils – activities that both improve production and serve as carbon sinks.

Biofuels have been presented as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In Canada, the government set minimum quotas for ethanol and biodiesel in Canadian fuels and

established major subsidies to corporate producers. The growth of the biofuel industry was a significant factor in the 2007-2008 food price crisis,¹ as increased demand for grains and oilseeds pushed food prices beyond the reach of millions of poor people. It is also playing a role in today's global farmland grab. Closer links between the food and energy sectors pose a serious threat to future global food security, as the world seeks alternatives to fossil fuels. In this context, there is no justification for government subsidies or mandated use of biofuels. The mandated use and subsidies should be eliminated in Canada, and Canada should not import biofuels (ethanol or biodiesel) or biomass for biofuel production from developing countries. Canada's foreign aid should not be used to support biofuel projects.

Seeds

Biological and seed diversity are experiencing an alarming decline, with 75% of plant and animal diversity lost with the last 100 years. Preserving and restoring biodiversity is a key measure to help cope with climate change, and diversity is also strongly linked to community livelihoods, nutrition and health. As a signatory and host country to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Canada should step up measures to immediately stop the 2% loss of biological diversity every year, and meet the targets set out in the CBD 2010 plan of action.

As discussed above, the free trade agreements promoted by the Government of Canada impose forms of IPRs that threaten farmer control over seeds. These trade agreements have been critical in pushing Canadian legislation down this same path, just as the negotiations of the free trade agreement with the US were used as a pretext by the federal government to bring in Canada's first Plant Breeders Rights Act in 1990. Canada's efforts to promote the inclusion of GM crops within international agreements pose equally significant threats to farmer controlled seed systems. Canada has even gone so far as to try and block international efforts at the UN to ban Genetic Use Restriction Technology (GURT), known as Terminator Technology because plants that grow from seeds with this technology are sterile after the first harvest.

Pursue national and international policies to build seed sovereignty

At the national level, the Government of Canada can engage in the following: support the adoption of Bill C-353 (Terminator Technology Ban) and reject the introduction and use of technologies that serve only to strengthen the control of corporations that sell seeds; support the adoption of Bill C-474, an Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm) which contains seeds regulation over potential harms to export markets of genetically engineered seeds; and adopt legislation to prevent patents on life.

¹ Anatomy of a Crisis: The Causes and Consequences of Surging Food Prices. IFPRI discussion paper 00831, 2008.

At the international level the Government of Canada can engage in efforts to accomplish the following: seek the removal of all obligations for IPRs on plants and life forms from international agreements; uphold and strengthen the de facto international moratorium on the commercialization of Terminator Technologies agreed to by all signatories of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) during the fifth Convention of Parties in 2000; ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety of the CBD about potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology (this protocol has been ratified by almost 160 countries in the world); and recognize the inherent right of farmers to save and control seed by enforcing national application of farmers' rights recognized in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

FOREIGN AID

The majority of the world's food insecure are small-scale food producers living in rural areas, women, and children. In response, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has made increasing food security one of its three thematic priorities for the disbursement of international aid. Canada's approach to food security should consider agricultural, environmental, and trade policy in light of its development goals. Canada has a great opportunity to support an innovative approach to agricultural development. While mainstream research focuses primarily on yields, CIDA can support and build on the work of smallholder peasant farmers: existing research in participatory plant breeding (for a variety of traits valued by small-scale farmers), on-farm conservation of biodiversity, ecological agriculture, and innovative practices that represent sustainable solutions to the food and climate crises. Furthermore, by implementing the Canadian Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) strategy called "Pathways to resilience" (developed by the Canadian Food Security Policy Group and summarized below) CIDA would be contributing in a pro-actively way to enhancing resilient and environmentally sustainable agricultural systems.

Protect small-scale local sustainable production

Canada should increase foreign aid spending to support smallholders in their efforts to build sustainable rural communities. Canada's food security strategy should focus on smallholder peasant farmers (men and women), helping to promote resilient agriculture systems and rural livelihoods, while taking measures to change the institutions, policies and structures that erode them. Such a focus will help ensure the right to food is a central pillar of the CIDA's new thematic strategy.

More specifically, Canada's food security strategy should demonstrate direct benefits to smallholder agriculture and rural livelihoods. The strategy should recognize and encourage the many functions of agriculture in rural areas, going beyond food production to include provision of environmental services, improved nutrition and incomes, employment for landless labourers, and its important role in sustaining local cultures.

Encourage and nurture genuine and meaningful participation in decision-making in local communities

Local civil society (farmer organizations, non-governmental organizations) and communities play a crucial role in increasing food security and thus the Canadian government should support the participation of strong, rurally-based farmer organizations and civil society organizations in decision-making on agriculture and food policy. Also important is the support for agricultural services to smallholders as well as appropriate technology and establishing local markets. The rural poor are key actors that must be actively involved in deciding how best to reduce hunger and poverty.

Value and support women's role in agriculture

While the key role of women in food security is widely recognized, systemic gender discrimination means the poorest rural women are more likely to be malnourished, in ill health, and have limited control over productive resources (land, water, labour and inputs). Moreover, they rarely benefit from agriculture research and extension, have limited access to financial and insurance services, and benefit much less than their male counterparts in the agricultural marketplace.

To ensure gender equity in agricultural development CIDA should adopt the following policies to strengthen the rights and participation of rural women:

- Support women's leadership capacity-building in rural organizations;
- Improve women's tenure over productive resources such as land and water;
- Support women's economic empowerment through training;
- Improve women's access to markets and market information ;
- Ensure the genuine participation of rural women and children in all food security interventions

Enhance nutrition by supporting sustainable small-scale agriculture

Although micronutrient supplementation and food fortification are critical tools in addressing acute malnutrition, in the long term the promotion of small-scale agriculture practices that protect biodiversity and produce crops for domestic consumption are also crucial as they effectively contribute to increasing the quality and diversity of nutritious foods available, particularly for women and children under five. Therefore, an effective policy includes support for preventative approaches to malnutrition by improving food and nutrition security through investment in biodiverse, small-scale agricultural production and rural development in developing nations.

Furthermore, agricultural interventions should be designed to improve nutrition of vulnerable people (especially women and children under five years of age).

Support environmentally sustainable agriculture

Canadian food security policies and programming will promote resilient households and communities and have greatest impact if they support smallholder farmers' efforts to build resilient agricultural and food systems that are based on local solutions, able to feed communities, and are strong enough to withstand external pressures from industrial agriculture. As such, policies need to emphasize agro-ecological approaches that minimize green house emissions, improve the soil, and boost small-scale farmer resilience to external shocks including the effects of climate change.



Contact:

FOOD SECURE CANADA
SÉCURITÉ ALIMENTAIRE CANADA

CP 48020 BP Bernard
Montreal, QC H2V4H0
Canada

(514) 271 7352
info@foodsecurecanada.org
www.foodsecurecanada.org

Food Secure Canada is based on three interlocking commitments:

Zero Hunger: All people at all times must be able to acquire, in a dignified manner, adequate quantity and quality of culturally and personally acceptable food. This is essential to the health of our population, and requires cooperation among many different sectors, including housing, social policy, transportation, agriculture, education, and community, cultural, voluntary and charitable groups, and businesses.

A Sustainable Food System: Food in Canada must be produced, harvested (including fishing and other wild food harvest), processed, distributed and consumed in a manner which maintains and enhances the quality of land, air and water for future generations, and in which people are able to earn a living wage in a safe and healthy working environment by harvesting, growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing and serving food.

Healthy and Safe Food: Safe and nourishing foods must be readily at hand (and less nourishing ones restricted); food (including wild foods) must not be contaminated with pathogens or industrial chemicals; and no novel food can be allowed to enter the environment or food chain without rigorous independent testing and the existence of an on-going tracking and surveillance system, to ensure its safety for human consumption.