



NETWORK 
Connection

PEOPLE LOBBYING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE • MAY/JUNE 2007

**Farm and
Food Policies
for a
Healthier World**

dear members

This issue is dedicated to the farm bill or, as we like to refer to it, the "food and farm bill." It has been quite the adventure for us at NETWORK to enter this arena! We got into it because of the importance of combating hunger in our country and providing healthy food in all sectors. We also got involved because of our work on trade and investment issues. In the process, we have learned a lot.

Jean Sammon, our field coordinator, wears her farm hat whenever she is working on the issue. Jessica Guentzel, our field associate, has educated us with real life farm stories, having grown up on a farm in Minnesota. Jessica's dad even visited our office and gave us his perspective as a farmer. This has been great for most of us who are "city folk"!

Now it is coming down to the time of implementation. We are launching workshops, Web activities and alerts as we gear up to engage the issue. It is difficult to tell where the push-back is going to come from, but we imagine it will come.

So we are getting ready for a summer of food and farm lobbying. As always, this is where you come in. Among all the issues we care about, this one is among the most elemental. Together, we can realize a bill that is food for the common good! I look forward to the partnership and the challenge.

Simone Campbell, SSS

We welcome **Mary Ann Gaido** and **Mary Ann Nestel, CSJ**, to the NETWORK Board of Directors; and **Elizabeth Dahlman**, **Katherine Feely, SND**, and **Jennifer Haut** to the NETWORK Education Program Board. They come to us from diverse ministries in different regions of the country, and we are grateful for the gifts and talents they bring.

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Comments on this issue? Ideas for future issues of *Connection*? Let us hear from you!
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Nourishing the Body of Christ

By SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

Our study of the food and farm bill has stirred up my thinking about politics as well as food. I love cooking and delight in a fine meal. I have worked in and supported foods banks over the years and have cared about international food aid. But I have been less aware of the impact of U.S. subsidies on the international market and the free trade disruption of Central American and Mexican economies. I was unaware of the issues of rural development, sustainable agriculture, and the pressure of agribusiness. I had not known how bigger farmers can save money by shipping directly to overseas distributors. I, as a city girl, had not thought about the politics of food—I just enjoy the delicious act of eating. But as we have begun to work on what most people call “the farm bill,” this has changed.

I have realized that food is perhaps the most elemental aspect of all of life. Food keeps us alive. Food is absorbed and changed by living organisms. Food becomes energy for life and various waste products. Those waste products become food for other beings. Food is at the core of living and breathing. Any-

thing this elemental will stir up the passions of all concerned.

There are also the practicalities of providing us with food—how it gets to our tables and what we do to share it. For the last three summers, my family members and I have purchased a Community Supported Agriculture share that enables us to participate in the harvest of a nearby organic farm. This fresh vegetable link provides us with locally grown food and supports local agriculture. I try to buy local produce and resist Chilean tomatoes and peaches in mid-winter. We have learned in our study that buying locally is even better than buying organics when organics have been shipped over a long distance.

I have also come to see that we need to take our images of food to another level because they are at the core of our faith. Over and over, Jesus spoke in parables using agricultural images—a mustard seed, grains of wheat and weeds, and vineyards. But even more central to our faith is Eucharist—the actual eating of bread and wine, Body and Blood. It is this elemental act that brings the food and farm bill to the core of faith. Jesus invited all to eat and drink. Jesus calls us all to the table. So

those of us with eyes to see are challenged to see the food and farm bill as essentially Eucharistic. It is how we nourish the Body of Christ by sharing with all so that none go hungry. It is working with policy to make certain that the earth is nurtured and future generations protected. Eucharist knows no national boundaries so it also means advocating for a food and farm bill that finds a balance for the international common good.

Thus, I have come from the simple enjoyment of a meal to see this piece of policy work as Eucharist. It is essentially a time of thanksgiving for the richness of the nourishment around us and a time for justice in our formation of policy. We need to ensure that all are nourished, all are welcomed to the table. We, as a Eucharistic people, must work to ensure that U.S. policy cares for the earth, provides access for all families to healthy food, creates vibrant rural communities, and is fair for U.S. and global farmers. This work is the Eucharistic work of nurturing the Body of God.

Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK Executive Director.

The Farm Bill—Will It Promote Justice and Health?

By BARBARA JENNINGS, CSJ

For people of faith, food production is unlike any other sector of the economy precisely because it is necessary for life itself.

Department of Social Development and World Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, February 2007

Public consciousness about the links between food production and public health grows each day, even as we also begin to understand that health, nutrition, conservation and global trade are all part of the same food system. In our United States, much of this system is controlled by the farm bill, which is once again up for renewal in Congress.

NETWORK and dozens of groups are now working to make people more aware of the broad impact of this important legislation. Anti-hunger groups are partnering with conservation groups; public health groups are joining with fair trade groups; and faith groups are working with animal welfare groups to advocate for a farm bill that will serve the common good.

In December 2006, NETWORK was awarded a grant from Oxfam America to educate and lobby on the 2007 farm bill in three states in the Midwest. When NETWORK approached me and asked if I would help with this effort, I enthusiastically agreed. I have been a member of NETWORK since 1982, including seven years on its Board of Directors, and I know how effective we are.

We immediately met with some of our partners in this new endeavor, including Bread for the World and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, and it was agreed that NETWORK would focus on Missouri, Iowa and Kansas while other organizations concentrated their advocacy and education in other regions.

Our Values and Goals

At NETWORK, we agreed that we would work for a 2007 farm bill that will:

- provide healthy nourishment to those who are hungry and thirsty,
- ensure fairness for rural communities,
- care for the earth and water, and
- promote the common good for communities around the globe.



Dan McLarney's family farm in Gower, Missouri

Because farm bills are reworked and reauthorized only every five years, the importance of this legislation is far-reaching. It impacts how America and the world eat, prevent disease, and foster social and economic justice for years to come.

What Farmers Have to Say

Yes, the complexity of the farm bill is daunting, especially since it covers many seemingly unrelated programs (e.g., land conservation and food stamps). We can perhaps better understand it if we trace the path of our food from farms to

markets and U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food programs. To help me trace this path, I recently met with farmers in northwest Missouri, where the clay soil supports corn, soybeans, cattle and some dairy farming.



Dan McLarney, a third-generation farmer, raises corn, soybeans and some cattle on his mid-sized family farm. He has many years of experience with subsidy and conservation programs—and he and his brother have some definite opinions about the role of government and global agricultural issues.

Dan repeated what three other farmers told me about government programs that subsidize the farming of corn, soybeans, wheat and other crops by paying farmers a certain amount per bushel to make up for low market prices. Dan and the others feel these programs could be eliminated if farmers were paid a fair market price for what they raise.

Instead, farmers, faced with low prices, are forced to increase their yields in order to get the government subsidies so they can survive. How do they increase them? Generally they plant as much as possible, even on less fertile land that may need more chemical fertilizers. This overproduction further lowers prices, and the cycle continues.

Dan does believe that farmers need disaster assistance in bad years. He suggests that government could help farmers buy private disaster insurance with 85% coverage so small farmers and people

who raise cattle would not need to rely on subsidies.

Dan's brother, Jim, lives in the city, but retains part ownership of the family farm. Jim also favors fair prices over government subsidies, and he supports government help for crops damaged by weather conditions such as drought, wind, flood and hail. In addition, Jim wants the U.S. government to teach farmers in the U.S and other countries how to grow crops appropriate for global consumption, and to provide assistance such as improved varieties of plants, animals, and better irrigation methods. He feels that the federal government should not pay for large corporations to export surplus grain to India, China and Japan—instead, this should be funded by corporations themselves.

Government programs under the farm bill have a clear impact on what and how much farmers grow, but the truth of the matter is that small and mid-sized farmers gain relatively little when compared with large corporate interests. How did that come to be?



Some History

In 1933, the first “farm bill” was created as a New Deal program to counter the devastating

effects of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl. That year’s “Agricultural Adjustment Act” was a mix of commodity-specific price supports and income support programs. Over the years, changes were made that, among other things, created links between soil conservation and commodity programs.

A major change occurred in 1973 that directly impacted our current farm system. That year, it was decided that farmers would receive subsidies instead of price supports. In other words, the farmers’ income would now depend on market forces, with the government stepping in to provide a subsidy when prices dropped below a certain level. As a result, the ability to grow more and more bushels of certain crops (e.g., corn) became a driving force in our food system. Each bushel, no matter what the market price, provided extra money needed to run the farms.

A very helpful source in understanding the overall impact of these changes can be found in *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* by Michael Pollan (Penguin Books, 2006). According to Pollan, instead of paying farmers for production constraint, the new subsidies encouraged farmers to plant as many acres as possible “and to sell their corn at any price, since the government would make up the difference. Or as it turned out, make up some of the difference, since just



Brother Louis Rodemann, FSC, Teresa Vandeenboom, Martha Belker, Robert Heyer and the author confer on rural issues in Missouri as part of NETWORK’s farm bill work funded by Oxfam America.

Oxfam America has called for farm bill reform that includes measures on:

- **Commodity reform:** to reduce funding for commodity subsidies that distort trade and to shift resources to alternative investments in rural America.
- **Efficiency:** to reduce the loopholes and accounting games that allow some people to reap huge payments from the taxpayers.
- **Conservation:** to increase funding for conservation and encourage better stewardship.
- **Diversification:** to encourage production of other non-commodity food crops.
- **Equity:** to spread the benefits of economic growth opportunity to new groups and constituencies.
- **Rural development:** to increase funding for rural development, to expand access to credit, roads, and telecommunications, and to help rural areas diversify their economies and attract new businesses.
- **Nutrition:** to increase funding for food security through food stamps, food banks, and access to nutritious foods, and to strengthen local and regional agricultural production.
- **Global leadership:** to set our farm policies in a direction that will enable poor farmers in other countries to make a living. This could also improve international relations with other countries that think current U.S. farm subsidies are unfair to their farmers.

From *Fairness in the Fields: The 2007 Farm Bill*, Oxfam America, www.oxfamamerica.org

about every farm bill since has lowered the target price, in order, it was claimed, to make American grain more competitive in world markets.” Of course, major beneficiaries of these lower prices have included large U.S.-based corporations like Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, which buy enormous amounts of agricultural products and have, predictably, played a hand in shaping recent farm bills.

According to Pollan, the U.S. government now spends up to \$5 billion a year subsidizing cheap corn. This infusion of money has encouraged farmers to increase their corn yield, which has resulted in new USDA predictions that U.S. farmers will plant more than 90 million acres this year, the largest acreage in 63 years. This could produce more than 12 billion bushels of corn, with more than 3 billion going to ethanol production.

Although the subsidy checks go to farmers (and represent nearly half of net farm income today), Oxfam America reports that only one-quarter of all farmers are able to qualify for the subsidies. Furthermore, 72 percent of the subsidies go to just 10 percent of the qualifying farms. These, of course, are the largest farms.

The Crops Leave the Farms

After the crops are sold, they usually go in one of three directions—feedlots, consumers or world markets. Agribusiness and the government decide where they go.

A very high percentage goes to feedlots for cattle, pigs and chickens. Many feedlots have become notorious in recent years for crowded and unsanitary conditions that result in the extensive use of antibiotics to keep the animals “healthy.” They also use grain like corn and soybeans (and hormones) to rapidly fatten up the animals right before slaughter. Cattle are now being bred to eat grain even though grass is their natural diet. As a result, according to Pollan, “[t]he



Clifford Crouse and son Stephen Crouse, 4th and 5th generation farmers, Easton, Missouri

species is evolving...to help absorb the excess biomass coming off America’s cornfields. But the cow’s not there quite yet, and a great many feedlot cattle—virtually all of them to one degree or another, according to several animal scientists I talked to—are simply sick.”

Feedlots are one of the reasons organizations like the American

commonly supplied through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program are macaroni and cheese, beef stew, canned vegetables and fruits, peanut butter, cereal and juice. CSFP is on the chopping block in the administration’s proposed farm bill. If it is not authorized, it will not be funded and the administration says the participants will be folded into the food stamp program. There are already thousands of qualified people not in either program due, in part, to lack of funds.

Children in school lunch programs are also impacted by the farm bill. As with nutrition programs for senior citizens, the food chosen for children’s lunches is most often starchy and filling, full of salt and sugar. In recent years, there has been an epidemic of obesity and diabetes in children caused, in part, by junk food advertised to them on TV (including sweetened cereals and soda pop made from corn fructose, yet another corn product) and unhealthy school lunches.

Farmers at the beginning of this food chain worry about where some of their crops end up. As Dan and Jim McLarney told me, government-sponsored food programs for children and the elderly should feature healthy eating and be accompanied by exercise and health programs. Ultimately, taxpayer-funded programs should benefit the recipients for whom they were intended instead of big business.



Cancer Society and American Heart Association are also lobbying for a good farm bill—one that will promote the eating of healthy foods like fresh vegetables and fruits, especially in schools and inner cities.

The USDA buys a significant amount of processed foods to use in programs such as school lunches and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), a small program that provides food to low-income senior citizens and others in certain states. The items most

The third destination for commodity products—corn, soybeans, rice, cotton and wheat—is outside U.S. borders. Subsidized exports can be sold cheaply to developing countries, and this has caused economic hardships for a significant number of farmers in Africa, Mexico and Central America. Many of those impacted have migrated to the U.S. or elsewhere to find new sources of income. NETWORK is working with anti-hunger groups trying to curtail this cheap dumping of grain products while promoting fair trade and fair prices for small farmers in the U.S. and across the globe.



Protecting Our Resources

Conservation is another important part of the farm bill. The Farm and Food Policy Project tells us that U.S. farmers and ranchers control more than half of U.S. lands and are therefore “key to solving many of the nation’s environmental challenges.” How they use their lands has a direct impact on soil, water, air and animals throughout our nation.

We are all hurt when government subsidies and other programs promote overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and “fencerow to fencerow” planting in order to maximize yields. In their place, we need programs that better enable farmers to do what they do best—protect their lands and resources for generations of farmers to come.

The Common Good

The final principle in NETWORK’s farm bill campaign is the most impor-

tant and all-encompassing: working for the common good. We must move beyond a utilitarian mindset that promotes cheap grain and overproduction of agricultural commodities at the sacrifice of our health, the environment, and the wellbeing of those of us most in need. We must also serve the needs of our children and future generations. Catholic Social Teaching teaches that:

[f]or us, hungry children, farmworkers, and farmers in distress are not abstract issues. They are sisters and brothers with their own God-given dignity. ... [W]e live in a shrinking world. Disease, economic forces, capital, and labor cross national boundaries; so must our care for all the children of God.”

— *For I was Hungry*,
USCCB, 2004

In the long run, cheap food at the expense of the common good is not cheap

because it harms not only us, but generations to come. This cost is simply too great.

Our new and holistic consciousness requires us to act. Join with NETWORK to meet this challenge and advocate for a farm bill that will balance the needs of all and truly serve the common good.

Former NETWORK Board Member Barbara Jennings, CSJ, lives and eats healthily in St. Louis, Missouri

Photos with captions courtesy of the author. Small photos without captions by Theresa Guentzel, sister of NETWORK staff member Jessica Guentzel, from the family’s farm in Minnesota.

All people want what’s best for their children and for future generations. All community members—whether rural, suburban, or urban—want strong local economies and the ability to buy healthy and affordable food. All Americans, whether farmers or not, recognize that agriculture is vital to the nation and must remain productive, profitable, and sustainable.

But what we want from our food system and what our national food and farm policies deliver are increasingly out of balance. This is especially true for the “Farm Bill”—which Congress will renew in 2007—and which addresses such critical issues as agricultural production, food and nutrition assistance, rural development, renewable energy, equity, and conservation policies. These public policies need to result in better management of the farm and food system that serves us all.

Introduction from Seeking Balance in U.S. Farm and Food Policy, a report published by the Farm and Food Policy Project and endorsed by more than 400 organizations, including NETWORK. www.farmandfoodproject.org



Hubert Gregory of Easton, Missouri, supplements hay with corn and is concerned about rising corn prices. And yet he is aware that his neighbors who grow corn are not getting what they should. His wife Bonnie, who is a nurse, is concerned about the rise of obesity and diabetes due to too much corn fructose, sugars and fat in foods and drinks. She supports more vegetables and fruits in school lunches and other nutrition programs.

Debates on the Budget, Iraq, Immigration and Trade Go On

By MARGE CLARK, BVM, CATHERINE PINKERTON, CSJ, AND SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

As *Connection* went to press, Congress and the White House openly clashed on major issues such as Iraq and immigration. Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) planned to introduce legislation that would require the president to redeploy the troops out of Iraq and end most war funding by March 31, 2008. The president continued to resist timelines for ending the war.

Senator Reid also announced that the Senate would begin what promised to be a contentious debate on immigration in late May. The White House released a draft immigration bill that drew criticism for its less generous treatment of undocumented immigrants than had been previously proposed.

Meanwhile, we at NETWORK strengthened our engagement with Members of Congress on the federal budget, economic development in Iraq, comprehensive immigration reform and global trade issues.

The work continues!

Will the Budget Address Human Needs?

The House and Senate Budget Committees have each accepted their chamber's budget resolution for FY 2008. Differences will be reconciled by a conference committee, with May 15 as the deadline for the reconciled budget resolution to come to the floors of both chambers. The resolutions show some progress in addressing human needs, but the president threatens to veto a budget with more domestic discretionary spending than he requested.

The pay-as-you-go rule ("paygo") has been reinstated with the FY 2008 budget. It says that any spending or tax changes cannot add to the federal deficit.

This means that any new proposals must be either "budget neutral" or offset with reductions in other areas or increases in taxes. In the 1990s, "paygo" was instrumental in bringing about balanced budgets and reducing the deficit.

Key Budget Issues

• Overall Spending

The president's budget request capped spending at \$2.9 trillion while House and Senate resolutions set totals near \$3 trillion. The budget request and resolutions differ vastly in how the money would be spent. The president's budget calls for the continuation of costly tax cuts scheduled to expire in 2009 and 2010, whereas congressional resolutions cut back on these but increase spending in human needs areas.

• Mandated (Entitlement Program) Spending

Children's healthcare is of utmost importance, and this year the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is up for reauthorization. There is agreement that the need is great since there are nine million uninsured children in this nation. Both chambers have included money to allow the reauthorization to cover all children who are eligible for SCHIP, at a cost of \$50 billion over five years. That still leaves nearly three million children uninsured because they are ineligible. "Paygo" rules apply to this spending, which makes it difficult for lawmakers to decide how to fully fund it.

• Discretionary Spending

In contrast to the president's proposal for cuts in nondefense discretionary funding, both congressional resolutions provided modest increases. A compari-

son appears in the table below. (Note: The "baseline," which is determined by the Congressional Budget Office, is the 2006 spending level adjusted for inflation.)

The president's budget would limit children's healthcare spending, eliminate housing and food commodity programs for the elderly, reduce nutrition programs for children, and increase educational costs for families. States would also face increased expenses for mandatory programs since block grant programs would be cut.

Congress continues to work toward a budget that will better provide for the basic needs of families in this country, while meeting the defense requests of the president. Offsets to spending are supposed to be met in part through ending more tax loopholes and closing the gap between what individuals and corporations owe and what is actually collected.

Appropriations committees will allocate money to specific housing, nutrition and healthcare programs, and be



Non-Defense Discretionary Spending Levels

Baseline for 2008	President's Budget	House Resolution	Senate Resolution
\$ 405.5 billion	\$ 392.5 billion	\$ 417.8 billion	\$ 412.7 billion

Need up-to-date information about legislation in Congress? Check out NETWORK's Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/bills/>. ★ To learn what happened to legislation you followed in the past, go to <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/votes/> and enter your zip code in the "Key Votes" field.

required to stay within the cap allocated to that committee. It is an important time for NETWORK members to advocate for sufficient funding of human needs programs such as WIC (Women, Infants and Children), HUD vouchers and veterans' healthcare.



Iraq

On Capitol Hill there is beginning to be more awareness of the need for economic development as a way to peace-building in Iraq. NETWORK members' lobbying efforts have made a dent that has resulted in increased supplemental funding for development and refugee assistance. Over the next few months, our efforts will shift to the appropriation process to get these programs adequately funded in FY 2008.

We have already helped change some of the political rhetoric to reflect more concern for economic development in Iraq. It is vital that we keep up the pressure on Congress and the administration to build peace as an alternative to war.

Immigration

As we went to press, it was difficult to predict where the immigration debate will go. The president's proposal is a dramatic departure from what has been the conventional wisdom. It moves away from the family reunification principle and does not have a workable approach to the 12 million undocumented working people currently in the U.S.

The Senate is hoping to bring the issue up in late May, but there is no agreed-upon bill that has been introduced. Senator Kennedy is insistent that

family reunification is a moral issue and is not to be compromised.

NETWORK members should be attentive to coming alerts. This issue could move quickly in the next few critical months—or it will be lost in election year posturing.

Let's keep the pressure up for responsible comprehensive immigration reform!

Faith Groups and Congress Confer on Trade

It is rare that legislators join lobbyists in speaking to Congress, but such an exciting and productive meeting occurred on March 13, 2007. The Interfaith Working Group on International Trade and Investment (IWG), of which NETWORK is a member, hosted with Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and Representative Walter Jones (R-NC) a congressional briefing entitled "Rethinking U.S. Trade Policy for the Common Good." Our goal was to examine some of the effects of our current trade policies not only on workers and farmers in the U.S., but also on our trading partners in developing countries.

The briefing covered three aspects of current trade policy:



1. Trade and Livelihood—The current U.S. trade agenda has resulted in the loss of too many well-paying manufacturing and service jobs. In their place, we have seen an increase in lower-paying, low-quality, temporary contract jobs. More U.S. families are living on the edge as they work longer and harder just to keep their heads above water. For our trading partners, U.S. agricultural trade has resulted in the loss of livelihoods and increased urban and international migration. In many areas, signing a free trade agreement with the U.S. has meant economic upheaval, increased violence, human rights abuses, economic insecurity and decrease in job quality.

2. Trade and the Weakening of Democracy—In the drive to secure markets for U.S. products and lower prices for consumers, Congress has been left out of the crucial debate as to what should and should not be included in trade agreements. The governments of our trading partners, including many developing countries in conflict hot spots, are being pushed into policy straight-jackets that restrict their ability to respond to their populations' needs.

3. Trade and Agriculture—U.S. export-oriented agriculture policy, reinforced internationally through trade agreements, has done little to help struggling family farmers or impoverished rural communities in many regions. It often encourages overproduction

and dumping, lowering prices and threatening the livelihoods and food security of subsistence farmers globally and family farmers here in America. Current U.S. agricultural trade has displaced thousands of subsistence farmers in Mexico and other countries, increasing global migration and immigration to the U.S.

Presenters who spoke to the effects of trade agreements on their nations came from Southern Africa, Bolivia, Kenya and Mexico, as well as the United States. In addition to Representatives Kaptur and Jones, Representatives Kucinich (D-OH) and Ron Paul (R-TX) also addressed the group.

The briefing came at an important time since Congress faces a vote on trade agreements with Peru, Bolivia, Columbia and South Korea, as well as the reauthorization of the 2007 farm bill.

Marge Clark, BVM, and Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, are NETWORK Lobbyists. Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK Executive Director.

Want timely information about key issues in Congress? NETWORK members can sign up for our weekly email legislative hotline. Send your name, zip code and email address to jsammon@networklobby.org.

Guatemalan Food Preferences Affected by Global Trade

BY MIGUEL GUARCHAJ LÓPEZ

Miguel Guarchaj López was interviewed for this article by NETWORK Lobby Associate Elena Lacayo. His original comments are printed on the following page, with the translation below provided by Elena Lacayo.

In the last ten years, the people's diet has changed significantly. Global politics have changed what people eat. For example, people eat what we call "junk food," which is the food that comes in bags with preservatives. Many people prefer to eat this, which is a big change from how it was before. Before, people ate what they produced in the fields. The market has turned the population into consumers and has lowered the production of their own foods. Speaking in terms of food security, we see people producing less food.

This artificial food is neither cheaper nor more nutritious. For example, it costs four quetzales to buy a Coca Cola and it costs 75 centavos to buy an egg. [One quetzal is worth 100 centavos.] It is clear that the egg has more nutritional value, but people consistently choose the other product. Despite the fact that this has much to do with the people's own choices and habits, the primary influence is the politics of the world economy, the neoliberal economy including NAFTA, CAFTA and Free Trade agreements. [Neoliberalism is the general term used in many parts of the



"In the botanical garden, we have 102 medical plants and 23 nutritive plants. A way in which the nutritious plants help, for example is, now that the price of meat is high, we teach people which plants can substitute for the nutrients in meat, like soy."

—Juan Guarchaj (who works in the clinic garden)

world to describe a push to the opening of markets in order to expand capitalism and globalization.]

From my point of view, there is a real lack of direct education for the communities. We need programs that are adequately tailored to the local customs. This year we started radio programs to inform the population on different issues: nutrition, the environment, nourishment security [food security], and natural medicine.



"In 1940, engineers financed by the Rockefeller Foundation brought toxic agrochemicals; teaching us to abandon our traditional practices. They thought they were teaching us a better way, whereas we were the experts in agriculture in our land. The process of returning [to our traditional methods] has been slow because we had been so indoctrinated."

—Miguel Ajtzalam

We help those who come to the clinic by communicating in their language, which is Quiché. In this way we can help the sick, most of whom do not understand Spanish. We provide nutrition counseling in their language. Our team includes women who work with the mothers in the community, especially when their children are recuperating from malnutrition. They are given a nutrition plan that includes information about the basic food groups so that they know how to feed their children. When they arrive, we note the child's height and weight. In some cases, for extremely poor families, food products are provided and they are taught how to cook some of the foods needed for the child's recuperation.

But we need a permanent orientation program in the clinic, one that includes audiovisual support such as videos that can be shown while patients wait to see the doctor. This would take advantage of



"I used to be able to buy wonderful tomatoes here in our market, but now the only tomatoes you can buy are hard in the center and yellow and tough skins and without flavor. What is happening to our land?"

—Older Woman from Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan, Sololá

the space already available in the clinic. Another aspect where we could improve is to better monitor those who come to the clinic because of malnutrition.

What I most like about my job is working with people who come in search of a solution to their problem. Because we have many ways to help them here, it provides me with a chance to improve many aspects of people's lives.

Miguel Guarchaj López is the Assistant Director of the Maxena Clinic of Santo Tomás la Unión in Suchitepéquez, Guatemala. Photos by Marge Clark, BVM.



Returning from the morning market.

Como el Comercio Global Afecta la Alimentación en Guatemala

POR MIGUEL GUARCHAJ LÓPEZ

En los últimos diez años ha cambiado bastante la manera en que se alimenta la gente. La política global ha cambiado lo que come la gente. Por ejemplo, nosotros llamamos la “comida chatarra” la comida en bolsas con preservativos. Mucha gente prefiere comer esto, y es muy diferente de lo que era antes. Antes, la gente comía lo que producían en el campo. El mismo mercado ha convertido la población en consumidores y ha bajado la producción de la gente. Hablando en términos de seguridad alimentaria, vemos que la gente esta produciendo menos.



“Our municipio is doing nothing to forbid the cutting of the trees or introducing a plan to cut and replant. Soon our mountain will be a desert...and we'll have no water or arable land. Maybe if I go to the United States, I can learn about methods and make some money to do some good here.”

— Young Man from Xojola, Nahualá, Sololá

Y esta comida artificial no es ni más barata ni más nutritiva. Por ejemplo, cuesta cuatro quetzales una Coca Cola, y cuesta 75 centavos un huevo. En términos de alimentación, el huevo es mucho mejor pero la gente escoge el otro producto. Aunque esto es efecto del

modo de vivir en la gente, la primera influencia es la política de economía mundial; la economía neoliberal incluyendo los tratados de libre comercio en Centro América y Norte América.

Desde mi punto de vista, hace falta más educación directamente con las comunidades. Programas que se adecuen a las costumbres de la gente y los eduque sobre estos temas. Este año comenzamos programas de radio para orientar a la población sobre diferentes temas: la nutrición, el medio ambiente, la seguridad alimentaria y la medicina natural. Nosotros ayudamos a los que llegan a la clínica más que todo comunicándonos en su idioma, que es el Quiché. Así podemos ayudar a los enfermos porque la mayoría no entienden el español. En su propio idioma, se da consejería de nutrición. En nuestro equipo trabajan mujeres que trabajan con las madres de la comunidad, sobre todo durante la recuperación de los niños desnutridos. Se les da un plan de nutrición de los elementos básicos para sus hijos si están desnutridos. Cuando llegan, se les hace un control de talla y peso a los niños. En algunos casos para las familias extremadamente pobres, se les da alimentos y se les enseña como cocinar para la recuperación de los niños.

Pero necesitamos un



Mecha cooks for infirmary patients at Sto. Tomás la Unión.

programa de orientación permanente en la clínica, equipos audio visuales, videos que se pueden enseñar mientras esperan ver al doctor sobre las cosas que necesitan para mejorar la vida, aprovechando los espacios que ya existen en la clínica. El otro aspecto donde podemos mejorar es dándole seguimiento a los que llegan por la desnutrición.

Lo que más me gusta es mi trabajo con la gente que viene a buscar una solución a su problema y teniendo muchas posibilidades acá, siente que tiene la oportunidad de mejorarle muchas cosas en su vida.



Miguel Guarchaj López

Madre Maria (Mary Waddell, BVM) works with the author and has lived in Guatemala for 21 years. According to Madre Maria, their clinic's programs, “emphasize prevention of diseases and the bettering of living conditions and care of the environment. We have a Natural Medicine Program with a clinic for treatment, and a garden of medicinal and nutritive plants of our area, and a laboratory where we process medicine for sale. The program provides training, demonstrations and support to local groups using medicinal plants. This program has extended to the promotion of the use of soybeans and amaranth in combatting malnutrition and principles of agroecology with local groups.”

Miguel Guarchaj López es el subdirector de la Clínica Maxeña de Santo Tomás la Unión en Suchitepéquez, Guatemala. Fotografías por Marge Clark, BVM.

Taste Something Local

BY MORGAN GREGSON

Western North Carolina is home to stunning mountain views, rich Appalachian culture, and a growing movement to protect the local food system. Two summers ago, I spent time there when a farmworker justice program asked me to do some research about Latino farmworkers who were now running their own farms. That summer, I not only learned their stories, but also how food gets from their fields to my table.

The region is one of many areas in the nation that have initiated “tailgate markets,” often known as farmers’ markets. Shopping at tailgate markets is now one of my most treasured experiences. Walking through these markets brings color-splashed sights of fresh squash and broccoli, crisp collards and chard, and plump berries and tomatoes. Goats proudly bleat beside tables offering cheeses made from their milk. Rich scents drift through the air—soaps and lotions made from homegrown lavender or mint, and freshly cut flowers from family gardens. In the midst of the shuffling crowd, I hear the music of a local bluegrass band or fiddler, reminding all of us of the rich cultural history of the mountains and hollers. Products I previously saw only on grocery store shelves now become directly linked with farmers who had worked the soil to produce them. It was during my first

market moments that I came to realize that those farmers and I directly affect one another—we are all part of a shared food system.

That system also extends to western North Carolina restaurants and grocery stores that contribute to the regional food movement. Many buy produce directly from local farmers or from groups like Carolina Organic Growers (COG), a marketing cooperative based in Asheville. Restaurant and grocery owners, like tailgate market shoppers, have come to understand that local food is fresher, better for the local economy, more environmentally friendly since it requires less fossil fuel, and most often, of the highest quality. Restaurant-goers take pride in knowing that the food on their plates has come from local farms, and visitors like me feel like they have experienced a unique part of what the area has to offer.

Besides providing regional foods to shoppers and diners, local farmers are now selling their produce directly to schools and colleges. As school systems agree to purchase local food, farmers are guaranteed a market for their harvest. Regional organizations have rallied around the so-called “farm to school” idea, creating programs that allow students to take field trips to meet the farmers, learn new recipes that use

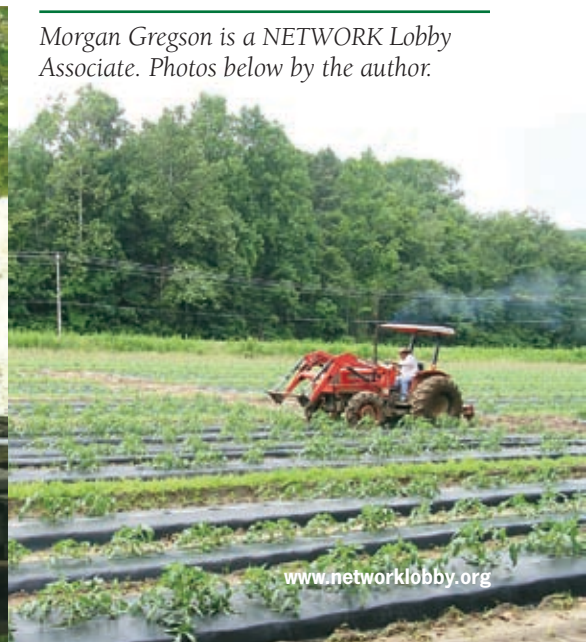


Morgan Gregson reads to local elementary school children about César Chávez.

local produce, and learn how to grow their own food in gardens behind their schools. I worked alongside some of the elementary students in their gardens, where we talked about César Chávez and farmworker issues, as well as about healthy eating.

After completing my initial work in the area, I wanted to better understand local food from the producers’ standpoints. Last summer, I returned and worked with three farmers who grow produce for their own families as well as for COG. I delivered boxes of freshly harvested collards and broccoli to COG and was delighted when I spotted them beautifully displayed during subsequent trips to local grocery stores. When I saw them, I looked down at the dirt entrenched beneath my fingernails, smiled, and walked away understanding where it all began.

Below: Boxes of freshly harvested broccoli, collards, and sugar snap peas, ready for delivery.
Below right: A local farmer at work in the field.



Morgan Gregson is a NETWORK Lobby Associate. Photos below by the author.

Food and Farm Policies Only Affect Those Who Eat!

Agriculture isn't just about farmers—it touches all our lives. It's about how we feed our families, how we preserve the earth, our relationship to a global society, and how we ensure opportunity within our communities. We have the chance to influence our lawmakers on all of these issues as they work on the food bill this year. NETWORK chooses to call the farm bill the “food and farm bill” because it touches so many parts of our food system.

Our faith tradition teaches us that it is our right to participate in those decisions that affect our lives. The food and farm bill is being transformed by faith and justice communities so that it will truly serve us all.

The final bill must include:

Fairness for U.S. and global farmers

In the developing world, 50% of the people are farmers, in comparison to just 1% of the U.S. population. Most impoverished people in the world depend on agriculture for their livelihood, yet they find it very difficult to compete with U.S. policies that favor large farms, agribusiness, and exports.

Assurance of healthy communities

Food stamp programs, though efficient, don't adequately ensure that families have access to healthy foods. Over 35 million Americans, a population equivalent to those of Pennsylvania and Texas combined, live in households unable to afford the food they need throughout the year.

Rural development

Rural no longer means only agriculture. A new rural culture is evolving; one that needs help to develop infrastructure, entrepreneurship, community innovation, and incentives for new farmers. With access to resources and innovative policies, rural people will make changes that benefit their communities.

Managing our resources

Farmers, while meeting the agricultural needs of today, are also taking care of the land for future generations. Farm policies that rewarded farmers for environmental conservation have not been funded in the past few years. One way to protect our air, water and land is through initiatives such as the Conservation Security Program, which rewards farmers who are good stewards of the environment.

We encourage the reproduction and distribution of this back-to-back fact sheet.

Farms and Catholic Social Justice Tradition

Our vision for food and farm policies comes from principles of Catholic social justice tradition that call us to promote the common good and to care for God's creation.

FOOD & FARM POLICY VALUES	CATHOLIC TEACHING
Healthy food for all families	This is a time not for "just words or mere talk" but for "active and genuine" commitment by Catholics in the United States to work with others to make a place at the table for all God's children. — U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, <i>A Place at the Table</i> , 2002
Protection of our natural resources	The world that God created has been entrusted to us. Our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply for our own benefit. — U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, <i>Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Responsibility</i> , 2003
Vibrant rural communities	In rural areas of the United States and throughout the world, small towns and villages are the backbone of social and economic life. As rural populations decline and rural economies suffer, basic structures of rural life are at risk. Public policies should encourage a wide variety of economic development strategies in rural areas. — U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, <i>"For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food"</i> (Mt 25:35), 2003
Fairness for U.S. and global farmers	A key measure of every agricultural program and legislative initiative is whether it helps the most vulnerable farmers, farmworkers, and their families and whether it contributes to a global food system that provides basic nutrition for all. — U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, <i>"For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food"</i> (Mt 25:35), 2003

All members of Congress need to hear from their constituents who believe in these values that shape our farm and food policies. **Now is the time to contact your legislators, as both the House and Senate are currently working to develop legislation on the farm bill.**

WRITE:	U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	U.S. Senate Washington, DC 20510
CALL:	Capitol Switchboard	202-224-3121
EMAIL:	through the NETWORK website	www.networklobby.org

For more information:

- NETWORK's statement on the farm bill— <http://www.networklobby.org/issues/alsoofinterest/FarmBill.htm>
- Food and Farm Policy Project— <http://www.farmandfoodproject.org/index.asp>
- United States Department of Agriculture— <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome>
- Bread for the World— <http://www.bread.org>
- Oxfam America— <http://www.oxfamamerica.org>

Compiled by NETWORK Field Associate Jessica Guentzel

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The People Speak

BY JEAN SAMMON

“These days, some people want to call what you are doing ‘grassroots activism’ but I still call it democracy,” said Senator Tom Harkin.

He was speaking to a group of about 75 people who had come to Washington from California, Maine and 25 other states because they are concerned about our nation’s farm policies. They had gathered for a conference called “Roots to Reform: A Summit for a Sustainable 2007 Farm Bill,” which was organized by the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. Their goal was to learn from each other, to organize themselves, and to make sure their voices were heard in Congress.

I guess you could say they were educating, organizing, and lobbying,

Hmm...no wonder I found them inspiring—those are words that that appear in NETWORK’s mission statement!

I went to the conference to learn about farming from some of the people who know it best. I met small farmers who are trying their best to grow healthy food while being good stewards of the land. They felt they could use a little help. They saw injustice in our current government farm policies, and so, being good citizens, they came to Washington to petition the Government for a redress. (See first amendment to the U.S. Constitution.)

Redress means setting right what is wrong. The sustainable agriculture coalition people have ideas about how to do this. They would like limits on payments to big producers, help for new young farmers and rural businesses, improvements in conservation programs, support for more diverse crops, and innovative programs to encourage local markets.

They not only know what they want, they know whom to talk to. They organized themselves to meet as constituents with their own members of Congress and exchanged information about messages that would be particularly effective for each legislator. Then they met

with Senator Harkin because he is the chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee and has a lot of influence on policies that affect farmers. Senator Harkin was happy to meet them and hear their ideas, and he was even happier when he learned that they were also meeting with their own Representatives and Senators, because, he said, that’s what will make a difference.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days

Another group came to Washington that same week—over 800 Christians from 20 different denominations and 41 states. They, too, came to educate, organize and lobby. They are concerned about the future of our children. They asked their members of Congress for three specific things: healthcare coverage for all children in the U.S.; prioritizing peace, not war, for all of the world’s children; and legislation that addresses climate change now rather than passing the burden on to our children’s children.

Imagine what a difference 800 Christians make when they go to Capitol Hill. Organized and divided into constituent groups, they visited over 200 congressional offices. They learned from the advice of Rev. Bob Edgar, who was once a Congressman himself, to treat the people on the Hill as ordinary people, and to simply have a conversation with them.

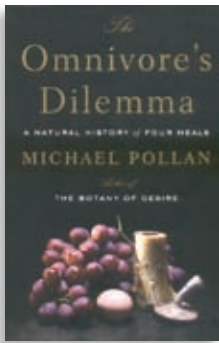
Animated by the Spirit and inspired by each other, the ecumenical advocates educated themselves, their legislators and congressional staff members. They learned from their lobby experience that there is power in numbers and in building relationships, and that advocacy is an energizing and unifying experience for people of faith. Many felt that they had really made connections with congressional staff, and that these relationships gave them new information that led to commitments for follow-up action.

Almost everyone who goes to Capitol Hill to visit his or her legislators comes away with a feeling of how important it is to keep advocating. Without it, change rarely happens.

Jean Sammon is NETWORK’s Field Coordinator.



Ginger Geating, Christine Martin, OSF, Daniel Petsche, OSB, Kathleen Reichert, OSF, and Martin Goedken are members of Sparks of Hope in northwest Missouri. Formed in 2000, the group advocates from a faith perspective for the benefit of rural communities.



The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan, The Penguin Press, 2006, www.michaelpollan.com/omnivore.php



Creating a Healthcare System for All Our Children: The Prayer Tent for Children's Health Care. Invite your faith community to reflect, pray and act for justice for children. Join others in addressing the needs of the more than 9 million children without health insurance. Designed as a six-week program, the prayer tent and bulletin inserts create a space where family and friends can reflect on and discuss the need for a healthcare system that serves all our nation's children. For materials and community actions for children's healthcare justice visit www.healthcaredialogues.org.



American Catholics Today; New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church by William V. D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge and Mary L. Gautier, A Sheed & Ward Book, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007, www.rowmanlittlefield.com.

May 2, Kansas City, KS
June 9, St. Joseph, MO
June 11, Parkville/Kansas City, MO

Barbara Jennings, CSJ, NETWORK's Regional Organizer, will facilitate workshops on "Good Farm Bills Make Good Eating" at Donnelly College in Kansas City (5/2), Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in St. Joseph, MO (6/9), and St. Teresa Church, Parkville/Kansas City, Mo (6/11).

June 26, Cleveland, OH

Simone Campbell, SSS, will present "The Spirit of Vatican II and the 2008 Election" at the "Remembering the Call" conference, sponsored by the Cleveland Diocese and Catholic Colleges, Universities and Seminaries.



Have you received a renewal notice even though you just gave a donation to NETWORK? Please accept our apologies. We try to keep our records as up-to-date as possible. Pass the extra letter on to someone you know who may be interested in learning about NETWORK!

Join NETWORK's Monthly Pledge Program!

NETWORK's pledge program members are a key part of our social justice mission. They provide reliable, monthly support so that we can direct more of our resources towards the crucial work of lobbying, educating and organizing for change.

As a monthly pledger, you authorize NETWORK or NEP to charge your contribution to your credit card, or have the amount withdrawn from your bank account each month. You can discontinue your contributions at any time simply by notifying our office.

No more hunting for stamps or filling out credit card forms! Best of all, you have the satisfaction of knowing that each month your contributions are put to work for justice.

There are three easy ways to join the monthly pledge program:

- **By mail**—fill out and return the envelope in the center of this magazine
- **Online**—your sign-up is secure at www.networklobby.org
- **By phone**—contact Ann Dunn, Membership Coordinator, at 202-347-9797 ext 200.

Get started today!

Last fall, our magazine featured an article by Baldemar Velasquez, founder of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). Tragically, Santiago Rafael Cruz, a FLOC staff member, was found murdered on April 9 in their offices in Monterrey, Mexico. NETWORK extends our sincere condolences to Baldemar Velasquez and to the family and coworkers of Mr. Cruz. As we pray for those who grieve, we will also pray that farmworkers touched by his organizing work will achieve the justice they deserve. (For more information, see www.floc.com.)



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