



Local Food and Food Sovereignty: Walking the Walk

Producers for local markets: Ann Slater, organic vegetable farm, St. Mary's

Ann Slater farms one-and-a-half acres of land, just 20 kilometres beyond the busy streets of Stratford, Ontario. Ann has been growing nutritious food for families in her area since she was a teenager. She farms without chemicals or heavy machinery. She keeps a few animals which help to keep her soil rich and fertile, and she uses labour-powered tools for weeding and planting. Her work is challenging and the hours are long, but Ann is able to support herself entirely from the money she makes farming. This is in contrast to many farmers in her area who are not making a living from high-input farming. Part of the reason for her success is simply that the fruits of Ann's labour are hers; they are not divided amongst the various chemical, seed, machinery companies, or supermarkets for half their true value.

Ann Slater epitomises Food Sovereignty in action—she maximizes control by minimizing reliance on purchased and non-renewable inputs; she produces food for herself, her family and her community instead of commodities for trade; she maintains the fertility of her soil through natural and organic means; she fosters biodiversity; she conserves and develops knowledge of ecological production; she enhances local self-sufficiency and helps put control locally. This article highlights Food Sovereignty in fields and communities of Ontario.

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Report on Sapporo's People's Weeks on G8 People's Summit 2008, Hokkaido Island, Japan, July 2008 We Can Change the World!

In July, NFU member Ineke Booy travelled to Sapporo, Japan as the North American Via Campesina representative to participate in the Via Campesina workshops, meetings and protests held in parallel to the G8 meeting. The following is her account of the experience.

On arrival at the airport in Sapporo, La Via Campesina (LVC) members were ready to welcome twenty-four Koreans and myself but we ended up waiting for eight hours for the Korean people who had been detained by Customs for questioning. At long last two of the twenty-four were allowed entrance while the others were sent back home. Our efforts to negotiate with customs had failed. The reason for not letting the Korean members in had to do with the forced importation, via the World Trade Organization (WTO), of beef from the United States into Korea. The Koreans suspected the US beef to be contaminated with Mad Cow Disease. The twenty four Koreans had planned to make this issue public during the G8 talks. Other activists also were detained, questioned and made to feel afraid. Susan George from Attac France and author of "How the Other Half Dies" was also detained and questioned in a room without windows, notwithstanding the fact that she was in

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NEW—NFU ONLINE!!

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Tyson/XL sale: packer concentration bad for cattle farmers

The NFU is meeting with Canada's Competition Bureau in early September to discuss the proposed sale of Tyson Foods Inc.'s Brooks, Alberta beef packing plant to XL Foods. The Brooks plant is Canada's largest. XL Foods is owned by the Nilsson Brothers of Alberta.

In late July, the NFU wrote to the Prime Minister and the Competition Bureau raising concerns regarding the proposed sale (that letter is available on request from nfu@nfu.ca). The NFU called on the Bureau and the Prime Minister to intervene aggressively.

The NFU letter pointed out that the Tyson-XL sale, as proposed, would leave XL with nearly half of national meat packing capacity. Further, the sale would leave XL and Cargill with virtually *all* of western Canadian capacity. The letter said: "If the government facilitates the XL-Tyson purchase, in so doing it will

create one of the most concentrated markets in the North American food system."

The NFU pointed to XL's extensive ownership of auction facilities. "The proposed sale would not only make XL Canada's biggest packer, it would also make XL a major cattle supplier, and leave XL as the largest owner of auction facilities. If the sale is allowed to proceed, XL will be buyer, seller, and auctioneer. The Canadian government cannot be an accomplice to creating this type of competition-distorting corporate entity," said the NFU letter.

The letter also highlighted the issue of captive supply—wherein packers own feedlots or control cattle on feed. It appears that, post sale, XL would be able to provide more than 20% of its cattle needs from its own feedlots or from cattle it controls. "Government must

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OUR BOARD OUR BUSINESS

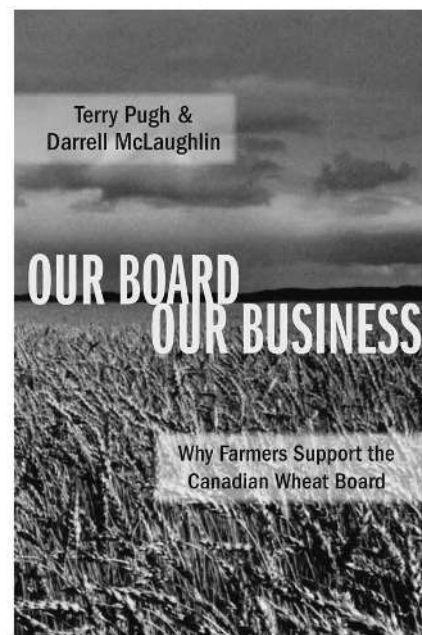
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The central purpose of this book is to help farmers and non-farmers better understand the essential role of the Canadian Wheat Board in the lives of western grain producers and their communities, and the Canadian economy. The need for such an understanding has been made all the more urgent by Prime Minister Harper's neo-liberal open market agenda which will guarantee corporate domination of Canadian grains. This book, sets out the context, operational mechanism and role of the CWB, making the case for its economic, social and political value.

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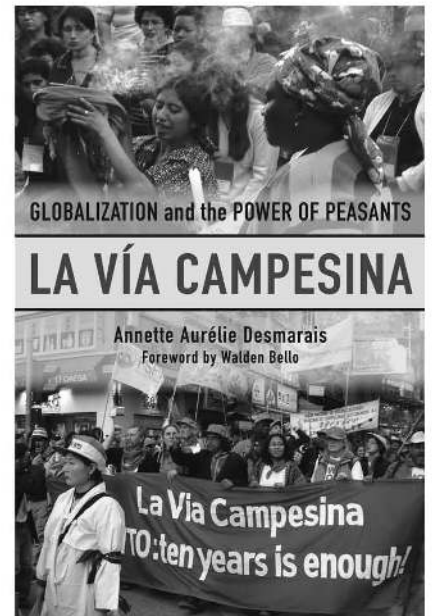
GLOBALIZATION and the POWER OF PEASANTS

Annette Aurélie Desmarais
Foreword by Walden Bello

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— Nettie Wiebe

(Tyson/XL sale, from page 2)

take action to stop the competition-subverting and price-depressing practice of captive supply. These practices harm family farmers and independent sellers of fed cattle. When these captive supply practices are compounded by vertical integration that includes control of sales facilities and by massive concentration of packing plant ownership, the harms increase dramatically," said the NFU.

The NFU proposed two alternative solutions to deal with the competition-suppressing potential of the proposed sale:

- 1) block the proposed sale to XL and ensure the ongoing operation of Tyson's Brooks plant (either by Tyson or an interim operator) until a sale can be arranged to:
 - a. a farmer-controlled co-operative structure, or
 - b. a buyer who has significant food processing assets but does not currently own North American cattle processing facilities; or
- 2) allow the packing plant sale but require XL to divest 100% of its cattle production, finishing, and marketing assets—its cattle on feed, feedlots, and auction rings (and ensure that XL does not control cattle through contracts or other arrangements).

NFU livestock report

The NFU continues to work on an ambitious analysis of the Canadian livestock sector. The report will examine corporate concentration, captive supply, and the role of trade agreements. The report will be released at the NFU National Convention in November.

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Author, Univ. of California at Berkeley

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PAUL NICHOLSON



Basque Farmers & Ranchers Movement/Via Campesina

Address—Farmers and the Global Food Crisis

JUANA FERRER



Chair, International Women's Commission/La Via Campesina

Address—Food Sovereignty: Feeding the People

JUDY REBICK



CAW Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice & Democracy, Ryerson University

Address— Rebuilding the Food System for the Future

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Chief Commissioner, Canadian Grain Commission

Address—Bill C-39 and Changes to the Canada Grain Act

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Address—Strengthening Farmers' Market Power

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Address—Supply-Management: A System that Works for Everyone

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(Local Food and Food Sovereignty, from page 1)

When Ann first started farming in the 1970s, she would sell her produce at a roadside stand. Ann's parents encouraged her and her siblings to farm so that they could, in her words, "make some money without having to get a job". Today, Ann sells at the St. Mary's farmers market each Saturday and runs a 37-member CSA (Community Shared Agriculture—a direct farmer-community distribution system).

Ann believes that the success of her farm lies, to a large degree, in her ability to market directly to neighbours. Ann insists that if she had to sell to grocery stores she could not farm. "Grocery stores pay such low prices, so low that farmers cannot make a living," said Ann.

Ann hasn't always been recognized as a farmer by her community. As a woman and a small-scale farmer, Ann is unique in Perth County. In the past, when the women in town asked Ann about the farm, she would tell them about what she was growing, even though she knew that they were really asking about her family's dairy operation. The work she did on the farm was seen by others as more of a hobby than a genuine centre of food production. She laughed as she recalled this and remarked: "In a global context, I am an average farmer—a woman farming an acre of land, selling food at the local market".

Ann believes that the most important thing she does on her acre-and-a-half of land is, very simply, to "provide food for my community." The North American food system is highly concentrated and corporate controlled, these corporations move food long distances, worsening climate change and hunger around the world. In this context, Ann's market garden is a vital contribution to the health and security of her community and the planet.

Oliver and Renate Haan of Haanover View Farms, Marysville

Seeing that things can be different was critical for the Haan family. The ability to change helped the family survive financially after 2002 when the prices in commodity hogs began to fall. In 1999, the Haans were the second biggest commodity hog farm in their region. In 2002, the Haans lost a quarter of a million dollars.

A combination of economic factors, including corporate takeovers and hog megabarns pushed many farmers in Canada out of business. Between 2000 and 2008 the number of hog farmers in Canada was cut in half—from 17,165 to 8,740 respectively (Statistics Canada, Hog Statistics: Second Quarter 2008). The Haans were seeking another way beyond the troubles of the commodity market, so they decided to try producing pork for the local market instead.

Since 2004, the Haan family have been marketing their 'ecologically produced' pork directly to consumers with positive feed-back and financial success. Oliver explains what they mean by 'ecologically produced': "We use a balanced approach to farming using new technology and old techniques. We produce our own crops for feed. We now have a 80-sow, farrow-to-finish operation, and all of our animals are antibiotic free, and live in a naturally ventilated barn, on straw."

Becoming smaller and marketing locally was good for the Haans, their hogs, and local consumers. When Oliver and Renate were producing for the commodity market, they were not always comfortable eating their own pork. All of the antibiotics required to produce pork in large-scale production system made them question the quality of the meat they were selling.

When the Haans made the decision to turn things around, they took all the drugs out of the barn—despite what they were told by the experts. "The vets were shocked and said that we couldn't do it, and that the pigs would never be good enough for consumption. Our mortality rates actually went down. We cut the number of sows we had to 16. We have since grown to 80 sows and we haven't looked back. Today, we are making money off of every pig we sell," explained Oliver. Oliver and Renate believe that the animal husbandry of small-scale farming produces better quality meat overall than the large-scale methods.

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(Local Food and Food Sovereignty, from page 5)

I asked Oliver and Renate to talk about how things are different from the years when they were in commodity hogs: Oliver replied: “We can weather most storms now because we are not dependant on someone else’s price. We are out of the continuous cycle of riding highs and lows like commodity farmers. Before, we had no control over what was going on with prices. Now, at the end of the day, we can make a living, unlike those who are at the mercy of the market. We are glad that we are farming differently but it’s a lot of work... Then again, we worked hard before too.”

Renate agrees that local marketing gives them more financial security and autonomy. She also says that *Haanover View Farms* has become “a true family business” with the kids selling at the market, learning math skills and how to communicate with customers. “This is our home and I’d like to see the next generation go down this path. If I asked myself this question five years ago, I would have said no way,” explained Renate. By marketing locally, the Hanns are able to have more control over their farm and guarantee high quality food to the consumers who know and, most importantly, support them.

The Haans are proud to be selling higher-quality pork to local families. They encourage open dialogue with customers about their prices and farming methods. Oliver and Renate are discontented with the low price of commodity pork sold in supermarkets, which comes in at 10 to 20 dollars less per pig, usually from the United States or elsewhere. “We can’t compete based on price, but we believe that consumers want quality and the trust that comes with knowing your farmer,” stated Renate.

Oliver and Renate continue to stress the importance of the consumer to the growth of local markets: “We are successful because we have built a relationship with consumers and marketed ourselves. The consumer holds the power. Consumers, at the end of the day, will shift the food system and will determine what the food system looks like. I always like to say: ‘Consumers have to care or commodity will prevail’. If consumers didn’t support me, I would have to look into commodity farming. Then again, I probably wouldn’t be in farming,” stated Oliver. Consumers’ power to shift the food system toward more people-centered, local markets is real—especially when consumers know about how the food system operates, and act through other channels to make lasting change.

Caitlin Hall from Reroot Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Moorefield

Caitlin Hall also spoke passionately about the importance of producer and consumer partnerships. I asked Caitlin to explain why she believes that direct partnerships are important. She reflected for a moment and said: “If you look at the big picture, I am marketing all my crops directly and feeding 60 families. If all farmers were able to do this there would be more Food Sovereignty—more influence by producers and consumers over what is grown, how and where. CSA’s are about shared bounty, shared risk, shared values: from a farmer’s perspective it is a more secure way to market food because there is less financial risk, [members pay for food at the beginning of the growing season] the investments are not in the global financial system but rather from your community, and both the financial and weather-related risks are shared. Farmers have been taking on the responsibility for these risks for too long. Consumers should share this responsibility because growing food is an essential service. In the last 30 years or so, it has not been treated like that.”

Since 2007, Caitlin has been growing organic produce for families in her area who care enough to share the risk. She farms along side Martin de Groot of *Mapleton’s Organic Dairy*, who, knowing what barriers young farmers face in purchasing or leasing land, gave Caitlin two acres of certified organic land. Caitlin was so successful in her first season growing for 20 families, that she was able to make enough to pay off her capital investment, which included a greenhouse and some tools. Now she is farming with a partner and together they serve 60 families that live in towns just beyond the hills and fields that surround their farm. As an aside, Martin de Groot proudly claims that his most productive land is the land that Caitlin now farms.

Caitlin wanted to farm because she was concerned about how the food system impacts the environment—a concern of many farmers around the world who are struggling for Food Sovereignty. Although organic farming and running a CSA is more labour intensive than conventional farming, Caitlin insisted that she made the right decision. “I’m not in farming to make a buck, I want to make a living, of course, but I believe that farming is about more than that. Growing food is an important service for families around here and I’m willing to do the extra work”.

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(*Local Food and Food Sovereignty*, from page 6)

Believing that it is important not to spray, and to nurture natural ecosystems, Caitlin explains: “I am looking at the larger picture, at the benefits to the soil now, and in the future. I am not only thinking about the financial bottom line. It’s also about the other two bottom lines, the social and the environmental, and the way I farm has to reflect all of those interests”.

Her greatest contribution to her community, Caitlin believes, is providing affordable, local and organic food. She also sees her CSA as a way of helping people connect to the land, to their food, and to each other. Caitlin and her business partner distribute weekly newsletters to their members and have a website with recipes and information about the food they grow, hoping to inspire and educate people about the alternative markets for “healthy and happy food”.

Distribution—Wendy Banks of Wendy’s Mobile Market, Kingston

Further along the food chain, Wendy Banks is driving forward the partnerships between local producers and consumers. Wendy started a distribution network in her area where she picks up food from 36 farmers and delivers to restaurants and families in the surrounding towns and cities. Wendy began her business with the encouragement of *Local Flavours*, a Frontenac community group organizing to enhance economic and financial partnerships between producers and consumers.

Wendy is motivated by a “passion for food”. “Many people supported me and told me that if anyone were to do this it should be me, because I represent both the concerns of farmers and consumers,” stated Wendy. As someone who grew up on a farm, Wendy says that she is aware of the hardships that farmers face selling their products below the cost of production. As someone with health challenges she knows how important it is to know where our food comes from and how it is grown or raised.

Wendy not only provides an alternative route from farm to table, she offers producers and consumers with more choice as to where and how they sell, and what they eat and who they buy from. She finds chemical-hormone-additive-free food for families with allergies. She gives livestock farmers the option of feeding their animals grass and selling to gluten-intolerant consumers. Wendy told me a story about how she connected a farmer unsure of what to grow with several restaurants who wanted as many squash and zucchini as she could provide. All the restaurants Wendy sells to are thrilled to have a local and reliable source of fresh produce to feature on their menu—a happy partnership and one with a positive social and environmental impact. These partnerships lessen dependency on the long-distance food system and help producers and consumers have more control over their livelihoods and their well-being.

Wendy values food as a source of nutrition—an essential ingredient to a more people-centered food system. “When you look at the transportation of food today and how far food travels now in comparison to 30 years ago, what is concerning is not just the carbon footprint, but the mineral loss. When I eat something, I want it to have 100 percent of the minerals, but for many foods such as corn, the mineral content decreases within a few hours of harvest. We often deliver food to restaurants within an hour of being picked. They are always very amazed and excited about how fresh and healthy the food is that they can serve”.

Retail: Kim Perry of Local Family Farms, Verona

Like Wendy, Kim Perry spends most of her time establishing a connection between town and countryside. Kim and her husband Dave are beef farmers in a small town about 25 kilometres outside of the City of Kingston. Before 2007, when Kim and Dave opened the *Local Family Farms* grocery store, citizens of Verona had to drive to the supermarket in Kingston to buy meat and produce from farms half-way across the globe. Now they are able to purchase food from over 50 producers within 100 kilometres of their front porch.

“We have a strong focus on providing locally-produced food and making food using ingredients that are available locally, in-season or frozen. All the meat we sell is hormone free. And we don’t use a microwave,” Kim told me. Kim and the workers at *Local Family Farms* prepare pies, soups, lasagna, Tortiere, meatloaf and other goodies in the kitchen at the back of the store. In order to keep to the ‘local code’ they often reinvent recipes to suit what is available in season. They sell preserves and meat as well as some consignment goods and other products for local artists and collectors. In the future they hope to expand their bulk section to include locally-milled grains.

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(*Local Food and Food Sovereignty*, from page 7)

Kim really values family farmers, which is of great importance to the struggle for Food Sovereignty. Unlike the ‘local food’ you can sometimes find in supermarket chains in several towns and cities across North America, the local food from *Local Family Farms* is priced according to what the producers decide. Kim also operates on a very small profit margin and is more concerned about the success of local producers and about the food security for her community than she is with the economic rewards of expanding.

Some people believe that local food is more expensive than food at the typical supermarket. But not Kim: “Maybe that was the case five or ten years ago but there is more volume now, so the prices are going down. I have a very small profit margin and I ask the producer what they want based on growing conditions. For some items, because the food is not mass produced, it can be more expensive. But local food is not as much of a niche market as it was in the past. Everyone can shop here. It’s not exclusive and the more volume we get in, the less of a niche market it will become”. Valuing food as a human right is central to Food Sovereignty, which advances the struggle for all people to have access to safe, healthy, and culturally appropriate food.

Kim sees *Local Family Farms* grocery store as a vehicle for change. Her goal is to “bring local family farms back into the center of our community”. She hopes to get local people interested in eating from their neighbours and to remind people that family farms are important to food security.

“The local economy is growing. People are seeking us out and I think that this has a lot to do with the BSE [Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy] scares and contamination. People are also more aware of the link between conditions for farmers and imported goods. People are not happy getting garlic from China... farming is not like other businesses that when one closes down two others open in another town. When a farm goes out of business, it’s gone,” Kim stated emphatically.

Kim recognizes a fundamental role that *Local Family Farms* grocery store has within the struggle for Food Sovereignty—food security. “We are giving people what they want because they can stay close to home, especially people who do not have the means to leave. We are building food security in Verona”.

Kim, Ann, the Haans, Caitlin and Wendy are members of the *NFU* and other networks within their communities and regions that are organizing for real human food security and self-sufficiency. Their struggles to re-localize the food system show that there are alternatives to the current food system which is dominated by distant and unaccountable corporations and the neo-liberal agenda of governments and the *World Trade Organization* (WTO). These ‘localizers’ reveal the life-centered values—such as environmental stewardship, respect for human rights, health, and community—that are central to Food Sovereignty and emerging local food economies.

Their struggles at the local level also have global dimensions. By providing food for their own families and communities, these farmers and food suppliers are in solidarity with farmers and suppliers in other countries who want to keep more of their resources, labour and products for themselves, and meet the demands of their own markets without the threat of cheap imports.

They are also connected to the international movement of peasants, small and medium-scale producers, landless people, indigenous peoples and rural youth, *La Via Campesina*, where women are at the forefront of the struggle for Food Sovereignty.

As these five stories show, localizing the food system not only decreases food miles or returns more of the food dollar to farmers. Local markets enhance the freedom and control that producers and consumers have over their lives and work.

By shifting production to local markets, they are shifting power to local producers and consumers, and away from unaccountable transnational corporations—the *raison d’être* of Food Sovereignty and a precondition for a healthy community food system where the needs of people and the environment come first.

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possession of a valid entrance visa. LVC sent a letter of protest to the Japanese government addressing the issue of anti-democratic behaviour by not allowing free speech. The security measures made it seem as if the country was under siege. During the Peace March of a thousand, four helicopters were hovering overhead. The police presence in relation to marchers was at least 1:2. The police had 21000 of its officers engaged on the island. The host country clearly wanted to cover all the bases in order not to lose face.

La Via Campesina is a small-farmer and peasant organization with millions of members from fifty-six countries. The NFU is a founding member. Henri Saragih, a vegetable and rice farmer from Indonesia is LVC's General Coordinator. He is the recipient of the Right Livelihood Award (often referred to as the Alternative Nobel Prize). He commented that the G8 continues to support the development of open and efficient agricultural food markets. The G8's push for globalization of the food markets by forcing developing countries to open their markets to imports of subsidized food from the European Union and from the United States has a devastating effect on the poor as this undermines local prices. The G8 did not take a clear position on the massive subsidies to corporations producing agro-fuels which, according to the World Bank, are responsible for 75% of the food price increase. LVC's slogan at the People's Summit was: Food Before Fuel!

LVC members share common enemies: neo-liberalism, multi-nationals corporate control, large landholders' hungry for more land, the WTO, and, for the poorest of peasant families, hunger. LVC considers food a human right and, through the idea of food sovereignty, promotes the right to protect local agriculture, farmers' access to land, water and seeds and people's ability to feed themselves and their communities. LVC's focus is on: food sovereignty, agrarian reform, and monitoring international trade agreements on the exchange of agricultural products; biodiversity and the question of genetic resources; small scale family farming as opposed to industrial farming; and local food.

LVC took part in the G8 Action days organized by the Japanese small-scale farm organizations Nouminren and Zenzoren who are members of the union Shokenden (farmers, trades people, teachers, etc.) with 3.3 million members. Non-Governmental Organizations from the West and Aboriginal people from Canada and elsewhere also took part in the plethora of workshops (73) as well as in the two rallies (peaceful demonstrations) in the city of Sapporo. During the workshops LVC representatives took part in the following sessions with issues related to: global poverty and climate change, intellectual property rights, the economy, hunger, high oil prices, agro-fuels, mismanagement of agriculture and food policy as well as the dominance of large corporations.

I spoke about our own family farm: diversified, organic and vertically integrated. I was asked questions such as whether we could afford sending our children to university and questions about supply management in Canada. During the Japanese Women's Day events the LVC women were asked questions about their chores on the farm. Family violence was discussed and the fact that not enough Japanese women are interested to be a farmer's wife. Male farmers resort to marrying women from the Philippines. The farm women in Japan have not acquired the same rights (yet) as Canadian farm women. We laughed a lot during the women's sessions and some tears were shed. I find it amazing that people from so many different countries are able to connect so easily. The excellent interpreters had definitely something to do with it...and our common interests in a fair, stable and healthy food system.

Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sovereignty will Save the Planet

Boudrille, a young farmer from Bangladesh, gave a presentation at the Starvation and Food Crisis Seminar. He started off by saying that the food crisis in the world is an artificial food crisis. There is no lack of food in the world. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), there are now 822 million hungry people in the world. Boudrille said that the FAO promised to solve this problem, however, the hunger is increasing. Boudrille comes with a solution: Food Sovereignty. What is it? It is not a dream he answers, it is a pragmatic approach. "Farmers have the right to land and we need to have the right to use our own seed and to make our own farming decisions as well as making our own way of life. If we have food sovereignty, there will not be hunger in the world."

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He states that hunger is produced for market reasons. In the past rural people never went hungry, only people in the cities. He goes on: "One billion people will be hungry and the majority live in Asia. Why? Asia produces enough food and the food security concept should have been able to prevent this hunger. However, the FAO did not reach the targets. The markets are not the people's markets but are for the corporations, who with their redundant trading practices are responsible for global warming. Corporations should stop trucking food around the globe and producing greenhouse gas emissions. If we have food sovereignty, there will be no hunger in the world."

Small Farmers can feed the World

Katinga from Thailand, a young man with an infectious smile, played a big part in the Peace March by calling out a que: G8-NO, G8-NO! NO GMOs, Fair Trade Yes! Down with G8: Yes! He made the rally fun to watch and take part in. It was cool to follow his examples including the Japanese versions. During the workshops he did a presentation about his family's farm.

"My family grows rice and vegetables. I am lucky, as many people do not have land to grow food. At present Thai people now pay twice the amount for food, which is a hardship. Some people are going back to their ancestral lands, but they will also be poor there. The solution to the food crisis is not only to have food, we also need to increase the market share for small farmers." He goes on to say that there must be fair trade for food. Food should not be traded as a commodity. Katinga advocates for supply management (cost-of-production) in order to get consistently a fair price for the producer and for the consumer. "What small farmers need are: access to land, forest and water as well as distribution centers. Farmers must have the right to distribute food." La Via Campesina believes that small farmers and peasants can feed the world. "Small farmers need to unite in order to get market power." Farmers for Food Sovereignty: YES! Agro-fuels: NO! Fuel before Food? NO! Land-grabbing from peasants? Thugs!

Final thoughts

"G8 Get out of the Way" said Walden Bello. IMF and the World Bank are trying to reconstitute themselves as the salvation for climate change. The G8 is a meeting of discredited leaders (Brown, Sarkozy and others). The G-8 is illegitimate. The White House hailed the G8 declaration as a major step forward and said it was a validation of President Bush's global warming policy. But environmental campaigners slammed the lack of commitment to midterm goals. Green Peace International called it "a complete failure of responsibility" and the World Wildlife Fund said that the target date of 2050 was insufficient and the lack of progress "pathetic".

Back from the journey to Japan I had a feeling that what happened in Japan was not very useful. What had we achieved? Did we change anyone's mind? Did we talk only to people who already were converts? Then I came upon some writing by Susan George: "Local activism is an important contribution to a struggle for a just and sustainable planet. [But] the scale of the climate crisis is such that only long term, legally binding commitments can make change. We need a Keynesianism for the environment".

It was interesting and invigorating to talk with LVC members: Henri, Indra from Indonesia, Iratxe from Basque country and many more. It was ironic for me that Indonesia was colonized by the Netherlands (they still have Dutch words in their language such as "spandoek" meaning a banner used in demonstrations and "kantoor" meaning office). Japan invaded Indonesia in WWII and in turn put the Dutch colonizers in concentration camps. There we were, in Japan, all together working for global causes.

It was interesting and skill-building to give presentations on the spur of the moment. It was heart-warming to talk and laugh with the Japanese farm women and to hear about their projects to improve society, like working to uphold Article 9 of their Constitution (no re-armament, no nuclear weapons) and promoting local and organic food for school dinners. We visited two farms growing vegetables and an old type of wheat. They both did "Sanchoku" or direct marketing.

(continued on page 11...)

(Report on Sapporo's People's Weeks, from page 10)

How can some of the lessons learned be applied in a global setting? Yes, the random trucking of food around the globe is in large part responsible for the climate crisis. Corporations are the ones who benefit the most from polluting the earth. There is nothing better than a good crisis for boosting business. In our capitalist system based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) the more we ship stuff around, the more profitable it is seen by the system. This is the reason for the WTO policies of forced importation of products in which a country already has self-sufficiency, such as Japan with rice or Mexico with corn. Local Food is an important solution to climate change as well as to hunger. It is my hope that perhaps more farmers will consider changing their farming

practices into more ecological approaches. It is not that difficult, especially when considering mixed-farm operations can use practices that do not kill wildlife, protecting the birds and the bees. The monetary savings are there when one does not fill the pockets of the agribusiness corporations anymore. Our quality of life increased (as in social-and environmental networks) after we took on the organic way of producing food (of which Martin initially said that "this will never work on a 640 acre farm. We are not hippies anymore...") The farm is not an isolated place anymore where only the vet and the milk truck driver visit. Many people are interested in alternative forms of agriculture for food production. Changing our destructive ways is paramount if we want to leave a healthy world behind for generations to come.

—nfu—

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NFU responds to government plan to end CWB election spending cap

On August 1, the federal government published notice in the Canada Gazette announcing regulatory changes to remove limits on third-party spending during CWB Directors' elections. Currently, third-party spending is limited to \$10,000 per election. The government set a 30-day comment period for its proposed regulatory change.

The changes, if implemented in the coming weeks, will allow companies such as Cargill and Viterra, provincial governments such as Alberta's, and organizations such as the Western Barley Growers to spend hundreds-of-thousands, perhaps millions, of dollars to spread mis-information, subvert Directors' elections, elect single-desk-hostile Directors, and dismantle the CWB.

"The Harper Government is obsessed with destroying the Canadian Wheat Board and has wasted millions of dollars of taxpayers' money in that effort already. Now the government is trying to leverage corporate money to support its pet project," said NFU President Stewart Wells in an August 1 news release.

Limits on candidate spending will remain. Candidates will be limited, but Cargill will not.

In justifying its proposed regulatory change, the government said: "The Government believes that removing this limit would create an environment for a robust and fulsome exchange of information and points of view on key issues regarding the direction of the CWB...." Farmers might question this government's sincerity with regard to "robust and fulsome" exchanges of information; this government placed a gag order on the CWB to prevent it from communicating with farmers about the benefits of the single-desk. Corporate spending should be without limit; CWB spending should be limited to zero.

Recently, a judge ruled the government's gag order illegal. Perhaps it was this move that triggered interest in uncapping third-party spending.

As part of the process for regulatory change, the government issued a Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement (RIAS) and asked for comments.. On August 28, the NFU submitted a response to the government strongly critical of the proposed removal of the spending cap. The following provides excerpts:

1. ***This move is unjust, dismissive of the value of farmers, and damaging to our democracy***

To put this regulatory change in context, imagine the government tries to remove third-party spending caps on federal general elections. Imagine that the government announces it will allow unlimited spending by special interest groups, corporations, and foreign interests in elections for our Parliament and Prime Minister. There would be an uproar. Citizens would decry the move and protest in the streets. Such a tactic would be clearly seen for what it is: a corruption of democracy, a theft of our rights as voters. It would not stand.

Of course, no government would attempt to do so. None would be so foolish, so callous, so openly disdainful of democracy and citizens as to advance a proposal designed to give the richest corporations and individuals a dramatically enlarged role in determining the governance of our nation.

The federal government has, however, made exactly this move with regard to the governance of the Canadian Wheat Board. The government is doing to farmers what it

(continued on page 13...)

(CWB election spending cap, from page 12)

would never do to Vancouver professionals or Toronto suburbanites. The only way that the federal government can do as it proposes is to first relegate, in its considerations, farmers to second-class status. Moreover, when democratic rights are breached for one group, all suffer, all are put at risk. When it comes to democratic rights, an attack on some is an attack on all.

The government's proposed regulatory change must be rejected and repealed because it is unjust (treating some in a way that the government would not treat others) and because it accelerates the erosion of democracy. In terms of costs, this latter effect—damage to the democratic structure of our nation—is the ultimate cost. This cost is too high. Other regulatory options come with lower costs.

2. *This move may prove illegal and unconstitutional*

“Promoting electoral fairness by ensuring the equality of each citizen in elections, preventing the voices of the wealthy from drowning out those of others, and preserving confidence in the electoral system, are pressing and substantial objectives in a liberal democracy.”

—Supreme Court of Canada, Harper v. Canada (Attorney General), 2004, SCC 33

The Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, has previously opposed spending limits on elections. As head of the National Citizen's Coalition, Harper challenged the legality of limits on third-party spending during federal elections. He took his challenge all the way to the Supreme Court. He lost at every level. In rendering its decision, the Supreme Court gives sound reasons why spending limits on elections are vital to democracy, serve to protect the public good, and serve to ensure fairness and balance among competing interests. Here are two more excerpts from that Supreme Court decision:

“The limits allow third parties to inform the electorate of their message in a manner that will not overwhelm candidates, political

parties or other third parties. The limits preclude the voices of the wealthy from dominating the political discourse, thereby allowing more voices to be heard. The limits allow for meaningful participation in the electoral process and encourage informed voting. The limits promote a free and democratic society.”

“Several experts, as well as the Lortie Commission, concluded that unlimited third party advertising can undermine election fairness in several ways. First, it can lead to the dominance of the political discourse by the wealthy Second, it may allow candidates and political parties to circumvent their own spending limits through the creation of third parties Third, unlimited third party spending can have an unfair effect on the outcome of an election Fourth, the absence of limits on third party advertising expenses can erode the confidence of the Canadian electorate who perceive the electoral process as being dominated by the wealthy”

Finally, the Court recognized that, as much as possible, “individuals should have an equal opportunity to participate in the electoral process” and that “wealth is the main obstacle to equal participation.” These considerations, the court said, “require the wealthy to be prevented from controlling the electoral process to the detriment of others with less economic power.”

In rendering its decision, the Supreme Court referred to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically to the balance between free speech, on the one hand, and to the rights of equality and participation, on the other. The government's proposed regulatory move to remove third-party spending limits on CWB elections violates the spirit of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Further, it very probably violates the letter, and would thus prove to be ultra vires and illegal. Therefore, the government's proposed regulatory change must be rejected until the government obtains a reference decision from the Supreme Court regarding the proposed regulatory change's legality. *(continued on page 14...)*

(CWB election spending cap, from page 13)

3. *This move will create huge costs*

The proposed amendments to CWB election regulations will create huge costs on at least two fronts:

- A. By removing the cap on third-party spending, the proposed regulatory change will create massive costs to farmers and farm organizations by forcing them to try to match corporate third-party spending.
- B. And if we fail to match corporate spending, either because we don't try or because we cannot, we risk a second cost: losing the Canadian Wheat Board as farmers' marketing agency. Every single credible, independent economic analysis of the CWB has shown that it increases farmers' returns by hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars annually. The government's proposed regulatory change may, in a fairly direct way, alter the future of the CWB, and lead to its destruction. In so doing, the government's proposed regulatory change would cost farmers billions of dollars over the coming decade.

4. *This move is uncalled for*

Farmers have not asked for the elimination of spending caps. The vast majority of farmers support retention of the caps. The organizations that represent the vast majority of farmers support retention of the caps. Apart from the corporations who would profit from the destruction of the CWB, there is no support for the government's proposal. This change is not being done *for* farmers, it is being done *to* farmers.

5. *Conclusion*

Rarely have Canadians seen a proposed government move that is so anti-democratic, so costly, and so damaging to democracy and the public interest. Further, the move may prove to be illegal. It is being done despite the objections of the vast majority of the affected constituents. It is designed to privilege the wealthy over the majority. And its ultimate outcome, if it affects the CWB elections and leads to the destruction of the CWB, will be to destroy farmers' collective marketing agency and to transfer power and profits to grain companies, railways, and others in agribusiness. The government, in its proposed regulatory change, seeks to empower and free the corporations who will profit and prosper if the CWB is destroyed. This is a foul and corrupt move by government, one that every Canadian must oppose.

The National Farmers Union demands that this regulatory change be repealed, revoked, and rejected. It fails every test: cost, legality, and fairness. It must not stand. —nfu—



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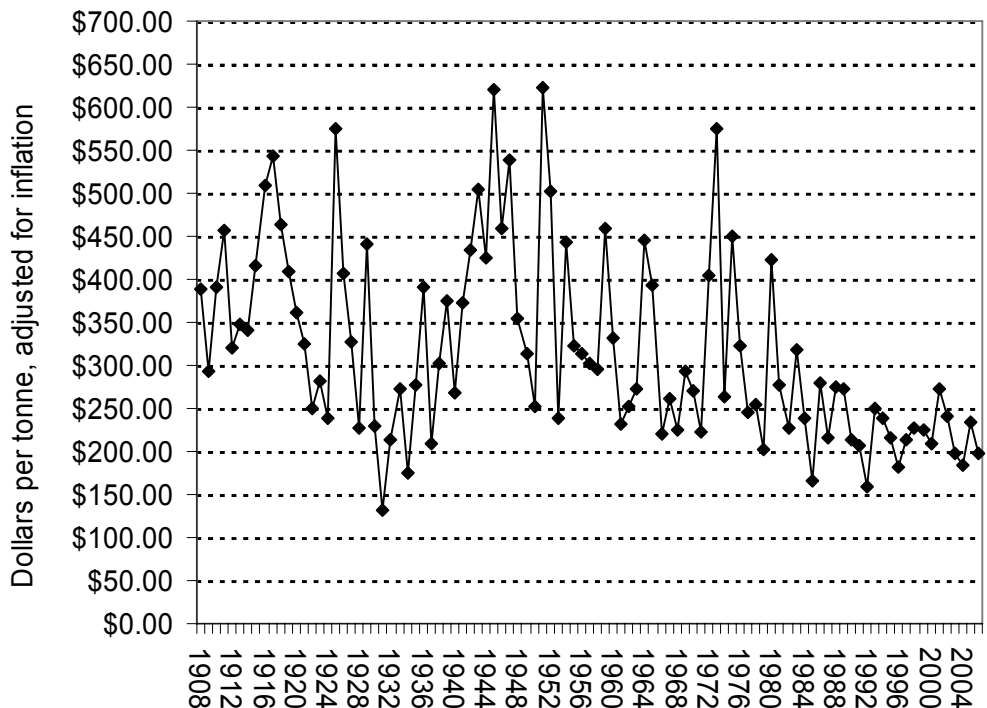
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Potato prices: The long-term view

A lot of things become visible when we take a long-term view. One thing that becomes visible is just how miserable potato prices are today.

The graph below shows the past 100 years of potato prices. Prices are in dollars per tonne, Canada average, farmgate (net of all deductions), adjusted for inflation. The numbers combine prices for processing and tablestock potatoes.

**Potato prices, Canada average:
1908-2006**



Sources: Statistics Canada, *Potato Historical Series: 1891-1997*, and Statistics Canada, *Canadian Potato Production*, Cat. No. 22-008.

Adjusted for inflation, potato prices today are lower than those during the Great Depression. Prices in the graph jump around, so it's hard to compare one era to another, but the following ten-year averages shed some light:

1930s	\$258.07	1970s	\$321.23
1940s	\$429.08	1980s	\$269.19
1950s	\$375.12	1990s	\$212.91
1960s	\$292.95	2000—2006	\$219.55

Recent prices are 1/3 lower than those in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, and 20% lower than those in the 1980s. To find historical prices as low as those in the recent decade-and-a-half, one has to go all the way back to the Great Depression. And Depression-era prices were higher.

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