

Family Farm Defenders: NAFTA needs to be replaced, not renegotiated

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The North American Free Trade Agreement must be replaced with a transparent trade agreement that ensures: farmers in all three nations receive fair prices for their production, consumers are guaranteed the right to know the content and origin of their food and strong environmental protections are put in place to protect the sustainability of rural communities.

While the current structure of NAFTA has increased trade between Canada, Mexico and the United States, farm profit margins did not increase. Multi-national grain traders made huge profits dumping subsidized US corn on Mexico, crushing much of Mexico's farm economy to the point that Mexican Catholic Bishops said that NAFTA was leading to the "cultural death" of their nation. Trade agreements should promote fair trade that supports farmers of all countries involved, not just the financial interests of multi-national agribusiness corporations.

To give just one recent example of how rural communities suffer from reckless trade policies, on April 1st Grassland Dairy Products, the nation's largest butter maker, informed 75 Wisconsin dairy farmers that their milk would no longer be needed by May since Canadian buyers had cancelled contracts to import one million pounds of milk per day. Ironically enough, Grassland has also been bankrolling the 5,000 cow factory farm expansion of Cranberry Creek Dairy in Dunn County to further flood the domestic milk market. Trade deals like NAFTA thrive on such commodity speculation that boosts corporate profits, while bankrupting family farmers, price gouging consumers, and destroying the

environment.

NAFTA should be replaced with a new Fair Trade agreement, one that ensures farmers receive prices that, at a minimum, meet their costs of production plus a living wage.

Farmers should not be pitted against each other in a race to the bottom. They deserve to have access to their own domestic markets and to be protected from imported commodities that are unfairly priced below the cost of production (dumping). Furthermore, people of all participating countries should not be subject to trade rules that restrict their right to: reject imports that do not meet their preferences on GM content, pesticide use, food labels, or protect their local food systems.

The basic human rights of farm workers: fair wages and working conditions, must be protected by trade rules that support jobs and rural development in all three countries.

Food is a human right. Food sovereignty cannot be compromised by trade agreements designed by corporate interests. All nations have a right to decide what they will eat, how it will be grown and who will control it. No one should be forced to accept agricultural products they do not want.