

## Seeking Justice in the Food and Agricultural System

### Introduction:

Access to adequate quantities of safe and nutritious food is necessary for individuals to develop their full personhood and also for communities to develop for the common good, both basics of Catholic Social Teaching. The food and agricultural system has the potential to provide everyone with the food that they need. However, even though there is currently enough food produced to feed everyone, there are still 852 million people who suffer from hunger around the world. The structure of the food and agricultural system is not functioning to meet the needs of everyone on earth. As people of faith who care about hunger and poverty, we must work to change the food and agricultural system to ensure that everyone has the right to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. As Lent begins and we look ahead to Holy Thursday and the sharing of the Eucharist, join with other people of faith to reflect on how we are called to share food in a complex world.

### Interfaith Principles on the Food and Agricultural System:

Over the next weeks of Lent, join others looking at the food and agricultural system, U.S. food and agricultural policy, and their relationship to hunger and poverty worldwide. This series will focus on different ethical principle adapted from the principles of the Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment ([www.tradejusticeusa.org](http://www.tradejusticeusa.org)), which includes Catholic groups grounded in Catholic Social Teaching.

The five central Interfaith principles are:

1. U.S. Food and Agricultural Policy should respect and support the **dignity of the human person**, the integrity of creation, and **our common humanity**.
2. U.S. Food and Agricultural Policy decision-making

process should be transparent (open) and should involve the **meaningful participation** of the most vulnerable stakeholders.

3. U.S. Food and Agricultural Policy should advance the **common good** and be evaluated in light of its impact on those who are most vulnerable, both domestically and internationally.
4. U.S. Food and Agricultural Policy should **safeguard the global commons** and respect the right of local communities to **protect and sustainably develop** their natural resources.
5. U.S. Food and Agricultural Policy should reflect that the U.S. government, in collaboration with civil society, is creating public policies that encourage the **development and welfare of all people**, both domestically and internationally.

### The U.S. Farm Bill:

The U.S. Farm Bill is the piece of legislation in the Congress that includes many of the policies dealing with agricultural production (farm subsidies), nutrition (the Food Stamp Program and the National School Lunch Program), as well as Environmental Conservation (the Conservation Reserve Program). In 2007, the Farm Bill will be reauthorized, meaning that the U.S. Congress will write a new piece of legislation regulating what will happen with agricultural, nutrition, and conservation programs. Debates on this bill have begun. The outcomes of the Farm Bill debates will have life-changing consequences for farmers, farm workers, citizens, and consumers worldwide. It is important that people of faith think about how the 2007 Farm Bill can assist in guaranteeing everyone the right to food globally and addresses economic justice, environmental sustainability, and human rights for small farmers and farm workers.



## The Global Consequences of U.S. Agricultural Policy:

Due to the economic and political reach of the United States, the way that the U.S. structures its food and agricultural system has global consequences. The agricultural policies that are set by U.S. politicians directly affect the lives of farmers and farm workers, consumers and citizens, both domestically and internationally. Changes to U.S. agricultural policy, in conjunction with restructuring international trade and investment policy, has human rights implications and the potential to alleviate or worsen poverty and hunger worldwide.

Countries around the world are starting to pay close attention to U.S. farm policy, and many countries, especially in the developing world, are asking questions about the global common good. Many developing countries believe the U.S. is asking them to take away all the protections for their own farmers while the U.S. does not do the same. This double standard is of concern to people in the developing countries of the Global South and should concern citizens of the U.S. as well who want a just world.

### Reflection Questions:

Why is it important to understand the global implications of U.S. agricultural policy?

Why is Lent an appropriate time to consider hunger around the world and food for all?

Which of the Interfaith Principles are similar to Catholic Social Teaching?

Why is it important for people of faith to work together on the problems of world hunger?

### A Prayer for Agricultural Justice

Together, we reflect and pray in hope of a domestic and international food and agricultural system that fulfills our desires for justice and sustainability.

We ask for an agricultural system that provides adequate amounts of safe and nutritious food for every human being on earth.

We ask for fair treatment and living wages for all agricultural sector workers, in the U.S. and abroad.

We ask for farming policies that protect the global commons, ensuring that future generations can enjoy the natural resources of this earth.

We ask that politicians listen to and act upon the voices of small farmers around the world, not the demands of wealthy corporations.

We ask for an agricultural policy that guarantees the dignity of the human person, from the field to the table.

Together, in prayer and reflection, we ask for the strength and courage to work for economic justice, environmental sustainability, and human rights throughout the global agricultural system.

May God bring us all food to nourish our souls and our bodies so we may live in joy and dignity, and so we may praise the Lord all our days.

Amen.

by David Pedulla