

AGRICULTURE WORKSHOP

I. Background

The Agriculture Stream started with an opening on "the Myths and Realities of Globalization on Agriculture and Food Security". The participants then moved into three groups to discuss four questions. Issues discussed in the agricultural stream included: impact on local communities, control of food processing and production, concentration of political power in the hands of multinational food producers, loss of cultural diversity through monocultures, the need for agriculture that is sustainable, lack of government support for small farmers, impact of technology and chemical fertilizers on farming, loss of land, the need for agrarian reform in many developing countries, and the need for increased awareness and education in northern and southern countries to offset the impact of globalization in agriculture.

Opening Plenary: The Myths and Realities of Globalization on Agriculture and Food Security

The plenary speakers were:

Fred Tait, National Farmers Union (NFU - Canada)

Oscar Castillo, PAKISAMA (National Movement of Farmer's Organizations – Philippines)

Farida Akuter, UBINIG (Bangladesh)

a. Summary of Fred Tait's plenary address:

The globalization discussion began in Canada in 1988 with the Free Trade Agreement. This was a formal extension of a process that began in WWII. The difference is that people were previously able to reject the process via the election process. Now, clauses of trade agreements limit people's abilities to direct resources of their communities or nations. Other impacts of free trade and globalization include:

Governments are withdrawing from managing production toward "market management", therefore dismantling national institutions. The Canadian Wheat Board is being dismantled against the wishes of farmers. Agricultural research is driven by corporate profits, not public interest. GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are multiplying and spreading. The food processing industry is being consolidated in the hands of multinationals. There has been a reduction of competition in the domestic market, a reduction in the number of farmers, and increased average farm size and dependency on chemicals. Farm income is decreasing. Communities are being destroyed by the agricultural model being put into place.

Message to other countries:

Whatever you do, do not consider the Canadian model as one to follow.

b. Summary of Oscar Castillo's plenary address:

Myth: Trade liberalization will increase agricultural output to compete with foreign countries.

Reality: Globalization in the Philippines has led to only modest agricultural growth (one percent) rather than the promised large increase. The Philippines are unable to compete with