

Solutions to Replace the Destructive International Neoliberal Agricultural System

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Idream up new utopias every day. After all, being harmonious with Mother Nature and our fellow human beings, becomes more precarious day by day because of multinational monopolies' priorities for cheap labor and raw materials. We farmers see industrial agriculture destroy biodiversity right before our eyes and our rural communities lose so much viability. When we travel, we see metropolitan areas sprawl with traffic gridlock, and where more and more of our rural citizens join growing populations of workers with low wages or no jobs at all.

Inevitably, we are all inclined to dream of utopias that would be so much better. I don't believe there's anything wrong with that. Each one of us probably has a utopia that changes day by day as we learn more and more about the history of humanity and the deadly trajectory we find ourselves in. Sharing our utopias and the wisdom of indigenous people can open new vistas and will be vital education in itself.

But do we have time to agree on an ultimate solution, and won't change come one step at a time? Given the potential for imminent chaos and growing authoritarianism, maybe preserving our rights to free speech and association for all our fellow citizens becomes our first priority. After all, widespread debate must be the immune system of our democratic future. If "Might Makes Right" becomes the norm, how much longer will it take before we can no longer live in fear and resume our quest to make our planet a peaceful and safe home for humanity?

I believe to make a difference and concretely get us on track, we need to get everybody to see the big picture and to Think BIG! Only a BIG movement, a global movement, one that gets bigger and bigger, can begin the march to a better future. As a long time family farmer and activist, I'm very familiar with one such global movement, La Via Campesina (LVC). LVC represents virtually millions of peasants, family farmers, farmworkers, indigenous people, and fishers around the globe intending to end the neoliberal straightjacket that commits all our lives and natural resources to the accumulation of wealth and power of by multinational corporations. Members of La Via Campesina grasp the big picture and know intimately how the current of international neoliberal economic and political system discounts the beauty of all human beings and cultures and the most basic ecological relationships we must rely on.

So I'll now offer my proposal for our first steps for everyone on the planet to see the Big Picture and to Think Big. Si se puede! We must demand an international treaty to immediately end the destruction of pristine land, ecosystems, and homelands of indigenous peoples for any purpose, but especially for conversion to industrial agricultural production. At the same time that members of La Via Campesina suffer from low commodity prices and witness the usurpation of livestock production by corporations, we see on TV the Amazon Rainforest being burned and bulldozed to produce more cheap corn and soybeans to feed corporate-owned livestock in inhumane feedlots and confinements (CAFOs). All citizens of this planet will recognize this has to stop immediately!

We must also end neoliberal free trade and restore universal food sovereignty so countries can democratically design new agroecological farming systems to protect their natural resources, produce healthy

culturally appropriate food supplies, restore economic opportunity, and create food security reserves. Progressive movements like La Via Campesina must regain the lead in abolishing free trade enforced by faceless bureaucrats at the WTO, or reactionary movements will co-opt this issue with inauthentic right-wing opportunistic politicians like is happening here in the United States.

Everybody must become familiar with the Law of Economic Gravity. In a market economy, economic gravity is, as real as, the Physical Law of Gravity. The Law of Economic Gravity dictates that over time, the buying power of wages and commodity prices will fall, fall, fall - unless we establish economic democracy to create laws guaranteeing fair prices for farmers and living wages and safe conditions for workers. These living wages and fair prices must be paid by employers and buyers of commodities, livestock, and fruits and vegetables, rather than letting the government pick up the bill which would only be a subsidy to employers and food processors. The guaranteed prices and living wages must be indexed to inflation, or once again workers and farmers will experience the hardship of declining standards of living,

In the U.S., minimum wages haven't increased since 2009 and are now the lowest in real dollars since 1945! Prices for commodities in the US were supported and indexed to inflation from 1941 to 1952 because of workable policies established during President Roosevelt's New Deal. Farmers in the US have suffered under "Market Oriented Policy" ever since, which explains the evolution of US agriculture from diversified farms into mono-cropping corn and soybeans to furnish cheap feed to corporate livestock operations and cheap feedstocks to biofuels production. The system of fair prices and supply management to avoid wasteful overproduction, as well as food security reserves was called *Parity*. Thousands of Indian farmers protested in recent years likewise demanding a minimum support price (MSP), which should be the demand of all farmers around the world. This also coincides with La Via Campesina's Geneva Declaration of June 28, 2022. "We call upon governments to build public food stocks procured from peasants and small-scale food producers at a support price that is just, legally guaranteed and viable for the producers."

Once food sovereignty and the guarantees of parity prices and parity wages are achieved, other reforms, including land reform, rural resettlement, local food systems, and reparations will be possible. We can make agroecology the holistic basis of all our agriculture. The public will enthusiastically support efforts to bring young people and landless farmworkers back to the land, recreating rural communities with opportunities and meaningful work to be the foundation of our societies.

So the Demands of our Giant Movement will be Simple and Easily Understood

1. An international treaty requiring that every country stop the destruction of land, natural ecosystems, and indigenous homelands used to profit extractive industries including industrial agriculture.
2. The immediate end to free trade agreements and the tyranny of the WTO enforcing free trade rules designed to abolish nations' sovereignty, particularly food, labor, and environmental sovereignty.
3. International commodity agreements to stop the relatively few major exporting countries from exporting commodities at disastrously low prices - disastrous for their own farmers, their environment, and, in fact, their own economies. US history shows how this can be achieved in every one of the major exporting countries by comprehensive parity policy which would include a parity price support (not government payments,) marketing agreements, supply management, food security reserves, and import controls. Since Big Data, robotic farm machinery, and land speculators are bringing about the elimination of "Big Farmers" in these countries, these farmers will support our proposals of transformation so they can see a future that will end the treadmill of growing more for less and less.