

Partnership for Global Justice

November Alert

As we continue to enjoy this harvest time and the richness and abundance of the farmers' labor, we reflect this month on one of the root causes of poverty in developing countries. The **free trade agreements** are harming farmers in the developing countries. In the US, the government pays industrial sized farms billions of dollars in subsidies. Timelines for free trade agreements are coming up soon with Peru, Columbia, Thailand and Ecuador. According to Oxfam, free trade agreements would make it easier for Northern agricultural products to be shipped to these countries. This agricultural overproduction and export dumping depresses prices in other countries and hurts poor farmers.

Send Post Card to:

Your Congressional Senator and Representative

Use the Congressional Directories at www.house.gov or www.senate.gov to find biographical information, committee and subcommittee assignments and key issues of concern for your member of Congress.

Dear _____

The upcoming free trade agreement forces subsidized agricultural imports on developing countries. Subsidized agriculture is causing poverty by not supporting local farmers. In order for poverty to become history, farmers in the developing world need markets to sell their goods. International trade needs to reduce poverty not worsen conditions for poor people. I urge you to reform the rules of trade to help people out of poverty.

Sincerely,

Background Information for Letters:

-Proposed free trade agreements between the U.S. and countries in Latin America and Asia could prove disastrous for small-scale farmers, indigenous people, and women.

-Free trade agreements were written to benefit corporate interests, such as agribusinesses and pharmaceutical companies with little consideration given to the development needs of trading partners.

-Many poor people in developing countries depend on agriculture for their livelihoods as well as affordable medicines to treat infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, or chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease.

-International trade could help reduce poverty in developing countries, but current trade agreements either written or discussed by trade negotiators actually threaten to worsen conditions for poor people.

-In upcoming trade agreements being discussed with Peru, Columbia and Ecuador, farmers who grow crops would be unable to compete with heavily-subsidized, cheaper US crops entering their countries.

-In an agreement discussed with Thailand, small-scale corn and soybean farmers are likely to face stiff competition with corn and soybeans for the US. The US crops will be sold in the Thai market for lower prices than domestic producers currently receive.

For more information contact:

Oxfam America at: www.oxfam.org

Bread for the World at: www.bread.org

World Health Organization at: www.who.int