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**HUNGRY FOR LAND**

**Small farmers feed the world with less than a quarter of all farmland**

GRAIN, the international non-profit organisation committed to promoting community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems, wrote a Report in May 2014, with the above title. Drawing on data from UN agencies and within-country government sources, they discovered that the rapidly increas-ing corporate control over farmland represents a serious risk to world food security. What follows is a summary account of this Report drawn from an article in The Guardian (UK).

The world's food supplies are at risk because farmland is becoming rapidly concentrated in the hands of wealthy elites and corporations. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reported in 2013 that small farmers grow 70% of the world's food, but a new analysis of government data suggests that the land which they control is shrinking every year as mega-farms and plantations squeeze them onto less than 25% of the world's avail-able farmland. These mega-farms produce less food per area of land.

‘Small farms are getting smaller all the time, and if this trend persists they might not be able to continue to feed the world,’ says the Report. The single most important factor in the drive to push small farmers onto ever smaller parcels of land is the worldwide ex-pansion of industrial commodity crop farms. ‘The powerful demands of food and energy industries are shifting farmland and water away from direct local food production to the production of commodities for industrial processing,’ it says. The land area occupied by just four crops – soybean, oil palm, rape-seed and sugar cane – has quadrupled over the past 50 years. Over 140 million hectares of fields and forests have been taken over by these plantations since the 1960s – roughly the same area as all the farmland in the Euro-pean Union (EU). ‘What we found was shocking,’ said Henk Hobbelink of GRAIN. ‘If small farmers continue to lose the very basis of their existence, the world will lose its capacity to feed itself. We need urgently to put land back in the hands of small farmers and make the struggle for agrarian reform central to the fight for better food systems.’

Big farms have been getting bigger nearly everywhere, with rising numbers of small and medium-sized farmers going out of business over the past 20 years. Belgium, Finland, France, Germany and Norway in Western Europe have each lost about 70% of their farms since the 1970s, while Bulgaria, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia each lost over 40% of their farms in the years 2003-10. Poland alone lost almost one mil-lion farmers between 2005 and 2010. ‘Within the EU as a whole, over six million farms dis-appeared between 2003 and 2010,’ says the Report.

The concentration of land ownership is seen on every continent. Argentina lost more than one-third of its farms in the two decades 1988-2008. In 1997-2007, Chile lost 15% of its farms with the biggest farms doubling their average size, from 7,000 to 14,000 hectares per farm. The United States has lost 30% of its farms in the last 50 years. The number of very small farms has almost tripled, while the number of very large farms has more than quintupled.

The Report calls for urgent land reform if enough food is to be grown to feed everyone. ‘What we see happening in many countries ... is a kind of reverse agrarian reform, whether it's through corporate land grabbing in Africa, the recent agribusiness-driven coup d'état in Paraguay, the massive expansion of soybean plantations in Latin America, the opening up of Burma to foreign investors, or the exten-sion of the EU and its agricultural model east-ward,’ says Hobbelink. ‘In all of these pro-cesses, control over land is usurped from small producers and their families, as elites and corporate powers push people onto smal-ler and smaller land holdings, or off the land entirely into camps or cities.’ This takeover is now accelerating. It is estimated that 90% of all farms worldwide are ‘small’, averaging

2.2 hectares.

The Report also found that small farmers are often twice as productive as large farms and are more environmentally sustainable. ‘Although big farms generally consume more resources, control the best lands and receive most of the irrigation water and infrastructure ...they have lower technical efficiency and therefore lower overall productivity. Much of this has to do with low levels of employment on big farms in order to maximise return on investment. Our data [suggests] that if all farms in Kenya had the current productivity of the country's small farms, Kenya's agricul-tural production would double. In Central America and Ukraine, it would almost triple. In Russia, it would be increased by a factor of six. Furthermore, small farms are also much better at producing and utilising biodiversity, maintaining landscapes, contributing to local economies, providing work opportunities and promoting social cohesion, not to mention their real and potential contribution to revers-ing the climate crisis’.

The most productive farmers in the world seem to be in Botswana, the Report suggests, where 93% of the farmers have small patches of land but together grow all the country's groundnuts, 99% of its maize, 90% of the millet, 73% of beans and 25% of the sorghum

on just 8% of the farmland.

*Sources: John Vidal, The Guardian (UK) 28 May2014,* [*theguardian.com*](http://theguardian.com) *For full report see*

[*www.grain.org*](http://www.grain.org) *Edited by Alison Healey.*

**AFRICA EUROPE FAITH AND JUSTICE NETWORK (AEFJN) PUBLICATION**

This Network has published a training Manual in two volumes on Economic Justice. It provides a working tool for groups working on AEFJN issues. But it is also useful for any groups in Africa (in fact all countries!) seeking to tackle injustices and to transform society.

The writer, a Spanish sister Begoña Iñarra, knew Anne Hope and Sally Timmel when she worked in Kenya and she has used their books on 'Training for Transformation', among other sources. The Manual presents the underlying causes of econo-mic injustice in Africa and stimulates groups to work on issues relevant for Africa.

There are two volumes, *The Pastoral Circle* and *The Issues*. In Vol. 1, the ‘pastoral circle’ is pre-sented as a methodology for improving under-standing of the world we live in, in particular the economic system and the ecology, and for provid-ing a Christian response. Vol. 2 gives a very de-tailed overview of all the issues AEFJN works on, such as land grabbing, exploitation of natural re-sources, trade, access to cheap and high quality medicines and small arms, with annexes providing information for each African country.

We thank Begoña Iñarra for all her work to bring this excellent manual into existence. On the website ([www.aefjn.org](http://www.aefjn.org)) you can find the digital version of the Manual in both English and French. If you prefer the book version please contact the AEFJN Secretariat in Brussels, Belgium. I have one Manual (2 volumes) in book form and 4 DVD's with the complete texts of both volumes. If

you are interested, please contact me,

and I will send them to you.

*Source: Carla van Thiel (Grail Netherlands)* *c.vanthiel@tiscali.nl*

**OPPOSITION GROWS TO INVESTOR-STATE DISPUTES ARBITRATION**

**Critical submission from international body of experts**

A group of 121 academic experts has spoken out against the provisions for investor-state disputes arbitration that are proposed for inclusion in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)[[1]](#footnote-1). The provisions are modelled on those in the Canada-European Union (EU) Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

The academics include leading international ex-perts in trade and investment law, EU law, inter-national law and human rights, constitutional law, political economy and other fields. They criticise the investor-state arbitration provisions for failing to protect the right of governments to legislate and regulate, thus displacing the role of courts; and for failing to ensure judicial independence in the arbi-tration regime.

The scholars have spoken out in response to a public consultation launched by the European Commission, in the face of strong public interest and growing concern about this issue. They wel-come the Commission’s recognition of serious flaws and shortcomings in the international invest-ment arbitration regime as it has developed over the last few decades. On the other hand, they are critical of the Commission’s failure to make a plausible case for the need for such provisions at all. They express the hope that the controversy over investor-state arbitration in Europe will prompt a broad and serious debate about existing and new investment treaties. Investment law is far too important to leave to trade officials and investment lawyers.

The following comments from these experts are relevant to proposals for investor-state arbitration in both of the trade agreements mentioned above,

the USA.-EU TTIP and the Canada-EU CETA.

**On the right to regulate**

The proposed provisions ‘fail to protect the *right to regulate* as a general right of states, let alone as a component of fair and equitable treatment and expropriation standards, while many elaborate rights and protections are afforded to foreign

investors.’

**On conflicts of interest among arbitrators**

`The European Commission, rightly, has misgiv-ings about standards of ethical behaviour and con-flicts of interest that prevail in the investment arbitration regime. It is imperative… that no one who stands to profit from the income generated by

an investment dispute acts as an arbitrator.`

**On the Commission`s proposal for a code of conduct for investor-state arbitrators**

The Commission ‘is so vague on the contents of this code that is difficult to come to any judg-ment.` ‘Even with the most robust code of conduct, the absence of basic institutional safe-guards of judicial independence fundamentally undermines the claims of investor-state arbitration

to neutrality and impartiality.’

**On the use of arbitrators instead of judges**

‘There seems to be consensus that the arbitration regime proposed falls short of the standards re-quired of an institutionally independent and ac-countable dispute settlement system. Weighing and balancing the right to regulate of sovereign states and the property rights of foreign investors are vital constitutional tasks. It is contentious to entrust these decisions to persons who have an ap-parent financial interest in the situation and are

unaccountable to society at large’

**On protecting public funds in a sovereign debt crisis**

‘In light of the social misery and hardship the sovereign debt crisis has brought the mere thought of speculative investors in government bonds seeking damages before an investment arbitration

tribunal is utterly unacceptable.’

*Source: Submission by Peter Muchlinski (SOAS School of Law, London), Horatia Muir Watt (Sciences Po Law School, Paris), Harm Schepel (Kent Law School, UK), Gus Van Harten (Osgoode Law School, Toronto). Full submission at* [*www.kent.ac.uk/law/isds\_treaty\_consultation*](http://www.kent.ac.uk/law/isds_treaty_consultation)

*Edited by Mary Boyd.*

**NEW CANADIAN LEGISLATION ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

After 10 years of work by Joy Smith MP and hours of advocacy by UNANIMA communities, on 4th June 2014, the Canadian Parliament passed the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act.* The Attorney General of Canada

announced this historic legislation:

‘For the first time, the purchase of sexual services in Canada will be a criminal act, with tough pen-alties for those who exploit others through pros-titution. At well, the *Act* protects and safeguards our communities – particularly women, children and those at risk of being drawn into prostitution - from the dangers associated with it, including

violence, drug-related crime and organised crime.

‘The provisions of the *Act:*

* criminalise those who fuel the demand for prostitution, ie, purchasers of sexual services;
* continue to criminalise those who financially benefit from the exploitation of others through prostitution;
* prohibit advertising for the sale of others' sexual services in print or online;
* safeguard those who sell their own sexual services from criminal liability for any part they play in purchasing or advertising of-fences;
* criminalise communicating the sale of sexual services in public places where a child could reasonably be expected to be present; and
* increase existing penalties relating to child

prostitution.

These measures will be supported by $20 million in new funding for programs that help individuals

exit prostitution.’

*Source: Canadian Department of Justice, 4th June 2014; UNANIMA (coalition of communities of women religious working against human traffick-ing and for the welfare of trafficked persons)* [*www.unanima-international****.****org*](http://www.unanima-international.org) *Sent by Elly Koenig*

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**CAMPAIGN DURING GAMES IN BRAZIL**

During large sporting events such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games, criminal gangs and predators seek to capitalise on the increased de-mand for prostitution and lure vulnerable girls to the arenas and hotels with the promise of lucrative ‘work’. *Talitha Kum* *(Little Girl, Arise),* an inter-national network of religious congregations against human trafficking, partnered with the Vatican and the USA Embassy to the Holy See to launch a campaign called *Play for Life—Denounce Trafficking*, using social media and public demonstrations to raise awareness of the heightened threat of child prostitution and forced labour. During the football tournament, they handed out leaflets at airports and other tourist spots, encouraging visitors to be vigilant and

report suspected exploitation to the police.

*Source:* America*magazine and UNANIMA,* [*www.unanima-international****.****org*](http://www.unanima-international.org) *Sent by Elly Koe*

**Contributions to Bulletin and responses to its content welcomed.**

**Deadline: 14th of each month. Publication office in Sydney.**

The Bulletin is currently produced by two networks: *Justice and Trade Agreements* and *Human Trafficking.*

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Design: Thanks to Marian Kelly for her donation of time and talent.

1. The TTIP is a trade agreement presently being negotiated between the European Union and the USA. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)