Get the full PIGture

The ugly truth behind the agro-industry, what you eat and what it does to Europe and South America

Content

A brochure made for the occasion of the anti-G8 protests around Heiligendamm, Germany, 2007.

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Get the full PIGture

Global food production and especially the production of meat has increased dramatically in the past decades. As living standards rise, we eat more and we eat more meat. Meat production today is an intensive industry taking animal feed from one part of the world to overproduce meat under extreme conditions in another. It is an industry that comes with unacceptable consequences for animals, humans and the environment; it pollutes our waters, lands and air; it speeds up deforestation and climate change and it treats humans and animals, not as living beings deserving respect but as means to gain profit.

This reader focuses on the implications of the ever-growing production and consumption of meat. We follow a pig from the industrialized European farm all the way back to the soy fields in South America where the feed is produced. The journey examines the various problems in the agricultural sector, exposing the underlying structures and the role of international policies.

The effects of the increasingly intensive meat production can be seen worldwide. Small diverse farms are replaced with enormous

monoculture farms and factories, specialised in producing for export. This has a particular impact on the poor, who are more directly reliant on their land for food, health care and income. The competition for arable land between small family farmers, large landowners and the agro-industry's profit-seeking corporations raises important questions about who should have ownership of the land, who should be entitled to use its resources and who should reap the benefits from it. Is it acceptable to prioritise economic growth before the right to food?

Animals are no better off. Wild animals are threatened to extinction due to deforestation and pollution and farm animals are reduced to meat factories. Raped of all dignity as living beings, animals are kept under extreme conditions in closed factories, pumped with antibiotics and sedatives against diseases and stress. Vegetarians and vegans take a stand against this. Consuming meat and other animal products cannot be so important that one allows oneself to forget where it comes from.

These developments are not the result of natural laws nor are they isolated processes. Rather they are the result of a global free market system with economic growth as the primary aim, where as well producers in the agricultural sector have to compete for profits. It is a system where humans are reduced to engines of production and consumption and where nature is only of concern when it can create short term profit. Some of these problems are recognised by government leaders but the underlying mechanisms are not being addressed. Instead, initiative for change is left to the corporate dominated free market. The G8 plays an important and active role in maintaining this economic system for the benefit of the few who are in the position to call it free. At the G8 meeting in Heiligendamm, Germany, in June 2007, agriculture is not expected to be on the agenda. The biggest consequences from the modern food production system are seen in the global south and are of no immediate concern to the leaders of these industrialised countries.

One way to break the increasing madness around food production is to make sure that people know what is going on and are encouraged to take action for change. Our daily food consumption directly and indirectly affects the lives of animals and farmers in all parts of the world. Change comes by making more conscious and caring choices. Don 't let supermarkets, multinationals, governments, or the G8 dictate how you live your life and how your life affects others. If you find something shocking – do something about it!

Animals or "meat factories"

"Yoho, I am finally out. How can a so-called civilised society keep animals in factories? My millions of mates and I have never seen daylight. Moving around is seen as a waste of energy! No future for us but the butcher. We are living animals with feelings damn it! Not just a money-making product! Ein zwei drei, alle Tieren frei!"

European animal farms are heavily industrialised and highly specialised. The meat you eat is processed through a number of different farming factories the same way a car is made from pieces of steel moving through different stages of fabrication.

At pig farms specialised in breeding, there is a concentration of "productive animals." Highly fertile sows are mated with particularly fast and large-growing boars. There is little interest in, for example, breeding animals that are capable of resisting disease. After going through this sub-breeding farm, the sows go to a multiplication farm where the piglets are born. Their tails and the young bores' testicles are immediately cut off. There is so little living space that the piglets bite each other's tails and ears from stress. The piglets are separated from their mothers after four weeks, and six weeks later, they are transported to a meat farm. This is more like a factory of small unit pig cages with very limited space, usually about 0.8 m2 per pig. Living without daylight and barely any movement causes physical and mental illnesses, which are treated by pumping the animals full of antibiotics and sedatives. Here, in about three months the pigs grow from 25 to 115 kilograms, fed on high-protein fodder from South America. After this they are taken to a slaughter farm. That is, if they live that long at all; 12 - 20 % of the young die prematurely. Many also die during the large distance transports across Europe, sometimes under extreme conditions, such as being packed together without water, food, or light. It should be mentioned that not only are pigs locked up, exploited, and killed in this way, similar stories can be told about cattle or chicken.

Number of animals in the EU (EU15)

(in millions)

goats	11.5
cows	76
sheep	87
pigs	120
poultry	880
(estimation, incl. laying hens)	
humans	380

(Source: Eurostat, 2003)

In Europe, there are often tens of thousands of pigs at one farm, reaching up to as much as 100,000 animals. Keeping far too many animals in small spaces, transporting them over long distances and overfeeding them with unbalanced food and medicines has given rise to huge epidemics among farm animals in recent years, such as foot and mouth disease. This leads to large scale slaughtering of all affected farm animals and has devastating consequences for not only the farmer, but also large numbers of non-farm animals of similar species in that area are eliminated.

Animals are also killed for the production of milk and egg. Like humans, cows only produce milk after giving birth. A milk cow needs to calve every 6 months to stay 'productive.' Intense milking causes many of them to have udder and teat infections giving off pus, which can be found in the milk (about one finger cap in every litre). Since the milk is meant for humans, the calves are taken away from the mother cows. Females become milk cows, while the bull calves are not really needed for anything else but for their flesh.

For egg production, we need breeding hens. These are hatched at specialised breeding farms from where hens are selected for breeding and cockerels are either gassed or shredded into pieces. They are useless for the industry as they cannot lay eggs and these breeding varieties are not good for meat.

What is the justification behind this large scale slaugthering for human consumption?

Eating meat, milk products, or eggs makes also you responsible for the mistreatment and killing in the animal industry. What is the justification behind this large scale slaughtering for human consumption? What is a relevant difference between animals and humans that could legitimize this treatment? Is it that humans are conscious? We cannot know whether or not some animals have consciousness, but why should this be a relevant distinction anyway? We know very little about the feelings of the mentally handicapped, but of course we do not mistreat them based on that. Then, is it that animals are less intelligent than humans or that they belong to a different species? Discrimination and exploitation of other species by humans has it own definition: speciecism. Factory farming is speciecism in its worst form.

A frequently used argument to legitimise meat eating is that it's "natural" to do so. Animals eat each other, so why shouldn't humans do the same? "Natural" is not per se good. Natural and moral are two different things. Violence is perceived as natural, but seen as wrong. Most people are capable of making moral choices and have the possibility to choose to not eat meat. Not eating other animals may seem unnatural, but it's an obvious moral responsibility.

It is possible to find an alternative in organic production but in most cases this is not many

steps away from the factory farming. Organic production faces many of the same problems and cannot expand much on space and fodder. And in any case, it is not a solution to the problem: why? Why, if we can agree that animals do not exist to be exploited, can there be a demand for animal products which reduces the animal to a "meat factory?"

The supermarket set-up

Impersonal aisles with flashy packages, endless rows of strangers and fake smiles, and bored employees that don't know anything about what they are selling – isn't there a better way to get our food?

Supermarkets are on the top of the food chain and have an enormous influence on the way our food is produced, processed, and sold and the way we deal with each other in our daily life. They make their own standards and conditions. Due to their centralised distribution and marketing strategies they are able to demand huge quantities of products with the same shape, size, and taste, preferably twelve months a year. For small farmers or small independent brands, it is next to impossible to fulfill these requirements. A food company cannot introduce a new product if it cannot convince supermarkets to display it on their shelves.

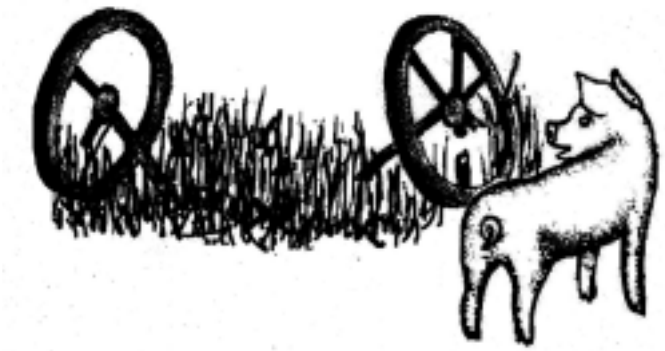
Farmers are the only ones who cannot shove off the price reductions.

In order to attract customers, supermarkets want to lower their prices. This dictating of the price puts pressure on the suppliers. In turn, the suppliers put pressure on the processors, and this play continues all through the production chain until the small farmers and farm workers. They are the only ones who cannot shove off the price reductions, which is putting lots of farmers out of business.

This growing influence of supermarkets on our lives seems to go by unnoticed. Still, it is possible to stop this growing monopoly. You can support small independent shopholders and join (or start) producer-consumer food cooperatives that cut out the wholesalers and supermarket chains. This reduces transport, as food cooperative most often buy straight from local producers. It also improves the understanding for how your food is produced. Between the field and the plate there doesn't have to be a Carrefour, Lidl, Aldi, Tesco or Albert Heijn.

Further reading: What's Wrong With Supermarkets
www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=1910

Factory farming



"In the past, Europe had a diverse agriculture. Farmers had some of us pigs next to growing grains and vegetables and they produced for the locals. Luckily, most farmers don't keep pigs anymore, but look what we have instead. Only these mega-farms, like factories, producing a single product for the world market."

Meat production in Europe is no longer based on access to land. Import of soy as a cheap vegetable protein source has meant a major turn for factory farming and concentration of meat and dairy production in areas near the big harbours in the Netherlands, Denmark, Northern Germany, Spain, and France. The intensified meat production Europe is experiencing would not have been possible without this soy import. For example, an amount of 4.7 million tonnes of soy is needed to satisfy the average German's yearly meat consumption of 61.1 kilos. It would take ten million hectares or about one-third of the surface of Germany to produce the animal feed for this meat production, not to mention all the fossil fuel and water that would be needed as well.

Meat production in Europe is no longer based on access to land.

Small farmers cannot compete with these huge meat factories. People in rural areas see their regions change from a nice countryside into a smelly industrial zone with increasing truck traffic for feed, manure and animals. The imbalance of importing all animal feed results in a massive surplus of manure which is polluting the soil, (ground-) water, and the air. This also changes the landscape in these meat-producing regions; the countryside turns into fields of maize, the crop that can handle most manure.

The intensified meat production in Europe would not have been possible without soy import.

For too long, people have been misled to believe that farm subsidies are about protecting small and family farms. About 44% of the yearly budget of the EU is spent on agriculture subsidies. It has been calculated that 80% of the funds go to just 20% of EU farmers, while at the other end of the scale, 40% of

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farmers share just 8% of the funds. What is not known is that amongst the big receivers of agriculture subsidies you find, for example, the Queen of England (based on land-ownership), food and drink manufacturers like Heineken and Nestl é, the catering of KLM and British Airways, and the big meat companies such as Dänish Crown.

sources:

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4407792.stm

www.guardian.co.uk/country/article/0,,1443878,00.html

www.financialexpress.com/fe_full_story.php?content_id=99333

Production of soy worldwide has, in the past three decades, grown from 55 million tonnes (1975) to 223 million tones in 2006, a growth of 324%. The demand made a sudden jump in the 1990's when bones and other leftovers from the meat industry were no longer allowed to be used as a protein source in animal feed. A third of today's soy harvest comes from South America, while the US is still one of the world's largest soy producer. But while the US mostly uses its soy for its own meat production, countries in South America export theirs' to Europe and China.

Argentina exports 94% of its soy production (2004), and Brazil exports 76%. In the past years, the area of soy plantations in South America increased with 3.5 million hectares yearly (the size of the Netherlands). In Argentina and the US, almost all soy is genetically modified. In Brazil, where GM-soy was officially forbidden until President Lula came in power, around 44% is now GM.

The European soy import is 39 million tons yearly, or a line of 23,000 kilometers with loaded trucks. Around 90% of the European imports are used as animal feed.

source: 'Soja Doorgelicht' (brochure from the Dutch Soy Coalition) and the Oil Mill Gazetteer, Volume 110

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern case – mass-production of pigs

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV) has a history of smelly barns. In communist times, huge animal factories were built and abandoned again after Germany was reunited. The ground is heavily nitrate-polluted, but still the MV state government is actively trying to attract more pig farmers to the region. This is contradicting studies showing that local production is uncompetitive, that only very big farms with few employees are likely to make profits, and that every new pig farm drives one elsewhere out of business. Already there is an overproduction of meat in Europe of 9% and the price for pork has been on the decline for years.

Pig farmers can get subsidies, encouraging the use of the old structures from before 1990. Own land resources (for depositing manure) used to be, but is no longer a requirement for receiving subsidies. Now EU-subsidies for "development of rural areas" can be directed towards industrial pig farming. To make Germany more attractive, manure standards have been lowered. There are no fines for overusing manure and the allowed amounts have been increased.

The government justifies attracting pig farms to MV as an attempt to create employment in an area that is being abandoned by young people because they see no future there. However, those who remain strongly object to the pig factory boom, because of its huge impact on the region. Additional to the environmental effects, these huge industrial farms give very few jobs while destroying employment at smaller farms. (And people taking jobs at the factory farms suffer suffocating working conditions and extreme stress due to under-staffing). The tourist sector suffers as well when the region loses its natural character. Locals also argue that animals deserve better conditions.

Many pig farm investors are from the Netherlands where, due to massive overuse of manure, pig factories are being shut down.

The pig farm investors are often anything else but local. Many of them are from the Netherlands, where, due to massive overuse of manure, pig factories are being shut down. In Medow, MV, there is a scandalous example of a pig farm owned by Dutch investor Straathof, known in The Netherlands for repeatedly disregarding regulations. The farm with 15.000 pigs opened before all

Source: www.bund.net/lab/reddot2/pdf/fleischfabriken.pdf, www.mvregio.de/mvr/26902.html

TV show about Dutch pig farm investors in MV:

www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/1/0,1872,1001633_idDispatch:2494827,00.html

facilities were built and stored dead pigs outside, causing horrible smells. An illegal canal leading from the manure storage to a nearby nature reserve was found. Locals protested for months; the government met their "smell protocols" with a study finding there was no considerable smell – the study was conducted over 3 days when the wind blew in the other direction. Straathof now has plans for new pig factory farms in the region.

Governmental acting such as this can be opposed by actively supporting local small-scale agriculture - by buying their products and by exercising your right as a citizen to question governmental policies for investment and development.

WORKING HELL FOR FOOD?

"What!? I thought only pigs and farm animals are forced to produce our worth of weight in dirty, full-packed factories. Look these people slaving - they don't seem to have eaten much - with picking, sorting and packing food for the rich. Lots of children as well. I am sure they would be happier and healthier with own land to grow some food and play on."

While the agriculture workforce as a whole is shrinking, as more and more small farmers leave the land, the number of waged agriculture workers is growing in most of the regions of the worlds. The new jobs are usually in export-oriented production like vegetable growing and packing. Agriculture workers do not own the land on which they work, nor the tools and equipment they use, and are often poorly paid, earning well below industrial workers. Millions of these workers live below the poverty line; they often cannot afford to buy sufficient food and their employment is often temporary. Besides, agriculture is ranked as one of the three most hazardous industries (along with mining and construction) with for example dangerous machinery, livestock-transmitted diseases, and exposure to toxic pesticides.

Of the estimated 246 million children around the world who go to work, over 170 million (70%) are employed in agriculture, often working 10 hours per day and earning less than one dollar per day. Employers prefer women agricultural workers, seeing them as unskilled workers who will accept low wages and increased workloads without complaining and who rarely join unions or organise for their rights.

Agriculture is ranked as one of the three most hazardous industries.

Anyway, trade unions are not very appreciated in the food and agriculture sector. Unions don't receive much political support and the people who want to join them are often threatened or fired. This is true for the farm worker, to the factory worker, to the person filling the shelves in the supermarket. Often the workforce is made up of temporary and young employees, which makes it hard for workers to organise themselves and to fight for better wages and working conditions.

Source: 'Agriculture Workers and their Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development', joint report between FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation), ILO (International Labour Organisation) and IUF (International Union of Food Association)

'Cheap but not so cheerful'

www.guardian.co.uk/supermarkets/story

CONSUMING OUR LANDS

Farmers will have to produce for a growing world population, but agriculture simply cannot meet the desire by some 5 billion people to consume more livestock products. World population increased from 2.7 billion in 1950 to 6.3 billion in 2006 (233%). Meanwhile, world meat consumption increased from 47 million tons in 1950 to 260 million tons in 2005 (553%). Consumption of milk and eggs has also risen. In every society where incomes raise, meat consumption raises too, although it's a highly inefficient way of feeding people.

Meat consumption is a highly inefficient way of feeding people

The efficiency with which different animals convert grain into protein varies widely. For

cattle it takes roughly 7 kg of grain to produce a 1-kg gain in live weight, but the ratio can be as high as 16:1. For pigs, the figure is close to 4:1, for poultry it is just over 2:1, and for farmed fish it is less than 2:1. To produce a kilogram of beef requires about 100 times more energy than producing one kilogram of potatoes. Meat production also pressurizes the scarce water resources. The kilogram of beef uses 15 m3 of water, whereas it only costs 0.4 - 3 m3 water to produce a kilogram of wheat.

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In 2005, the world 's farmers produced 220 million tons of soy beans. Of this, only some 15 million tons were consumed directly. 144 million tons of soy bean flour is fed to cattle, pigs, chicken, and fish. Besides soy, animal feed contains maize and other energy-rich cereals as well, all provided by the mono-culture agriculture industry.

At the U.S. level of using 800 kilograms of grains per person per year for food and feed, the 2-billion-ton annual world harvest of grain would support 2.5 billion people. Of the 800 kilograms of grain consumed in the US, only 100 gram is eaten directly, the other 700 grams is eaten indirectly through animal proteins. At the Italian level of consumption of close to 400 kilograms per year, the current harvest would support 5 billion people. At the nearly 200 kilograms of grain consumed per year by the average Indian, it would support a population of 10 billion.

Sources: Brown 2006,
Milieudefensie "Voer tot nadenken"

Ecological footprint

An "ecological footprint" is a metaphor used to predict the amount of land a human population would hypothetically need to provide the resources required to support itself and to absorb its wastes. It compares human consumption of natural resources with the earth's ecological capacity to regenerate them. (Human footprint has currently exceeded the sustainable bio-capacity of the planet by 25%)

Footprinting is widely used as an indicator of the environmental sustainability of individual lifestyles, industry sectors, regions, and nations. For an average citizen in the UK, for example, living an environmentally friendly lifestyle in a not too big house you get the following figures:

According to www.ecologicalfootprint.com she will have a footprint of 4.4 hectares/year if she is an average meat eater and 4.9 if she is a heavy meat consumer, but she needs only 3.6 hectares/year if she is a vegetarian and 3.3 if she is vegan (no meat or dairy products at all). For other Western European countries these numbers would be very much the same.

At this moment, there are about 1.65 hectares available per person.

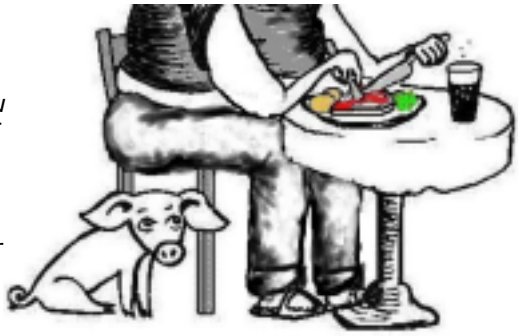
If everyone in the world would try to adapt to the UK lifestyle, we would need 2.7 planets for the regular meat eater, 3 planets for the heavy meat eater, 2.2 for a vegetarian and 2 for the vegan.

While there is much discussion about the methodology of ecological footprints it is still a useful tool to point at huge differences a change in lifestyle can have.
Going vegan saves you a planet. The nearest next one is about 20 light years away...

The figures also show that we need to change more than our food consumption. Think reducing use of energy, changing travelling patterns, lowering your standards. Or we will need to reach planets much much further away...

Consuming our health

"Man, are all these people overweight! They have all the choices in the world and still...What 's the problem? Maybe it's not so strange if you think of how much they eat of us animals. High meat consumption can never be good. Funny to see how they take lazy car rides to buy their meat. Don't they get it?"



In industrial countries, life-style diseases such as obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancers are widespread. There is an abundance of data showing that a vegetarian diet is associated with a lower risk for these diseases. Nevertheless, meat, sausages, and fish are still considered to be a part of the normal diet. The myth that these are especially healthy and valuable foodstuffs is still widespread and many members of the medical profession also still believe that meat is a vital force in your diet. There are claims that modern humans need to eat meat because 2 million years ago they did. But any difficulties in getting sufficient nutrients and calories through other means were erased 10,000 years ago with the widespread adoption of agriculture. In fact, today our problem is clearly the reverse – many people get too many calories and are suffering from overweight related problems. Modern agriculture provides plenty of everything we need when relying only on plant foods. There are no health-supporting components in meat that cannot be obtained in a healthy vegetarian or vegan diet. On the contrary, in modern epidemiological models, a low intake of vegetable foodstuffs is now considered a risk factor for many tumor diseases, cardiovascular disease and degenerative diseases. For which the pharmaceutical industry spends millions every year trying to find suitable chemically produced medications (tested on animals). Obviously it would be healthier and cheaper if we all just stopped eating animal products.

A vegetarian diet is associated with a lower risk for obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancers.

A diet including meat also confronts us with various food-borne illnesses. The most common are the pathogens found in contaminated meat, like Salmonella, Campylobacter, pathogenic E. coli and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BS), which are all world wide diseases. The avian flu looms currently, while there are no adequate medicines to stop it. The WHO (World Health Organization) blames the potential avian flu outbreak on "intensive poultry production." The head of the Centre for Disease Control in Thailand opines: "The world just has no idea what it's going to see if this thing comes", changing it to "When, really. It's when. I don't think we can afford the luxury of the word 'if' anymore. We are past the 'if'."

Source: www.dfwnetmail.com/earth/realistic-look-meat-dairy-consumption.htm
www.heimat-fuer-tiere.de/english/articles/med/meat_makes_you_sick.shtml

Closing the circle: EU dumping

With its intensive meat production, the EU is one of the largest exporters of meat in the world. Most of this meat is sold below production cost. This is partly because farmers receive direct income support from the EU. Maybe more significant is that animal fodder, which makes up 44% of farming costs, is heavily subsidised. On top of this, the EU uses export support to get the meat out on the competitive world market. While the EU has limited its milk and wine production through quota systems, there is no quota system in place for meat production and export.

Flooding the world with unfairly cheap meat has a severe effect on food production in developing countries, a phenomenon called 'dumping.'

Flooding the world market with unfairly cheap meat has a severe effect on food production in developing countries, a phenomenon called 'dumping.' The main reason behind the EU dumping policy is the overproduction of meat. This overproduction has its roots in the more than 50 year old Common Agricultural Policy, or CAP, meant to make the EU self-supporting in food production to not be dependent on food imports. Instead, it has resulted in massive overproduction of meat and dairy products that depends heavily on animal fodder and energy inputs from outside the Union.

In developing countries, dumping throws the bottom out of any regional food market and it makes it impossible for smallholders to sell their products, causing mass poverty and migration to the capital cities. Agriculture is vital in reducing and eliminating poverty, something the EU and US policy makers of the 1940's and '50's knew very well, so they protected their own. Most countries subject to dumping are banned from defending their markets by the WTO 'anti-dumping' tariff measures, agreed upon in the Uruguay Round on Agriculture. The promise of the EU and US to stop their export subsidies was never realized.

Using the anti-dumping tariffs is a tool used only by a small number of industrialized countries and is beyond the reach of most countries that are affected by dumping practices. These are also banned from preventing dumping under the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) of the IMF and World Bank (see page 10). SAP's are introduced as a measure for resolving a countries' debt situation and often have tariff reduction as a first step. For many countries with high debts and a viable agricultural base like in Sub-Saharan Africa, the dumping practices of the EU and US have created a vicious cycle in which domestic supply is depressed, leading to more imports and more debt, in turn leading to less governmental support for the domestic agriculture and more food imports, etc. Ironically, these countries also receive EU development aid which is used to alleviate these problems instead of facilitating development.

Global agriculture today is concentrated among a small number of large agricultural corporations which control every aspect of the production, from the seeds and the fodder to the slaughter of the pigs and packaging of the meat. These corporations can internally subsidize their products below market prices by using both EU and US subsidies and profit from other market opportunities along the food production chain.

For many countries with high debts the dumping practices of the EU and US have created a vicious cycle leading to more imports and more debt.

Dumping can be stopped, starting with eliminating export subsidies, something all G8 countries have committed themselves to but somehow have failed to act on. The iron grip of the agricultural corporations on food production must be broken and they must be banned from internally subsidizing themselves. Implicit and explicit government subsidies for these companies should disappear and they should be forced to be more transparent. Moreover, countries and communities (especially those of which most of the workforce is still in agriculture) should be allowed to protect their agricultural sector from the world market.

Sources:
www.southcentre.org/info/southbulletin/bulletin53/bulletin53-04.htm www.tacd.org/docs/?id=199
www.tradeobservatory.org/library.cfm?refid=80706

WTO FOR SOY

The growth of soy production, trade, and use is the result of a deliberate trade policy. In 1962, as result of the 'Dillan Round' of the GATT (the predecessor of the WTO), the US and Europe agreed on a ban on import taxes of oil-containing crops (like soy). At that time the US was the main exporter. The other side of the agreement was that Europe would be allowed to subsidise its production of grains. For European factory farmers, this meant access to cheap proteins (from imported soy) and cheap carbohydrates (from subsidised grains), the two ingredients of a fast growing piece of meat. The result was a boom of fodder imports, meat production and meat export (including dumping) to the rest of the world. This agreement from '62 is still valid, although now the big corporate South American soy producers are benefiting from it.

Source: www.wervel.be/content/view/159/156

CONCENTRATE OF AGRO POWER

"Let's see. I would like to have some packaged juice from Spain and sun-dried tomatoes from Italy. Humus from Greece is delicious and on top, a pinch of fresh herbs from here. But hey, they all have the same company label. How is this possible?!"

The agriculture market has opened up in ways that favour companies in a position to do business on a global scale. A strong push for free market policies has changed markets for farmers the world over. The trade market is ruled by those who have the power to affect price, to eliminate competition, and to set standards for an economic sector. Farmers are inherently disadvantaged on the world market: they are numerous, while processors are few (one mill can grind the wheat of many farmers); individual farmers' production decisions have no effect on price and, as it is expensive to store harvested products, most producers try to sell their crops at the same time.

The emergence of private standards set by the industry, without governmental reference, has a profound impact on who can sell their produce where. If a product does not make it to the one supermarket shelf, or a processor's factory, there are few other marketing options available to the seller. This is the market access that ultimately counts, whether in domestic or export markets. The fewer the companies in control of that access (whether commodity

brokers, food processors or supermarkets), the fewer options producers have for where to sell their production.

Agro-business market power is not new. Take grain trading as an example; four of the current top five corporations dominated the market already 100 years ago (Cargill, Continental, Bunge and Louis Dreyfus). The concentration of power is most problematic in the seed market and the trade commodities (unprocessed materials) but in the past decade concentration has accelerated in other related sectors as well.

trade: the soy market is controlled by four companies; Cargill, ADM, Bunge and Louis Dreyfus together hold 80% of market share.

seed / GMOs: Monsanto alone provided seeds for 88% of the total area of GE crops planted worldwide in 2004. Monsanto controls 41% of the global market in commercial corn seed and 25% of the global soybean seed market. The growing importance of gene technology makes market power in this sector particularly worrysome. It is a sector where farmers used to be self-reliant (by for example saving seed and using crop rotation and manure from farm animals to maintain the health of the soil). When they have adopted industrial farming techniques, they are entirely dependent on buying all inputs; seed, pesticides and fertilizers from the market providers.

pesticides: In 2002, 10 companies controlled 80% of the global pesticide market, top 5 being Monsanto (US), Dupont (US), Syngenta (CH), Groupe Limagrain (F) and KWS AG (DE).

supermarkets: In 2004, Wal-Mart was estimated to have 6.1 percent of the global grocery market; almost three times as much as the nearest rival, French-owned Carrefour. The European situation makes it more obvious; in Germany, The Netherlands, UK and France between 42-56% of the market is dominated by a top 5 retailers.

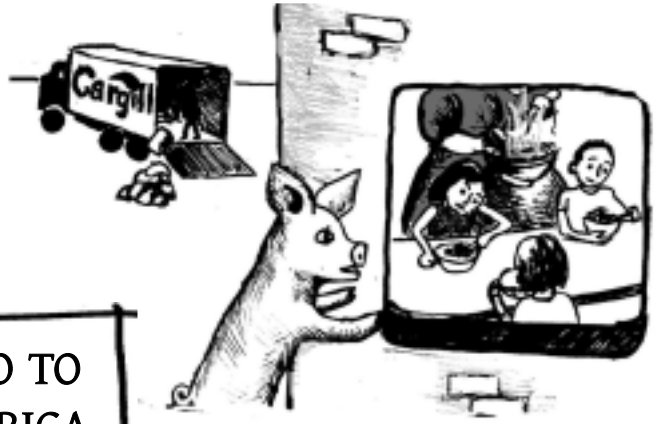
meat / slaughter houses: Most meat producers still mainly operate on a national market but in the recent decade this is beginning to change in Europe. The US meat producer Smithfield is rapidly entering the European market.

animal feed: Globally, the concentration in the animal feed market isn't that extreme yet. On a national or regional level though, a few companies are dominating. In the Benelux countries, for example, there are only six players accounting for 48% of all feed production.

It is possible to find local farmer cooperatives and independent food producers, though it's a struggle for them to stay on the market. Consumers can show disapproval of the concentration-to-no-choice by shifting to these local, independent initiatives.

source: 'Market Power and Agricultural Trade' 2006, Sophia Murphy, www.tradeobservatory.org/library.cfm?refid=89014

The expansion of mono-cultures "green deserts" such as large scale soy production promotes a mechanised agriculture without small farmers; without people.



What we do to South America

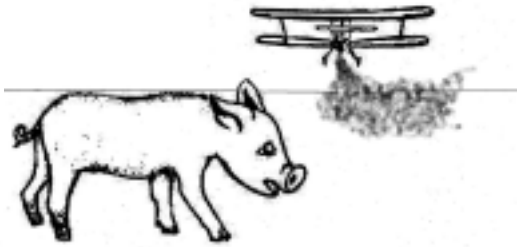
"Look what they have to eat. I know this, from before I was liberated. Pure genetically manipulated soy. Every meal. And it all came from Argentina because there, they produce millions of tons of soy for our animal feed, they can't use its fertile land to grow healthy food for its own population. I don't get this world."

In the South American countries of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil, the massive expansion of soy production for export has catastrophic consequences for rural communities and ways of living. Soybean cultivation is most profitable when done in a capital intensive and labour extensive way and has displaced more labour intensive production such as vegetables, cotton, and dairy farming. While large parts of Argentina and Brazil are already covered in soy plantations, it is much less known that Paraguay has become the world's fourth largest soybean exporter.

In 2006, nearly 2.5 million hectares of soy was sown in Paraguay alone, an area comparable to the German State Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Paraguayan authorities are planning an increase to 4 million hectares. According to the Paraguayan NGO BASE.IS, "...The expansion of mono-cultures "green deserts" such as large scale soy production promotes a mechanised agriculture without small farmers; without people. All mono-cultures are damaging to the ecosystems they supplant; they destroy biological and agricultural diversity, poison water sources and the soil and undermine the food security and sovereignty of the people and their countries. They cause poverty, unemployment and the eviction and exodus of communities in rural areas."

In Argentina, nearly all soy grown is "RoundupReady" varieties from the biotech multinational Monsanto. This genetically modified soy plant is made resistant to the "kill all" herbicide "Roundup." It survives intensive spraying while all other plants and weeds around it are killed. The use of this variety is advancing in Paraguay and Brazil as well.

Monoculture chemical overflow



"Oink, look out! That plane flying low over the fields and houses is spraying! What a smell, ugh, ugh. Pesticides, not only over the fields, but also over small private plots. Over peoples houses. Everyone is breathing it. This is why I see so many ill people here. Humans don't only disrespect animals, they poison their own likes. How barbarian!"

Not only Roundup, but a cocktail of agrochemicals is sprayed on soy monocultures. The large scale and careless use of these pesticides has devastating impacts on nearby fields, on air, and on water quality and can cause dramatic health problems. "During the months of soy cultivation, rural communities suffer headaches, diarrhoeas and skin problems. In the communities surrounded by soy fields there is a high incidence of cancer, spontaneous abortions, premature births and birth defects.1"

In Argentina and Paraguay, campaigns have been initiated to resist these sprayings of soy fields. In Paraguay, a court case was won against two soy producers who had covered 11 years old Silvino Talavera with RoundupReady glyphosate twice by careless spraying, after which he died. In the process, his family was exposed to extreme forms of intimidation, varying from poisoned animals to the murder of the boy's uncle. (see www.silvinotalavera.phy.ca)

In Argentina, rural and urban communities have started a campaign together called 'Stop Fumigating,' after realizing the exorbitant number of skin and respiratory diseases, tumors, and cancers among people living near soy fields. After official research of the public health situation in an outer neighbourhood of the city Cordoba, the researchers concluded that the area should be declared uninhabitable. In other towns under investigation, they found "very significant incidence" of cancer and malformation in the studied areas.

According to the 'Stop Fumigating' campaign, the latest harvest of 15.5 million hectares soy consumed 160 million litres of glyphosate - six times more than a decade ago. It is sprayed within metres of people's homes. Protective zones around towns, like forests, and pastures have disappeared. The massive spraying also forces smallholders bordering the soy plantations to abandon or sell off their land due to loss of harvest, death of animals, and severe health problems caused by polluted air and water.2

1.Report "Paraguay Sojero", www.aseed.net, 2.http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=35511

"Where on earth did I arrive? Looks like a pigsty, excuse my wording. Why are these people living without proper houses, water, or sewerage systems? Without any green space or gardens. Why don't they go and live in the countryside. What force of repression prevents them from having their own farms, land, and roots?"

THE SOY UNEMPLOYMENT BOOM

Almost half of Paraguay's population lives below the poverty line, and 21 % is in extreme poverty. Studies have shown that poverty is higher in the provinces where there is more soy production.

According to a FBOMS report, "Rural and urban poverty increases because besides the expulsion of small farmers from their lands, monoculture hardly creates any jobs. For each 100 hectares, there is 1 job in eucalyptus plantations, 2 for soy, and 10 for sugar cane, while 20 families could make a living in the original agriculture. Faced with no other option, many rural workers move to the city slums." (1) According to Friends of the Earth Paraguay, approximately 70,000 people leave rural areas each year. In addition, many migrate to neighbouring countries.

Around one quarter of the Paraguayan population now lives abroad.

Anthropologist Kregg Hetherington, who lived in the soy frontier areas in central Paraguay for some time, describes this process:

"Suffering the rapid and uncontrolled expansion of genetically modified soybeans into their lands, Paraguayan peasants have seen whole towns disappear under fields of beans. This usually follows a period in which towns are surrounded by mechanized fields, trees are stripped from the landscape and indiscriminate fumigation is allowed to waft into people's houses, churches and schools. Forced evictions, arson and occasionally armed attacks are the extreme, but by no means the exceptional tactics used to clear peasants off their land. Even though it is illegal for soy farmers to buy land in these areas, the communities are easily bought out after their villages have been surrounded by chemical-intensive farms. Mono-cultural soy production makes the peasant lifestyle virtually impossible in communities near the big farms."(2)

For each 100 hectares, there are 2 jobs for soy, and 10 for sugar cane, while 20 families could make a living in the original agriculture.

1."Agribusiness and biofuels – an explosive mixture. The impacts of monoculture expansion on bioenergy production in Brazil", Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and Development (FBOMS), 2006

2.activistmagazine.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=608&Itemid=80

RECLAIMING THE LANDS

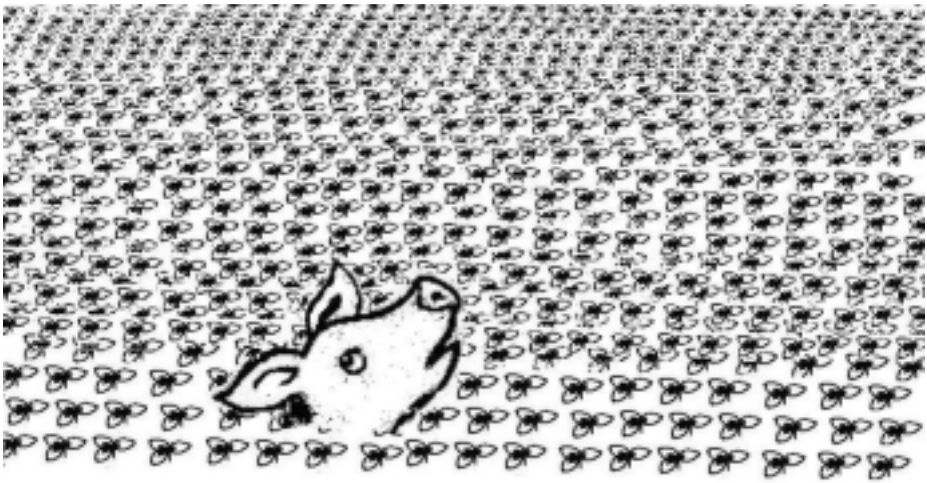
In Paraguay, as well as in other South American countries, the land concentration is extreme: 1% of landowners own 77 % of the land. This incredible concentration of land, plus the lack of opportunities in the cities has led to a growing number of land occupations in Paraguay, especially of public lands that have been illegally sold to soy producers. Organization in the countryside is not easy, but victories do occur. Communities such as the province of Caaguazu, where the organization Movimiento Agrario y Popular (MAP) is active, have managed to control the advance of soy beans into their midst.

However, soy producers respond to this by hiring "security" teams of unemployed rural youths, using them to intimidate peasants that organise themselves. Even governments react with violence and repression. In Paraguay alone, over 30 peasants were killed by government forces in the last 4 years.

Soy – an ecosystem threat

The explosion of soy cultivation has caused the destruction of millions of hectares of forest and savannah with extremely high and valuable biodiversity. Between May 2000 and August 2006, Brazil lost nearly 150,000 km2 of forest - an area larger than Greece. Recently, soy beans have become one of the most important contributors to deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon. Soybean production directly causes some forest clearing, but has a much greater impact on deforestation by expanding into savannah and transitional forests, thereby pushing ranchers and slash-and-burn farmers even deeper into the forest frontier. Soybean farming is also a key economic and political impetus for new highways and infrastructure projects, which accelerate deforestation even further.

The large scale monoculture agriculture with its large machinery and terminating pesticide spraying replaces the technique of turning the soil to get rid of weeds. This, together with lack of crop rotation, causes increased erosion by both water and wind. On average, the production of 1 kg of soy beans means the loss of 4 kg of soil.



"What has happened here? I have seen pictures of this country full of thousands of types of trees, plants, and animals. My wild relatives used to live in these kind of forests. Now I see only endless fields. All monocultivation of one crop, for producing feed for us pigs, chicken, cows, and fish. I am loosing my appetite."

The scale of the soy production is so big that it is rapidly changing the climate in the south of Brazil. Deforestation in the Amazon region is pushing the forest line further and further. The agriculture land heats up and dries out faster in a spiral of increasingly dry climate and further loss of rainforest.

Soybean production has become one of the most important contributing factor to deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon.

The Structural Adjustment Program drive

Large scale mono-culture production of agricultural products in developing countries is a focus of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank. The IMF and World Bank hold leverage over the economies in the global south through their control of debts. Their Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), set up as "debt relief" programs, are mostly achieved by forcing countries to convert to and sell their agricultural raw materials in bulk – with the devastating consequences for people and the environment, as has been described in this brochure. Added to this comes large scale clear-cutting of forests, for making areas available for fodder and biofuel production. Old growth forests are treasure groves of biodiversity and function as a major clean-up mechanism for greenhouse gases. But, it also generates hard cash relatively fast, serving the debt payments required by the IMF and World Bank, whereby little space is given for social and environmental concerns. But why should citizens and the environment have to suffer for this debt, once created by dictatorships and the rich elite? Source: Via Campesina

"Do you know what they say? That pigs and cattle are to blame for climate change. Because we fart too much. Well, that is from the shitty food we get. And why are we so many anyway? To give rich people all that meat on the plate, I tell you! Don 't forget that deforestation, the production of artificial manure, and use of fossil fuel in the agro-industry are greenhouse contributors too. Now they are starting to mass-produce biofuels instead of animal feed. Isn't it cynical?"

AGRICULTURE SECTOR – CLIMATE POLLUTER

Over the past few months, the media has been full of worrysome information on climate change. Agriculture is a major contributor to this, mostly due to the keeping of livestock. Keeping livestock is responsible for at least 18% of greenhouse gas emissions, more than all of the traffic worldwide. The gases come from burning fossil fuels in the production of artificial fertilizers, methane emissions from both the animals themselves and from dealing with manure, and the use of fossil fuels in producing animal fodder. Methane especially is a very powerful greenhouse gas, 21 times more harmful per kilogram than CO2. For the production of animal fodder and the need for grazing grounds, there is clear cutting and burning of forest areas. Burning down forests and the oxidation of carbon by soil loss causes massive emissions of CO2. As lost soil is not replaced, this process has been called "agricultural mining," leading to local temperature rise and desertification, and not to mention the effects of transporting all the feed, manure, animals, and the end product – the meat. According to the recent report 'Livestock's long shadow' (2006) from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the livestock sector is responsible for the following worldwide human influenced production of:

CO (2.9%)
methane (35-40%)
nitrous oxides (65%) and
ammonia (64%).

Keeping livestock is responsible for at least 18% of greenhouse gas emissions, more than traffic worldwide.

Soy, agrofuels and the G8

At the time of writing this brochure, the official agenda of the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, is still a closely guarded secret. It is typical for the G8 to decide what's good for the world without telling or asking the people who are being decided upon. However, political analysts expect three main themes to be addressed at the summit: Global Economic Imbalances, Energy, and Intellectual Property. Of these three, the discussion about Energy could have serious consequences for farmers and soy production.

Key players in the G8 have announced their commitment to large scale production and use of biofuels produced in developing countries. The finance ministers of the G7 (G8 minus Russia) also have the controlling votes in the IMF and World Bank, influencing their investment policies. This commitment makes pressure on land for industrial production of fodder even greater, as soy for animal fodder competes with soy, palm oil and other crops for biodiesel. Mexico has experienced a 400% price raise on corn, as the corn they would normally import from the US is now used as biofuel. Cars are put in direct competition with people, where western cars havly not available here. By relying on biofuel production in developing countries, the large agriculture and energy corporations in the industrial G8 world avoid having to make uncomfortable adjustments on production, leaving the hard choices and hard consequences up to the people and animals in the global south. e greater market value than people. Biofuels serve as a way for the G8 leaders to try doing business as usual while the amount of available fossil fuels has stopped growing and the climate crisis is more serious than ever.

Soy for animal fodder competes with soy, palm oil and other crops for biodiesel.

Problems caused by biofuel production are made worse by so called 'climate neutral' or 'climate offset' campaigns which are aimed at 'offsetting' greenhouse gas emissions. This is often done by taking existing agricultural land in developing countries out of local food production to be used for fast growing CO2-binding trees and plants, which cannot be used by the people living there as using them may release CO2 back into the atmosphere.

The problems with unsustainable transport patterns in the industrial world are exported to other parts of the world, since the areas for growing biofuel in the volumes needed are simply not available here. By relying on biofuel production in developing countries, the large agriculture and energy corporations in the industrial G8 world avoid having to make uncomfortable adjustments on production, leaving the hard choices and hard consequences up to the people and animals in the global south.

Something different, something new

There are alternatives. Sustainable agriculture practices involve community supported agriculture and real consumer choice. It allows food autonomy, where people can decide about their land and how to meet their basic needs. It promotes an agriculture system without corporate power, without forced production for export and a way of production that does not have to compete on the free market. Farmers and consumers relate to each other on a regional level, which not only reduces transport, but it also puts people in closer relation with their food and where it comes from. Production of food can be managed without agro-chemicals, without deforestation, without monoculture, and can give space for a production which employs people to sustainable wages.

We have to stand up for our human rights and bring back dignity in how we treat other animals. We have to reclaim the lands. Free the waters. Save the seeds. We must stop corporations and financial institutions from making profit on food production. The current global free market system with economic growth as the main aim will not change by itself, since it's driven by greed for profit and accumulation of capital.

People in the global south are daily facing the consequences of global greed. Their persistent struggle against the ruling industrial powers is an invitation for all to take action.
Join the struggle. We are everywhere.

One action says more than 8716 words.
(Which is exactly how many words you have just read in this reader).

See you at the barricades!

www.pig8soy.org