

Farmers' Views on the Future of Food and Small Scale Producers

Michel Pimbert, Khanh Tran-Thanh,
Estelle Deléage, Magali Reinert,
Christophe Trehet and Elizabeth Bennett
(Editors)



Reclaiming
**Diversity &
Citizenship**

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Summary of an Electronic Conference, 14 April to 1 July, 2005

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Organised by:

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

Progressio (formerly CIIR – Catholic Institute for International Relations)

The Small and Family Farms Alliance

The UK Food Group

The Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and
Education (TEBTEBBA)

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Reclaiming Diversity and Citizenship

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The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is an international policy research institute and non governmental body working for more sustainable and equitable global development. IIED acts as a catalyst, broker and facilitator and helps vulnerable groups find their voice and ensure their interests are heard in decision-making. Environmental sustainability is a core concern but not at the expense of people's livelihoods.

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The Small and Family Farms Alliance was formed to protect the interests and livelihoods of family farms within the UK by promoting a better understanding of agriculture and why agriculture is important to all of society from the food which feeds us, through to the unique multi-functional role agriculture has of caring for the environment, landscape and the biodiversity. Our main aims are to promote the family farm as the best future for a sustainable agriculture not just in the UK but world-wide. To do this we work with many others, consumers, environmentalists, artists, development NGO's and many others. We also have links to many other farming organisations around the world, working with them to understand better the problems facing world agriculture and those involved in it. We are through CPE (Coordination Paysanne Europeenne) members of Via Campesina the international farmers movement.

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The UK Food Group represents a unique network of expertise and experience, with members from the UK's leading national and international organisations working on food and agriculture issues. Its broad, and growing, membership includes farming, development, consumer and environment Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) who share a common concern for global food security. Through raising awareness of global trends in food and agriculture the UK Food Group seeks to promote sustainable and equitable food security policies. The priority areas of action are trade policies, sustainable agriculture and the regulation of food and agriculture transnational corporations, through research, awareness raising, advocacy and facilitating South-North exchanges of experiences.

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1



Introduction

For the past fifty years, mainstream neo-liberal policy has encouraged and justified the elimination of small-scale food producers¹ and indigenous peoples who live off the land in both industrially developed and developing countries. This process of undermining and eliminating small-scale food producers is linked with the expansion of a development model that sees farming and indigenous communities outside ‘modernity’. Farmers and indigenous peoples are thus seen as ‘residues’ of history – people whose disappearance is therefore inevitable. This process – which started in industrial countries – has spread more recently into farming and indigenous communities in developing countries, along with the adoption of neo-liberal economic policies.

Throughout the world, small farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, and indigenous peoples are increasingly being displaced from their livelihood base through a combination of factors, including:

- the imposition of inappropriate neo-liberal development models and industrial technology for food, fisheries and agriculture that displace indigenous knowledge and ecologically sustainable management systems based on local institutions and rights;
- the spread of liberalised markets in which farmers cannot compete with imported foodstuffs and are driven to bankruptcy;
- falling prices of primary commodities, often brought about by the increased supplies that have been encouraged by World Bank/IMF structural adjustment policies and development assistance, supported by Western governments (such as increased coffee production in Vietnam);

¹ Small-scale food producers are those women and men who produce and harvest field and tree crops as well as livestock, fish and other aquatic organisms. They include smallholder peasant/family crop and livestock farmers, herders/pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolk, landless farmers/ rural workers, gardeners, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples, and hunters and gatherers, among other small-scale users of natural resources for food production. Among indigenous peoples who live off the land, some are farmers whilst others are hunters and gatherers or pastoralists.

- the withdrawal of government support linked to structural adjustment programmes which leads, for example, to the inability of small and medium farmers to access affordable credit and government services; and
- standards for food products and production processes that cannot be met by smaller farmers, fisherfolk and pastoralists as well as international rules on intellectual property rights that can limit the ability and rights of farmers and indigenous peoples to save and exchange their seeds.

And yet the neo-liberal path to growth is but one among several possible development models and political choices on the future of food, farming, environment and development. The disappearance and end of farmers and indigenous peoples is therefore not inevitable. The idea that farmers and indigenous peoples as a group are bound to disappear reflects just one vision of the future – a political choice that relies on specific theories of change that can be disputed and rejected.

The knowledge, priorities and aspirations of small-scale producers are rarely included in policy debates on the future of food, farming and development. When governments do decide to hold public consultations to help guide their decisions, policy experts as well as representatives of large farmers and agri-food corporations are usually centre stage in these debates, not small-scale producers and other citizens. Similarly, when policy think tanks and academics organise discussions to inform the choices of decision-makers it is striking that the voices of farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, and indigenous peoples are largely absent from such processes. The Electronic Forum on 'New Directions for Agriculture in Reducing Poverty',² organised by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) in 2004 and the E-forum on 'Pastoralism, tenure and management of land' organised by the Livestock, Environment and Development Initiative (LEAD)³ are but recent examples of a more general trend whereby professionals and their knowledge play a disproportionate role in framing and legitimising political choices made by decision-makers.

As a modest response to this democratic deficit, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Progressio (formerly CIIR – the Catholic Institute for International Relations)⁴, the Small and Family Farms Alliance, the Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education (TEBTEBBA), and the UK Food Group organised an electronic conference on the Future of Food and Small-scale Producers. The E-Conference aimed primarily to involve indigenous, small, and family farmers, along with landless people and

2 See <http://dfid-agriculture-consultation.nri.org/themes.htm>

3 See www.virtualcentre.org/fr/ele/econf_02_faune/download.htm

4 On 1 January 2006 CIIR changed its name to Progressio to enable it to reach out to a new generation of potential supporters and members with its message of hope and justice.

fisherfolk, as well as their representative organisations. An inclusive process and safe Internet space were set up to allow the excluded to voice their views, analysis and priorities on the future of food, farming, environment and human well-being. The organisers also invited contributions from selected scholars and policy analysts who have strong social commitments to ecological sustainability and justice in the food system and land use. But most participants were drawn from farming, indigenous, and fishing communities. This is the agreement IIED had with indigenous and farmer organisations in the North and South who had expressed a strong need for such an E-Conference.⁵

The E-Conference was run in three languages: Spanish, French and English. The objectives of this electronic discussion forum were to:

1. Deconstruct this dominant discourse and re-think food, farming and the use of land/water outside the existing mainstream policy and conceptual frameworks.
2. Encourage dialogue and exchange between indigenous peoples and small-scale food producers in developed and developing countries.
3. Bring the voices and priorities of small-scale producers to the forefront in policymaking on the future of food, farming and land/water use.

Contributors were invited to describe the practice and underlying rationale of farmers and indigenous peoples' alternatives to the modernisation and industrialisation of food, agriculture and land/water use. It was hoped that this deeper understanding of alternative movements in rural areas would help explain why keeping farmers and indigenous peoples on their land throughout the world is of fundamental importance for the well-being of society and nature.

The electronic discussion on the Future of Food and Small-Scale Producers was held during 10 weeks between 14 April and 1 July, 2005. Launched just before the International Day of Farmers' Struggles (17 April, 2005), the E-Conference was

5 Between 2001 and 2004, Dr Michel Pimbert from IIED discussed the need for more inclusive policy processes on food and farming futures with a variety of indigenous peoples' and groups of small farmers in Indonesia, India, France, Peru, Senegal, The Philippines and the United Kingdom. All small-scale producers involved in these discussions asked that more of IIED's resources be used to strengthen their voices and agency in the choice of policy futures for food, farming, land and water use.

6 The Commission for Africa was launched by Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2004 to generate effective and innovative action for Africa. Natural resources, agriculture, food security, and environmental management are seen as key to growth and poverty reduction and are, therefore, recognised as important themes for the commission's work.

7 The G8 stands for the 'Group of Eight' nations. It began in 1975 when President Giscard d'Estaing of France invited the leaders of Japan, the USA, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy to Rambouillet, near Paris, to discuss the economic problems of the day. The group expanded to include Canada in 1976 and Russia in 1998. Unlike many other international bodies, the G8 does not have a fixed structure or a permanent administration. It is up to the country that has the Presidency to set the agenda and organise the annual G8 Summit. On 6-8 July 2005, the G8 Summit took place at Gleneagles Hotel, Perthshire, Scotland, under the presidency of the UK. See: www.g8.gov.uk

strategically positioned between the meetings of the Africa Commission⁶ (May 2005) and the G8⁷ (July 2005).

The E-Forum included Spanish, French and English-speaking participants from over 30 developed and developing countries. The outcomes of this citizens' space for deliberation on the Future of Food and Small-Scale Producers are described here. An extensive summary of the participants' contributions and their policy recommendations are presented in the first part of this book. The second part of this report describes and analyses the E-Conference process: how it was done, with whom, where, and with what impacts.

2



E-Conference Views on the Future of Food and Small-Scale Producers

This section of the report presents a consolidated summary of all E-Conference contributions and participants' responses to questions. Participants' comments in all three languages (French, Spanish and English) have been summarised and synthesised for each of the four sets of questions asked (see Table 2). A selection of quotes from participants is also included here.

A Vision for the Future

What does sustainable agriculture and land/water use mean to you?

There was a fair amount of agreement amongst the three groups about the concept of 'sustainable farming'. Key was the agreement that there must be a balance between people and nature. Water, land and air can be used as long as they are respected, and not polluted, depleted or destroyed. 'Preserving the biosphere is a requirement for any form of life on earth', said one French participant, and Juan Godines and Lucila Blandon from Nicaragua agreed on the importance of 'the balance of the ecosystem, where mankind and nature benefit mutually'. They noted that we need to take into account the 'pattern of continuity of resource management so that there are no problems of shortages of resources in the future'.

Edgar Gonzalez Castro from Peru wondered, even though there appeared to be agreement among forum participants, whether sustainability is a global concept or one 'born' in the North? Can modern/monocrop farming whose primary aim is making money ever be sustainable? Traditional systems (on small plots and without using artificial chemicals) that 'satisfy the subsistence and food needs of the farmer and his/her family' appear to be more intimately and naturally linked to the concepts of sustainability. He feels that the North may talk of sustainability only to salve consciences that 'should be biting them hard'. There were also concerns that corporate agriculture is hijacking the term 'sustainable', something they are able to

do in part because the definition is so hazy. If they succeed, said John Turner, it will be 'business as usual, but with a new set of clothes'.

Participants were eloquent on how farming was to them something much more than just a food production system. In this respect there were two important and related angles: what farming means to people, and what landscapes result from farming.

This term [sustainability] came from the North and Western countries, due to a tremendous preoccupation about the deterioration of natural resources used in the production of foods, chiefly soil and water. Of course their preoccupation is huge and their conscience must prick them tremendously, if they have one that is, because they used and continue to use large quantities of agrochemicals [...], that is high technology in so-called technological packages, that in fact destroyed 'nature' and the capacity of natural resources [...]. But the result is that after nearly 40 years of the Green Revolution, the proportion of poor people in the world has grown and the poor are worse off than they were, particularly small-scale farmers in the Third World, obviously due to the difficulties they face and the limitations on them participating fully in the market.

[My vision of the future is] a 'traditional' agriculture that is aimed at satisfying the food and livelihood needs of farmers and their families, rather than generating a profit and accumulating wealth. This idea is key, because small-scale agriculture does not work large areas of land. What matters is that on the family plot of land farmers and their families have a range of crops to fill the cooking pot, not to accumulate or generate wealth. Small farmers fertilise their crops with natural manure, using whatever is available from their livestock pen. Ploughing and earth moving is minimal. Seeds for each species and variety are selected, managed and sown by the whole family. They plant what they really need, depending only on the carrying capacity of their plots. They rotate land and crops, and they control pests and diseases biologically. They are constantly rotating the land and crops they plant and combining different crops. This system has been used for thousands of years in small-scale traditional indigenous Andean agriculture. It is still in use today and continues to serve its purpose of sustaining local livelihoods. And if the term 'sustainable' means a system of agriculture that lasts over time with no need for major changes and that satisfies families' needs, then I will stick with this model.

Edgar Gonzales Castro

In terms of 'human sustainability', there are issues around equity, access and rights.

For small-scale producers in Central America, sustainable farming is 'a family tradition that allowed our parents to raise us and allows us to raise our children'. It is 'a means of guaranteeing the basic food basket to feed my family' and 'should be the main crux of a country's development'. That is, farming is not just an economic activity but part of the very fabric of the life of small producers, an activity profoundly connected to their culture and history. As a subsistence activity, then, farming forms a direct link between the production of food and the health and well-being of the small producer – a link that is far more immediate than in those countries where farming is simply a means of earning money. Julio Lopez Poso from Nicaragua said that 'there are two sorts of farmers: those that live off agricultural exports through soft credits from the government and banks and those of us that survive by it'.

When we started there were 300 of us producers, but at the moment there are only 80 of us who have carried on in the co-op. In the end the only thing to say is that the vision is a difficult goal to achieve when poverty is such a marked factor in our low-income community. When the producer hears the word 'benefits' he doesn't think of the well-being of the environment as such, but more of economic (monetary) income.

Juan Sui Godines (Nicaragua)

Sustainable food production should also be associated with people's health and well-being: 'As the population matures and concerns for health and well-being become important, [...] 'food must be free from carcinogens and other [elements that could cause] adverse health effects', says Peter Ooi of Thailand.

From the economic point of view first of all, these families give high priority to self-reliance in all its forms: producing their own animal feed, maintaining fertility, feeding the family, providing their own tools and energy, etc. Many purchases are avoided through mobilising the farm's resources. As a result, all these families are self-sufficient in meat and eggs. Three-quarters of the vegetables eaten are home-produced (quantities of fruit and dairy products vary depending on family tastes and available labour power). All families supply their own firewood and, to some extent, timber requirements, by mobilising forest resources that are almost always available on farms and carefully renewed by replanting from generation to generation. [...]

From the social point of view, most analysts acknowledge that this form of farming has the advantage of providing a roof, food and social status to those who engage in it, a decisive asset in view of the high rate of unemployment and economic uncertainty in the country. Consequently, it

is sometimes praised and sometimes accused of absorbing a proportion of unemployment, hiding it by employing a labour force that has been described as overabundant. This is to forget that to be a small farmer is not a profession but above all a social condition. [...]

Finally, from the ecological point of view, the qualities of small-scale family farming in Poland deserve to be stressed and detailed. Its main feature is the division of the farm into four fixed areas: arable land, permanent grassland (used for either haymaking or grazing), vegetable garden and private forest. On the arable land, four-year rotations are usual, alternating weeded crops, cereals and legumes: organic fertiliser (composted manure in the majority of cases) added at the beginning of the rotation benefits the next year's demanding cereal crop and then a hardier cereal crop the year after that. An intermediate legume crop (or, depending on manure resources, a weeded, manured fodder crop such as rape), which complements the protein (or energy) ration given to livestock while regenerating the soil's nitrogen reserves, allows a third cereal crop to be grown in the last year of rotation. The use of mineral fertilisers is limited or non-existent, depending on the financial means available to purchase them and on manure resources. Apart from the splendid complementarity between livestock and cropping that these rotations allow, by means of reciprocal transfers of fertility (using manure) and food (animal feed is almost entirely produced on the farm), phytosanitary treatment can be sharply reduced or avoided by frequent alternating crops.

Catherine Darrot – 'Polish family farming is sustainable'

Sustainable agriculture thus favours 'practices ... promoting the complementarity between livestock and cultivation (food/fertilisation linkages), organic fertilisers, rotation, and mutually beneficial relations between crops, and the non-exploitative caring of land to avoid disturbing microbial life'. Sustainable agriculture makes the most use of local crop varieties and animal breeds to valorise and enhance their diversity of agronomical capabilities and values (resistance to disease, production period, diversity of products) and their nutritional values. These non-commercial varieties will in turn contribute to the producers' autonomy.

Anyone who speaks of life must speak of water and land, elements as vital as air to living. Farming came into being by combining these elements to make life last longer while constantly improving it. From subsistence farming, necessarily more self-contained and sparing of resources because of its space and quantity restrictions, from that pure function of

nourishment, we went over to 'commoditisation'. [...] Then we found globalisation, a big word that could have meant discoveries and exchanges, but became instead a vector of slavery, competition, expropriation and exploitation (not that exploitation has not always existed, I am just summing up roughly). And delusions of grandeur, constantly wanting more, took over the world. As a result, water and land ceased to be vital elements for life, being turned into accessories in the pursuit of profit and market shares. The very notion of food now no longer counts, as small farmers themselves have lost the notions of rights and duties, self-respect, respect for their labour, for others, for water and land.

Chantal Jacovetti 'Water and land'

How would you like food, farming and land/water use to look in the future?

'If we are only honest with ourselves and reflect on the good sustainable agriculture that was practiced for some 5,000 years and then looked at the greed for money that has made agriculture unsustainable, perhaps this would be a good starting point', wrote Peter Ooi.

Most of the ills of modern technology are brought about because farmers do not understand sustainable land use and the need to conserve water to optimise agriculture. We build irrigation canals to provide a myth of excessive water that washes away the nutrients of the soil and promote swamps. Hence, I think sustainable agriculture should be embedded in farmer education and not in seeds, top-down technology transfer and external inputs. The need for farmer research, farmer group activities, farmer discovery processes, and respect for farmers' innovations and traditional farming knowledge should be primary. Then and only then can we hope that land/water use can start to impact on sustainable agriculture as part of farmers' livelihood.

Peter Ooi – 'Vision for the future'

Marcial Lopez, a farmer from Nicaragua (interviewed by Elisabet Lopez from Progressio, formerly CIIR) as part of a series of workshops held in Central America in April 2005 to enable peasants without access to the internet to put forward their views), observed that, for him, his vision of farming cannot be of the countryside which is barely diversified and without peasants or small producers. Farming has to include a system where 'farming families are present, where the roles of women and the family are present, and with abundant, diversified and organised production'. Monocrop and traditional farming systems have to work together.

Godines and Blandon remarked that the sustainable use of resources (water for example) cannot be divorced from other parts of the ecosystem. So we need to understand sustainability from an integrated and global perspective and 'build humane farms with an understanding of the need to care for the ecosystem of which we are a part'.

Closely tied up with ideas of respect for nature and land, were values of tradition and traditional knowledge. There is a concern shared amongst participants about the loss of traditional knowledge in the countryside – perhaps indicating a lack of trust in current practice, a thought supported by Pippa Woods: 'Progress must be treated with caution and new ideas well tested before being widely adopted.'

Hans von Essen, a Swedish farming advisor who writes about the biodynamic movement, suggests that we need to 'Develop the farm as a whole'. The holistic view matches what is right for both the land and the farmer: 'The farm becomes like an individual in itself, and a dialogue develops between the farmer and the farm'.

In Europe, there are more and more proven links between pesticides and increased incidence of cancers and leukaemia directly affecting the farming communities who use these chemical inputs. [...] The development of genuinely sustainable agriculture is now seen as a necessity. Quite simply, the future of life (i.e. of humanity as well) is at stake in the not too distant future! Industrial farming has brought with it an orthodox vision of living things, founded on technology and 'control'; it has made small farmers into managers of petrochemical interests, cutting them off gradually from the world around them.

Jean-Jacques Mathieu 'Sustainable farming is the future!'

Hetty Selwyn from Farmers Link worries about what the system is doing to farmers. 'Travelling about the UK my vision of farming involves people. We have relegated farmers to often isolating and endless toil'. She highlights the need to re-populate the rural landscape with thriving local communities. (Farmers Link seeks to promote a respectful use of nature, which can lead to thriving and biologically diverse systems in which people can live.)

Travelling about the UK my vision of farming involves people. We have allowed the countryside to become enormous fields sliced by endless ribbons of tarmac (for whose benefit?). We have relegated farmers to often isolating and endless toil. Though many people in cities seem poorly motivated to cook for themselves let alone grow their own food the farmers I have talked to see the rewards of an outdoor life while many of the UK public yearn for a piece of soil and arguably need greater connection to

natural environments instead of paper-pushing offices and other indoor central heated places of work and leisure. The experience and pleasure of growing and eating something homegrown would engender a greater appreciation of the difficulty of farming and harvesting. Whilst the MST campaigns for land reform in Brazil I wonder whether such a thing is not desperately needed in the UK. The landscape can be an inhospitable industrial farming wasteland offering little shelter or nurture to any animal or person but with care can produce something diverse and buzzing with life. Hetty

Hetty Selwyn, Farmers' Link – 'More people in the UK landscape'

Echoing Hetty Selwyn, Pippa Woods says that 'Food must command a price which enables the farmer to make a living in proportion to his effort and comparable with his neighbours (i.e. end the WTO!) All communities should recognise the vital importance of food producers'. Thomas Gunnarson provides another angle: 'I am a farmer in Sweden with such high taxes that it is impossible to make a living in agriculture as a farmer.'

[My vision of the future is] community-based, decentralised, and relocalised, prioritising regional food self-sufficiency, satisfying household subsistence needs, respecting food sovereignty, valorising indigenous knowledge, maintaining ecological integrity and restoring native biodiversity, removed from the nexus of market-mediated contractual arrangements and alienating private property constructs, restoring culture to agriculture by respecting human traditions and different farm/food practices.

John Edward Peck

There is a clear need for a platform or space to promote farmer-led research, farmer discovery learning processes, and respect for farmers' innovations and indigenous knowledge. 'Sustainable agriculture should be embedded in farmer education and not in seeds, top-down technology transfer and external inputs', said Peter Ooi. 'The respect for farmers and their role in providing food, fibres and building materials should be met with concomitant service support.'

Food and farming for these communities is a matter of survival with dignity and hope. And that is what has shaped their agriculture and food systems. In recent years, we have seen an unremitting tragedy of thousands of farmers committing suicide because they have strayed away from this path of agriculture and chased a mirage. The numbers are

staggering. Nearly 5,000 farmers have killed themselves in the province of Andhra Pradesh itself [AP is one of the 25 provinces in India] over the last five years or so, unable to bear the burden of 'non-traditional' agriculture. This figure is equal to 70 per cent of all tsunami deaths in India. While the tsunami created a national hue and cry, farmer suicides have not stirred a fraction of that response. Therefore my vision of food and farming futures is simple: a farming that is not dependent on external inputs, is self-regenerative, and can provide multiple securities to people – multiple in terms of food, fodder, fuel, fibre, nutrition, livelihood and ecological security. It is the concept of Crops of Truth that is my ideal of the food and farming futures. An agriculture that can stand on its own, able to withstand all hostility, not even needing rainfall and providing extraordinarily diverse and tasty food to the population. A fiercely independent farming system which can be completely autonomous. A system that rejects neo-liberal neo-colonialism over the food systems of the world.

PV Satheesh – 'An introduction'

What values, ethics, and worldview guide your own vision of food, farming and land/water use?

Peter Ooi asserts that 'Food and farming should reclaim its rightful place at the centre of our culture and community, rather than being just another tradable commodity.'

There is a general belief among participants that international trade and the modern agri-food industry have denied farming's potential to be responsive to local conditions and to enable people to make a living. Food sovereignty is a vital issue for E-Conference participants. Countries' national policies should protect their own farmers and domestic markets properly. But this is rarely the case today.

In Nepal, Laxmi Prasad Pant is alarmed about people's changed attitudes towards self-sufficiency and the status of farmers. In her country farming is now considered a job of last resort because it is one of the least-respected professions. 'What are the approaches to restore the respect of smallholder farming?', she asks. It is easy to see how the problem has arisen. 'In the countryside many riches are produced but those that generated these riches (small farmers and farm workers) are the ones that benefit least, said Julio Palacios in Nicaragua. Farmers, he added, are 'in the hands of the traders or coyotes that devour them'.

'If the food and farming systems are not under the control of the communities, they are unsustainable', says Periyapatna Satheesh (India). Only when local communities have autonomous control over farming and food production will food sovereignty be

achieved. Hans von Essen believes the most important ethical point is to respect the identity and local knowledge processes. Only locally rooted social processes can create sustainable systems, and efforts must be made to prevent them from being destroyed by local, national or international corrupt practices. According to John Turner, 'Food, farming and all finite resources (including land and water use) have a value that should not be compromised by short-term economic considerations'.

'My vision of food and farming futures is simple', says Satheesh. 'A farming that is not dependent on external inputs, is self-regenerative, and can provide multiple securities to people – multiple in terms of food, fodder, fuel, fibre, nutrition, livelihood and ecological security.'

Fundamentally, farming consists of exploiting the natural elements present upon the earth for the benefit of humans in general and individuals in particular. So nature feeds us and, consequently, the farmer must both tame and respect nature, drawing upon what she has to offer. This means that, to meet our food requirements sustainably, agricultural production must also be made sustainable. Sustainable agriculture is founded on socially acceptable and desirable production that is economically viable and agro-ecologically sound. So people must re-establish the link with their mother earth – who nourishes them – by practising farming in balance with natural elements, farming that must be sparing and respectful of natural resources. [...] Above all, what we eat must meet our physiological needs (not too much, not too little). Still today, 843 million people in the world, of whom three-quarters are small farmers, suffer from hunger (malnutrition or under-nutrition). The first challenge is therefore to meet the physiological needs of the world population through access to food of sufficient quantity and quality, sharing natural resources and practising sustainable farming based on fair market rules. What we eat is also shaped by cultural, agricultural and culinary factors. These cultural aspects need to be retained by respecting other people's different beliefs and dietary habits. This is what contributes towards the cultural wealth of our planet.

Jean-Baptiste Pertriaux – Towards sustainable farming

The importance of farming in the policy and development of a country was an observation made by many of the peasants from many parts of Central America. We cannot discuss farming and food production, they said, without taking account of the wider role of the sector in national development.

Obviously we can't hope that we are moving towards a completely 'campesino' world because we still need the production of tobacco in

Esteli (Nicaragua), which generates a large amount of employment. We cannot say that we are going to eliminate monoculture but it should be done in the context of planning, of some organisation of production policy. Not like now where there is no sort of policy that is oriented to supporting productive processes.

Marcial Lopez

When asked about their vision of the future, the most common response was that food production should be organic and healthy. Moreover, participants said that they wanted food production to be supported by the state and recognised as an important part of the socio-economic development of the country. Participants observed that the migration of peasants from Central America to the USA and other rich countries is closely linked to the state of the peasant sector and the lack of support for small producers.

It would appear that a huge problem is how small producers that want to – or need to – participate in the national or global markets can do so without prejudicing their values on how they should farm. Colleagues from Nicaragua interviewed by Aldea Global said that ‘this culture [of using agrochemicals] is part of the need for bigger agricultural output although that does not mean to say that quality is improved’.

Many participants in Central America spoke of the need for government help to create a more secure future for peasants and to allow them to engage with the market in the face of imported foods from the North which are subsidised by the state. From Nicaragua, we know that peasants feel overwhelmed by the huge multinationals that ‘are taking over the production of small producers for commercial ends’.

But, taking a rather difference stance, Franck Tondeur (who works for Progressio, formerly CIIR in UNAG (National Union of Farmers and Ranchers), Esteli) remarked that ‘the small producer is the only one in the world that in an agro-ecological system can compete with the international market and nobody can destroy this if he is able to organise himself to market his products’ – provided he can organise. This point of view is, perhaps, a little radical, but if we are to deconstruct the dominant discourse and think differently about food and farming and the use of land/water outside the conventional frameworks, we need to underline radical concepts. The theme of organisation (or the lack of it) as a critical element in the future of sustainable farming was frequently mentioned by participants.

The role of the small producer is reinforced by the observation from Marcial Lopez (mentioned above) where he says that the monocrop system (tobacco, for example) has to exist alongside the peasant sector for the economic development of the country as a whole. The question is how to arrive at a happy union of the two.

What Prevents Small-Scale Producers from Achieving Their Vision?

Most of the feedback from all three groups shows that governments have it in their power to rectify many – though not all – of the constraints on small-scale producers. As long as governments support the continuing industrialisation of food systems and work hand-in-hand with multinationals they are working against their own small producers. There is a dire lack of national policies that support and invest in rural producers, from education to infrastructure and environment, and a few policies that work directly against them.

Industrialising our food

According to forum members, modern agriculture – as promoted by both national governments and international organisations – fails to recognise the non-financial values inherent within food and farming. Pippa Woods from the UK points to the fact that there is less and less money going into food production, and more and more into both selling and processing raw materials into packaged goods.

I think it has not been mentioned that science and technology have made it so easy to produce food on a large scale that there is now more food in the world than the world population can afford to buy. The WTO, supported by all the more powerful nations, refuses to allow any country to protect its farmers from being put out of business by the importing of cheaper food. It seems that what is needed to produce food is capital. If you can afford big enough machines, you do not need to pay – employ – many people. If this large-scale food production produces problems of pests and diseases, the scientists will find a chemical solution. One of the problems is that there is no research into how to produce food in a more sustainable way, i.e. without chemicals and other purchased inputs. Who is going to fund research into managing without spending money on chemicals or sophisticated methods of production which enable food to be produced on a very large scale with very little labour?

Pippa Woods – Family Farmers

‘The pursuit of higher yields has not brought altruistic global benefit’, remarked Hetty Selwyn from Farmers’ Link. Instead it has produced waste by enabling the transportation of food to markets where there is already more than enough, leaving other areas needy.

Global engineers, such as the WTO and the World Bank, are inhibiting the ability of small-scale farmers to develop. Technological development is geared to reducing labour, with crop development designed to simplify management rather than introduce complex integrated cropping. The

investment required for GM or large-scale dams and irrigation, for example, far outstrips the costs of low-tech solutions evolved by communities themselves – the former are favoured by those in power.

Hetty Selwyn – Farmers' Link

Her thoughts are echoed by other participants. Pippa Woods asks 'What prevents small producers from achieving their vision? The WTO and the greed for money and power of large multinational corporations. It is very depressing to find how our government cares only about money'. John Turner laments that under a new 'definition of "value", farming is regarded as being of declining importance in comparison to the "added value" service sector'. Hans von Essen agrees: 'The world has come to worship money'.

In the UK, governments and policymakers talk of farming in terms of its contribution to GDP (gross domestic product) and contribution to employment. With the economic pressures facing farming, mechanisation continues to displace manual labour. Similarly, the continual drive for cheap food (at least for the raw materials), and the accompanying profiteering by processors and retailers, has meant that under this narrow definition of "value", farming is regarded as being of declining importance in comparison to the "added value" service sector. Such a narrow interpretation is clearly fundamentally flawed when assessed in terms of the broader meaning of "value" and yet this myth perpetuates, for the greater part unchallenged.

John Turner

Unhelpful government

The lack of government support is a theme that was mentioned often and from all regions. A simple but startling example of what could happen if the government were to put more money in the countryside is outlined by Evelia Rodrigues Duarte: 'Julio has been working his farm for 28 years, how is it possible that he has survived with such depressed prices that they are paying him? How is it possible that he has not gone to work as a labourer? Or that he has not sold up and emigrated? So, if he can survive in such difficult circumstances, imagine what might have happened if he had had a little help from the government, that would have allowed him to market his goods better, that would have allowed him to produce more, with better technology; that would have allowed him to command better prices'.

Governments are unreliable and unresponsive, a situation exacerbated by the uncertainty of markets, and together these factors make small-scale producers increasingly vulnerable. Ram Chandra Khanal, reporting from Nepal, writes that

small producers are generally the most affected by market failures, transportation strikes, drought or floods. 'If somebody doesn't have power he/she always remains on the periphery and is deprived of every opportunity that passes through'.

Hetty from Farmers' Link agrees that when it comes to this power struggle: 'global corporations will have to face the reality that a food system based on high-energy inputs, as opposed to one that enables people and utilises other resources more wisely, cannot continue'. The WTO is once again associated by participants with small producers' struggle to survive.

Government's lack of engagement is having grave consequences for the environment too. Marcial Lopez of Nicaragua describes the problem with the government/state like this: '[we have] a state doing the bare minimum, and often with civil servants and technical experts that have only just arrived; they act more to defend their jobs and do not work towards a vision of natural resource management that responds to a plan'. The impacts of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and globalisation on the environment were mentioned by Juan Godines of Nicaragua too (interviewed by the NGO Aldea Global). He spoke of how each day it was getting harder to compete in the global market where 'the importance of protecting the environment as a long-term strategy has been lost'.

Small farmers do not encounter policies to facilitate their production process, only obstacles at every turn. There is no support policy that would allow us to produce with lower tax rates, for example. There is no policy that would give proper support to production, enabling us to have access to information, evaluations of production processes, technologies... The government just ignores all this.

Firstly, the Nicaraguan government lets itself be told what to do by institutions like the International Monetary Fund. Secondly, it doesn't have a vision that would look to the long term, seeking to build our own capacities and shore up those capacities. The government just gives way all the time and the country's own strengths are totally neglected. They have the idea that the solutions are going to come from outside. They think that everything proposed by foreign consultants, foreign analysts or Nicaraguan 'experts' must be right. For example, they divide farmers into groups depending on what they produce – meat producers, for example – and they fail to realise that most farmers produce a bit of everything. So they ignore the reality, they don't seek to build on that diversity, and there is no business or local support for these processes

... There is no government programme to support the whole experimentation process that small farmers carry out, with the aim of

developing our own local technologies and meeting people's real needs: early germinating seeds, for example, or drought-resistant seeds, or seeds resistant to pests and diseases. Small farmers are keeping alive an incredible number of native seeds that they have been saving and improving. But there is no support from the state for this. The state only supports what comes out of research centres outside Nicaragua.

Marcial Lopez, Nicaragua

Science and technology

Modern agricultural science and technology, participants felt, was being applied only to further industrialise agriculture. It has been unscrupulously applied to food and farming without any consideration for small producers. Because technological development has been mainly geared towards reducing labour, with crop development designed to simplify management rather than introduce complex integrated cropping, it has marginalised the weakest and caused environmental damage in the process. Furthermore, if large-scale food production produces problems of pests and diseases, Pippa Woods writes, 'scientists will simply find a chemical solution'.

Little money is invested in research on how to produce food in a more sustainable way, i.e. without chemicals and other purchased inputs. 'Science and technology have made it so easy to produce food on a large scale that there is now more food in the world than the world population can afford to buy', points out Pippa Wood.

The prohibition against selling and exchanging seeds is also contested by participants. In France, farmers need to go through registered seed organisations. The network 'Réseau Semences Paysannes' has a long history of advocating for the right of farmers to produce and exchange their own seeds.

We are also confronting the problem of the lack of seeds for quality Creole vegetables, we have to buy hybrid seeds for these and they are very expensive and only work for one cycle and some for two, then the product ends up with characteristics which means the consumers don't want them or pay less for them. People with more purchasing power pay more for good looking vegetables.

[...]

At the moment I have a problem, there are no labourers to work in farming because the youth emigrate to the cities in search of other sources of employment, because they see farming as not very profitable. Not having one's own land means that I can't put into practice all the techniques of organic cropping that I know because the effects occur in

the long term and the rental agreement is only for a year; I grew organic potatoes with good results but the cost was very high and as the land is not mine, it wasn't profitable for me, for this reason I also don't do things to conserve the soil like terracing.

Jose Alberto Cortes, Honduras

Health and safety norms are technology-related legislation that work against small producers. Mainly adapted to industrially oriented forms of production, norms are often inappropriate or inapplicable to smaller holdings. Martine Bégné explains: 'I understand that health and safety officials need to check for the quality of products sold (although here, there is much to be debated since chemicals and GMOs are included in notions of quality). However, the enforcement of these norms (e.g. respect for the 'cold chain' and the obligation to have a refrigerated display window when selling products at the market) entails financial investments which small producers cannot make'.

Education

Peter Ooi is a strong advocate of the basic human right of education, and believes it is the way to help small farmers: 'The fundamental right of small-scale producers is the right to education to build skills to meet the demands of an ephemeral world of globalisation and, more importantly, to develop a quality of life that is required for any human being'. Non-formal education approaches focusing on experimental learning can help farmers realise their own potential as both important contributors to the well-being of the country and citizens worthy of his/her livelihood. Difficult access to education thus impedes small farmers from achieving their vision. Most participants share this view.

Ethan Van Druenen takes it one step further as he highlights the importance of who is the 'owner' of what is being taught. He writes that because educational goals are sometimes largely defined by the government, educational practices are seen by many elders as anathema to a healthy village micro-economy and tradition. Reporting from his experience as a teacher located in the Indian Tehri-Garhwal in Uttaranchal, he explains that farmer education is not locally controlled by the subsistence farming stakeholders located in villages of the region. The result is that young people are encouraged to leave the villages for the cities, creating labour shortages. 'Blueprint development', he continues, in regions where traditional methods and culture previously dominated, has greatly changed the manner in which information is being transmitted from one generation to the next.

For all participants from Latin America drought was a major problem and they understood that drought was the result of climate change and deforestation. The lack of rains and trees had caused erosion and poor soil quality and thus lean harvests.

Juan Herrera of Honduras understood that peasants themselves (large, medium and small) had to share some of the blame for the lack of water and deforestation from not tending their farms properly. But at the same time participants spoke of the lack of education, consciousness and knowledge about the environmental damage caused by inappropriate farming techniques. The government, according to the participants, should carry most of the blame for the lack of education on the environment. People commented that governments in all counties have no frameworks and no policies or strategies to guide small-scale producers about the effects that bad practices can cause. What is more, where there are laws in place to protect the environment they are unrealistic and are not respected.

There are technical people in charge of the environment that are willing to work but they have a complete lack of resources for visiting communities. There are also technical people that don't visit the fields, nor consult with the community and base their recommendations on the spoken evidence of one or two farmers. It is sad but politicking has meant that there are people occupying posts for which they are not trained.

Eugenio Antonio Diaz (Republica Dominicana)

The focus of government-led research leaves very little space for small-scale agriculture. Olivier Gondinot notices that 'Atypical, extensive, original forms of production and sustainable or biological agriculture are put aside by a research trend that continues to invent bigger and bigger machines, more and more productive varieties of seeds, and more and more powerful chemical products; a totally contradictory approach given the current state of overproduction and environmental degradation'. In animal and plant genetics, research contributes to the selection of the most productive varieties and breeds, whilst overlooking other criteria such as ecological diversity or hardiness. Martine Bégné is revolted: 'Instead of enriching the genetic heritage, agricultural research kills the diversity of species and destroys the genetic specificity of a variety that is well adapted to a particular environment'. Jose Alberto Cortes of Honduras and Juan Francisco Lemus of El Salvador spoke also of their worry about the loss of native seed in the face of transgenic seeds.

However, the promotion of an alternative form of agriculture can come from sources other than the mainstream institutional ones. Many farmers' associations have been working to develop a sustainable and biological agriculture. Isabelle Debord explains: 'Over the past four years, I have been working with dairy farmers who have changed their practices to meet environmental needs and to share their tools of production amongst a maximum number of farmers. They provide evidence that it is in fact possible to produce better products, generate employment, and assist newcomers in settling in the countryside, using low-cost systems and whilst being able to make a good living out of it'.

[...] Another major issue is training for the small farmers of the future; courses in organic farming are new and uncommon and, in addition, are often geared towards intensive development on large areas, using plant protection products and soil improvers such as rotenone – a powerful insecticide that kills not only pests but beneficial insects as well – that are undoubtedly organic but at least as dangerous as chemical inputs! It is vital to offer small farmers, at all costs, relevant education that takes into account the social status of small-scale farming and the major role it plays in preserving and developing biodiversity.

Research and innovation as presently practised also constitutes a considerable obstacle to sustainable development. Public sector research is clearly focused on intensive farming; if researchers want to move up in the INRA (National Institute for Agronomic Research) hierarchy, they must work on projects breaking new ground for them, such as biotechnology or breeding plants adapted to chemical inputs.

[...] However, three INRA plant breeders did decide to work with small farmers on participatory breeding programmes and, for the last three years, I have been working with one of them on durum wheat. The aim is to create a hardy variety adapted to organic farming practices. We are beginning to get good results; about a dozen researchers are now working on my farm on various projects. This participatory research, in which the small farmer (or small farmers) plays a crucial role, is undoubtedly a real innovation helping to achieve the aim of creating genuinely sustainable farming. [...] However, if only some 20 researchers in total (plant breeders, ethnologists, agronomists and sociologists) are officially involved in such projects for the whole of metropolitan France, while there are 8000 researchers engaged in public sector research in the country, raising awareness will take a very long time.

Jean-Jacques Mathieu – Towards education and research for small farmers

Olivier Godinot sees 'a glimpse of hope through co-operatives (CUMA and others) and farmers' association (CIVAM, Réseau agriculture durable), who have rightfully targeted the potential of small-scale farms to regenerate the agricultural landscape, to achieve a high value-added agricultural model (close producer-consumer links, direct channels for trading, farmers markets), locally produced high-quality products, and respect for the environment (bio-agriculture, sustainable pasture systems...)' These networks are concerned about showing that economic and ecological autonomies are highly beneficial to agriculture. Furthermore, they take a diametrically opposed view to the predominant modern agricultural model which is responsible for environmental degradation, increasing farmers' debt as well as their marginalisation.

The criticism levelled at agricultural research and development is equally valid for mainstream farmer training and capacity-building programmes. The latter are also informed by the narrow logic of economic productivity and the search for ever higher yields. Nevertheless, here again farmers' associations and co-operatives have been promoting alternative forms of production and innovation. Martine Bégné is pleased about 'the solidarity and critical education promoted by the "Confédération paysanne" and other associations that have been created to encourage continued adult education in farming, knowledge sharing, exchange of skills and experiences, as well as systematic structures (mainly voluntary), and which allow experienced farmers to help newcomers and farmers who have new ideas and projects, especially in biological agriculture'.

Changing perceptions

Participants in the E-Conference believe that one of the key impediments to achieving the vision of sustainable food and farming for the future has been small producers' view about themselves, their situation and their profession. Hans von Essen says that 'Overcoming the psychological patterns that make some people victims and others abusers is one way to put it. It is impossible to save a victim if the victim does not actively take steps to leave the victim role. There is a new very positive development going on, invisible below the surface. Just encourage it'.

More and more though, farmers learn to see their own work as important and to work in networks with consumers to benefit from synergies. Our colleagues from Nepal have expressed concern that it is becoming a social problem as no new generation is ready to follow their parents' profession. Hans von Essen maintains that farmers the world over must be encouraged to take back the power that belongs to them. The general public's opinion, i.e. the consumers, is also crucial. Hetty says that we will have to learn to empower ourselves, make better choices about who grows our food, and eat a wider range of foods, rather than the sugar/fat-based diets of western culture.

Not everyone sees the picture as quite so positive, however. John Turner: 'It is easy to imagine that with the wealth of knowledge about individual plants, animals, and fields, about weather patterns, and pests and disease, that farmers should be in a position to have the necessary control to ensure a sustainable future for their farms and for themselves. And yet, examples of farmers working together and supporting each other are the exception rather than the norm. Communications between farming groups throughout the world tend to be either indirect or non-existent, leaving those who profit from the food cycle to pitch farmer against farmer and country against country.'

Many participants from all parts of America also talked of the lack of organisation and solidarity among peasants. The result of this lack of solidarity is that peasants

have no voice in the government, which as a result produces farming policies and development policies that do not represent peasants.

How a farmers' social status is recognised and what model of agriculture is promoted by the government are key issues in the context of policies designed to help farmers access land and start farming. In France, farmer's status is strictly defined: one needs to have a certain level of education, a farming plot with a minimum size (each French department fixes their own minimum). Only when these conditions have been met does a farmer have access to the funds and loans needed to set up a new farm and qualify for wider social rights. Martine Bégné regrets, 'Evidently, small producers are not of interest to anyone. In the French system, we represent nothing. One only needs to hear what government and other "higher ups" say. There are real farmers, and the rest are all insignificant farmers'. In France, more than a third of all farm units are thus considered 'amateur'.

[...] Access to land is probably the greatest obstacle for small producers. In my region with its mixed cropping and livestock, although there are plenty of small producers, available land is allocated first of all to the highest bidders, secondly to young people setting up in 'viable' farms (meaning at least 100 hectares) and, finally, to the 'others', who may not necessarily be small producers but are considered as economically unprofitable and doomed to disappear shortly. Preference is given to large-scale, intensive structures, coming close to the industrial model, to the detriment of the family farming model which has been the strength and original feature of French farming and which alone can keep the rural environment alive.

Research, which is less and less frequently conducted in the public sector and more and more geared towards the profits it can bring in the short-term, no longer pays much attention to topics of interest to small producers, since the latter do not represent a sufficiently lucrative market. Atypical production, extensive or original modes of production and sustainable or organic farming are left aside by research, which continues to invent larger and larger machinery, more and more productive varieties and more and more powerful chemicals, in total contradiction with the overproduction and environmental degradation that is becoming widespread throughout Europe (and indeed the world). Profit is the watchword!

Regulation itself is not suited to the position of small producers, who often have two jobs and therefore have much less time than 'professional farmers' to gather information, conform to standards and fill in the many

compulsory documents. There is no simplification in sight for them in the new CAP, quite the reverse!

Professional farming organisations, consular chambers and associations, of which I am a member, have great difficulty in identifying and reaching out to small producers in their territory, because the latter, not being 'professionals', tend not to be picked up in official studies and censuses. The dominant ideology of these structures supporting farmers is, moreover, often very far from that of small producers, who, it must be admitted, have little representation within the FNSEA (farmers' union).

There is, however, some hope where co-operatives (CUMA and others) and farmers' associations (e.g. CIVAM and RAD) are concerned, as they have grasped the potential of small farms to revitalise the rural environment, practise farming with high added value (short production chains, direct sales, local markets), produce quality food locally and care for the environment (grazing systems, organic farming, etc.).

Finally, there is another factor that does not augur well for the future: agricultural training (at least such as I underwent for five years not so long ago) pays very little or no attention to farming models that do not fit the classic 'FNSEA' pattern and even goes so far as to ignore the existence of small producers. As if the farming of tomorrow could only consist of growing 200 hectares of cereals or raising 500 pigs. [...]

Olivier Godinot – The many obstacles to sustainable farming

Infrastructure

Once again, the failings of the government, this time to invest in rural infrastructure, was a theme that stood out in the Spanish forum. As Mr Martinez of Nicaragua notes, 'the national development plan does not consider creating infrastructure in rural areas such as roads, power, wells, etc.'

Lack of credit – or soft credit and long-term loans at low rates of interest – is a significant problem for peasants. As many of them do not have title deeds for their land they cannot use it as collateral (even if credit were available). Because of this they are unable to invest in their farm or their land, which hinders them a great deal.

I don't know whether our vision of the future is 'a bright orange day', wrote (the French poet) Aragon. 'But I do know we are suffering the present [...]. [And], quite obviously, small producers are of no interest to anyone. In the French system, we are nothing. You only had to listen to the comments of Ministry of Agriculture officials after the last farm census. There were the

real farmers and then the others, of negligible importance. No one wants to set land aside for them! The concentration of land in the hands of a few farmers is certainly one of the first obstacles faced by small producers trying to set up a different type of farming, on smaller areas of land, aiming at quality in local marketing rather than quantity in anonymous mass distribution. This shortage of land very obviously prevents new farmers from setting up.

I would say that the second difficulty is financial (I recognise that this tends to be a problem specific to rich countries). Setting up in farming requires a minimum of resources (equipment, tools and buildings) even for a small project like mine. Unless you have private means, money and financing must be found, i.e. you have to approach the banks. While the banks may be welcoming, listening benevolently to projects and really not very critical (they are used to small farmers getting into debt), they will not fail to refer to the rules governing them at the first sign of trouble. I think that anyone setting up in farming should be helped and subsidised, not by signing a blank cheque, but by looking into the feasibility of the project, its possible outlets and what it can bring not just in farming but also in environmental, ecological, social and human terms. People with project proposals (especially for small-scale projects) need to be encouraged by having land and financing set aside for them. Municipal authorities could play such a role to encourage people to set up in farming and reinvigorate the rural areas this way rather than through holiday homes which, in any case, stimulate price rises (for land and housing).

Martine Bégné – 'A bright orange day'

The bad state of the roads to main markets and the lack of appropriate transport to take goods to market is particularly onerous, and exists in all Latin American countries. This leaves peasants open to exploitation by middlemen – or 'coyotes' to use the local term. Although some noted that middlemen are as much a necessary part of the system as one of the problems, many thought that the low price they receive from middlemen prevents them from reinvesting in their farm. They are paid much less than their sowing and harvest costs, according to Marcial Lopez of Nicaragua. Peasants' lack of information about market prices makes them particularly vulnerable.

This lack of information is both a result and a cause of the low levels of education and school attendance in rural areas and the lack of manpower – Carlos Humberto Pacheco notes that youngsters migrate to the cities for better jobs, leaving the poorest and the least educated in the countryside.

Electricity and electric equipment were also a problem – many said that the lack of access to the internet is a sizeable problem for those in rural areas because it compounds the problems with communication and education.

Many peasants lack appropriate technologies – surviving with very rudimentary technologies without much hope that the situation will improve. The lack of oxen was mentioned by many, as was the lack of technical assistance from the government to improve the level of technology used.

Water presented many problems. Many spoke of the lack of water, the lack of access to water, the lack of irrigation systems, and the lack of wells. Part of the problem is the lack of training or technology to sink new wells in order to take advantage of underground water resources, explains Francisco Heriberto Olicas Cruz in Nicaragua. He said 'there is groundwater, but there are no funds to construct deep wells (which require building materials)'.

A participant from Honduras also spoke of the lack of good seeds – they have to buy hybrid seeds that are expensive and only good for one season.

Many participants from Nicaragua commented that there are many disincentives to practice organic farming. Those that have no title to their land or no land at all have no incentive to use organic farming methods that require long-term planning and investment. Moreover, the market for organic produce is not very mature and the difference between a kilo of organic coffee and conventional coffee (produced using agrochemicals) is not enough to warrant sowing organic coffee: 'there is no appropriate market to sell organic coffee. The price difference paid for organic coffee and traditional coffee is minimal. The market is saturated and there are producers that are giving up organic coffee and reverting to traditional growing methods' says William Alfredo Flores Castillo in Nicaragua. And finally the high cost of certifying organic land is also a disincentive.

What Needs to Change to Allow Small Scale Producers to Achieve Their Vision? What to Do and How to Organise?

Drivers of change: Small and family producers?

Before venturing into issues of what should be done, participants in the English forum reflected on who should do it. It was clear to most that the only group that would really be interested in considerably improving their situation were small-scale farmers themselves, and the Spanish and French forums reached the same conclusion. As potential drivers of change, 'if small-scale farmers worldwide will not act to change the situation, no one will' writes Sibylle Bahrmann. Elizabeth Cruzada notes that 'farmers themselves must realise the need for change and act on their self-determined priorities, and thereby create self-sustaining and dynamic communities

that are able to respond to external and internal pressures'. At a dynamic and interactive workshop at the G8 Alternatives Summit on 'Who's got the Power?', Patrick Mulvany from the UK Food Group reported that the mainly young participants realised that they had the power – and that if they are to change things they must link with all others with the same vision, with those who 'dream the same dream'.

The Spanish forum spoke of the problems with the enormous differences between campesinos and large-scale agricultural systems, and the important need for specific policies for small-scale producers – ones that do not attempt to measure them as they do large-scale producers. The challenge, explains Krishna Kaphle, is that small farmers can be naive and are often compelled to tolerate unacceptable situations. Krishna's concern is the lack of good and honest guidance for small producers, which she believes 'is the scarcest factor in this modern world'. Sibylle is hopeful though: we 'have to give up the conviction that we are too unimportant, powerless, not clever enough, not rich enough to do something about it. We must learn to work together at different levels'. Many participants stressed that small producers around the world should focus on what unites them, rather than what does not. On Michael Hart's visits to other countries, he reports having often heard that the subsidy systems in the EU or the USA were believed to be the causes of problems in the South. He wished to make clear that from a EU farmer's point of view, small farmers would rather not have subsidies, but a fairer price instead, pointing to the fact that even with subsidies family and small farms in the EU can be in serious trouble.

What is needed is recognition of the many advantages of farming on a human scale. Most farmers want to grow honest produce and be rewarded with a fair price but markets have become so distorted that certainly in the UK 'value' is synonymous with 'cheap' whilst 'added value' products can be hazardous (e.g. Sudan 1 contamination) but are sold as convenient. Many consumers have lost all sense of food culture and national identity and whilst I welcome variety the danger is that indigenous knowledge and integrity can be replaced by homogenised processed commodities that are barely recognisable as having a natural origin. [...] Small producers have been confused by the lure of greater wealth to adopt methods and solutions that are really working in the interests of corporations rather than society. Though growing enough to feed everyone is a worthy goal (MDG) the strategy undermines the objective by bulking up and transporting food, often making it inaccessible to the poor or provided as aid, increasing dependency. Most areas have the capacity to produce food for local people but we have been distracted by demands to service debts that ensure growers produce for export markets that appear lucrative.

Marcial Lopez, Nicaragua

The French forum felt that the main challenge for small and family farmers is emancipation from an industrial agriculture embedded in agro-chemical and agri-food networks. For Western farmers, this can only happen by transforming existing practices. A testimony from Denis Gaboriau, from the Groupe de Recherche en Agriculture Durable et en Economie Locale (GRADEL), demonstrates that such a radical change is possible. Small farmers have worked together to develop alternative production systems, which not only rest upon greater autonomy but are also more economical in their use of external inputs. Their dairy production based on a grass system insures greater income to the producers – less debt, less dependence on external supplies. And this by using a smaller than average surface area per worker. This system thus leads to more employment and a better use of the land area.

Not all European countries have lost their small farmers, notes Catherine Darrot, who argues that being a 'latercomer' to this process could be an advantage for the Polish agricultural community, since the farming practices there still secure a degree of independence and room to manoeuvre in the face of risks and uncertainties. The farming population in Poland is thus still increasing because communities of small farmers are able to welcome and absorb people marginalised by industrial restructuring. Although small and family producers have been mistreated by agricultural development policies, Darrot hypothesises that 'the future of these small family Polish farmers in Europe depends maybe, among other things, on their ability to consider themselves as forming an original category, endowed with rich local specificities and with the support of rapidly emerging spokespeople, ready to defend their cause'.

A colleague studied how biodynamic advice works. He discovered that conversion of a farm did not, as per the theory, take a seven-year crop rotation period, but it took ten years for the farmer to get used to the thought and overcome the fear of doing things in a different way to the neighbours and testing on a very small scale where no one could see. Once the inner thresholds were overcome, conversion of the whole farm was fast. Small-scale farmers do carry a dream to strike it rich. It is this that makes them copy the success story of others. The real bottlenecks are knowledge, self-esteem and courage. Many expressed a need to convince politicians and so on. I say: it does not work that way. First I convince myself. When I have convinced myself I begin to act according to my conviction and then others will be convinced without anyone having to convince them. In this way there is a complete freedom.

Hans von Essen – The real bottlenecks are knowledge, self-esteem and courage

The keys to capacity building: Knowledge sharing and critical education

Participants then quickly pointed to another challenge faced by small and family farmers, namely their capacity to fight for the betterment of their situation. Hetty Selwyn from Farmer's Link presumed that the reason behind the limited activity on the forum was that smallholders do not have enough time to enter into discussions of this type, let alone the time and energy to be actively involved in lobbying for better agricultural policies. Multinational companies, on the other hand, have the clout and power to pay professional lobbyists to push for decisions that work in their favour.

Nugroho Wienarto, from Indonesia, has much confidence in education to build the capacity of small farmers: 'this enables them to conduct their own analyses on inputs and trade systems, to make informed decisions, and continue their struggle with dignity'. Peter Ooi, another promoter for farmers' education, argues that 'farmers who understand environmental factors are more likely to protect their ecosystem and achieve their vision of sustainable development'.

Either we improve the position and lot of small producers within the current framework or we accept that radical change is needed! That everything should change, rather like in 1789, when the French Revolution enabled small farmers, who were then serfs, to recover land from the feudal lords. This was a vital time in our history. Since then, another oligarchy has come into being. The small farming community has practically collapsed. Its land has contributed towards swelling the size of a minority of holdings that have imposed a certain picture of farming.[...]

To say that everything should change also means putting people rather than capital at the heart of policy concerns. Indeed, how could there be a future for small producers within a system that denies human beings and only glorifies money? In the same way, can the unemployed or the poor look to the future? I think that we need rules other than those governing our current system; we should abolish the WTO and cease to make profit the focus of farming. All human beings should have a minimum income enabling them to live (to eat, house themselves, get education and medical care), i.e. making the philosophical precept 'everyone is born free and equal' into a reality. [...]

This brings us to the cornerstone of change: education! Not in the sense of knowing a lot, but of learning to observe, reflect, think, criticise the obvious, accept differences, challenge the dominant ideology, the orthodoxy that shapes our views without our knowledge while pretending to be impartial. Nothing is worse than never to have doubts, not to ask

ourselves questions, whatever the subject! I personally agree that small farmers should be trained in the field. In this respect, why should nursery and primary schools in the countryside not teach children to grow vegetables and raise livestock as Jean-Jacques Rousseau advocated in his work 'Emile, or Education', both to enhance the status of more manual jobs and to establish a link between farming and the environment, between theory and practice? From this perspective of open, permanent education, consumers need to be informed and trained! They should know how wheat is produced and treated, whether with chemicals or otherwise, whether or not the lamb or poultry that they buy has been fed on genetically modified soya. We must not lose sight of the fact that what will eventually be needed to bring about real change is the elimination of industrialised farming, initially by penalising it to discourage its supporters. For example, why not write, as on packets of tobacco, 'the products used can kill'? [...]

Martine Bégné – Money is king

More farmer-to-farmer dialogue

Most participants from all three forums agreed that more exchange of information is needed. By allowing farmers to share their experiences, they can learn about and understand each other, work together, and develop ways to challenge the existing agricultural policies that affect them most. This should also serve to promote and celebrate the diversity that the uniqueness of agriculture in each country brings to the world. Laxmi Prasad Pant writes that farmers' networks must include small farmers' more powerful friends to initiate meaningful communication or negotiation between those with and without power. The only concern, he concludes, is in relation to who should facilitate this negotiation process. The Spanish forum noted that it is important to share information between as well as within countries – but there were no suggestions on how this might be done – although the Brazilians organised a march for Agrarian Reform in May of this year.

An effective dialogue process with farmers cannot, however, be achieved only through workshops, papers and seminars, writes Wienarto. He concludes: the dialogue should take place 'in the field, season after season, in the form of farmer-to-farmer training'. FIELD Indonesia have initiated several approaches, such as the Farmer Field School (FFS), Farmer-to-Farmer training, and Farmer Action Research Facilities. Approximately one million farmers have graduated from the FFS in Indonesia (see www.thefieldalliance.org/Partners/FIELDIndonesia.htm). Such workshops and e-forums do have their place, however, as Eugenio Antonio Diaz from the Dominican Republic noted: 'an initiative such as this workshop to contribute to an electronic forum on small-scale producers is very interesting'.

Hetty from Farmers' Link reminds us that we should not overlook the importance of the human factor. Innovation and ideas on techniques should be shared and disseminated through networks. By working on a human scale others can hear of your visions and successes as well as the problems.

Many participants have mentioned email networks for farmers from distant countries to share experience with one another. Laxmi Prasad Pant, though acknowledging this potential, reminds us that we may have to wait a few more decades before smallholders from the South get connected via email. His question is 'who will provide affordable and reliable telephone and internet'?

To give stability to farming, I think we need a grand alliance of everyone who works in the countryside. In rural areas there are not just poor farmers, there are also small and medium-sized producers who could stimulate local production and absorb local labour, increase local wages. But this requires policies that would support the farming sector. On my farm I have three families working with me and I have an agreement with them that resulted from dialogue. They know all about my production plan and I know what their lives are really like. And this has enabled us to meet the farm's targets in terms of production. People have their own land and they don't want to have to sell it, and neither do they want to have to leave their community. So for them it's very important to be able to find employment locally.

I am trying to map these local communities, to put together a small production assessment, locating where the pockets of poverty are, where the poor farmers are, where the small farmers are, where the moderately well-off and the well-off ones are... to see how we can develop alternatives and support a participatory process at the local level. I'm interested in this information to be able to locate the most vulnerable areas, the most productive areas, the workforce that could be strengthened, and see how we could organise production and marketing.

Marcial Lopez, Nicaragua

Access to land, water and other resources

Access to natural resources is a fundamental concern for small-scale producers – farming would simply not be possible without natural resources. Policies and regulations defining rights to local resources tend to accommodate larger farmers, however, or industrial farms, making access to resources difficult for smaller producers. Marcus Colchester writes 'for farmers who still face major obstacles in

getting recognition of their rights and access to land and natural resources, denial of rights is bound to be the major challenge'.

Participants from the Philippines and from Thailand thought that, first and foremost, farmers need land. The French forum raised the issue of the need to fight against the concentration of land, and felt that a redistribution of land could be achieved at the national level by means of a land reserve set aside for redistribution. Peter Ooi also writes, 'to have access to land is to have a livelihood'. Ditdit Pelegrina argues that control of farming resources by small-scale farmers needs to be changed, in terms of access not only to land but also to markets and technology. In the same way as the land tenure system makes tenants of farmers, farmers are often rendered mere end-users of technology, rather than being included in the development process.

The MST⁸ group from Brazil is in the process of organising itself to confront the government in this respect. They demand, amongst other things, that the government, as agreed, settles 430,000 landless families; implements a programme to develop agro-industry in the settled lands; provides special credit for agrarian reform; and guarantees that there will be a halt to the unrestricted commercial use of any genetically modified seed in the light of the lack of information available about the consequences for the environment and health of the population. Echoing the need for co-operation and self-help as exemplified by the Brazilians, Marcial Lopez (Nicaragua) noted that in order to help organise campesinos, local enterprises are needed that are run by the campesinos themselves. This would also help to put the power of the market into the campesinos' hands.

Access to land and water was also mentioned by many participants – but the specific problem of lack of secure tenancy was mentioned by many Nicaraguans. Here, as part of the agrarian reform process, land titles are not always assured, with ownership being contested by various parties. The participants urged the authorities to confront this problem but believe that there is a lack of political will to do so. Many said that the government should be more concerned with producers – or better still, that the producers should organise themselves to demand that the government does what it promised at the elections. Marcial Lopez of Nicaragua noted that the responsibility for promoting the countryside was in everyone's hands, and that 'if we want the countryside to develop we have to invest in it', with money, policies, and time.

Access to water is desperate in areas suffering from drought and in areas where forests are slashed and burned. In some countries the participants wanted the

8 Brazil's Landless Workers Movement, or Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), carries out long-overdue land reform in a country where less than 3 per cent of the population owns two-thirds of the land on which crops could be grown. Since 1985, the MST has peacefully occupied and directly taken over unused land where they have established co-operative farms and constructed houses, schools and clinics, and generally promoted indigenous cultures. See www.mstbrazil.org/.

government to put more effort into reforestation, and in Honduras they urged the government to stop timber sales.

Participants in the Spanish forum suggested that we all need to be more aware of the environment and what is more we need the government to make people comply with environmental legislation and stop using chemicals. As Luis Obregon of Nicaragua said, 'the countryside absorbs the impurities of the city', so we need to pay more attention to the environment and the way of life in the countryside.

Science, technology and innovation

In terms of basic changes, participants in all countries in the Spanish forum said that they needed access to education, health (in the form of affordable medicines and clinics), electricity, and good roads.

That producers need to diversify was also recognised by many – they also spoke of the need to 'conserve seeds as part of the national heritage', according to Pablo Pinell of Nicaragua, and to promote non-traditional crops and, said Jose Erasmo of Honduras, to 'change our conformist attitudes and put into practice what we learn'. The dilemma thus appears to be how to integrate diversification and modernisation without loss of heritage in the countryside. Nobody offered options of how this might be achieved.

The lack of silos for storing crops and facilities to keep seeds was mentioned by participants from Nicaragua and Honduras. Participants such as Alejandro Sanchez of the Dominican Republic also spoke of the need for markets dedicated to the sale of organic produce.

Many noted that there is a lack of information on markets, prices, and costs of production and in order to plan to stimulate markets, this information is needed. Linked to the comments above (on the need to share information), one participant mentioned the possibility of using radio to disseminate information on markets, prices, etc.

At the end of the 1980s, GRADEL (research group working on sustainable farming and local economies) began to question the dominant model of dairy production (with feed bought in, silage, rye grass, no grazing) on the basis of various economic and ecological observations, in particular the effects of drought, the implementation of milk quotas, and environmental degradation (particularly water pollution). The group set itself the aim of maximising grazing and cultivating grassland combining fescue, English rye grass and clover. We wanted to achieve three-quarters of annual feed taken up through grazing. As a result, applications of nitrogen fertiliser went from 600 kilos per hectare in 1985 to almost nothing in 2002. In

the same way, purchases of soya cake dropped sharply. Economically speaking, the results of our group, compared with the Farm Accounting Information Network, have turned out entirely positive. The number of workers is higher, while the surface area per worker is lower. Whereas output per worker is lower, income per labour unit is higher. Our farms have more control over their intermediate consumption and their investments (the animals spend very little time indoors). Capital per human work unit is much lower than the regional average. Finally, our consumption of fuel oil has hardly moved in 10 years. We can also see that our working conditions are improving. We face fewer peaks of work, because the load is spread over the whole year. Rethinking the production system by making greater use of the agronomic potential of the farm has led the group to regain control of its labour. In short, our system rewards labour more than capital.

Denis Gaboriau – 'It is possible to get away from an intensive livestock farming system'

Participants have recognised that science, technology and innovation have an important impact on small, family farmer's and indigenous people's livelihoods. Most agree that technology and innovation have the potential to be key drivers of future prosperity and quality of life, but only if they are integrated with community empowerment. What is needed are institutional policies that put smallholder farmers and their institutions into mainstream agricultural research and development. Whilst thinking out of the box about technology and innovation, one point raised was that innovation is not solely the remit of scientific establishments, but was also possible within farming communities. One member also argued that technology was not the same as science. As Peter Ooi further explains: 'science is the generation of knowledge and the most important thing is empowerment that comes from access to this knowledge'. Technology is hence the production of recommendations based on scientific endeavour. By educating farmers about renewable resources, we empower them by sharing scientific knowledge that will help them farm in the most efficient manner.

Laxmi Prasad Pant proposes an alternative way of introducing changes in a farming community: the Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS). 'The conventional transfer of technology approach considers technology as a product of science that can be transferred to farmers irrespective of their context. [...] On the other hand, AISs identify the innovative potential of multiple actors, emphasise inter-institutional linkages, foster innovation, and recognise the interdependency of both technological (e.g., a crop variety) and institutional (e.g., new partnerships to distribute the seed) innovation.'

As an example – MASIPAG is a farmer-led organisation in the Philippines, a partnership between farmers and scientists, which was formed as a response to the problems created by the Green Revolution. Their core values are: (a) a bottom-up approach; (b) farmer-scientist partnerships; (c) farmer-led research and training; (d) farmer-to-farmer mode of transfer; and (e) advocacy towards genuine agrarian reform. They are also active in issues within their communities, such as aggressive development by corporate plantations and mining companies, commercialisation of genetically modified crops, local government's programme priorities and budgeting allocations, etc. While the macro-level of things may remain largely unchanged, for these MASIPAG farmers, they are being active players and creating their own development processes. (See www.masipag.org)

E. Crusada – Partnership between farmers and scientists: The case of MASIPAG

Reapers against researchers: OK, but which ones?

[...] I would like to point out that reapers are not against researchers. [...] They are against research that contributes towards our technical and economic enslavement and towards locking us – even tighter – into the dead-end of industrial, oil-based agriculture. Let me give an example, so that your readers may exercise their own judgement. In Kenya, maize is attacked by an Asian pyralid moth and damaged by witchweed (*Striga* sp.), a parasitic plant. Efforts to combat these pests using the cowboy methods of industrial farming – insecticides and herbicides – have failed. Researchers at the International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) have developed an agro-ecological method of control: sow a legume, tick clover (*Desmodium* sp.), with the maize. Its smell is unpleasant to the pyralid moth, which is further encouraged to move away from the maize by a belt of elephant grass (a fodder plant), on which it can lay its eggs. After the first stages of development, the caterpillars penetrate within the stalk, where they are destroyed by the plant's mucilage. In addition, tick clover eliminates witchweed. This legume fixes nitrogen from the air and fertilises the maize. Finally, it covers and protects the soil. Researchers and small farmers undertook this superb scientific work together. It produces reliable, abundant harvests, with no need to buy fertiliser, herbicides or insecticide. The well-being and self-reliance of small farmers increase, but... GDP and profits fall. For the economy and the state, it's a catastrophe. Two kinds of science are possible. The first consists of completing the historic move towards industrialisation of farming, the privatisation of living things and the subservience of small farmers to patented genetic chimera (the so-called

GMOs): sterilising living things to separate production from reproduction and place our future in the hands of seed merchants manufacturing toxic chemicals. The second, agronomy, lets nature do for free what we do with machinery, fertilisers, pesticides and irrigation, i.e. using oil. The future, if there is still time, is agronomy, 'the no-cost science'. That's what reapers say.

Extract published in the Express magazine

Jean-Pierre Berlan – Connecting with agronomy again, i.e. with no-cost science

Jean-Jacques Mathieu is sure that farmers' education should be based on knowledge sharing. He criticises all the technicians and economists who surround farmers for being 'first and foremost salesmen for agro-chemical inputs'. Jean-Pierre Berlan, researcher at the Institut National de Recherche Agronomique, argues for a type of research which does not contribute to 'the technical and economic enslavement' of farmers, but which complements their increased autonomy. Supporting his case with an example of a successful farmer-scientist initiative, he concludes: 'Two sciences are possible. The first one is about achieving the historical shift to industrial agriculture and concomitant privatisation of all living nature, the enslavement of farmers with the patented genetic artifacts (the so-called GMOs): sterilising the living world in order to separate production from reproduction and leaving our livelihoods in the hands of agro-toxic seeds manufacturers. The second type of science, ('agronomy'), encourages nature to do for free what we do with the help of machinery, fertilisers, irrigation – using oil.'

Governance: Alternative institutions

In order to market their products and diversify, small farmers need access to credit at affordable interest and they believe that help from the government and donor organisations to stimulate the credit market is needed.

In the past, we have looked to politicians and others to fight our cause, writes John Turner, relying upon the governance of those who judge the value of food and farming in very different terms, eg. purely economic terms, to those who are engaged in it. 'If you can't measure it, you are going to find it difficult to argue your case'. The difficulty in measuring such intangibles as health, freedom, fairness and biodiversity and the need to explain and translate these needs into monetary terms betrays a deeper problem within the structure of our social and community governance.

In Laos, Vietnam and Bhutan, in order to work with small-scale farmers you have to work through the government and find the spaces within it where you can work and link the small-scale farmers across the region to discuss and find their issues and concerns (discuss farmers rights). Our experience shows that providing workable/concrete models on the ground

and enabling small farmers to articulate for themselves their needs and wants can pave the way to crafting more responsive policies. In the end, change has to come from the small-scale farmers with support from other stakeholders [...].

Research and innovation

Aside from strengthening the capacity of farmers (through experiential learning and experimentation), building on their local knowledge system to take control of the science, technology, and innovations in their own agricultural system (as part of building the grassroots movement), in my opinion there is a need to critically engage national agricultural research stations to be more responsive to the needs of small-scale farmers. The operative word is 'critical engagement'.

Having had the opportunity to work in South-East Asia, especially in Vietnam, Laos and Bhutan, I noted the limitation of national agricultural research institutions in terms of asserting their own path to science and technology – most are under-staffed, under-budgeted and the training and exposure that they get is through the international agricultural research centres (IARCs) only. In plant breeding, most of the materials used by plant breeders are developed by the IARCs, with little work being carried out on local/indigenous materials. Most researchers, for example, are shielded from the debates on intellectual property rights with limited access to information, alternatives, etc. There are spaces and opportunities to change the mindset of programmes of NARS and make them more responsive to small-scale farmers' needs for sustainable farming. Besides, in developing countries these are still public institutions, paid from taxpayers money.

Ditdit Pelegrina – Government policies

Most contributors agree that there is much more promise in 'alternative' institutions that have emerged outside the limitations of public bodies and the corporate world. Many believe there is a need for a concerted effort aimed at changing policies not only at the World Trade Organisation, but also at the international financial institutions (IMF and World Bank), who put conditionalities on aid packages. Some advocate abolishing the WTO, or at least removing food and agriculture issues from its agenda. Pippa Woods suggests a World Environment Organisation, which would fight large, polluting farms and champion small ones, as well as other useful activities. If properly promoted, it would take precedence over the WTO.

If we are to achieve our vision of the future, what needs to change first of all is the policy of our governments. It needs to break the stranglehold of 'economic efficiency', challenge the current WTO, release Southern countries from their debt, and dismantle the major corporate monopolies in order to redistribute these markets amongst local SMEs, which should sign ethical contracts undertaking to respect the social and cultural status of small farmers, who in turn would undertake to preserve the environment and the quality of foodstuffs. [...] The role and ethics of farm organisations in France also need to be called into question; the majority union clearly backs industrial farming, thereby directly supporting the major petrochemical monopolies. The President of the Republic openly supports this union. So we are back to state policy again! Briefly, we have historically had separation between church and state, but what we need now is genuine separation between economic lobbies and the state, strictly controlled by ethical commissions, which would have real power over our policies [...].

Jean-Jacques Mathieu – Changing policy

A better agriculture is possible, but only outside the WTO as it is currently set up, argues Colin Hines, who contributed interesting comments and recommendations from a macro-level perspective. Hines proposes that instead of rules developed under GATT, now policed by the WTO, these would be replaced by: The General Agreement on Sustainable Trade (GAST) administered by a democratic World Localisation Organisation (WLO). Their remit would be to ensure that regional trade and international aid policies and flows, information and technological transfer, as well as the residual international investment and trade, should incorporate rules geared to the building up of sustainable local economies. The goal should be to foster maximum food security, employment and diverse livelihoods through a substantial increase in sustainable, regional self-reliance.

We also had the chance to read the message sent from ROPPA, the biggest network of smallholders in Africa, to Tony Blair. The principal demands in their message were an immediate halt to negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements and the inclusion of smallholder farmer's organisations in negotiations on any agriculture-related policies and programmes.

Replacing globalisation with localisation

Hetty recognises that although growing enough to feed everyone is a worthy MDG goal, the strategy of bulking food undermines this objective by making it inaccessible to the poor or provided as aid, increasing dependency. Most areas have the capacity to produce food for local people but they have been distracted by demands to service

debts that ensure growers produce for export markets that appear lucrative. The French forum believes that networks of localised trade should also be developed to eliminate distribution intermediaries (thus increasing value-added for producers), and more importantly to localise markets to avoid contributing to the games of global market competition.

Farmers from the South would be able to live well from their own work if they were protected from the development of large-scale production intended for the global market, but if they were also protected from international competition. The ROPPA, the biggest network of smallholders in Africa, denounces the deadlock of the 'international community's renewed commitments', which did not alleviate poverty in Africa. Refusing 'to live off charity and condescending humanitarianism', the network demands that food sovereignty be recognised as a right and enshrined in policy. ROPPA called on Tony Blair in the context of the 2005 G8 summit to recognise that: 'As long as aid remains tied to conditionalities and schemes promoting the neo-liberal paradigm, West African economies will continue to disintegrate... Blair must support the right of each country, in particular those of Africa, to protect their agriculture and economy, including by allowing them to set tariffs'. This form of border protectionism will in addition require 'the immediate cessation of negotiations towards an economic agreement/partnership between Europe and the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). It is, in fact, unrealistic to foresee the creation of a free-trade zone and the introduction of competition between Europe and the ECOWAS countries, which are among the poorest in the world'.

Farmers' movements in Europe do acknowledge that they benefit from subsidies, which simultaneously disadvantage small producers in the South. Nevertheless, the economic returns of their activities are closely tied to these subsidies. The uncertainty of global market prices for agricultural products means that European farmers are also economically vulnerable. Farmers in the EU demand a reform in the subsidies system towards better market prices, which could also be guaranteed by import/customs tariffs. This option, however, remains at the margins of the WTO's main agenda of gradually eliminating all tariffs, barriers and subsidies.

Rethinking access to markets

John Edward Peck agrees that there is a pressing impetus behind direct marketing efforts and other one-on-one consumer-farmer relationships, not only to achieve a fair price and healthier food for all, but to break free from the corporate-led chemically dependent industrial agriculture.

Family Farm Defenders, led by executive director Peck, encourages farmers 'to stop growing commodities for a global marketplace that undermines food

sovereignty elsewhere and to get back to growing food for their local community where it is most needed'. Peter Ooi adds that to move forward, we need to develop markets by farmers and not peg farmers to markets. Michael Hart proposes the use of supply management to help farmers. By eliminating large surpluses which are then dumped on other countries – often using export subsidies and ruining local markets – and by balancing supply and demand, farmers should get a fairer price for their produce. Peck says we should target farmers markets, small-scale co-operatives, community supported agriculture (CSA), fair trade networks, local exchange trading systems (LETS) and local currencies. He warns however of the threat of big corporations who, sensing the great growth potential is in this realm, will move in to take it over.

It is clear that small-scale producers need to organise themselves to obtain a critical mass to sell their products more efficiently, but they also need support from the government to do this. The participants in Nicaragua in particular noted that the government needs to change the law to make the process of marketing easier, and participants from the Dominican Republic urged the state to change the law so that the process of certification for small-scale producers was not so expensive.

Organic production is more consistent with the capabilities of small farmers

Although small farmers see the health and environmental benefits of 'going organic', there are usually strong monetary disincentives – certification and labelling are expensive processes, and additional costs which make producers less competitive. This irony has prompted Roberto Verzola to propose a radical change to the system. His proposal is a change in the economic context, so that chemically grown products must be labelled as such before they can be sold in the market. This would change the very economic context within which organic farming competes with chemical farming. 'This will make organic production the default mode in agriculture. Those who get out of the default mode and spray their crops with toxic substances must be required to inform consumers about this. They would then carry the burden of testing, labelling, certification, etc.'. The EU is a case in point, where mandatory labelling of chemically grown/sprayed products is a matter of legislation. Labelling and traceability of genetically modified (GM) foods is mandatory, given that GM food is a departure from the 'normal/conventional/default' approach and therefore consumers deserve to be informed about it and the products need to be monitored over the long term for possible health impacts. In Nepal, however, the route towards organic certification has inevitably created unwanted bureaucratic processes, reports Ram Chandra Khanal.

Hans von Essen proposes a strategic alternative to organic certification. Because 'certification' by definition is in the realm of a national body, making a local organic brand would avoid pointless bureaucratic expenses. If a group of farmers can agree on their own rules for production – for example no GMO, no pesticides, only high quality for sale outside the village – they can 'create' a local brand and market this brand. Hans believes personal connections and local social process are key to export opportunities.

Many participants in the Spanish forum spoke of the need not only to promote organic agriculture in terms of training for farmers in organic processes, but also to help put the theory into practice.

Ambiguous best practice standards?

Some major agribusiness have now agreed to elaborate and adopt new 'best practice' standards designed to make their products more acceptable to discerning consumers. The techniques of 'independent third party' certification, pioneered by the organic farming lobby, are now being applied to a wide range of other sectors, notably shrimp, soya, and palm oil. Marcus Colchester asks: 'will the result of the application of these new standards and procedures be to help or hinder small farmers to get access to lands, just labour standards, fair prices and good markets?'

Small-scale food producers and workers are usually either poorly or not represented in voluntary standard setting processes and third-party certification. These regulations are usually pushed by big business and thus tend to favour their interests. Moreover, a number of issues are unresolved or unclear, including: the role of government in the application of the standards; the responsibilities of industries in the supply chain; the adoption of standards and procedures suitable for smallholders; whether or not to ban GMOs; details of the procedures for verification and dispute of claims; and the development of standards adapted to national contexts. For further details see: www.forestpeoples.org, www.wholesomefood.org, www.sustainable-palmoil.org

Policies of localisation, by Colin Hines

- Gradual introduction of import controls to protect those goods that can be produced domestically from imports which could otherwise threaten the rediversification of national agricultural systems.
- Eco-taxation to ensure that the real costs of environmental damage, unsustainable production methods and long-distance trade are included in the cost of food.
- Greater support for farmers to enable them to prosper and produce healthy food using environmentally sustainable farming methods.
- Ending of long-distance transport and live exports of animals.
- Restriction of the concentration and market power of the major food corporations and retailers through new competition laws, fair prices paid to farmers and consumers (rather than low prices to farmers and high prices to consumers), and development of schemes that encourage rural regeneration and employment.
- Residual long-distance trade in foods which cannot be produced in a region (e.g. coffee, tea, bananas), to follow the principle of 'Fair Trade Miles,' combining the requirements of fair trade with food miles (or 'short food chains' as it is termed in Italy). The former covers goods produced predominantly by small farmers for a fair price and in a way that furthers environmental protection. The latter means producing as closely as possible to the market in order to minimise transportation and hence the carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.
- Fair Trade Miles to be linked to a guaranteed quantity of goods to be purchased by each buying country, within a guaranteed range of prices. This would allow the exporting nations to have as secure a level of earnings as is feasible with which to contribute to the overriding goal of re-diversifying local production.
- Reorientation of the end goals of international trade and aid rules so that they contribute to the rebuilding of more sustainable local and national economies.

The global food movement, both North and South, shares many of the same goals. This next excerpt from a contribution by Colin Hines summarises the issues discussed so far:

- a shift in the role of subsidies away from supporting production towards paying instead for a transition to more extensive and organic farming, marketed locally;
- the ability to prioritise national food security above the production of exports and dependence on imports;
- a shift away from hi-tech, intensive agriculture with high levels of pesticide use, and dependence on dangerous technologies such as GM production;
- the rebuilding of rural economies and infrastructure, and the minimising of wealth discrepancies within rural areas and between rural and urban areas;
- land reform and redistribution;

- a move towards more ecologically sustainable extensive and organic agriculture;
- the production of food that is safe for the consumer, in a way that is environmentally sensitive and prioritises animal welfare; and
- a shift in the balance of power over the setting of food security priorities, away from transnational companies (fostered by the trade rules of the WTO and EU Treaties), towards national control.

Moving towards practical solutions

To achieve progress on these various issues, informing public opinion is crucially important. Martine Bégné says that we need to educate and inform the consumer, 'so that he/she knows how wheat is produced, with which chemical treatments if any, if the lamb, the poultry he/she buys has been fed with transgenic soya or not; keeping in mind that in the long run, what is needed is a move away from industrial agriculture, penalising it at first to discourage supporters. For example, why not write, as is done on tobacco packs, "the ingredients used kill"?'

Jean-Jacques Mathieu calls for a global mobilisation of existing networks of farmers, consumers, environmentalists, and students to work together and heighten public awareness on these problems.

Collecting case studies

Peter Ooi suggests identifying case studies of successful, sustainable and economically viable efforts to help small-scale producers meet the demands of food production without compromising on their profits, environment and health. Like Hans von Essen, Ooi believes there are numerous successful cases that support some of the issues raised: farmer education, access to land, farmer self-help, etc. Lessons learned from these successful efforts would form the basis of what needs to be done to address the landless, small landholders, illiteracy, etc.

A question of attitude?

Hans von Essen emphasised the importance of attitude: 'there is a network of farms with a serious and good attitude. This is a good way to get to see the world and also a good way to learn important skills. To be a farmer in this way requires a very special skill and it is very rewarding, because the farmer is the manager of a wholeness. To manage this wholeness requires a very high skill; the few who are able to do it are heroes'.

Laxmi Prasad Pant also brings an interesting perspective to the debate: development from within and the role of spirituality in realising the vision(s) of small-scale producers.

Part of the pressing impetus behind direct marketing efforts and other one-on-one consumer/farmer relationships is not to just get a parity price

for farmers and healthier food to consumers but to break out of the corporate straightjacket and enable people to once again determine the nature of their food/farm system.

Socio-economic factors

Farming should not be perceived as an occupation for losers and dullards – it needs to be respected and honoured for the important service it provides. [...] Our goal is to restore dignity to family farming in the US and thus encourage a new generation of dwellers on the land who actually believe in putting the culture back into agriculture, recognise the value of healthy soil and happy earthworms, and can see that rural life need not be full of drudgery and despair but can also be a source of hope and inspiration.

John Edward Peck – Science, technology and innovation

Farmers networking

Hetty reports back from a trip to Poland where she visited organic farms that are using ecotourism as a route to survival. Visiting farmers in this way, she writes, provided a refreshing break from, in some cases, very difficult situations, allowed excellent exchange of information (through an interpreter), and perhaps a chance to return to their own farms with 'new eyes'. Tours within countries would be a useful way to develop a sense of camaraderie and support. It has encouraged her to consider whether they can set up more of this type of activity to enable farmers to learn from each other, simultaneously providing direct payment for services and organising this in all countries with whom Farmers Link has contacts (see www.farmerslink.org.uk).

Actually, I wonder whether we still have the right to have dreams and whether we are entitled to try to achieve them (even if we don't succeed). [...] I think that, in France, farmers should just let themselves practise farming consistent with their ideas. To encourage unconventional practices, it is easier to be in a group situation to share questions and answers and especially to avoid feeling all alone...

Isabelle Deborde – Can we still dream of the future?

(1) Email Exchange – Network

It would be a good idea to set up an e-mail exchange between farmers around the world. This would be a very practical exchange for farmers to talk to other farmers about their problems and the causes of those problems. This would help other farmers to understand and alert others to policy changes that may affect them, as well as to share practical information on things like GMOs or TNCs. From this can come a better understanding and those who

benefit from making us believe we are the cause of each other's problems can be defeated. Where policies do cause problems we can work together to suggest solutions to policymakers that benefit farmers rather than have solutions pushed onto us by those who benefit at the expense of farmers.

(2) Farmers Steering Group

Following up on point 1, we could set up a group of farmers or other individuals who can act as information collectors and then share that information. These people will need to be both trusted by farmers and be good communicators. This networking will eventually facilitate quick reactions to certain media events, and represents a wide-based support group to rely on. We also need to link up when we respond to problems or policy changes or other things when we speak or contact the media. Again if I had more information on other parts of the world I could add information to other press and media releases where it was relevant to the subject.

Michael Hart also suggested we encourage more contact between farmers:

Laxmi Prasad Pant questions the capacity in the South for such networking: 'Regarding the networking with smallholder farmers in the South, we have to wait a few more decades to get connected via email. Listserves that are increasingly common in the North may not work in the South. So my question is: "who will provide affordable and reliable telephone and internet [services]?"'

Paid-for environmental services?

Krishna suggested that small-scale farmers and others like them should be paid for their global services. Services like environmental safeguarding, natural resources and cultural preservation, minimising migration, conflicts, etc. A recently adopted policy to pay countries to help reduce greenhouse effects is one step in that direction. I would like to see such steps in areas of preservation of water catchment areas, forests and landscape, wildlife, and other natural resources. Those who are paying should not feel it is charity but is rather a price for the present services and an investment for secured future availability of vital natural resources and safe food sources.

International agreements or conventions

There are international agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, that recognise the value of biodiversity and seek to preserve and develop it wherever possible. Similar agreements exist for climate change and arms reduction, which although flawed and not completely effective, do give a benchmark of objectives. John Turner suggests that we need a similar clear statement of the value of indigenous farming and farmers, which farmers throughout the world could both support and lobby the public and politicians to support. It would lay out the value of

farming as a set of resources that are every bit as threatened as the rainforest or an endangered species:

Statement of values of indigenous farming and farmers

- Natural values: air, soil, water and energy
- Genetic values: plant types specific to regions and cultures
- Human values: the wealth of knowledge held by farmers
- Cultural values: farming as an integral part of art and culture, locally and nationally

Within these, other issues such as knowledge transfer, self determination, and the proximity principle of 'local first, global last' can all be shown to play an important role. If clear statements or declarations of this sort could be arrived at, it would help to provide a unified platform for farmers throughout the world.

In an earlier contribution, Turner emphasises the need to enable a direct exchange of information between small and family farming groups throughout the world; to identify what are the genuine needs of farmers and what would be the most appropriate and effective solutions, but also to understand the impact of policy and commercial development, especially in countries outside of Europe and the US. This direct exchange between groups will also create an opportunity to co-ordinate efforts. The shortage of human and financial resources to dedicate towards campaigns and lobbying means that there is a vast imbalance between the power and influence of 'agribusiness', with its supporting interests of commodity trade and chemical supplies, and small and family producers. If enough exchange between farmers comes to light, then it should be possible for farming groups throughout the world to ensure that common threats are met with common, co-ordinated efforts that have a far greater chances of success; to move to a position where farmers lead campaigns on food and farming, supported by NGOs, rather than vice-versa; and to identify opportunities for change and to make sure that full use is made of them. It is far easier to influence policy and legislation before it is drafted than it is to change it once it has been implemented.

Radical movement – Small farmers' manifesto

Sibylle writes: 'we need a manifesto in which we explain and prove that small-scale farming is an absolute necessity for the food security of the world's population, and explain why industrial agriculture is unable to secure food supply in the long run'. Then an international steering committee sets the guidelines, fixes the aim(s), acts at the international level. So any individual, any group, anywhere in the world is invited to join the initiative and contribute to safeguarding the livelihoods of small producers. To connect all these people and initiatives we would establish a website.

The website should explain what the initiative is all about, report what's new or important, and give people a chance to exchange ideas, views, and experience and to get into contact with others all over the world. You could ask others for help, search for people with specific skills to help with your idea, or look for somebody with a fascinating idea if you want to help and have none yourself. People will get an idea about what activities helped save small farms in other parts of the world.

What seems to be clear to me is that we have a worldwide crisis in farming, with prices often below the cost of production and farmers leaving the land. In Germany, for example, some people expect 50 per cent of the farmers to give up farming within the next five years. But there is one important difference between industrialised countries and the South: while ex-farmers in the industrialised countries can take other jobs or have social welfare to support them, ex-farmers and their families in the South often have no alternatives to make a living and may face starvation or death. [...]So we must find ways to make this happen and that will not be an easy thing. Because it means that we, the farmers, will have to change to achieve that. As Hans von Essen said in his e-mail: what first has to change is our mindsets. We have to give up the conviction that we are too unimportant, powerless, not clever enough, not rich enough to do something about it. For one simple reason: if we don't do something about it, no one else will. So we have to develop the necessary skills and qualities to be able to do something about it and to succeed. We must learn to work together at different levels, we must concentrate on what unites us, not on what separates us, we must concentrate on the important and we must be efficient. And we have to do that as individuals as well as a group.

Sibylle Bahrmann

Let's not wait for others to do something. Probably they never will. Let's do something together – now.

John Edward Peck shares this idea of building a grassroots movement to force change upon the system rather than trying to 'lobby' corrupted politicians and their associates who are not going to listen to reason when money is more convincing. 'When push comes to shove, we will be out in the street with the other folks insisting another world is possible – and not in the boardroom trying to cut a deal that compromises our integrity.'

3



Highlights of the E-Conference Process

The Steering Committee

The E-Conference design and overall process was guided by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from small-scale producer groups as well as civil society organisations in the North and South. The E-Conference's Steering Committee was gender balanced and international in its composition (see Box 1). Members of the steering committee were chosen because of their regular contacts with farmers and indigenous peoples' organisations as well as for their work on issues relevant to this E-Conference (e.g. sustainable agriculture, food sovereignty, indigenous peoples' rights to land and self determination, and policy and advocacy work on food and farming).

The Steering Committee played a key role in identifying potential E-Conference participants. Considerable efforts were made to involve as many small farmers, family farmers and pastoralists as possible to create a diverse pool of participants – from both the North and South. After preparing a short background document and an invitation letter, the Steering Committee members teamed up with the moderators to compile e-mails addresses of potential participants. Letters of invitation were then sent out between 15 March and 1 April, 2005.

1

Box 1. The E-Conference Steering Committee members

Angela Cordeiro (Brazil)	Patrick Mulvany (UK)
Estelle Deléage (France)	Vicki Tauli-Corpuz (The Philippines)
Michael Hart (UK)	Carlos Vicente (Argentina)
Elisabet Lopez (UK)	Michel Pimbert (UK/France)
Farhad Mazhar (Bangladesh)	

The moderators

The moderators' role, as impartial facilitators of the discussions, was to ensure participant registration and good technical functioning of the E-Conference. The moderators mandate was also to introduce topics, decide when discussions had gone on long enough, prepare summaries of contributions received, and co-ordinate translations to ensure that summaries of the electronic discussions were available in French, Spanish and English on the website. In addition, the team of moderators (see Box 2) dealt with day-to-day queries from participants to ensure continued participation and engagement in E-Conference discussions. Working with Michel Pimbert and Estelle Deléage (Steering Committee members), Khanh Tran-Thanh was responsible for coordinating the moderators' team work and for overseeing the practical day to day running of the E-Conference.

2	Box 2. The E-Conference moderators
	Khanh Tran-Thanh Coordinator and moderator of the English Forum
	Magali Reinert Moderator of the French Forum
	Christophe Trehet Moderator of the French Forum
	Elizabeth Bennett Moderator of the Spanish Forum

The E-Conference technology: Using the DGroups System

The Dgroups facility (www.dgroups.org) was chosen to host this discussion on the Future of Food and Small-Scale Producers because it is free of charge. Moreover the Dgroups system offers a service which is simple, non-commercial (no advertisements), respectful of privacy, and targeted at low bandwidth users in the South. Dgroups is an online home for groups and communities interested in international development. The system is partly funded by the World Bank, but it has been developed by a consortium of bilateral agencies and international NGOs. The DGroups partnership's current partners include:

- Bellanet (www.bellanet.org)
- DFID (www.dfid.gov.uk/)
- Hivos (www.hivos.nl)
- ICA (www.icamericas.net/)
- IICD (www.iicd.org)
- OneWorld (www.oneworld.net)
- UNAIDS (www.unaids.org)

Timing and schedule

Timed between mid-April and July 2005 (see Table 1), the outcomes of the E-Conference were generated to help inform several important international events that were likely to affect the international policy agenda regarding agricultural development, including:

- The Africa Commission (May 2005)
- The United Nations review of progress toward the 2015 target to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- The G8 summit in Scotland, under the Presidency of the UK government (July 2005)
- The European Union meetings chaired by the UK
- The 6th WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, China (December 2005)

Table 1. E-Conference time line

Activities/Tasks	Dates
Compiling contact emails for potential participants	15 – 1 April
Sending invitation letters	1 April – 14 April
Participants registration	11 April – 15 May
E-Conference Launch	14 April
Question Set 1	15 April – 4 May (20days)
Question Set 2	5 May – 25 May (21 days)
Question Set 3	26 May – 14 June (20 days)
Addition: Question Set 4	22 June – 1 July (10 days)

The four sets of questions asked of E-Conference participants were staggered over time, allowing about three weeks for responses and comments to each question (see Table 1). The questions were designed to elicit participants' views on the policies and practices needed to sustain the livelihoods and environments of small-scale producers (see Table 2).

Table 2. The E-Conference questions

Question Set 1	A Vision for the Future <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What does sustainable agriculture and land/water use mean to you?2. How would you like food, farming and land/water use to look in the future?3. What values, ethics and worldview guide your own vision of food, farming and land/water use?
Question Set 2	What prevents small-scale producers from achieving their vision? <p>Among all the factors listed below as possible reasons, which ones do you see as major constraints? What other factors prevent small-scale producers from achieving their vision?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2.1. Access to land, water and other resources?2.2. Recognition and exercise of those rights?2.3. Science, technology and innovation?2.4. Roles, practice and culture of organisations?2.5. Policies, regulations and government support?2.6. Markets?2.7. Corporations and private sector policy?2.8. Socio-economic factors?2.9. Environmental factors?2.10. Other factors?
Question Sets 3 & 4	What needs to change to allow small-scale producers to achieve their vision? <p>What to do and how to organise?</p>

E-Conference summaries

For each discussion group, regular summaries of participants' responses to each question set were prepared in that forum's language by the moderator. Each of these summaries was then translated into the other two languages and posted on the E-Conference for all participants to read. All forum participants were therefore able to read the main outcomes of discussions held in each of the three language streams (Spanish, French, English). These summaries, together with archives of the individual contributions, remained available on the website www.dgroups.org until March 2006. A consolidated summary of all forum contributions is reproduced in the first part of this report, together with a selection of quotes from participants and web links to all other key products of this forum.

Who participated in the E-Conference?

The E-Conference included Spanish, French and English-speaking participants from over 30 developed and developing countries.

A total of 227 people registered for the consultation (see Table 3). The highest number of participants was from Latin America and the Caribbean (98), OECD countries (87), and Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa (16). The types of organisations most represented were 'Individual small-scale producers' (95), 'NGO and civil society organisations' (42), and 'student/academic research institutes' (40). There were no registrants from the private sector.

**Table 3. E-Conference registration:
Subscribers by region and type of organisation**

Region	Policymaker	Student/researcher	NGO/CSO	UN body	Private sector	Indigenous peoples & small farmers organisation	Individual small-scale producers	Other	Grand Total
Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa	0	4	7	0	0	3	2	0	16
East Asia and Pacific	0	0	4	1	0	4	1	0	10
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Latin America and Caribbean	0	1	6	1	0	13	73	4	98
Middle East and North Africa	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
OECD countries	2	28	19	1	0	18	18	1	87
South Asia	1	6	3	0	0	1	1	0	12
Unknown	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Grand total	3	40	42	3	0	39	95	5	227

Nearly half of all registered participants (48 per cent) were engaged in farming-related activities, either as individual producers themselves or as representative of indigenous peoples and small farmers' groups (see Table 4).

Table 4. Number of participants involved in farming-related activities

	Farming-related activities	Non-farming activities	Total
Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa	4	12	16
East Asia and Pacific	1	9	10
Europe and Central Asia	0	1	1
Latin America and Caribbean	87	11	98
Middle East and North Africa	0	1	1
OECD countries	14	73	87
South Asia	3	9	12
Unknown	0	2	2
Total	109	118	227
% Total	48%	52%	100%

An analysis of contributors by region and type is summarised in Table 5. In terms of relative percentages, the following categories of contributors participated most: individual small-scale producers, indigenous peoples' and small farmers' organisations, and UN workers. It is noteworthy that 83 per cent of registered small-scale producers sent comments to the forum. In sharp contrast, contributions and levels of participation by policymakers, NGO and CSO representatives were low for all questions (see Table 5).

On a regional basis, most contributions were recorded from Latin America and the Caribbean region, with 81 per cent of registered people sending in a comment. This was followed by South Asia (58 per cent) and East Asia and the Pacific region (50 per cent). OECD countries accounted for the second highest number of participants, but only a quarter of registrants were active. Participation from the Middle East and North Africa, as well as from East Asia and the Pacific region, was low (see Table 5).

Table 5. Active participants/contributors by region and type

Region	Policymaker	Student/researcher	NGO/CSO	UN body	Private sector	Indigenous peoples & small farmers organisation	Individual small-scale producers	Other	Grand Total
Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
East Asia and Pacific	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	5
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Latin America and Caribbean	0	1	0	0	0	5	72	1	79
Middle East and North Africa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OECD countries	0	4	3	0	0	9	4	0	20
South Asia	0	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	7
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total	0	9	7	1	0	16	79	1	113
& of total registered	0%	23%	17%	33%	n/a	41%	83%	20%	100%

Table 6 summarises information on how often each question was commented on by E-Conference participants. Overall, participants responded the most to the final question set (see Table 6). A more detailed analysis of levels of participation is given in Tables 7, 8 and 9. The highest number of contributions for question set No.1 and No.3&4 came from individual small-scale producers. Question set No.2 was commented on primarily by representatives of indigenous peoples' and small farmers' organisations.

Overall, a total of 282 written contributions were offered. Active participants tended to send a single message and there were comparatively fewer participants sending multiple messages or comments (see Table 6). This indicates that there was not much debate between participants within each question set. However, contributors often referred to each other's arguments in the subsequent question sets that they addressed.

Table 6. Contributors and activity level for each question set

Question	Total number of participants	Number of messages	Active participants	%	>1 message	1 message only
1	227	97	93	41%	2	91
2	227	92	90	40%	1	89
3+4	227	126	104	46%	12	21

Table 7. Contributors to question set No.1

Region	Policymaker	Student/researcher	NGO/CSO	UN body	Private sector	Indigenous peoples & small farmers organisation	Individual small-scale producers	Other	Grand Total
Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Asia and Pacific	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Latin America and Caribbean	0	1	0	0	0	4	72	1	78
Middle East and North Africa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OECD countries	0	2	0	0	0	5	3	0	10
South Asia	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total	0	4	1	1	0	9	76	1	92

Table 8. Contributors to question set No.2

Region	Policy maker	Student/researcher	NGO/CSO	UN body	Private sector	Indigenous peoples & small farmers organisation	Individual small-scale organisation	Other	Grand Total
Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Asia and Pacific	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Latin America and Caribbean	0	1	0	0	0	5	72	1	78
Middle East and North Africa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OECD countries	0	1	0	0	0	6	1	0	8
South Asia	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total	0	3	1	1	0	11	73	0	89

Table 9. Contributors to question sets No.3 and 4

Region	Policymaker	Student/researcher	NGO/CSO	UN body	Private sector	Indigenous peoples & small farmers organisation	Individual small-scale producers	Other	Grand Total
Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
East Asia and Pacific	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	5
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Latin America and Caribbean	0	1	0	0	0	3	72	0	76
Middle East and North Africa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OECD countries	0	2	3	0	0	7	2	0	14
South Asia	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total	0	6	6	1	0	12	76	0	101

Reflections on the E-Conference process

The use of electronic conferences to discuss and inform policymaking on food, farming, environment and development has become more widespread over the past decade. The benefits of using a webspace to carry out an electronic discussion are many and relatively straightforward. E-Conferences are quick to set up and easy to manage, can reach a very wide audience, are relatively low cost, and do not need technology-intensive equipment. Another benefit to using web-based communication tools is that they can give all participants a reinforced sense of equality. Each person has the same opportunity to speak up by posting messages without the typical distractions such as gender biases or seating arrangements. Shy and anxious participants may feel more confident posting online rather than speaking in front of a large audience. Furthermore, an E-Conference allows participants to schedule their own 'participation' at times that are convenient to them. Beyond these, experience shows that an E-Conference has the advantage of being 'self-publishing'. 'The information exchanged is immediately available, without the delays in writing up and publishing papers associated with conventional conferences'.⁹ Finally, opportunities can also arise to develop a continuing sense of sharing among those interested in a chosen topic, once the conference has closed.

There are, however, important differences between the ways that E-Conferences are designed to elicit multiple perspectives on any given subject or policy issue.

This E-Conference was designed to give more 'voice' to people whose views are rarely heard in policy discussions on the Future of Food and Small Scale Producers. The organisers of this process assumed that a carefully designed E-Conference could offer a safe space for small-scale producers and their organisations to produce relevant knowledge and policy recommendations for food, agriculture, land/water use and development. The E-Conference process was therefore rooted in a bottom-up model of decentralised innovation that attempted to link together many 'voices' of small-scale producers to influence policy. As such, the pattern and ways of working of this forum contrasted sharply with more conventional models in which 'experts' seek to represent and interpret farmers' views in electronic conferences (see Box 8).

⁹ 'Is an E-Conference Right for you', web document from the Data Services Unit, English Heritage, [www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/dsu_info_econference.pdf], accessed 19 October, 2005.

<h3>3 Box 3. E-Conferences for policymaking: Two models of innovation</h3>	
<p>Conventional model of innovation</p> <p>Policy research and innovation based on the use of E-Conference technology is centralised. Experts and consultants (public and private sector) frame the E-conference process, make contributions, and own the policy recommendations.</p> <p>Horizontal and convivial links mostly between experts who participate in the E-conference. Local actors whose reality is discussed in the E-Forum are not usually included in this horizontal network</p> <p>Knowledge, categories, perceptions and analyses of experts count first and foremost, with many local perspectives and priorities excluded. Potentially high democratic deficit.</p>	<p>Bottom-up model of innovation</p> <p>E-Conference based policy research and innovation draws on voices of many different citizens (farmers, scientists, etc.). The framing of relevant questions is decentralised and there is plural ownership of outcomes.</p> <p>Horizontal and convivial links among an extended peer community. Plural traditions of knowledge (scientific, vernacular) and values brought together in an open conversation.</p> <p>Knowledge, categories, perceptions and analyses of socially excluded made to count along with 'expert' views, with a diversity of 'realities' expressed and included in outcomes.</p>

The organisers of this E-Conference sought primarily to include small-scale producers as participants. In so doing they were faced with two constraints in particular:

1. Lack of access to internet. Most of the world's farming population lives in the South, but many people are still involved in community and family farming in the North (even though the actual numbers are smaller than in the South). Access to the internet is very uneven or nonexistent in many of the places where small-scale producers live and work, in environments that range from relatively undisturbed ecosystems, such as semi-natural forests, to food-producing landscapes with mixed patterns of human use, to ecosystems intensively modified and managed by humans, such as agricultural land and urban areas.
2. Engaging non-literate small-scale producers. Half of all working people worldwide are small-scale producers. A significant number of these producers are non-literate people who often rely on rich oral skills – rather than reading and writing – to communicate and codify knowledge.

To some extent, these constraints were overcome by feeding the outcomes of village-level meetings and/or facilitated group discussions into the E-Conference, with producers giving a clear mandate to someone to write up and post their oral contributions on the website. This methodological innovation worked well for groups of small farmers in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic (see Box 4).

4

Box 4. Combining village-level group discussions with worldwide internet-based communication – Examples from Central America

In order to give Latin American farmers without access to the internet the opportunity to participate in this E-Conference, Elisabet Lopez from Progressio (formerly CIIR – the Catholic Institute for International Relations), organised one-day workshops in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. The date and location of the workshops were:

- 1 April, Santa Rosa de Copan, Honduras (20 participants)
- 4 April, San Salvador, El Salvador (14 participants)
- 6 April, Esteli, Nicaragua (17 participants)
- 12 April, Santiago, Dominican Republic (19 participants)

As an external facilitator, Elisabet Lopez first introduced the electronic discussion project to the workshop participants. Next, working groups of four or five farmers were created. One of Progressio's development workers was assigned to each group and wrote down the comments of each participant on the E-Conference questions. This was then followed by discussions in plenary to agree on the main conclusions to be communicated on the E-Conference website. The external facilitator was asked to post farmers' comments on the internet and afterwards feed back to the workshop participants' outcomes of the E-Conference.¹⁰

Finally, group discussions were complemented with one-to-one interviews. For example, on 7 April 2005, Elisabet Lopez interviewed Marcial Lopez, who for many years was the coordinator of Nicaragua's Campesino to Campesino programme. Five years ago he left this job in order to become a full-time farmer.

In all of these situations, groups of small-scale producers deliberated on each of the forum questions and agreed on what they wanted to communicate to other participants via the internet. A computer-literate farmer representative or an external facilitator (usually staff from a supportive NGO) would then consolidate all comments into a summary. After checking and validating the summary, groups of farmers gave a mandate to their representative (or the external facilitator) to post their comments on the E-Conference website. This way of working thus called for significant role reversals on the part of external facilitators who could only act on behalf of small-scale producer groups when the latter mandated them to do so.

Methodologically, this combination of traditional forms of deliberation with modern internet-based communication proved to be an effective and trustworthy way of

¹⁰ Participants of the workshops held in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and El Salvador in April 2005 count for 70 of the 'registered' participants in the Latin American and Caribbean subgroup. Although they were not formally individually electronically registered, it was deemed important to include each one of them as a 'separate voice'.

engaging non-literate producers in the E-Conference. It also helped overcome the lack of direct access to the internet that prevented small-scale producer participation in several places. As such, this hybrid methodology may have more general relevance and applications for future E-Conferences that seek to involve non-literate actors who do not have access to internet.

However, there is scope to further push back methodological boundaries in future E-Conferences committed to citizen empowerment and democratic 'voice'. Creative forms of cross-cultural communication and the use of miniaturised computer technology linked with satellite telecommunications will no doubt be required to address the key remaining constraints, including:

- Exclusion from internet-based communication. The hybrid approach developed in this E-Conference was only used by some farmer groups in Latin American countries. Elsewhere – and notably in Africa – the potential of this mix of 'old' and 'new' forms of communication was not realised in this E-Conference. The lack of access to reliable internet-based computer systems was a substantial limiting factor in these settings.
- Language barriers. This E-Conference took place simultaneously in three languages (Spanish, French and English). It successfully mediated conversations across the 'language divide'. However, many more languages (and not just dialects) are spoken by pastoralists, fisherfolk, small farmers, forest dwellers and indigenous peoples throughout the world, with each language reflecting and reinforcing culturally specific ways of seeing and acting in the world. Language was certainly a constraint to deeper and prolonged participation for some people registered for this E-Conference. For example, it is interesting to note that there was a distinct difference in activity between the three language forums. According to the moderator of the Spanish forum, the low level of activity in the Spanish forum was probably due to the fact that a number of Quechua-speaking Andean participants spoke Spanish as their second language. This may have dissuaded these indigenous peoples from contributing to the E-Forum and fully engaging with the issues discussed by other participants.

Evaluating impacts

In terms of its stated objectives, this E-Conference did generate some immediate impacts and positive outcomes:

- Several contributions and policy recommendations made by participants were used as a basis for statements on food, agriculture and trade policy. For example, the UK Food Group, one of the co-organisers of this E-Conference, included some of the policy recommendations made by participants into campaign materials that were prepared specifically for the G8 summit and other side events

held in Scotland, in July 2005 (see the G8 'Make Hunger History': www.makehungerhistory.org).

- Judging from feedback received from several participants, this E-Conference did succeed in bringing together people in a rich conversation and shared international analysis on the Future of Food and Small-Scale Producers.
- There is also evidence that some participants have continued to interact and exchange views well after the formal closure of this E-Conference. For example, these post-conference exchanges have allowed some members from the French Réseau Semences Paysannes to better understand the situation of Polish farmers, thereby strengthening prospects for future joint pan-European actions around policy and practice. It is anticipated that the publication of this E-Conference summary will further encourage these farmer-to-farmer exchanges for mutual learning and organising for change.

The E-Conference is thus perceived as a modest contribution to strengthening citizen-led innovation and networks of knowledge users who are organised on the basis of a more horizontal and egalitarian logic, working independently and outside the state and the market. According to Illich (1970; 1975), such endogenous knowledge creation by and for the people means (a) taking responsibility for one's own learning process; (b) having unrestricted access to learning tools; and (c) addressing issues that relate to people's aspirations and lives. 'Against the constant and pressing need for expert knowledge to catch up with the industrial development future, endogenous knowledge proposes to "celebrate the awareness" of the social construction of knowledge and science, and to take the responsibility to "create" alternative futures' (Finger and Asun, 2001). De-institutionalising policy formulation and research for autonomous learning is thus seen as a way to move from 'communes of resistance' to sustainable communities which confederate into larger food sovereignty networks, and in which citizens participate in a direct and democratic way (see Pimbert, 2006).

However, the longer term impacts of this E-Conference on the Future of Food and Small-Scale Producers cannot be predicted at the time of writing this report. Outcomes will need to be monitored and assessed by the participants and organisers themselves – as part of a more decentralised and polycentric evaluation of the whole E-Conference process and outcomes. We offer here a generic checklist of questions, indicators and issues which participants and other actors may want to use or adapt to assess the quality, validity and outcomes of this E-Conference (see Box 5).

4

Box 4. Evaluating E-Conferences and their impacts: A checklist of possible questions and indicators

Stage I: Planning

Who participates?

Who decides on who should participate?

Who participates in whose E-Conference?

..and who is left out?

Who identifies the problem?

Whose problems?

Whose questions?

Whose perspective?

.. and whose problems, questions and perspectives are left out?

Stage II: The E-Conference process

Whose voice counts? Who controls the process?

Who decides on what is important?

Who decides, and who should decide, on what to say and make public?

Who controls the use of information?

And who is marginalised?

Whose reality? And who understands?

Whose reality is expressed?

Whose knowledge, categories, perceptions?

Whose truth and logic?

And whose reality is left out?

Stage III: Resulting information control and use

Who owns the output?

Who owns the resulting data and information?

What is left with those who generated the analysis and shared their knowledge?

Who keeps the physical output?

Whose analysis and use?

Who analyses the information collated?

Who has access to the information and why?

Who will use it and for what?

And who cannot access and use it?

Ultimately ...

What has changed? Who benefits from the changes? At whose cost?

Whose views are included in policy-making?

Who gains and who loses?

Who is empowered and who is disempowered?

Annex 1: Resources

Web links mentioned by contributors

Farmers Link www.farmerslink.org.uk
Deccan Development Society <http://www.ddsindia.com/>
Family Farm Defenders <http://www.familyfarmdefenders.org/Main/HomePage>
FIELD Foundation <http://www.thefieldalliance.org/Partners/FIELDIndonesia.htm>
MASIPAG <http://www.masipag.org/>
SEARICE <http://www.searice.org.ph/>
<http://www.ukfg.org.uk>
www.makehungerhistory.org
www.wholesomefood.org

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Annex 2: Participants

Eyasu Elias	Argentina	Glendis Adelayda Yodines	
Carlos Vicente	Argentina	Pacas	El Salvador
Richard Sager	Australia	J. Huberto Leon Calles	El Salvador
Thomas Dax	Austria	Josefa Elizabeth Avila	El Salvador
Fahrad Mazhar	Bangladesh	Josefa Pacas Osorio	El Salvador
Jean Michel Berho	Basque Country (France)	Juan Francisco Lemus	El Salvador
Felix Gutiérrez Matta	Bolivia	Juanita Antonia	El Salvador
Altacir Bunde	Brazil	Julio Leon	El Salvador
Angela Cordeiro	Brazil	Lazaro Velasquez Funes	El Salvador
Ciro correa	Brazil	Maria Maura Portillo de Contreras	El Salvador
Horacio Martins	Brazil	Maribel Ramos Osorio	El Salvador
Alan Thomson	Canada	Oscar Arnoldo Guevara	El Salvador
Devlin Kuyek	Canada	Silverio Salvador Escobar	El Salvador
Gloria Wenyeye	Canada	Adrian Cullis	Ethiopia
Stuart Clark	Canada	Getachew Gebru Tegegne	Ethiopia
Zuzka Tatiersky	Canada	Bénédicte Hermelin	France
Vivienne Solis Rivera	Costa Rica	Carmen Bordallo Labal	France
Alejandro Sanchez	Dominican Republic	Catherine Darrot	France
Angel Colombino Chalas	Dominican Republic	Chantal Jacovetti	France
Carmelo Carela	Dominican Republic	Denis Gaboriau	France
Cristino Viloría	Dominican Republic	Estelle Deleage	France
Daniel Tejada Francisco	Dominican Republic	Gérard Bricet	France
Eloy Cruz	Dominican Republic	Isabelle Deborde	France
Eugenio Antonio Diaz	Dominican Republic	Isabelle Fabre	France
Eusebio Heredia Vasquez	Dominican Republic	Jean Jacques Mathieu	France
Felipe De Los Santos Diaz	Dominican Republic	Jean-Baptiste Pertriaux	France
Francisco Antonio Gomez	Dominican Republic	Jeanne THIEBOT	France
Francisco De Jesus	Dominican Republic	Jean-Pierre Berlan	France
Idelfonso Diaz	Dominican Republic	Jean-pierre Portet	France
Jose Antonio	Dominican Republic	Jerome Laplane	France
Rosario Camacho	Dominican Republic	Josselin Rouillard	France
Jose Gutierrez Peña	Dominican Republic	Martine Bégné	France
Leonardo De Jesus Serrano	Dominican Republic	Mathieu Glorian	France
Maria Magdalena Morillo	Dominican Republic	Olivier Godinot	France
Martinez Santos	Dominican Republic	Pierre Fabre	France
Maximo Antonio Villar		Samuel Feret	France
Martinez	Dominican Republic	Saône & Doubs Vivants	
Miguel A. Perez	Dominican Republic	Association	France
Myriam Salazar	Dominican Republic	Alexandra Podlejski	France/Argentina
Raymundo Cruz Simi	Dominican Republic	Evelyn Mathias	Germany
Antonio Felix Dia Gonzalez	El Salvador	Sibylle Bahrman	Germany
Ezequiel Rivema	El Salvador	Emelia Arthur	Ghana
		Bertha Mejia	Honduras

Farmers' Views on the Future of Food and Small-Scale Producers

Carlos Hernandez Reyes	Honduras	Francisco Heriberto	Nicaragua
Carlos Humberto Pacheco	Honduras	Olivas Cruz	Nicaragua
Jose Alberto Cortes	Honduras	Irma del Rosario	Nicaragua
Jose Erasmo	Honduras	Jose Rene Lopez Canales	Nicaragua
Juan Herrera Herrera	Honduras	Juan Alberto Rayo Laguna	Nicaragua
Juana Miranda	Honduras	Juan Siú Godines	Nicaragua
Karlin Maria Maldonado	Honduras	Juana Esperanza Ponce	
Maria Eduviges Sanchez	Honduras	Zamora	Nicaragua
Maria Isabel Perez Regalado	Honduras	Julio Cesar Lira Gonzalez	Nicaragua
Maria Mercedes Diaz		Julio Cesar Palacios	Nicaragua
Cortes	Honduras	Julio Ramon Lopez Poso	Nicaragua
Mario Paz Mejia	Honduras	Justo Pastor Mendoza	Nicaragua
Noe Mejia Lara	Honduras	Lucila Blandón	Nicaragua
Obdelia Benitez Quintanilla	Honduras	Luis Octavio Obregón	Nicaragua
Oscar Manuel Sarmiento	Honduras	Marcial Lopez	Nicaragua
Otilia Mejia Quintanilla	Honduras	Marvin Chavarria	
Raymundo Orellana		Matamoros	Nicaragua
Sanchez	Honduras	Miguel A. Canales Ruiz	Nicaragua
Ricardo Alas	Honduras	Pablo Ramon Pinell	Nicaragua
Rigoberto Sarmiento		Picado Martinez	Nicaragua
Miranda	Honduras	Roberto Martinez	Nicaragua
Tovias Sorto	Honduras	William Alfredo Flores	
Ethan Van Drunen	India	Castillo	Nicaragua
Kashinath Vajpai	India	Ibrahim Aminu	Nigeria
P V Satheesh	India	Aksel Nærstad	Norway
Rahul Saxena	India	Kjell Esser	Norway
Sandeep Minhas	India	Babar Khan	Pakistan
Alifah Sri Lestari	Indonesia	Shahid Zia	Pakistan
Nugroho Wienarto	Indonesia	Edgar Gonzales Castro	Peru
Maryam Rahmanian	Iran	Gabriela Lopez Sotomayor	Peru
Antonio Onorati	Italy	Hilario Aroni Quispe	Peru
Jane Ross	Italy	Kenneth D. Duncan	Peru
Nora McKeon	Italy	Maria Scurrah	Peru
Tateo OIE	Japan	Roberto E. Valdivia	Peru
Jens-Peter Bamekow Lillesø	Kenya	Washington Chañi	Peru
John K. Mutunga	Kenya	Javier Chaparols	Philippines
Festus Akinnifesi	Malawi	MASIPAG	Philippines
Victor Perezgrovas	Mexico	Normita Ignacio	Philippines
Luis F. Lifanissa	Mozambique	Roberto Verzola	Philippines
Krishna kaphle	Nepal	Vicki Tauli-Corpuz	Philippines
Laxmi Prasad Pant	Nepal	Wilhelmina R. Pelegrina	Philippines
Ram Chandra Khanal	Nepal	Alexandra Dana Spinu	Romania
Tara Devi Gurung	Nepal	Marjorie Jobson	South Africa
Augusto Castillo Obregón	Nicaragua	Raj Patel	South Africa
Eleuterio Herrera Palacios	Nicaragua	Richard Fowler	South Africa
Erika del Carmen Carrasco	Nicaragua	Ward Anseeuw	South Africa/France
Eugenio Torres	Nicaragua	Henk Hobbelink	Spain
Evelia Rodrigues Duarte	Nicaragua	Neus Marti	Spain
Fausto Villareyna Olivas	Nicaragua	Hans Von Essen	Sweden

Farmers' Views on the Future of Food and Small-Scale Producers

Pernilla Malmer	Sweden	Bill Sanda	USA
Peter Einarsson	Sweden	Daniela Soleri	USA
Thomas Gunnarson	Sweden	David A. Cleveland	USA
Liliane Ortega	Switzerland	Glenn Davis Stone	USA
Jason Pan	Taiwan (Indigenous Pazeh People of Taiwan)	Helmut Klauer	USA
		Holly Rose Mawby	USA
		Hugh Joseph	USA
Peter Ooi	Thailand	Janet Jacobson	USA
Allan N. Williams	Trinidad & Tobago	Jean-Marie Aguerre	USA
Anke Weisheit	Uganda	Jennifer Chesworth	USA
Betty Esenu Nenghanjwa	Uganda	John Peck	USA
Chebet Maikut	Uganda	John Schelhas	USA
Barbara Dinham	UK	Ken Hargesheimer	USA
Claire Rhodes	UK	Laura Dininni	USA
Colin Hines	UK	Lindsey Fransen	USA
Elisabet Lopez	UK	Mary Jo Langston	USA
Hetty Selwyn	UK	Mary K. Hendrickson	USA
John Turner	UK	Michael Yee	USA
Lies Craeynest	UK	Pascal Destandau	USA
Marcus Colchester	UK	Rebecca Kessinger	USA
Michael Hart	UK	Robert Waldrop	USA
Michel Pimbert	UK	Valerie Imbruce	USA
Nicholas Wilkinson	UK	Dorah Mwenye	Zimbabwe
Patrick Mulvany	UK		
Pippa Woods			
Family Farmers	UK		
Sue Wrennall	UK		
Francoise Gollain	UK/France		
Linda Kingery	USA		
Ariele Foster	USA		

The outcomes of an electronic conference on the 'Future of Food and Small Scale Producers' are presented in this report. The electronic discussion primarily involved indigenous, small and family farmers, landless and fisherfolk as well as their representative organisations. The focus was on small-scale food producers – women and men who produce and harvest field and tree crops as well as livestock, fish and other aquatic organisms. The E-Conference process was thus specifically designed to allow the excluded to voice their views, analysis and priorities on the future of food, farming, environment and

human well being. Contributors were invited to describe the practice and underlying rationale of farmers and indigenous peoples' alternatives to the modernization and industrialization of food, agriculture and land/water use. The views and analysis of small scale producers that are summarised in this report offer a deeper understanding of alternative movements in rural and urban areas. Contributors explain why keeping farmers and indigenous peoples on their land is of fundamental importance for the well being of society and nature throughout the world.



How – and under what conditions – can diverse, localised food systems be sustained in the twenty-first century? Who gains and who loses when local food systems are strengthened? These are some of the questions examined by the Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods project.

This project combines a political ecology perspective on food systems and livelihoods with action research grounded in local practice. Research is done with, for and by people – rather than on people – to bring together many different ways of knowing and types of knowledge for learning and change. As such this action research seeks to bridge the gap between the academic orientation of political ecology and the largely activist focus of food sovereignty, human rights and environmental justice movements.

The Reclaiming Diversity and Citizenship Series publishes lessons from case studies in India, Indonesia, Iran and Peru along with findings from other studies linked with this action research project. Contributors are encouraged to reflect deeply on the ways of working and outcomes of their research, highlighting implications for policy, knowledge, organisations and practice. The Reclaiming Diversity and Citizenship Series also seeks to encourage debate outside mainstream policy and conceptual frameworks on the future of food, farming and land use. The opportunities and constraints to regenerating local food systems based on social and ecological diversity, human rights and more inclusive forms of citizenship are actively explored by contributors.

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Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken
Ontwikkelingssamenwerking

PROGRESSIO

Formerly CIIR



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UK FOOD GROUP