



Alexandra Spieldoch

# A Row to Hoe

The Gender Impact of Trade Liberalization on our Food System, Agricultural Markets and Women's Human Rights



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This paper is part of a joint collaboration between IATP and the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) titled “Transforming Women’s Livelihoods in Relation to Food, Agriculture and Trade.” This global project facilitates research and dialogue from a feminist gender perspective on issues of food sovereignty, sustainable development, and human rights.

The author acknowledges with gratitude the generous support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for publishing this paper. In addition, the author expresses special thanks to Sophia Murphy, Steve Suppan, Allison Page, Jacob Wascalus, Anne Laure Constantin, Ben Lilliston, Alexandra Strickner, Corinne Rafferty, Maria Riley, Kristin Sampson, Graciela Rodriguez and Gigi Francisco for offering their time and expertise.

ISBN 10: 3-89892-606-0  
ISBN 13: 978-3-89892-606-5

*Publisher:* Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung  
Geneva Office  
6bis, chemin du Point-du-Jour  
1202 Geneva  
Switzerland

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*Author/Editing:* Alexandra Spieldoch

*Layout:* Pellens Kommunikationsdesign

*Photos:* UN-Photo, ILO

*Printing:* bub Bonner Universitäts-Buchdruckerei

Printed in Germany 2007

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## Basis for Paper

This preliminary research paper fills a gap in the body of literature around food and agriculture in relation to gender. It draws together analysis of recent trends in food and agriculture from a gender perspective with the wider literature on how trade and investment have affected food security and agricultural development. Although a number of case studies exist exploring how women have been affected by changes in the global food system, and changes in local food production as well, few have sought to situate these case studies (and their findings) in the more global context of international trade and investment. This paper explores these linkages, pointing to the connections as well as to the need for further research to deepen our understanding of why women—more than half the world's population and those who are overwhelmingly responsible for ensuring children get enough to eat—must be involved in policy decisions that affect agriculture and food security.

The basis for this paper is rooted in these four points:

- a) Rules for agriculture are changing.
- b) Women's long-standing traditional roles in agriculture have been largely ignored, especially by macroeconomists.
- c) Women are not affected the same way as men by the changes in agriculture. Because of women's different traditional roles, impacts on their livelihoods need to be understood.
- d) Gender-blind policy making has deepened some of the traditional inequities as well as created some new ones.

## Introduction

There is no shortage of studies highlighting particular components of food and agricultural production, nor of studies that look at the effects of trade and investment on food security and development. There are also studies that look at the specific areas where women are concentrated in food production and processing and/or are being affected by changes in the global food system. Yet there are surprisingly few analyses that link these components from a gender perspective. Within the growing movement to resituate economic policies in the broader context of development and human rights, gender is either unsatisfactorily addressed or, worse, forgotten altogether. This is as true in relation to food, agriculture and trade as it is to other sectors of the economy.

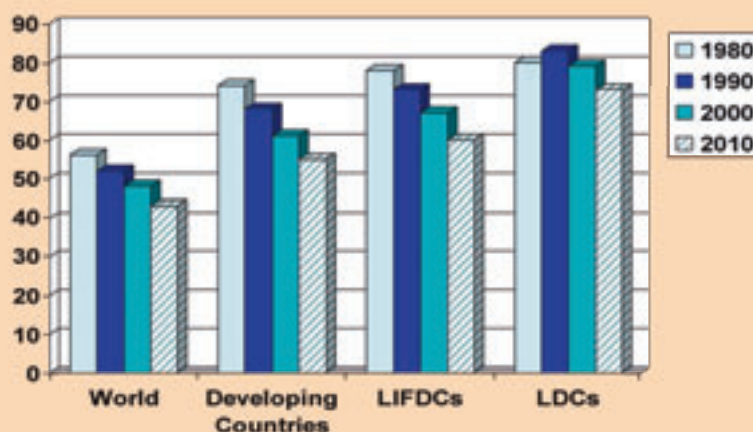
A gender analysis is not concerned only with women, but also with the social, cultural, economic and political structures that are shaped by different roles played by women and men in the family and the community. For example, important differences exist between women and men in their quality of life; in the amount, kind and recognition of work they do; in health and literacy levels; and in their economic, political and social standing. Women are too often mar-

ginalized in their families and their communities, suffering relatively less access to credit, land, education, decision-making power, and rights to work. Not surprisingly, women therefore comprise the majority of the world's poor in both the urban and rural sectors as well as the majority of those located in the informal sector. For this reason, this paper in its analysis places particular emphasis on women's experiences.

The marginalization of women in research and policy related to food and agriculture is extraordinary in light of the "feminization of agriculture" that exists today. In the area of production, men's role in agriculture has been declining while women's role in agriculture has either dropped slightly, remained stable or risen. Throughout the 1990s, in developing countries the proportion of economically active women in the agricultural sector was over 60 percent and close to 80 percent in the least developed countries (LDCs). Even as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) projects a decline in the overall number of women working in agriculture by 2010, it predicts that in LDCs women's participation will remain at over 70 percent.

Women are responsible for over half the world's food production. In developing countries,

Percentage of economically active women working in agriculture, 1980–2010 (*projected*)



Note: For a definition of low-income food deficit countries (LIFDCs), see <http://www.fao.org/FOCUS/E/SpeclPr/LIFDCs.htm>

rural women produce between 60-80 percent of the food and are also the main producers of the world's staple crops (such as rice, wheat, maize), which provide up to 90 percent of the rural poor's intake.<sup>1</sup> Women are even more dominant in the production of legumes and vegetables in small plots, and they also raise poultry and small animals and provide most of the labor for post-harvest activities such as storage, handling and processing of grains.<sup>2</sup> The FAO provides figures indicating that women provide up to 90 percent of labor for rice cultivation in Southeast Asia and produce as much as 80 percent of basic foodstuffs for household consumption and for sale in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup>

Nor is women's role in agriculture limited to subsistence plots. There are 450 million women and men working as agricultural laborers worldwide who do not own or rent the land on which they work, or the tools and equipment they use. These workers comprise over 40 percent of the world's agricultural labor force and, along with their families, are part of the core rural poor in many countries. The number of waged women agricultural workers, currently at 20-30 percent of the waged workforce, is increasing. New jobs for women are primarily in export-orientated agriculture such as cut flowers and vegetable growing and packing (the Non Traditional Agricultural Exports—NTAEs). These jobs are often temporary or seasonal, and poorly paid, with wages well below those earned by industrial workers. Children are also part of the waged agricultural workforce; 70 percent of all child workers are in the agricultural sector. Agricultural laborers often live below the poverty line, and they form part of the core rural poor in many parts of the world.<sup>4</sup>

A growing number of women work in the informal agricultural sector, as well, primarily doing homework at piece meal rates, or working as street vendors in local food markets. The International Labor Organization's (ILO) Committee on the Informal Economy argues that failed macroeconomic policies, the unequal distribution of the benefits of globalization, and the feminization of poverty have all contributed to the increase in women working in the informal sector.<sup>5</sup>

For all of these reasons, women are directly affected by governments' failure to realize the right to food and are too often negatively affected by macroeconomic policy changes. Women must be more involved in policy making to change this situation.

This paper is split into three sections. The first section, "*Realizing the Right to Food, Food Security and Food Sovereignty*," provides information on the state of food insecurity in the world and underlines the importance of supply, access, distribution, national development strategies as part of the human rights framework. The section, "*Women and Global Agriculture*," highlights global trends in relation to deregulation, market concentration and agriculture trade, and provides preliminary gender analysis around these themes. The third section, "*Case Studies*," provides examples of women in agriculture in developing countries, looking at how they are affected by trade and investment policy changes and pointing to the importance of a gender analysis. The case studies look at rice, corn, cashews, cut flowers, and poultry. The paper concludes with some brief reflection and a few suggestions for future research possibilities.

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1 United Nations, FAO. Website fact sheet: "Gender and Food Security: Agriculture." Accessed Oct. 28, 2006 <[www.fao.org/Gender/en/agri-e.htm](http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/agri-e.htm)>.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 FAO-ILO-IUF. *Agricultural Workers and their Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development*. October, 2005.

5 ILO. *Report of the Committee on the Informal Economy*. Provisional Record, Ninetieth Session. Geneva 2002.

## Section I.

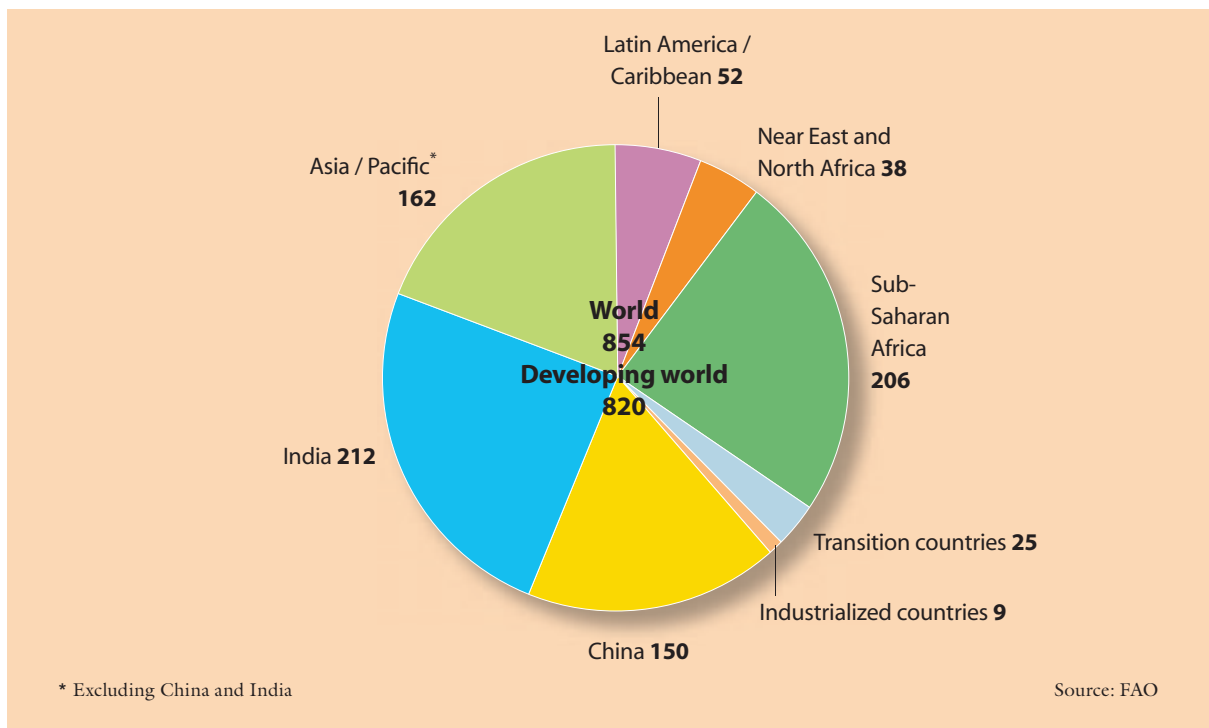
# Realizing the Right to Food, Food Security and Food Sovereignty

### The State of Food Insecurity in the World

At the World Food Summit in 1996, governments defined food security as meaning “that food is available at all times, that all persons have means of access to it, that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality, and variety, and that it is acceptable within the given culture.”<sup>6</sup> According to the FAO 2006 *State of Food Insecurity in the World* report, rather than decreasing, the number of hungry people in the world is growing at a rate of four million a year. For the period 2001-2003, FAO estimated 854 million under-

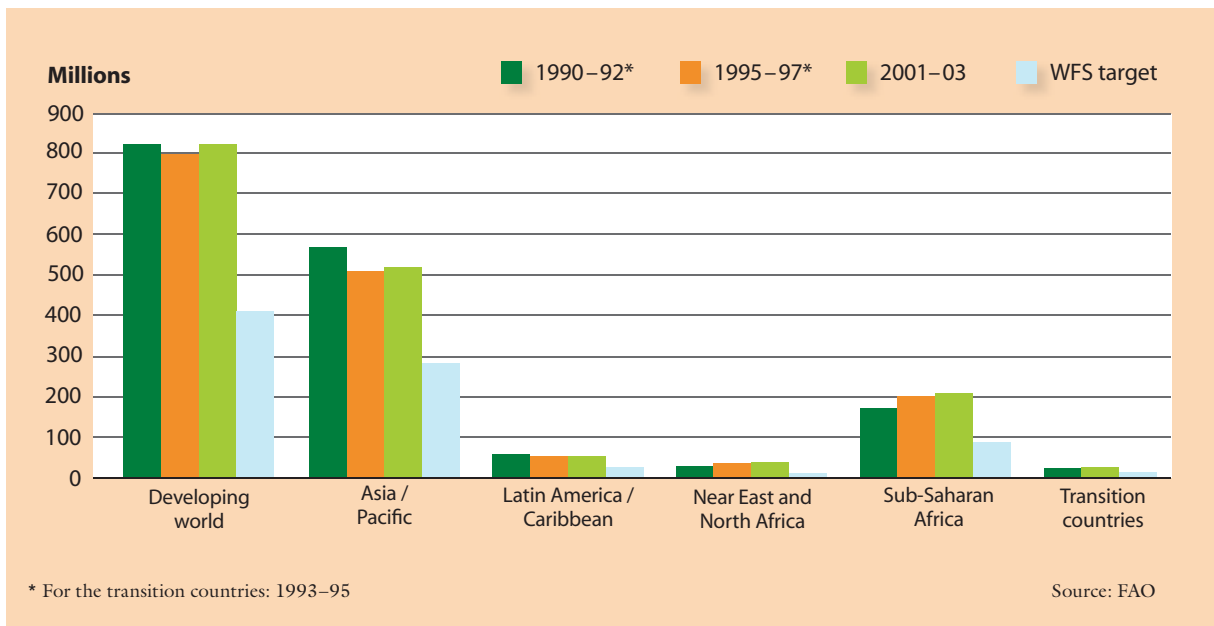
nourished people in the world: 820 million in developing countries, 25 million in transition countries and 9 million in industrialized countries. This contrasts with large-scale reductions of malnourishment in both the 1970s and the 1980s and represents an increase of 23 million since 1996.<sup>7</sup>

This number of 854 million undernourished is far from World Food Summit targets to reduce hunger by half for the year 2015. The graph below, also taken from the FAO State of the World’s Food Insecurity Report for 2006 highlights the problem.



6 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Elements for possible inclusion in a draft Declaration and Plan of Action on Universal Food Security. Rome: United Nations, 1995.

7 United Nations, FAO. *State of Food Insecurity in the World*. Rome: United Nations, 2006.



This increase in hunger along with other unstable trends related to food security and livelihoods is alarming. Food insecurity affects more women than men.<sup>8</sup> Gender inequality that hinders women's employment, education and access to decision making, also hinders their food security, and that of their children. According to UNICEF, globally one quarter of children who are under the age of five are undernourished, totaling 146 million children. In poorer countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal, this percentage is as high as 50 percent. Over 15 percent of children born (approximately 20 million per year) are born underweight. This is in large part to the fact that their mothers are malnourished during the pregnancies.<sup>9</sup>

### The Right to Food

The current economic liberalization agenda supports market concentration, promotes inequity, and undermines the right to food. Additionally, the fact that trade rules and human rights goals have tended to be addressed separately in policy

making is a serious problem in improving food security and food sovereignty. The Right to Food, which is part of the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,<sup>10</sup> was ratified in 1948. To date, it lacks clear instruments for implementation, posing a challenge for human rights activists.

According to the Secretary General of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, (A/55/342 Report to the General Assembly) "[A]chieving fair and equitable trade liberalization by adopting human rights approaches to WTO rules will be an important step in establishing a just international and social order and a failure to do so could perpetuate or even exacerbate existing inequalities." The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has also written that countries are responsible for: a) respecting the right to food in other countries, and b) facilitating access to food and providing necessary food aid where required (this includes providing food aid in ways that do not affect local producers and markets).<sup>11</sup> The Commission on Human Rights views the link between poverty and hunger as particularly problematic for

8 United Nations, FAO. *State of Food Insecurity in the World*. United Nations, 2005.

9 Social Watch Report. "Impossible Architecture: Why the Financial Structure is Not Working for the Poor and How to Redesign it for Equity and Development." 2006.

10 United Nations, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966. Accessed November 15, 2006 <[http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ceschr.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ceschr.htm)>.

11 Commission on Human Rights. *Globalization and its Impact on the Full Enjoyment of Human Rights*. Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights Resolution, 2001/32.



rural areas and recommends that countries base policymaking on food security needs, sustainable management of natural resources, food safety, hunger and poverty reduction, institution-building, and land reform.<sup>12</sup>

Research on ways to strengthen the definition and the implementation of the right to food in gender-appropriate ways is greatly needed. The *Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)*, signed by all UN member states in 1995, acknowledges that women must participate “as both agents and beneficiaries in the development process. In the BPFA, governments agreed to ensure that trade would not have an adverse impact on women’s economic activities (both new and traditional); to implement gender impact analyses of economic policymaking to ensure equal opportunities for women; to make legislative reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources (including property, credit and new technology); to measure unpaid work on family farms; to recognize and strengthen women’s role in food security and as producers; and to support indigenous women and traditional knowledge.<sup>13</sup> In the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, which was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and is considered to be a Women’s Global Bill on Human Rights, governments also agreed to pay special attention to rural women’s needs, to eliminate discrimination in rural areas, and to provide access for women to health, social security, training and education, loans, technology, water, adequate living conditions, sanitation, housing, supply and transport.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, governments have not met many of these recommended steps to realize the right to food from a gender perspective and to end discrimination against women, particularly in the area of agriculture. The disconnect between macroeconomic policymaking and women’s human rights continues to threaten peoples’ full realization of the right to food.

## Food Security

The literature on food security generally identifies three necessary elements: supply, distribution and access. Food supply is crucial, but not sufficient to achieve food security. It matters where the food comes from, when it is available on the market, and whether it supplements or displaces local production. For example, increased food supply through food imports that support domestic production and add value to existing food chains will strengthen food security. Conversely, imports can undermine local food production if they arrive at harvest time, or create demand for a cheaper, even if inferior, product. Thus, Mexico’s imports of yellow corn from the U.S. have undermined demand for Mexican white maize, although white maize is nutritionally superior. Similarly, Thai rice imports in West Africa have undermined local rice production and reduced demand for more traditional staple foods, such as cassava. In turn, this diminishes local income for farmers and the farm labor they employ, and has been shown to increase poverty in affected areas.

In the area of distribution, how much of what type of food farmers will be able to sell depends on farmers’ access to markets. This includes their ability to meet standards for export or national supermarket chains, and whether they have the means to store, process and transport food beyond the local market. Distribution is also driven by demand—farmers with access to urban markets are generally at a considerable advantage to those producing in remote areas where the local consumer base is likely to be poor, and where, to reach a richer market, poor infrastructure and limited means of transportation can prove an insurmountable barrier. Finally, access to food is often dependent on larger social determinants, including political dynamics, poverty and social status, which themselves are interconnected.<sup>15</sup>

12 Commission on Human Rights. *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security*. Sixty-First Session. Item 10 of Provisional Agenda. E/CN.4/2005/131. 28 February 2005.

13 United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). *Fourth World Conference on Women: Beijing Platform for Action*. Women and Poverty chapter, 1995.

14 United Nations, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979. Accessed October 25, 2006 <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>>.

15 Murphy, Sophia. “Securing enough to eat.” International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD): January, 2005.

Ensuring that safe, healthy food is available to women and children is a prerequisite for achieving food security and improving livelihoods overall. As part of this, governments need to put in place the infrastructure to supply and distribute food even in remote areas; local markets, state-led programs to regulate food standards, national food reserves are a few of the possible tools.

Water is also crucial to the supply of safe, healthy food. Irrigated agriculture accounts for approximately 70 percent of total water withdrawal in the world; in many low-income countries agriculture accounts for as much as 90 percent of water use. It has been estimated that agricultural production needs to increase significantly to meet the food, fiber and fuel needs of the world's growing populations and that world demand for water will double by 2050. At the same time, water available for agriculture is declining because of a combination of decreased availability of good-quality water and greater competition for available water.<sup>16</sup> Traditionally, women in the rural sector have been both the water carriers and food providers. Research is needed to understand how shifts in agriculture will affect water availability and healthy food supply from a gender perspective.

Ensuring that women producers have access to technology, land and credit is another major challenge for governments seeking to achieve food security. For example, in Niger, 97 percent of women in the rural economy work in agriculture but lack economic access and power. They are concentrated in subsistence agriculture (primarily the production of millet) and are largely excluded from production of cash crops for export (such as onions or cowpeas) because of gender-based constraints on their access to credit, technology, extension services, transport and markets.<sup>17</sup>

Women in agriculture in developing countries also face real challenges with the outbreak of the

HIV/AIDS epidemic. Ninety-five percent of people living with HIV and dying of AIDS are in developing countries. The overwhelming majority are rural poor in the prime of their lives (between 15-49), and women outnumber men.<sup>18</sup> For example, in Africa there are 13 affected women per 10 infected men. In sub-Saharan Africa, HIV/AIDS is depleting the region of its food producers and farmers. Women have a particular burden: as caregivers in the household, they are responsible for the care of sick household members. The number of children heading households is also increasing. The rural community also bears a significant burden, as those who contract the virus in urban areas tend to move back to their villages when they get sick to receive family care.<sup>19</sup> HIV/AIDS places very significant stress on the family, on food production, employment and access to food. Lack of proper care for this disease and other illnesses, coupled with cuts in rural extension programs that formerly provided healthcare in rural areas, have increased women's work burden and are threatening food security.

The increase in female-headed households is another of the many challenges related to food production, provision and supply. For example, approximately one third of all rural households in sub-Saharan Africa are headed by women. Because the average female-headed household has less land and capital than households headed by men, the increase in female-headed households is correlated with an increase in food insecurity and malnutrition more generally.<sup>20</sup>

Indigenous women face particular challenges as one of the most oppressed and impoverished sectors of society. As custodians of traditional knowledge, indigenous women have a critical relationship with natural resources, the land, water, and food security. Yet they face particular disadvantages as a group that is excluded from the assumptions and policies created under the dominant economic growth models.<sup>21</sup>

16 From a conversation with global water specialist Shiney Varghese. IATP, August 22, 2006.

17 3D: Trade, Human Rights, Equitable Economy. "Niger: Agricultural Trade Liberalization and Women's Rights." 3D, August 2006.

18 FAO-ILO-IUF, *Agricultural Workers and their Contributions to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development*. October 2005.

19 *Ibid.*

20 United Nations, FAO. *State of Food Insecurity in the World*. Rome: United Nations, 2006.

21 Tamang, Stella. "Indigenous Women, Ten Years After Beijing and Challenges." Speech given at the South Asia Women's Indigenous Forum, 2005.

## Demanding Food Sovereignty

Many NGOs, networks, social movements and even governments (e.g., Brazil) argue that there is an urgent need to strengthen existing definitions of food security as well as a need to support food sovereignty.<sup>22</sup> The concept of food security does not challenge the negative effects that trade and investment policies have on rural communities. In effect, food security is applied as a technical standard (how many calories per household or person in a given region) that ignores the politics of food production, distribution and access. Many food security advocates maintain a neutral position on which overall economic framework can best support the right to food. Food sovereignty advocates, on the other hand, believe the policy emphasis on open and deregulated markets, as well as on one-size-fits-all rules for trade, undermines farmers' livelihoods and

thereby local food security. At the same time, they see the existing rules as strengthening the already dominant control of food corporations.

Food sovereignty provides a framework for activists to reclaim the political struggle essential to shaping a fairer and more sustainable food system. Food sovereignty was introduced to the multilateral system in 1996 during the preparations for the World Food Summit; delegates asserted the rights of countries to determine their food and agricultural policies at the national level, as part of a participatory and democratic process, including the right to safeguard national development priorities, even if they require so-called "barriers to trade."

The international movement of farmer and peasant associations called La Via Campesina elaborated on the concept of food sovereignty in 2003.<sup>23</sup> They wrote:

*Food sovereignty is the peoples', countries' or state unions' RIGHT to define their agricultural and food policy, without any dumping vis-à-vis third countries. Food sovereignty includes:*

- *prioritizing local agricultural production in order to feed the people, access of peasants and landless people to land, water, seeds, and credit. Hence the need for land reforms, for fighting against GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), for free access to seeds, and for safeguarding water as a public good to be sustainably distributed.*
- *the right of farmers, peasants to produce food and the right of consumers to be able to decide what they consume, and how and by whom it is produced.*
- *the right of Countries to protect themselves from too low priced agricultural and food imports.*
- *agricultural prices linked to production costs : they can be achieved if the Countries or Unions of States are entitled to impose taxes on excessively cheap imports, if they commit themselves in favour of a sustainable farm production, and if they control production on the inner market so as to avoid structural surpluses.*
- *the populations taking part in the agricultural policy choices.*
- *the recognition of women farmers' rights, who play a major role in agricultural production and in food.*

<sup>22</sup> Both the International Gender and Trade Network and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy support the concept of food sovereignty.

<sup>23</sup> La Via Campesina. "La Via Campesina on Food Sovereignty." 2003. Accessed November, 2006 <[www.dakardeclaration.org](http://www.dakardeclaration.org)>.



The notion of food sovereignty fits well with a feminist agenda. It not only seeks to protect countries' rights to design and implement policies as part of an alternative framework of governance, but also supports sustainable development and human rights goals, including explicit support for women's rights. Food sovereignty recognizes women as agents and actors and not merely consumers in the food system. Food sovereignty also reaffirms the importance of social reproduction and social development as central components of rural development and rural employment.<sup>24</sup>

In the same way that definitions of gender include social, economic and political constructs of power, food sovereignty asserts that agricultural liberalization is a power construct defined by social, economic and political circumstances that run counter to human rights goals. In these ways, the term food sovereignty resonates within the feminist movement. The concept is based on a political analysis that challenges power structures blocking realization of the right to food.

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<sup>24</sup> International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN). "IGTN at Cancun: Advocacy Document for the WTO Fifth Ministerial." August, 2003. Accessed October 28, 2006 < <http://www.igttn.org/page/386/1>>.

## Section II.

# Women and Global Agriculture

A shift over time toward privatization, deregulation and more open trade has resulted in overproduction of commodities, volatile and often crippling low commodity prices and a marked increase in market concentration in agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers, farm equipment, etc.), food processing, food distribution and food retail. Land holdings in many parts of the world have become more concentrated. In the global North, the trend is toward both smaller farms (usually hobby farms owned by people whose income is from non-agricultural activities) and much larger farms, where virtually all food production is concentrated. Family-owned and operated farms are, to borrow a phrase, the “disappearing middle.” Most food in the global North is grown on the ever-larger farms. In many parts of the global South, poor and subsistence farmers are losing their land, or are abandoning it to search for income in the cities, with negative consequences for local food security, rural development, the environment and peoples’ livelihoods.

**Deregulation** as a means to open new markets has had serious consequences for farmers, especially in developing countries. The amendment (or more usually, abolition) of such policies as commodity boards, quantitative restrictions on imports, export taxes, price stabilization policies, production incentives (or restrictions), production subsidies, or capital controls have all changed market conditions for farmers everywhere.<sup>25</sup> Locking in tariff reductions has reduced the availability of funds for agricultural investment and the provision of agriculture-related services. Although open to abuse, tariffs offer governments a way to protect their agri-

cultural industry from sharp price swings or surges in imports. Their removal strips countries of safeguards and increases their vulnerability to global price shifts. Decreases in tariffs also reduce important revenues that could be used for the provision of basic services.<sup>26</sup> Deregulation to support increased trade has allowed corporations to set prices and standards for economic production that hinders, if not reverses, farmer-based initiatives such as domestic support, cooperatives and publicly mandated state-trading enterprises. Policy makers expected increased competition to lead to new opportunities for farmers, but the reality has been more complicated, especially for resource-poor and subsistence farmers.

Farmers in the global South are disadvantaged in the food system by a variety of factors. First, they lack capital, which reduces the amount of acreage they own and their ability to store food. Because of the expense of storing harvested production and even transporting it to distant markets, farmers end up being able to sell their crops only to local markets, at lower prices than the cost of production.<sup>27</sup> Farmers and peasant communities find it increasingly difficult to own, exchange and breed new varieties of seeds due to runaway patenting, the lack of disclosure of the origin of traditional knowledge, biopiracy of traditional plant varieties and stringent seed purity standards. For example, Monsanto owns more than 90 percent of all genetically engineered crops in the world.

Deregulation has paved the way for an increasingly consolidated world food system, leaving farmers to negotiate at a significant handicap with bigger and bigger corporations, whether for farm inputs or to sell their production.<sup>28</sup> The

25 Murphy, Sophia. “Concentrated Market Power and Agricultural Trade.” EcoFair Trade Dialogue Discussion Paper. No. 1, August 2006/English Version.

26 3D: Trade, Human Rights, Equitable Economy. “Niger: Agricultural Trade Liberalization and Women’s Rights.” 3D, August 2006.

27 Murphy, Sophia. “Concentrated Market Power and Agricultural Trade.” EcoFair Trade Dialogue Discussion Paper. No. 1, August 2006/English Version.

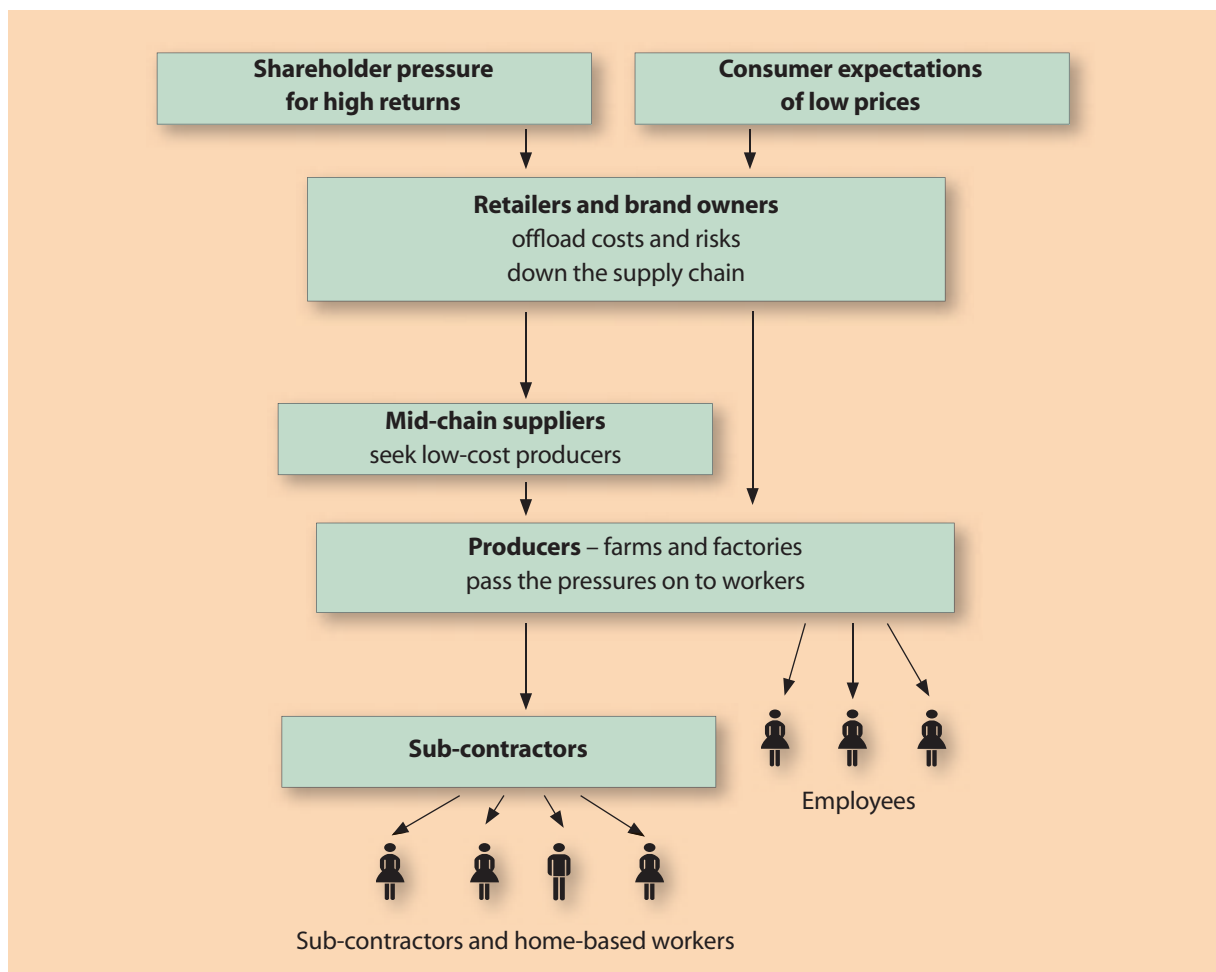
28 Monsanto controls 41% of the global market in commercial maize seed and 25% of the soybean market...Cargill alone exports 42 percent of the corn that leaves U.S. shores (and the U.S. supplies some two thirds of the world market). Cargill is among the top three beef producers in the U.S. and plays an important role in poultry production. (See Murphy, Sophia. “Concentrated Market Power and Agricultural Trade.” EcoFair Trade Dialogue Discussion Paper. No. 1, August 2006/English Version.)

Institute for Food Policy and Research (IFPRI) categorizes the emerging globalized agri-food system in four groups: companies providing agricultural inputs; food processors and traders; food retailers; and farms.<sup>29</sup> Their account of the imbalance of market gains is considerable.

- The companies providing agricultural inputs such as Syngenta, Bayer, BASF, Monsanto and DuPont account for 37 billion USD in the world food system.
- Food processors and traders, including top companies such as Nestle, Cargill, Unilever, ADM and Kraft Foods, comprise 363 billion USD of the food market.
- Food retailers, including Wal-Mart, Carrefour, Royal Ahold, Metro AG and Tesco, turn over 777 billion USD.

- 450 million farms provide agricultural value-added crops equaling 1,315 billion USD of the global market. Of these farms, only five percent of them are equal to 100 hectares or more. Eighty-five percent of farms are small plots of land with no more than two hectares<sup>30</sup> for planting. The current rules discriminate against such smallholders, leaving farmers with much less than their fair share of returns from agriculture.

The thirty largest supermarket chains comprise one third of global food sales.<sup>31</sup> These global food supply chains have created new pressures for labor-intensive exports from low-cost locations; the result is a dramatic increase in the number of producers competing to sell to the leading retailers and brand names.<sup>32</sup> This places



29 Von Braun, Joachim. Power Point Presentation entitled "Globalization of the Agri-Food System and the Poor in Developing Countries." University of Minnesota. November, 2006.

30 Women comprise the majority of small farmers with plots of two hectares or less.

31 Vander Stichele, Myriam/van derWal, Sanne/Oldenziel, Joris. "Who Reaps the Fruit." SOMO. Amsterdam, 2005.

32 Raworth, Kate. "Trading Away our Rights: Women Working on Global Supply Chains." UK: Oxfam International, 2004.

negative pressure on producers and workers to meet global consumer trends that are being set by the retailers themselves. See graph below:<sup>33</sup>

Women face particular constraints as a result of deregulation and market concentration in food and agriculture. Women continue to have more difficulty than men to get good land, credit, training and access to markets.<sup>34</sup> They lack access to the equipment required for food production on a large scale, and they have difficulty obtaining loans.<sup>35</sup> As farmer supports and supply management programs have been dismantled through deregulation policies, the costs for small farmers to produce increasingly outweigh the net gains. For instance, small-scale banana producers in Jamaica have been unable to compete with the large agricultural enterprises that are now supplying supermarkets. Women producers are increasingly unable to continue in small farming, and many have moved to other sectors such as hotel operations and tourism. Others who have stayed in agriculture no longer own their small plots of land or cultivate their own crops but are increasingly given jobs in packing and processing.<sup>36</sup>

In terms of new employment in the agri-food system, many women are finding waged work in the non-traditional agricultural export sector (NTAEs) and in export processing factories as pickers, sorters, graders and packers. (They are the sub-contractors in the OXFAM diagram of the food system above.) Fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, flowers and nuts represent a growing global market that supplies Northern demand for value-added products. Women represent the majority of workers in flowers and specialty fruits in Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya and Zimbabwe, among others. African exports go mainly to Europe, while Latin American exports go primarily to the United States.<sup>37</sup> According

to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), NTAE exports from the least developed countries grew by an annual rate of 32 percent between 1995 and 1999.<sup>38</sup> Poor rural women in developing countries are finding employment, but the work is often precarious and underpaid. In South Africa, women represent 69 percent of all temporary and seasonal employees and 26 percent of all long-term employees. In Chile, they represent 52 percent of all temporary and seasonal employees and only five percent of all long-term employees.<sup>39</sup> Women also face sexual discrimination, including violence, in the fields and the factories, while continuing to bear the burden as the caregivers in their families.

The elimination of public services such as healthcare and education increases the workload for women, as they are the traditional providers of these services. Many women farmers and peasant workers are coping with diminishing returns for their production, with increased pressure to expand export production at the expense of growing food for their households, and with the loss of basic services that supported the household's well-being, especially health and education services. The situation for some has become desperate. For example, in China, suicide is more common in women than in men, and because 70 percent of China's 1.2 billion people live in rural areas, 90 percent of the suicides occur there; as of 1999, 50 percent of all suicides by women in the world occurred in China. Researchers have determined that economic developments of the last two decades, including privatization and cuts to rural health extension programs, have contributed to this situation.<sup>40</sup>

**"Not so free" trade**—While there are some clear benefits to open markets, such as access to food when crops fail and, often, increased con-

33 *Ibid.*

34 Williams, Mariama. *Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System*. Commonwealth Secretariat. 2003.

35 According to Women's World Banking, 10 percent of overall credit to small farmers goes to women who also receive only 1% of the total credit within the agriculture sector, including production, processing and distribution. (Cited from Lebohang Pheko, Liepollo. "Interlocking Features of Trade, Gender and Poverty." Presentation at OXFAM America Intra-regional workshop in Addis Ababa. June 21-24, 2006.)

36 UNCTAD. *Trade and Gender: Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Countries*. Chapter 3: Agriculture, Trade and Gender, 2004.

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*

39 Raworth, *op. cit.*

40 Kaplan, Arline. "China's Suicide Patterns Challenge Depression Theory." *Psychiatric Times*, Vol. XVI, Issue 1. January, 1999.

sumer choices, there are also significant problems related to deregulating trade. The “one-size-fits-all” approach to agricultural liberalization does not reflect the reality of the dramatic variances among countries, individuals and the environment relative to politics, society and the economy. Although trade liberalization reforms were supposed to ensure growth and development, for many countries these results have not been achieved. Even as the World Bank continues to support the liberalization agenda, it has acknowledged that the gains from agricultural liberalization in developing countries have been marginal.<sup>41</sup> According to UNCTAD, poverty has increased in LDCs with open market policies and closed market policies, both. Additionally, poverty has increased more in countries that have liberalized.<sup>42</sup>

There are different factors that explain why trade liberalization does not necessarily lead to poverty reduction, although it can. One reason is that the global commodity crisis has resulted in commodity-dependent countries receiving less income for their exports as prices have declined drastically over time. The FAO 2004 Report on Commodities says aggregate commodity prices declined by 53 percent between 1997 and 2003. “Since 1980, the value of most major tropical commodities has dropped by over 50 percent, while the value of sugar, cotton and rubber dropped by about 80 percent.”<sup>43</sup> Weakened commodity regulations have contributed to worsened market price volatility beyond what can be explained by supply and demand equations.<sup>44</sup>

The decline in commodity prices has allowed countries like the U.S. to export commodities, including maize, soybeans, rice and cotton, at less than cost of production prices.<sup>45</sup> This has re-

sulted in many developing countries’ importing staple crops they once were able to grow themselves. Food aid programs supported by WTO trade rules have also allowed countries to sell surplus commodities on open markets in recipient countries to generate funds. Rather than serving as an emergency response, food aid currently represents a hidden market for countries such as the United States to unload their overproduced grains. This is undermining farmers’ ability to support themselves and threatens food security. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy has referred to this practice as “global dumping.”<sup>46</sup>

Women are the main producers of the world’s staple crops, providing up to 90 percent of the rural poor’s food intake.<sup>47</sup> Low commodity prices and cuts in tariffs have an impact on women’s livelihoods in a variety of ways. For example, in Mexico and throughout Meso-America, women have historically been the guardians and keepers of corn seeds not only for community knowledge but also for food provision.<sup>48</sup> The dumping of U.S. corn into Mexico as a result of the elimination of tariffs under NAFTA has undermined the role of corn as a crop and as a cultural icon, affecting women because of their special relationship to the crop. Dumping has increased poverty, unemployment (as well as precarious employment), migration, and food insecurity for women and their families throughout Mexico.<sup>49</sup> Declining cashew prices in Mozambique have contributed to an increase in rural unemployment, a loss of buying power and increased bartering (particularly by women), smaller internal markets for cashew distribution, and an increase in female-headed households as men leave rural areas to find employment in the cities.<sup>50</sup>

41 Wise, Timothy A. and Kevin P. Gallagher. „Doha Round and Developing Countries: Will the Doha Deal do More Harm than Good?“ RIS Policy Brief #22. April, 2006.

42 UNCTAD „The Least Developed Countries Report: Escaping the Poverty Trap.“ Chapter 3: Patterns of Trade Integration and Poverty, 2002.

43 Robbins, Peter. *Stolen Fruit: The Tropical Commodities Disaster*. UK: Zed Books, 2003.

44 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). “Ten Ways to Fix Agricultural Trade: Benchmarks for the Hong Kong Ministerial.” Excerpted from *Sailing Close to the Wind: Navigating the Hong Kong Ministerial*. 2005.

45 Ritchie, Mark, Sophia Murphy and Mary Beth Lake. *United States Dumping on World Agriculture Markets*. IATP: February, 2003.

46 *Ibid*.

47 United Nations, FAO. Website fact sheet: “Gender and Food Security: Agriculture.” Accessed Oct. 28, 2006 <[www.fao.org/Gender/en/agri-e.htm](http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/agri-e.htm)>.

48 Chiappe, Dr. Marta B. “Estudio de caso sobre la cadena productiva de maiz.” For the IGTN, December 2006.

49 White, Marceline, Carlos Salas and Sarah Gammage. *NAFTA and the FTAA: A Gender Analysis of Employment and Poverty Impact in Agriculture*. Women’s Edge Coalition: 2004.

50 Vijfhuizen, Carin, Luis Artur, Nazneen Kanji and Carla Braga. *Liberalisation, Gender and Livelihoods: the Cashew Nut Case*. Working Paper 2. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and Eduardo Mondlane University: November 2003.



The WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) ignores these issues. In August 2006, the FAO wrote that the “Doha Round on international trade negotiations collapsed mainly because of a fight for advantage in agricultural markets by large and powerful countries, corporations and lobbies... [and] because of a fundamental lack of fairness in its vision, its process and its projected outcomes....[The] least developed countries have seen almost no gains from past WTO agricultural trade agreements.”<sup>51</sup> Developing countries have experienced the devastating impact of unstable world prices for commodity exports compounded by eroded tariff preferences and poor special and differential treatment provisions as part of the AoA.<sup>52</sup> Supposed commitments toward food security and rural development through special and differential treatment have not moved forward.

Developing countries, social movements and many NGOs have been calling for the inclusion of specific language on Special Products (SPs) and the creation of a Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM), which would allow developing countries to exempt certain food crops and to protect domestic agriculture with higher tariffs. There is still no agreement among countries on how to define SPs and the SSM. Controversy on the question is one of the reasons why the Doha talks were suspended in July 2006.

Although SPs and the proposed SSM are necessarily limited tools that do not address the need for a fundamentally different model for trade policymaking in the area of agriculture, they nevertheless would enable countries to protect national agricultural programs and to curb dumping. They also offer the scope for governments to design and implement gender-specific goals for sustainable agricultural development. For example, gender-specific indicators to apply the SPs and SSM could include measures to assess and protect the most vulnerable women

based on their income level and their level of access to economic and productive resources. Such indicators might also take into consideration the relationship of agricultural products to food security, social and cultural development, national and regional contexts, and gender-disaggregated data on rural trends in employment and well-being.<sup>53</sup>

These protections, along with legislative reforms to protect women’s access to land and credit, and an effort to ensure that women’s organizations are able to contribute to agricultural policymaking, could go a long way toward strengthening food sovereignty measures from a gender perspective. To date, the global negotiations on agriculture remain at a standstill in part because countries cannot agree on the protections that should be included in the rules. The U.S. and several other members are unwilling to allow developing countries the means to limit market access for agricultural products.

There is another dimension to trade and investment policy that affects women: barriers to labor mobility. Although capital is increasingly mobile within the multilateral trading system, labor is not. This has been a source of contention between Southern governments, keen for the remittances that their workers send home from overseas, and Northern governments, coping with strong political resistance to increased immigration. Feminist economist Mariama Williams writes, “Today there remain significant barriers to the movement of labor in Northern countries. These include excessive regulation of immigration and labor mobility; discriminatory regulations in licensing; technical standards and qualification procedures on cross-border employment; quota or economic necessity tests; and non-recognition of professional qualifications.”<sup>54</sup> Where there are provisions for mobility,<sup>55</sup> they are focused on protections for skilled labor. Yet agricultural producers are generally considered

51 United Nations, FAO. “New Focus Needed for Doha Round.” Aug. 8, 2006. Accessed Nov. 1, 2006 <<http://www.fao.org/newsroom>>.

52 United Nations, FAO. *The Role of Agriculture in the Development of LDCs and their Integration into the World Economy*. Prepared for the UN Conference, Brussels, May 2001. Accessed Oct. 28, 2006 <<http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/Y0491E/y0491e00.HTM>>.

53 Hernandez, Maria Pia. *Incorporating Gender Considerations for the Designation of Special Products in WTO Agricultural Negotiations*. International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN): Geneva, March 2005.

54 Williams, Mariama. *The General Agreement on Trade in Services: The Debate between the North and the South*. IGTN: Economic Literacy Series, 2003.

55 See Mode 4: Movement of Natural Persons in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) at the WTO.



“unskilled,” leaving those who have lost work in the rural sector with less opportunity for legal migration to find work. At the same time that migration for “unskilled” workers is rarely legal or easy, there has been a notable increase in the migration of both women and men globally (in 2005, the United Nations estimated it to be more than 175 million and growing).<sup>56</sup> This migration is rural to urban within countries, interregional and from the global South to the North. Those migrating often face extremely difficult situations with not even basic protection of their human rights. For women, this can mean finding tenuous and unsafe work in farms in

other countries, getting manufacturing work in export processing zones, or work in the informal sector, including domestic and sex work.

Migration is a complicated issue, deserving serious attention, particularly as it relates to poverty, human rights and security. As such, it is outside the scope of this paper. On the other hand, one cannot help but note that many governments allow for trade rules that support deregulated food systems yet at the same time establish regulations that limit opportunities for farm workers and peasants to find a better life elsewhere when their own agricultural economies break down.

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<sup>56</sup> International Organization for Migration. World Migration 2005: Costs and Benefits of International Migration. Geneva.

## Section III.

### Case Studies

As countries shift policies in support of trade liberalization in agriculture, women are increasingly displaced from traditional roles as food producers and food providers; this is changing the scope of global agriculture, rural development and food sovereignty. There is not enough gender-disaggregated data to date to provide analysis on the full implications from a gender perspective. However, the case studies in this section (excerpts/summaries from longer research publications<sup>57</sup>) help to underline the multiple dynamics affecting women in different agricultural sectors as a result of trade liberalization and deregulation. Again, going back to the framework and the basis of this paper, these case studies highlight at least some, if not all, of these components:

- a) *Rules for agriculture are changing.*
- b) *Women's long-standing traditional roles in agriculture have been largely ignored, especially by macroeconomists.*
- c) *Women are not affected the same way as men by the changes in agriculture. Because of women's different traditional roles, impacts on their livelihoods need to be understood.*
- d) *Gender-blind policy making has deepened some of the traditional inequities as well as created some new ones.*

### Rice

**Excerpted/summarized, with cited input from the author, from "Gender and Rice: The Case of the Philippines" written by Riza Bernabe and Jessica Cantos for IGTN, December 2006.**

As is common in Asia, rice is the main food staple in the Philippines. Of the 6 million women engaged in agriculture, approximately 37 percent, or more than one third, are in rice farming.<sup>58</sup> Women farmers in rice production are mostly small-owner cultivators, tenants or farm-workers. They are engaged in almost all areas of rice production; however, their participation is particularly high in planting, weeding, input and fertilizer application, and drying and sacking. Small owner-cultivators own their land by virtue of emancipation patents issued through land reform. However, most of the land titles are in the name of male spouses, despite the fact that women play an important role in the production of rice. In the Philippines, of the 11.2 million people in the agricultural labor force, 8.5 million are landless.<sup>59</sup> Even though the landlord contracts men, the entire family—including women and children who are unpaid—are used as labor to ensure higher returns in rice cultivation.<sup>60</sup> Apart from actively participating in rice production, women are primarily responsible for food preparation and providing the meals eaten by workers at the rice field. Women are also involved in tasks such as hiring workers and storing seeds for future planting.

During the past years, there have been pressures to liberalize the rice industry in particular. For example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) made rice tariffication a conditionality for the release of loans. Regional trade agreements such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area—Common Effective Preferential Treatment (AFTA-CEPT) and the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area have also laid the

57 The majority of the case studies in this paper are excerpted and summarized from a set of short case studies published by the International Gender and Trade Network in January 2007. However, two of the case studies on corn and cashews are excerpted from other research publications.

58 Rural Women Statistics, Farm News and Views, Philippine Peasant Institute, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2002, based on data from the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, Development Indicators, 2002.

59 This citation was not part of the original case study. It was added by the author and was accessed from UNCTAD. *Trade and Gender: Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Countries*. Chapter 3: Agriculture, Trade and Gender, 2004.

60 *Ibid.*

groundwork for the liberalization of rice markets in the region. Though rice is generally treated as a highly sensitive product among ASEAN members, the trade agreements nevertheless provided for some opening up of the country's domestic rice market to other rice exporting countries in the region. As a result, the Philippines is now importing rice from Thailand, Vietnam, China and the United States. Imports from the U.S. are primarily in the form of food aid (PL 480) programs.<sup>61</sup> In 2002, the Philippines also launched its Hybrid Rice Commercialization Program. The use of hybrid rice, which uses F1 or terminator seeds, has strengthened the hold of multinational and private corporations on seed resources. Companies' presence in the rice seed industry has contributed to the marginalization of the role of farmers as seed growers and propagators, and endangers the role of women rice farmers as seed keepers.

*This case study points out that rice is a staple crop and is an essential element of food security in the Philippines. Women are engaged in all aspects of production although they are concentrated in specific areas. The need for land reform is an important aspect of rice production that needs further analysis, including one that incorporates a gender lens where women have not tended to own land.*

*Liberalization has led to the importation of rice, including GMO rice, to replace locally produced rice and to undermine small farmers, healthy food and culture. Corporate consolidation of seeds has allowed for dumping into the Philippines via GMO crops and international food aid. This shift is threatening food security and rural livelihoods. Women and their families are not separate from these shifts. They play a historical role in all aspects of production and are the major food providers in their households.*

## Corn

**Excerpted/ summarized, with cited input from the author, from two studies:**

- ***Estudio de caso sobre la cadena productiva de maiz*, by Dra. Marta B. Chiappe for IGTN, December 2006**
- ***NAFTA and FTAA: A Gender Analysis of Employment and Poverty Impact in Agriculture* by Marceline White, Carlos Salas and Sarah Gammage. Women's Edge Coalition, 2004**

Corn is one of the four cereals that constitute more than half of the world's food and is considered a staple for a quarter of the world's population. It is the basis for life in the household, work, rituals and celebrations throughout Meso-America. However, Mexico has a particular history with corn, which originated there over 4,000 years ago. Corn is the center of the *campesino* family, the mainstay of the average diet in Mexico. Women have historically been the guardians and keepers of corn seeds not only for community knowledge but also for food provision. Women in Mexico dry the kernels, cook and mix the grains as well as make the tortillas. All of this is part of daily life and reflects women's relationship to corn.<sup>62</sup>

For more than fifty years, Mexico employed a range of policies and programs including crop price supports to staple producers; subsidies for agricultural inputs; the provision of credit and insurance; government processing; state-owned retailing; state production of fertilizers and improved seeds; and targeted state consumption subsidies. In its liberalization phase, Mexico adopted a series of policy reforms to eliminate these programs. In preparation for NAFTA, it opened Mexico's borders 10 years ahead of schedule to allow cheaper imports of corn and beans from the U.S. and Canada. And it further reduced price supports for domestic farmers and consumers as well as reducing import restrictions.

61 Redona, Edilberto A., et. al. "Commercializing hybrid rice technology in the Philippines." 4th International Crop Science Congress: October 2004. Accessed November 2006 <[http://www.cropscience.org.au/icsc2004/poster/4/4/295\\_redona.htm](http://www.cropscience.org.au/icsc2004/poster/4/4/295_redona.htm)>.

62 Chiappe, *op. cit.*

At the time NAFTA went into effect, 3 million producers, or 40 percent of all Mexicans working in agriculture, were cultivating corn. Since then, NAFTA has resulted in the loss of 1.3 million jobs, mostly for corn and bean producers—typically small subsistence farmers who were unable to compete with U.S. industrialized corn production. Corn producers and their families remaining in Mexico today live on less than one third of the income they earned in 1994. Consequently, there has been a major exodus from the rural sector resulting in an exponential increase in migration of largely undocumented and unprotected persons coming to the United States annually. This number has been estimated at a net of 400,000 migrants, or as much as 9 percent of the Mexican born population living in the U.S.<sup>63</sup> The number of women-headed households in Mexico has increased, while poverty has increased by as much as 50 percent in the poorest, female-headed households. Additionally, dire poverty has reduced subsistence farm families' access to health care, education, and food. And while men migrating have outnumbered women, this number is shifting, as women are also leaving the rural sector to find a better life.

Prices for food have increased. Meanwhile, agricultural prices for corn decreased by half.<sup>64</sup> Between 1994 and 2000, the national production of corn was reduced by almost four percent while corn imports grew by almost 136 percent. The guaranteed price to farmers was reduced by 43 percent, and the consumer saw a price increase of as much as 571 percent.<sup>65</sup> Corn dumping in Mexico by the United States has not only affected the price of corn but also has negatively impacted Mexican control of the variability of corn seeds in Mexico that have been harvested, protected and cherished for centuries.<sup>66</sup> Price increases for staple foods have disproportionately hurt women, who are primarily responsible for food purchases and preparations, and other household maintenance. In many cases, families

have sacrificed food—selling the corn that they would normally retain for their own meals to earn extra income. Remittances have become increasingly important for survival, and 43.5 percent of households receiving remittances in 2004 were female-headed.

There are four areas where women are located in terms of employment.

- First, women, generally living on two or fewer hectares of land, continue to grow food at the subsistence level for domestic consumption and to sell informally at the local markets.
- Women have also found some employment in the fruit sector with non-traditional agricultural exports (NTAEs). However, the new jobs that women have gained have been highly sex-segregated: men typically assume the tasks of supervising, transporting, storing, and operating machinery, while women concentrate disproportionately in propagating, cleaning, sorting, quality control, and packaging. In general, work in the agro-industrial sector is paid by the piece, not per work period, meaning that workers tend to work the necessary hours to fill their quota. Women typically earn 25-30 percent less than men.
- Women have gained employment in *maquila* factories. Almost 70 percent of the *maquila* workforce in Mexico is composed of women. Working conditions in the maquilas are often unsafe, tenuous and insecure for women and adolescent girls. Sixty-three percent of the jobs are without fringe benefits, and 17 percent offer less than minimum wage.<sup>67</sup>
- A growing number of women are now working in the informal sector to supplement their family's household income. Of the jobs created since NAFTA, close to 40 percent have been in the informal sector. These jobs are not counted in the formal economy and are unprotected by labor laws. Most women in this sector work long hours and earn very little

63 This citation is not from the case studies. It is excerpted from "Mexican Immigration to the U.S.: The Latest Estimates," by Passel, Jeffrey. March, 2004. Accessed from the Migration Policy Institute in December, 2006. <<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=208>>

64 Data cited here is not from the case studies. It is excerpted from the book *Women's Resistance and Alternatives to the Globalizing Model* by the Red Nacional de Genero y Economia. Mexico 2005. Chapter entitled: "The Impacts of NAFTA on Mexican Women" by Hilda Salazar Ramirez.

65 *Ibid.*

66 Chiappe, op. cit.

67 *Women's Resistance and Alternatives to the Globalizing Model* by the Red Nacional de Genero y Economia. Mexico 2005. Chapter entitled: "The Impacts of NAFTA on Mexican Women" by Hilda Salazar Ramirez.

from their businesses. In both the rural and urban areas, women work more hours per day than men when unpaid household labor is included. A typical woman's working day is more than 18 hours and exceeds that of men by as much as 43 percent.

*The information from these case studies highlights that Mexico previously had programs in place to stabilize prices, support farmers and to ensure a certain level of national production. When Mexico liberalized its agricultural sector, the new policies devastated rural employment, increased poverty, and increased dumping and migration. Prices have gone up drastically. Women have had to deal with these shifts in a variety of ways. They have found some work as a result of liberalization, but their jobs tend to be precarious, low-paid and even dangerous in the case of the maquiladoras.<sup>68</sup> There is a growing number of men and women migrating to the U.S., leading to an increase in female-headed households in Mexico. Finally, poor families in the rural sector are having difficulty making ends meet. Their growing challenge to provide healthcare and food for their families is exacerbating food insecurity.*

## Cashews

**Excerpted/summarized from Liberalisation, Gender and Livelihoods: the Cashew Nut Case. Written by Carin Vijfhuizen, Luis Artur, Naneen Kanji and Carla Braga. IEED and Eduardo Mondlane University, 2003.**

Mozambique, known as one of the key cashew-producing countries of the world, experienced a production peak in 1972. Cashews in Mozambique have represented an important export crop as well as a means of generating cash income for smallholders. Additionally, they are a significant protein source for families and contribute to food security. Yet a combination of low farm prices, weak trade networks, war, drought, and a lack of capacity led to a flailing sector. In 1995 the gov-

ernment liberalized its cashew production and processing practices as part of a series of World Bank loans and in support of a trade liberalization agenda. The reforms included reducing export tariffs and deregulating licensing, among other things.

In the case of Mozambique, liberalization of national cashew production has not reached its targets, and its production numbers, for many of the reasons mentioned, have declined over time. The prices of exported processed cashews are better than the prices of raw cashews, and Mozambique earns more from processing them than from exporting them. However, even in processing, factories have had difficulties obtaining funds or loans from banks. Because banks regard cashew processing as risky, the interest rates are high. In fact, the southern part of Mozambique experienced a large number of factory closings between 1995 and 2000, during the liberalization phase. These difficulties, plus the continual changes in the markets (global, national and local), make cashew processing a difficult enterprise for smaller producers. The difficulty of competing nationally is one component. Competing globally presents another set of challenges in terms of being able to ensure the quantity and quality of raw material needed and also adequate financing to compete successfully.

Because the government no longer buys or sets the price for raw cashew nuts, those who have benefited most from these sets of policies have been traders, who have increased in numbers and earnings while farmers have benefited less. Trade today is dominated by a few major exporters who rely on a small group of intermediaries who deal directly with the farmers and retailers in rural areas or small urban centers.

Historically, cashew production has represented an important livelihood for women as weeders, nut gatherers and sowers. The fact that production levels have generally dropped over time, resulting in a national reduction in employment in the rural sector, is a serious threat of insecurity for both men and women.

<sup>68</sup> There have been hundreds of unsolved murder cases in Juarez, Mexico, where women are working in the *maquiladoras* in the export processing zones in manufacturing.

For women who continue to find work, it is generally in processing. Women in factory processing generally perform different jobs than men, and their jobs are more tenuous. Women who have lost their jobs in formal processing are increasingly engaged in local home processing, where they process kernel and juice. Working from home, they endure long working hours, depending on men to purchase their raw materials and to sell the goods outside of the home. With a high percentage of households headed by women, the challenges are even greater.

Both women and men sell raw cashews, but more men than women are involved in this trade, particularly when it is in large quantities. The barter of raw nuts, which was rare in the past, has risen to from 8 to 35 percent. Of those who are able to sell their raw cashew, men actually earn 15 times as much as women. They also dominate the more lucrative activity (trade in processed nuts) because they have more access to credit and transport. Women also dominate the marketing in fruit and juice; these are perishables, however, and can be sold only seasonally. While they require less investment, they also bring less returns, and women are generally earning only enough to cover their basic needs.

*This case study highlights that there is a clear gendered division in labor in cashew production and processing that is present in both the formal and informal sectors. Women are earning less than men and have more difficulty accessing markets than men. Women's jobs are more precarious than men's. Women are also the major food providers in their homes. It also highlights the fact that liberalization has not met its intended results in Mozambique. In fact, liberalization has contributed to a decline in the industry due to a variety of factors. Additionally, it has reduced women's spending power, and it has increased their workload from home.*

## Flowers

**Excerpted/summarized from *La Floricultura en Colombia y Ecuador* by Patricia Jaramillo, Universidad Nacional de Columbia and Nora Ferm, International Labor Rights Fund, Ecuador for IGTN, December 2006.**

The flower industry is one of the most successful export industries, with roses leading exports at almost 50 percent in Colombia and more than 61 percent in Ecuador. After only 35 years of activity, Colombia is now the second largest exporter of fresh flowers, with 14 percent of the global market. Eighty-five percent of exports from Colombia and 71 percent from Ecuador go to the U.S. Competitive advantage is based on climate, infrastructure within planting areas, geographical location to the U.S. market and cheap labor. The bulk of flowers imported to the U.S. enter duty-free under preferential trade programs such as the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Enforcement Act (ATPDEA), benefiting Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

Dole is the major U.S. firm with flower plantations in Colombia and Ecuador and is the only major U.S. firm that has flower plantations abroad. Until October 2006, it controlled 20 percent of the flowers exported from Colombia. Dole has its own transport service, a refrigerated warehouse in Miami to process the flowers, and its own market structures for sale (it delivers its flowers directly to retailers). In 2002, its revenue in flowers was approximately \$174 million. In October 2006, Dole announced it would reduce its operations by 30 percent in Colombia, closing Splendor Flowers and Porcelain Flowers, and its two plantations in Ecuador. It is expected that more than 2,600 people will lose their jobs as a result. This unemployment is expected to worsen the food situation for the newly unemployed, who will join the labor supply for other farms, potentially causing a lowering of wages in the sector.

The flower plantations prefer to contract with women for their productivity, delicateness in handling the flowers and their ability to select good quality. Women tend to be contracted young, with 66 percent of the workers in the flower industry in Ecuador between the ages 15-24 years (Oxfam Chile 2004). Often, women seeking employment are subjected to forced pregnancy tests, which is illegal even as it is common. When there are layoffs during slower periods, women are also the first to be laid off. The pressure within the flower industry for picking and packing flowers is particularly intense during

periods of high demand in the United States, such as Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. During this time, workers are offered more pay per flower bunch. The conditions of work and the use of toxic pesticides have raised concerns about labor and health rights abuse, as women are working directly with the sprayed pesticides with little to no protections. In Ecuador, approximately 30 different chemicals are used in addition to the fertilizers used on the soil. Workers are getting sick from exposure to these toxins. Even as conditions have improved, many of the smaller companies do not provide security for their workers, and more regulation is needed to protect workers' health.

Sexual violence on flower plantations is a considerable problem. One study in 2005 revealed that more than 55 percent of women flower workers in Ecuador have been victims of sexual assault during work, in some cases by their supervisors. This number is even higher (at around 71 percent) for women workers between the ages of 20-24 years. Only 5 percent of workers have sought legal recourse. Few plantations, if any, have established guidelines to forbid this type of behavior (Mena y Proaño 2005).

Rural families, many of which are female-headed, are struggling to survive because of low pay, overwork and poor services. Without proper salaries, many families cannot afford healthy foods, health care, education and even recreation. This has a negative effect on traditional livelihoods and indigenous practices that have been the lifeblood of communities for centuries.

*This case study highlights that there is a corporate-owned chain of supply in a substantial part of the flower industry. Trade entry of cut flowers to the U.S. is largely through a system of trade preferences. Shifts in these two areas will greatly impact women's employment. It also highlights that NTAEs represent an important industry for women. However, their waged work is precarious and poorly paid. Women are hired young and are victims of sexual abuse and environmental risk. Female-headed households are experiencing particular difficulty in making ends meet.*

## Poultry

**Excerpted/summarized, with cited input from the author, from "Chicken in the Global Economy: Impacts on Women, Livelihoods and the Environment" – A case study by the Center of Concern<sup>69</sup> and Delmarva Community Alliance.**

The global chicken trade is dominated by large, multinational poultry companies, which run a vertically integrated production process. By the early 1970s, agro-industrial firms across the globe were adopting this production model. In Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam, production jumped eightfold in just 30 years, while China's production of chicken tripled during the 1990s. Practically all of this new poultry production takes place on factory farms concentrated outside of major cities and integrated into transnational production systems.<sup>70</sup> Today, Brazil is the top exporter, with the U.S. close behind. Together, they control 75 percent of the global chicken trade. Rather than purchase broilers in the open market, today's integrators coordinate the supply of chickens through a system of contracts with growers. The volume of chicken traded globally is expected to reach 6.7 million tons in 2007.

The poultry industry represents the most vertically integrated sector of all of U.S. agriculture and food production and is rapidly progressing toward being one of the most concentrated as well, especially considering that this evolution has occurred in a relatively short period of time. Two firms (Tyson Foods, Inc. and Pilgrim's Pride Corporation) control 40 percent of the U.S. market and nine control over 67 percent.

The arrival of multinational firms—facilitated by liberalized trade and investment rules—with their model of industrial, vertically integrated production can destabilize smallholder chicken production and threaten community and environmental resources. Open markets can be replaced by contracts. Wealthy integrators may perceive smallholders as competitors and advocate for policies that would further expand the indus-

<sup>69</sup> The Center of Concern is the Chair of the U.S. Gender and Trade Network.

<sup>70</sup> GRAIN. Fowl Play: The Poultry Industry's Central Role in the Bird Flu Crisis. GRAIN Briefing, February 2006. Accessed November 15, 2006 <<http://www.grain.org/briefings/?id=194>>.



trial model. Enhanced intellectual property provisions have strengthened the position of the proprietary breeders, which supply chicks to the industrial operations. For example, currently two companies—Cobb-Vantress and Aviagen—control 65-85 percent of the world market for breeding stock. National Treatment clauses and restrictions on performance requirements have also allowed foreign companies, such as fast food restaurants and hotels, to source their chicken from international suppliers as opposed to domestic sources.

U.S. consumers prefer white meat, but as U.S. broiler production expands, there is the unavoidable production of additional dark meat, the bulk of which is exported, often to developing countries. Between 1960 and 2005, U.S. broiler production increased 707 percent while U.S. exports increased 5,736 percent. Because of the price premium on white meat, subsidies to corn and soy, low-wages throughout the industry, and externalization of key expenses (chicken houses, waste disposal), the dark meat can be sold at rock bottom prices, often displacing local production and threatening small producers' livelihoods, many of them women. Increased market access for chicken exports has been pursued aggressively by the U.S. in recent trade negotiations.

More gendered research is needed. However, different studies and projects to date recognize that women in developing countries are engaged in rural poultry production as a means to increase their income and improve food security. In many developing countries, raising chickens is vital for family nutrition and income, with women often responsible for rearing the chickens. For example, "The poultry industry in Laos is predominantly one of smallholders, raising free-range, local chicken breeds nearby their dwellings for meat and eggs, mostly consumed by the household or sold locally for income ... An average village has around 350 chickens, ducks, turkeys and quail being raised in small

flocks interspersed among village homes by about 78 families, with women primarily responsible for the flocks."<sup>71</sup>

Backyard chicken production is a subsistence activity, providing eggs and meat for family consumption and, to some extent, cash income. Studies done in Africa and Asia<sup>72</sup> have referred to village chicken systems as advantageous for small-scale producers because they are an indigenous and integral part of the farming system, with short life cycles and quick turnovers. They include low inputs and are a means of converting low-quality feed into high-quality protein. Because it is possible to farm poultry close to the household, women have tended to dominate smallholder poultry production in the global South.<sup>73</sup>

In the U.S., however, the dynamic is different. For example, women are heavily involved in industrialized chicken production by working as contract farmers and as factory workers to supply the U.S. chicken export market. Women and men in the U.S. are subject to a variety of abuses—lack of collective bargaining, low pay, wrongful termination, and denial of bathroom breaks (even for pregnant women). Female plant workers have also reported sexual harassment and intimidation.

*The poultry case highlights that rural women in both the North and South are in precarious positions. Rural women producers are seeing their markets decline as global production chains and imports transform poultry from a low-cost source of income and nutrition into a global commodity. Corporate consolidation of poultry includes intellectual property provisions, deregulated rules for domestic supply and is highly vertically integrated. Poultry growers are responsible for the risk of handling the birds (as was the case with flowers and fruit). Yet it is the food retailers who are receiving the net gains. Women poultry workers in the U.S. are experiencing gender discrimination in the factories, while small-scale women poultry growers in developing countries are unable to compete with the advanced level of market concentration and may experience food insecurity as a result.*

71 USDA, "Laos: Poultry and Products - Avian Influenza," GAIN Report, US Department of Agriculture, Washington DC, March 16, 2005.

72 Kitalyi, Aichi J. *Village Chicken Production Systems in Rural Africa: Household Food Security and Gender Issues*. FAO of the UN. Rome, 1998. Accessed November 20, 2006 <<http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/W8989E/W8989E00.HTM>>. See also "Asia's Women in Agriculture, Environment and Rural Production." FAO, Sustainable Development Department, 1998. Accessed November 20, 2006 <<http://www.fao.org/sd/WPdirect/WPre0108.htm>>.

73 This paragraph is not part of the Center of Concern and Delmarva Community Alliance case study but has been added by the author.

## Looking Ahead

Deregulation and liberalized economic policies have caused major shifts in trade and agriculture worldwide, reducing nations' ability to feed their populations, and causing upheaval for farmers, peasants and rural communities. Existing research points toward the conclusion that women, because of their particular roles in agriculture, are disproportionately affected by these changes, and at the same time are disproportionately absent from policy discussions. Research has not kept pace with the recent sweeping changes in trade and agriculture, particularly as they pertain to gender inequity. Of existing studies, too few disaggregate data by gender, making it difficult to demonstrate conclusively the apparent trends.

Looking ahead, more research is needed in several areas. Such research should include, but is not limited to, an analysis of:

- The gender effects of current macroeconomic policies in food and agriculture;
- The experiences of women and men as waged agricultural workers;
- Gender, land ownership, land tenure and agricultural production;
- The role of patents in agriculture relative to traditional knowledge, agro biodiversity, communal ownership and gender;
- Water use and consumption for agricultural production and rural development, and the link to gender; and
- Access to basic services in rural areas, social reproduction and human rights.

Ensuring that gender is a core component of alternative policymaking while taking into account the many layers of research that need consideration will move us closer to the realization of food sovereignty and the right to food.

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ISBN 10: 3-89892-606-0  
ISBN 13: 978-3-89892-606-5