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**NEWS RELEASE: New Publication Denounces Effects of Current Global Food System and Presents Alternative Strategies to Counter Them**

In spite of increased public and media attention to global warming, the industrial food system is rarely mentioned as a culprit, yet it is one of the major contributors of green house gases. The International Forum on Globalization (IFG) addresses this and other pressing issues in its important new report—*The Rise and Predictable Fall of Globalized Industrial Agriculture* (62 pages softbound).

Among the many critical issues discussed, the report also demonstrates how international agriculture rules ensure the continued dominance of a highly destructive industrial food model. For example, *despite spectacular growth in organic food consumption in the U.S. during the last two decades, only around 0.5 percent of U.S. cropland is certified organic.* The chemical-ridden, industrial food paradigm is still firmly entrenched and expanding around the globe. *The Rise and Predictable Fall* posits that this will remain so as long as current international rules are at play. The report offers policy options that would give organic and local food systems a fighting chance to become the norm instead of remaining a specialized or niche market.

The report also sounds the alarm that nature may soon force the end of the current industrial agriculture model via climate change, limited supply of fossil fuels, and water shortages. However, the cost will most certainly be the destruction of millions of livelihoods and lives, scarce food supplies, and devastation to the planet's natural systems.

Given the potential for such catastrophe, it is critical to change policies and trade rules that favor restoring and enhancing food and fiber systems that are more regionally based and respectful of social and environmental systems. The report includes many examples of successful regional food models, and recommends alternative agriculture and trade policies to those currently enforced by global and national institutions.

Highlights of *The Rise and Predictable Fall of Globalized Industrial Agriculture* include:

### **Climate Change**

- Industrial agriculture is currently responsible for an estimated one-third of greenhouse gas emissions—it accounts for 70 percent of nitrous oxide emissions, one of the most potent greenhouse gases; 60 percent of methane emissions, and around 25 percent of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide.
- One-eighth of the world's oil supply is used for transportation with a very high percentage of this used for long distance shipment of food.
- The current global food system is highly dependent upon fossil fuel—for fertilizers, farm machinery, and other farm inputs—yet many scientists predict that oil supplies are peaking, which could gravely affect the supply and distribution of food.

### **Roots of Migration**

- Within a year of the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexican production of corn and other basic grains fell by 50 percent and millions of farmers lost significant income.
- Since NAFTA went into effect, the number of illegal migrants from Mexico (and Central America) to the United States increased dramatically from 2 million to an estimated 6.2 million.

### **Future of Organic Farming**

- Without significant inclusion and support for organic farming in the U.S. Farm Bill and USDA policies, the future of organic farming may be limited and highly compromised. Despite tremendous growth in the organic sector, only about 0.5 percent of all U.S. cropland was certified organic in 2005. Patterns are similar in European countries as well.
- WTO policies bolster the use of genetically modified (GM) foods and crops, which threaten the viability of organic farming around the planet. The WTO has also ruled that labeling of GM products is illegal according to WTO trade rules.

### **U.S. Farm Bill Mimics WTO Policy**

- Fundamentally, the proposed U.S. Farm Bill is a response to negotiations within the WTO. In a number of ways, it maintains the WTO-led structure that allows commodity pricing and food distribution to be controlled by a handful of corporations.
- Instead of ensuring that the market provides farmers with a fair income, the Bill compensates farmers for crop or market failures via payments that come from taxpayers. This proposal was crafted as a direct response to WTO rules.
- After the WTO ruled that U.S. subsidies for cotton led to “dumping” in poor countries and were WTO-illegal, the U.S. was forced to shift how cotton subsidies in the U.S. are distributed. However, the proposed Farm Bill has manipulated such subsidies in a way that will allow distortion to continue—both globally and within the U.S.

## **About the International Forum on Globalization**

The International Forum on Globalization (IFG) is a North-South research and educational institution composed of leading researchers, scientists, economists, activists, and scholars providing analyses and critiques on the cultural, social, political, and environmental impacts of economic globalization.

“The IFG is one of the most serious and respected group of experts dedicated to analyzing and generating alternative proposals to the prevailing economic model promoted by international financial agencies” –*La Jornada*, Mexico, 2003

“The brain trust of the [global social justice] movement.” –Naomi Klein, *The Nation*, U.S., 2001

## **About the Author**

Debbie Barker is the Co-Director of the IFG. She has co-written and edited numerous reports and books on myriad aspects of globalization, including: *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World Is Possible*; *Does Globalization Help the Poor?*; *Invisible Government*; and *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, among others.

You can order *The Rise and Predictable Fall of Globalized Industrial Agriculture* or download a pdf copy of the report from the IFG's website: [www.ifg.org](http://www.ifg.org)