

Open debate on Food Security versus Global Market - Which Lobby/advocacy strategies? 27th March 2013 World Social Forum Tunis

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European Union's agriculture and trade policies' impact on Food Security in Africa

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Besides the US, the EU is one of the biggest players on agricultural markets, on production, on imports and on exports. E.g. the EU imports a lot of soya as protein feed, also tropical fruits like coffee or cacao. But if we want to assess the impact of the European Union's agriculture and trade policies' on food security in Africa we have to differentiate between the past, the present and the future situation. In the past with these imports and with the use of a lot of fertilizers and pesticides, the EU's agricultural production went up and surpluses occurred which had to be exported often by subsidized export prices. Since the 80ties, the EU exported a lot of cereals like wheat, barley or rye, sugar, meat or dairy products like butter or milk powder. As the production costs of these products were higher in the EU than on the world market, dumping practices were the only way to get rid of them with disastrous effects on the local markets in the importing countries where local farmers couldn't compete with these imports and a lot of them get bankrupted. Cheap imports replaced local production as well as food habits changed in favor of "western style" consumption patterns. In big cities like Lagos, Dakar, Tunis or Cairo it was much easier to eat chicken, bread on the basis of wheat flour or rice than to have local produced sorghum, millet or maize or beef from the Sahel.

But it was not only the EU which could be made responsible for this, also most of the African states failed to support their local agricultural food production. They neglected totally the national food production and relied on the easy way to have cheap imports to satisfy the urban population. But suddenly this became a dangerous situation for the African states.

In 2008 and 2009, with shortages on the world markets for the agricultural commodities, the bills for the imports of agricultural products raised dramatically and in consequence, riots in Cities like Ouagadougou, Dakar, Cairo or Tunis came up with people getting hurt or even losing their lives. And suddenly, everyone on national or international level demand for more food production at home. But it is not an easy task to fulfill these demands because rural development was not on the agenda of African states or development agencies the last 25 years and a lot of farmers had already left the rural areas to find a better living in the urban areas.

Now everyone recognized the importance of a good working agricultural sector and good conditions for farming, now more money is spent for rural development but the revitalization of this sector needs time.

Meanwhile there were major changes within the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):

- Export subsidies has been reduced and replaced by a system of direct payment to farmers per ha. E.g. in Germany every farmer gets € 330 / ha to cover his production costs in face of low world market prices.
- The instrument to use export subsidies still exists, but is hardly used anymore. Since 2009 the prices on the world market are quite high and the demand for agricultural

products is higher than the production. Now the EU has no problem to exports their surpluses for reasonable prices.

- Agricultural production in the EU gets more and more large scaled, small-sized farms get out of business and the big farms can deliver and export their products without the need to subsidize them.
- The new paradigm of the EU big farmer's organizations is: we are ready to provide the world market with our products for reasonable prices and our modern agriculture is high productive. The EU-strategy for their agriculture is export-oriented for the future.

Just now there is a new reform of the CAP going on and although a lot of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and development agencies had in the past proved negative effects of the EU agricultural policies on local markets in developing countries it seems that policy makers and the EU farmer's organizations have only little concerns about these impacts. But CSOs demand that the EU policy should follow his own principles as the EU members states declared at the Lisboan Treaty to respect the coherence of their own policy with development concerns and that the EU policy should not harm the development of other countries specially the agricultural production in poor countries which is the basis of the livelihood of so many.

The main demands for a development friendly reform of the CAP are as follows:

1. The instrument to use export refunds should be eliminated.
2. A monitoring system to assess the external impacts of the CAP on developing countries should be introduced
3. An independent complain mechanism based on the monitoring system should be introduced for countries which are affected by exports of the agricultural products from the EU.
4. In the EU, more protein plants should be produced to avoid big imports of soy beans which have negative social and ecological impacts in the export countries.

This year, during the negotiations of the CAP reform, the EU parliament and the EU Agricultural Minister Council have totally ignored the first three demands. Only on protein feed the door is now a little open. Regarding this failure of neglect development concerns, for the future development of food security in Africa we have to consider:

1. Big imports from outside to Africa will continue, not only from the EU but as well from the US and other big export nations like Brazil, Australia, Argentina or Vietnam. The imports bill will remain high and a lot of Africans will have to strike hard to pay food items.
2. For African farmers it will remain hard to compete with these imports because still the agriculture production system is not quite advanced.
3. The run on good farm land in Africa will continue. The reasons for land grabbing like the high demand of rich and emerging countries for minerals and food will it make profitable for foreign investors, national elites and African governments to invest in

land. The winners will be African business men and politicians but not African population or small scale farmers.

4. To counter these developments more protection for small scale farmers in Africa is needed. E.g. duties on principal food items which are imported should be imposed so that African farmers can compete with imports of these products. To make this and other demands a reality, a strong civil society movement in Africa is necessary Therefore we are all here in Tunis.
5. We need in Africa and worldwide an agriculture which is sustainable and affordable for the majority of the African farmers and which relies on their knowledge. We don't need an African agriculture which depends on high inputs like fertilizers or pesticides which have to be imported as well and we don't need GMOs. We have already good seeds in Africa which can be improved on farm level and which are resilient to all the threats which came in with the so called modern industrialized agriculture and the climate change as well.