

Food First NEWS & VIEWS

INSTITUTE FOR FOOD AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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Photo by Eric Holt-Giménez

Mozambique farmer standing next to his corn.

Highlights of Food First's 2007 activities and plans for 2008

Food First's work falls under *three program areas* aimed at integrating food sovereignty across both rural and urban and spanning local, national and international arenas. Programs include assisting with the *building of local agri-foods systems*, accompanying *farmers forging food sovereignty*, and supporting groups struggling to *democratize development including land, resources and markets*.

Local agri-foods systems

In 2007 Food First staff and interns focused local work in two areas. The first included organizing and research aimed at helping local food justice organizations, particularly in Oakland. We supported the formation of the Oakland Food Policy Council and worked with an Oakland citizen's group to hire a director for the HOPE Collaborative, a two-year Kellogg-funded project aimed at improving food and fitness in underserved communities. The second local agrifoods systems project is based in several Mexican villages where campesinos are creating markets for sustainably-grown produce. This project has the potential to allow small farm producers in Mexico to stay on their land, rather than being forced to migrate to the U.S. for work. In 2007, Food First also initiated trainings in indigenous areas of northeastern Mexico on the role of pollinators in food production. This was funded by the C.S. Fund.

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The Institute for Food and Development Policy—known as Food First—is a member-supported, nonprofit “peoples’” think tank and education-for-action center. Our work highlights the root causes and value-based solutions to hunger and poverty around the world, with a commitment to establishing food as a fundamental human right.

LETTER FROM ERIC HOLT-GIMÉNEZ

DEAR FOOD FIRST MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS,

Last year the world grain harvests set a new record—the most abundant in the planet’s history. The United States alone planted over 90 million acres to corn, more than it has in decades. Yet we also saw a rise in the number of hungry people worldwide, a dramatic reduction of global grain reserves, skyrocketing food prices, dwindling supplies at food banks, food riots in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and a half-billion dollar shortfall at the World Food Program. By all accounts, food price inflation, now spiking as high as 80%, will continue to rise. This will primarily affect the poor in the Global South and the industrial North, who spend from 50-80% of their income on food. Shortages and food price inflation appeared almost overnight, underscoring the fact that these price increases and shortages are not due to a sud-

den population explosion. Why this sudden shortage? The obvious explanations, including rising fuel costs, rising incomes in China, bad weather in Australia, and the substitution of fuel crops for food crops, are just pieces of the unpalatable truth. The fact is, for all their apparent productivity, the world’s food systems are extremely vulnerable to natural and human-induced hazards, including drought, flood, disease, migration, war, and economic shocks.

How did things get this way? The simple answer is that we have been

forced to put all our agricultural eggs in one precarious industrial basket. The concentration of market power under the monopolistic roof of multinational grain, seed, and agrochemical companies is undermining the resiliency of the world’s production systems by destroying the genetic, agroecological and social diversity of the world’s farms, turning them into vast, industrial mono-cropped plantations controlled by a handful of corporations. The agri-foods complex of giant processors and supermarket chains that control our food-buying habits want us to accept the plethora of “food-like substances” we consume and forget that our dependence on 3-4 commodities has led to the widespread loss of agro-biodiversity and our dependence on a shrinking handful of reconstituted food components. We are invited to believe that the loss of millions of neighborhood grocery stores to a few big chains is a sign of progress. Monsanto, which now controls 30% of the global seed market and Archer Daniels Midland with the largest share of the world’s grain trade, claim our present food shortages can be dealt with

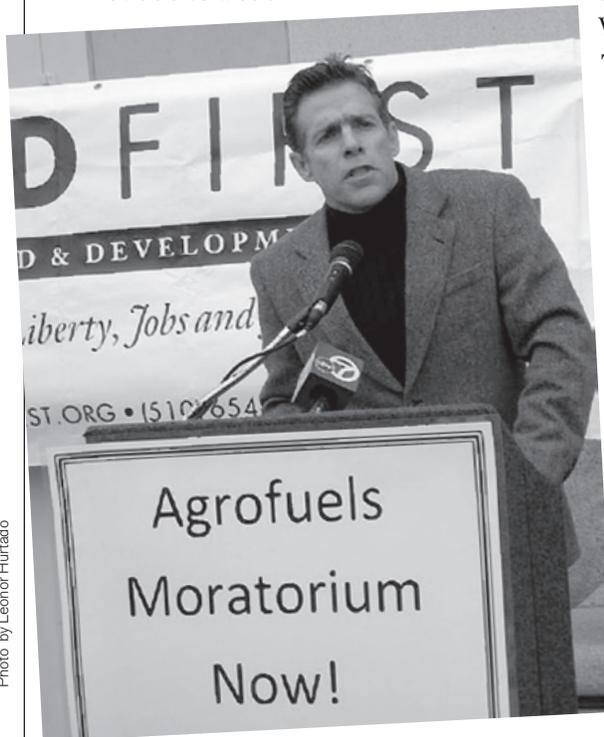


Photo by Leonor Hurtado

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Agrofuels mania hijacks food prices (and degrades the land, water and air): a loss for eaters ... huge profits for big agribusiness and big oil



Photo by Claudia Melendez

The border fence between New Mexico and Mexico

Agrofuels, a major focus of Food First's work in 2007, garnered the bulk of media attention and involved a diligent crew of interns and fellows delving into all aspects of the rapidly evolving and alarming developments around the market manipulation of grain prices as both the EU and the U.S. established renewable fuel standards. These energy standards shifted approximately one third of U.S. corn to agrofuels. Low grain reserves, coupled with grain speculation, caused prices to climb out of reach of many of the world's poor. As early as January 2007, tortilla riots were reported in Mexico www.foodfirst.org/node/1649. With basic food grain prices climbing dramatically worldwide, many more people are going to bed hungry in countries of the global south.

In February 2007 the *Des Moines Register* carried our editorial *With biofuels, consider: Who suffers? Who benefits?* This was followed by an *International Herald Tribune* editorial *The biofuel myths* by

Eric Holt-Giménez in July 2007. Two backgrounders issued in 2007 focused on biofuels. *Biofuels: Myths of the Agro-fuels Transition* www.foodfirst.org/node/1712 and *Colombia palm oil biodiesel plantations: A "lose-lose" development strategy?* www.foodfirst.org/node/1808.

Food First helped organize a coalition to oppose agrofuels in July 2007 to call for a moratorium on U.S. incentives for biofuels. Rainforest Action Network, Grassroots International, Family Farm Defenders, Global Justice Ecology Project, and the Student Trade Justice Coalition joined Food First in this campaign. Please invite organizations that you are a part of to join this call for a moratorium on spending tax dollars for biofuels that jack up our food prices and also threaten campesino livelihoods and the environment. www.foodfirst.org/node/1811

In July 2007 we published *An Overview of the U.S. Ethanol Market* www.foodfirst.org/node/1723, followed by *Alternative Agro-fuels: Jatropha cultivation in Mali & India* www.foodfirst.org/node/1710.

Other media and public speaking

Radio interviews in 2007 included public radio stations throughout the country and radio interviews associated with public speaking in Montreal, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia. Other public speaking on biofuels and agroecological alternatives took Eric Holt-Giménez to Mali, Columbia, Mozambique, Vienna, and Brazil. In 2008 we will place more emphasis on reaching out to internet-based media outlets and other like-minded nonprofits to share our research.

Food First 2007 reality tour from El Paso, Texas to Oaxaca, Mexico

Food First's executive director, Eric Holt-Giménez led a group of teachers, students, activists and farmers on a tour along the immigrant trail in late July and early August of 2007. View a slide show of that tour at www.foodfirst.org/en/node/2116.

Monterey Herald reporter, Claudia Melendez from Salinas also filed several stories: www.montereyherald.com/search/ci_7616170?IADID=Search-www.montereyherald.com-www.montereyherald.com/search/ci_7616169? and view slide show at <http://extras.montereyherald.com/slideshows/mexico1202/index.html>.

Our new 22-minute documentary, *Caminos*, by Juan Carlos Zaldivar, interviews people we met along the immigrant trail, and will soon be available on DVD with a companion study guide. We encourage you to arrange for a house party or community viewing of *Caminos* to spark discussion about how to craft a more humane U.S. immigration policy.

In 2009 a Food First book by Mexico tour participant and Food First intern, Dori Stone will be released. Her story includes

Agrofuels mania...

her keen observations, reflections, plus background on themes and topics that came up as we traveled, and a resource directory of immigrant rights and labor organizations working here in the U.S.

Food First Development Reports and Backgrounders

In 2007, Food First published three development reports including Development Report #15: *A bitter harvest: Farmer suicide in India* at www.foodfirst.org/node/1611, Development Report No 16: *LAND—GOLD—REFORM: The territorial restructuring of Guatemala's highlands* at www.foodfirst.org/node/1770. In 2008 Food First will publish a second development report on mining focused on the impact of gold mining on food and water in Ghana. Development Report No 17: *Fair to the last drop: The corporate challenges to fair trade coffee* www.foodfirst.org/node/1794 was accompanied by a shorter backgrounder *Organic Coffee Crisis?* www.foodfirst.org/node/1685.

Our colleagues at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor summarized their groundbreaking meta-study in the Food First backgrounder, *Shattering Myths: Can sustainable agriculture feed the world?* www.foodfirst.org/node/1778 in which they conclude that organic and sustainable agriculture could produce just as much, but in greater variety than industrial monocropped agriculture.

Perhaps the most explosive and rapidly evolving issue that Food First is dealing with in 2008 is the unintended consequences of the rapid rise in food prices, caused in part by sustainable fuel standards set by the U.S. Congress and signed by President Bush. With grain supplies at their lowest since the USDA began keeping records 47 years ago, speculation and hoarding have doubled and tripled the price of basic food, increasing the number of people going hungry and resulting in food riots in countries as diverse

Letter from Eric...

by ramping up industrial agriculture and genetic engineering. This is simply putting more of our eggs in their vulnerable food basket... A basket we have to carry for them, with over \$10 billion a year in agricultural subsidies, and a basket whose bottom is giving out.

The International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology (IAASTD) recently called for an overhaul of agriculture dominated by multinational companies and governed by unfair trade rules. The report warns against relying on genetic engineered "fixes" for food production and emphasizes the importance of locally-based, agroecological approaches to farming. The key advantages to this way of farming, aside from its low environmental impact, is that it provides both food and employment to the world's poor, plus surplus for the market. On a yield-per-acre basis, these small family farms have proven themselves to be more productive than large-scale industrial farms. And, they use less oil, especially if food is traded locally or regionally. These alternatives, growing throughout the world, are like small islands of sustainability in increasingly perilous economic and environmental seas. As industrialized farming and free trade regimes fail us, these approaches will be the keys for building resilience back into a dysfunctional global food system that is abandoning many of the world's poor.

as Egypt and Haiti www.foodfirst.org/en/node/2086. Industrial agrofuels are a poor idea, badly implemented at the worst possible time. Our coalition will continue to press for a moratorium on the sustainable fuel standards to allow for a more reasoned discussion of the economic consequences of using corn, soy, and oil palm for fuel.

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At Food First we also think that sustainable family farms and neighborhood food systems hold the best hope for the future, and that the growing movements of scientists, activists, and practitioners working for food sovereignty have a better idea. In fact they have a lot of ideas that are being put into practice daily—practices that make our food systems more diverse, more resilient, more democratic, and ultimately more fair and sustainable. In the face of growing hunger, economic crisis and food price inflation, these groups are working to turn our local food systems into engines for food security, food justice, and local economic growth.

That is why we partner with people and communities to produce action research and up-to-date information that both amplifies the voices and informs the efforts of organizations working for systemic change in the ways we grow, distribute and consume our food. Economically dynamic food systems that are fair and sustainable require both local and global changes. Food First works at home and abroad to support the alternatives and create the political will to bring about that change. Thank you for joining with Food First. It is a privilege to work with you. Together we can build food systems that serve people, communities, and the environment.



ERIC HOLT-GIMÉNEZ,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Food First's accomplishments in 2007 are due, in large part, to the tireless help of more than 30 unpaid board members, interns, associates, writers, and editors who labored to provide the many resources used by our community partners here at home and around the world. None of this work would be happening if not for the generous financial support of our more than 7,000 loyal donor members and foundation partners. Onward!

Food First Highlights...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In 2008 we will house and “incubate” the Oakland Food Policy Council to get it off to a strong start. It is starting at a time when food banks throughout the nation are reporting more hungry customers, while facing growing shortfalls of food donations. Grants from the HOPE Collaborative and the Clarence Heller Foundation will allow us to conduct an assessment of food system assessments, a review of food policy councils, and a meta-analysis of neighborhood food systems in Oakland, California. Preliminary work conducted by Food First interns on U.S. food policy councils can be viewed here www.foodfirst.org/node/1746

In Oakland our primary collaborators are City Slicker Farms, People's Grocery, the Public Health Institute, and the Alameda County Public Health Department.

African food sovereignty

Food First's 2007 work in Sub-Saharan Africa addressed both food sovereignty and democratizing development by highlighting African agroecological alternatives to a (new) green revolution for Africa (AGRA) launched in 2006 by the Rockefeller and Gates Foundations.

2007 work with African partners culminated in a December 2007 conference in Mali involving over 200 African scientists, researchers, activists and farmers. Our conference partners include the African Centre for Biosafety, Climate Network Africa, Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (CNOP - Mali), Development Fund (Norway), International Alliance Against Hunger, More and Better, IRPAD-Mali (Institut de recherche et de promotion des alternatives en développement), Terra Nuova (Italy), and Union Nacional de Camponeses Mozambique. In addition to agroecological alternatives to the green revolution, the conference focused on climate change and agriculture, hunger, and food aid, plus field visits to innovative local farms. The conference concluded with the following statement: www.foodfirst.org/node/1807 You can hear Dr. Eric Holt-Giménez report on

that conference on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz3CWWz6XwY

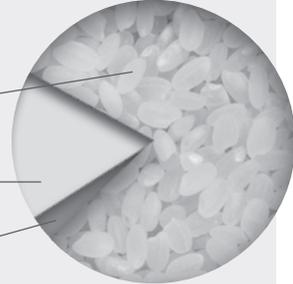
Individual donations plus grants from the C.S. Fund and the New Field Foundation allowed Food First to organize and fund participation at this conference in Mali.

In 2008 Food First will launch *AAAGR-rrr!*, an e-newsletter to allow our African partners to obtain information about the latest AGRA-funding projects and their possible impact, as well as share successful African agroecological alternatives that are being implemented in communities throughout the continent. Food First is now seeking funding to bring articulate and passionate advocates of these alternatives for a speaking tour to New York, Washington and California to allow them to share their perspective on what needs to happen to build food sovereignty for African nations, as opposed to agrofuels and food exports which are being promoted by big agriculture, big oil, and big research.

Eric Holt-Giménez was interviewed on CBC's "The Current" Speaking on the New Green *Revolution for Africa on March 27, 2007*. In August of 2007, we presented a keynote speech on the benefits of agroecological farming to researchers, farm trainers and leaders at a conference in Mozambique. This followed our participation in the World Social Forum held in Kenya in January 2007 www.foodfirst.org/node/1610. Seventy organizations from a broad cross section of civil society from 12 southern African countries raised concern that Africa's wealth of seed diversity and farmer knowledge is under threat from the Gates/Rockefeller "Green Revolution" initiative. And in February 2007, we participated in an international meeting on Food Sovereignty at Selingue, Mali. Over 500 women, men and youth activists from 80 countries met to share their knowledge, experiences, and hopes for a world free of hunger, injustice, and corporate greed. www.foodfirst.org/node/1652.

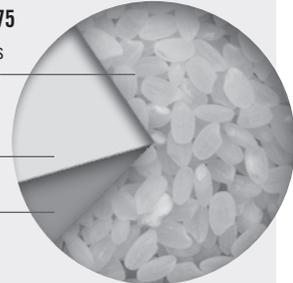
Fiscal Year 2007

Revenue and Support \$536,970



Grants and Contributions	80.77%
Publications	16.64%
Royalties, Honoraria and Other	2.59%

Expenses \$602,975



Education, Publications & Core Program	71.74%
Membership and Development	21.09%
General and Administrative	7.18%

You can leave a legacy of healthy food for all...

Annual member donations are the foundation of support that allows Food First to explain the often confusing news accounts about food and farming, marketing and consumption. Food is the most basic of human rights (along with water).

Please consider planning beyond your annual tax-deductible donation to Food First.

1. You can remember the Institute for Food and Development Policy in your will. Call or write for suggested wording.
2. Or you can donate \$5,000 or more to the Institute's Pooled Income Fund. Based on your age, you receive a tax deduction in the year of your donation, plus you receive lifetime income from your donation. Call 510-654-4400 ext 234 for more information.
3. Donate appreciated stocks, bonds, or property. You may find that this will reduce your capital gains tax and provide a tax deduction. For instructions go to www.foodfirst.org/en/support/stock
4. Name the Institute for Food and Development Policy as the final beneficiary on your life insurance or retirement savings plan. Donating an IRA, SEP IRA, Keough, 401(k) or 403(b) can avoid the 39.6% IRS tax plus state estate taxes on such accounts. Please consult with your tax and/or legal advisor.

Stepping up your support to strengthen food sovereignty, locally, nationally, and globally

If you find yourself asking what more you might do personally to promote greater access to healthy food for all people, please consider the following ways that you can strengthen the advocacy role of Food First/the Institute for Food and Development Policy. Your special investment now can help us mount a public information campaign and get discussions going about getting food trade out of the global trading system so that each nation can become food self-sufficient.

Food sovereignty is possible in every single nation around the world, given the will to do it, the right education, access to resources, and sufficient human labor. It is now clear that climate change dictates that the days of global, industrial food trade are numbered. Join with others who are working hard to allow gardeners and farmers to feed themselves and their families, their friends and neighbors alike.

Action starts at home:

- Become a locavor**—Eat as much food grown within 100 miles of your home as possible. Join a CSA subscription farm and get a box of produce weekly, join a co-op grocery, or shop at your farmers' market.
- Garden**—If you don't have the space, call city hall and find out where the community gardens are. If there are none, ask the owner of a vacant plot if you can start one. Then invite your friends to pitch in. Pick the fruit from the trees of elderly residents and distribute a portion to those in need in your community. Check if your food bank or food pantry has a garden that you might help in.
- Subscribe to Food First's twice-monthly *People Putting Food First* e-newsletter** for more ideas about keeping it local from communities around the world. www.foodfirst.org/en/newsletter. Forward issues to friends and build your own local eating network.
- If you haven't donated yet to Food First, we invite you to join now.** Individuals like you provided 81% of our financial support in 2007. Any amount that you can spare will be most appreciated and carefully spent. If you now donate once or twice a year, please consider becoming a monthly sustainer. You can make a one-time donation on-line here www.foodfirst.org/en/support/donate or monthly here www.foodfirst.org/en/support/monthly. Or you can call us and make a donation by phone at 510-654-4400 ext 234 or drop the enclosed envelope in the mail along with your check.
- Do your part to educate your friends and neighbors about immigration issues.** Host a *Caminos* documentary house party or public event. To get a copy of this 22-minute DVD and companion study guide, call 510-654-4400 ex 234.
- Share Food First News and Views and Backgrounders with friends.** Call us and we will send copies to you or your friends. Or print what you want from our web site to share with others.
- Honor or remember friends and family by making a donation in their name.** We will send them a card telling them of your generous donation on their behalf. You will feel good about not buying, you get a tax-deduction for remembering the occasion, and your friend or family member learns more about Food First's work.
- Give a gift membership, T-shirt or book.** Gift memberships are perfect for wedding, anniversary, and birthday gifts. We will send a note to those you designate.
- When you donate \$100 or more, you can select a free book.** Read the book, or donate it to your library. Send a catalog link to your friends who teach. More than 1,000 of our donors are professors or teachers. Help us expand that list of ambassadors of ideas that can change the world.

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JOIN FOOD FIRST AND TELL YOUR FRIENDS

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\$50 member \$140 Food First Forum \$500 patron \$1,000 or more — major donor other \$ _____

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Please make sure our e-mail reaches you. Add foodfirst@foodfirst.org to your safe list today.

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