



EcoFair Trade Dialogue Newsletter No. 3 – September 2006

Welcome to the 3rd newsletter of the EcoFair Trade Dialogue project. What has happened in the process since our last newsletter came out in January '06?

Fourth Expert Panel meeting – discussing preliminary key messages of the overall project

After three successful meetings of the Expert Panel (the core group of the project) in 2005, where drafts of nine policy papers were intensely discussed and improved, the fourth meeting took place in Mbour, Senegal, in February 2006. At this meeting, Wolfgang Sachs and Tilman Santarius, as the moderators of the project, provided a paper titled "Preliminary Key Messages Paper." The idea of this paper was to wrap up more than a year of discussion on the project, and to boil it down to some of the most outstanding and promising messages of our discussions. In about 20 paragraphs, fresh views on some of the major flaws in the current trade system were highlighted, perspectives and building blocks of a vision for a long-term future trade system were set out, and a range of policies and instruments that may serve for a transition were presented.

Since the meeting in Senegal, this paper has been elaborated, sharpened, and added on to a great deal, and has evolved as a group document of all the Expert Panel members. It is now available for download at www.globalalternative.org/en/web/327.htm. It has already served for discussion at the Regional Consultations (see below).

First Publication of EcoFair Trade Dialogue Discussion Paper

Sophia Murphy from the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), as one of the members of the Expert Panel of the EcoFair Trade Dialogue, presented the first of nine policy papers to be published on the web. The paper titled, "Concentrated Market Power and Agricultural Trade" is written to provide information and analysis on concentrated market power in agricultural markets, from input providers through producers, to processors and retailers. This was a result of the EcoFair Trade Dialogue Expert Panel identifying concentrated market power as one of the obstacles preventing the emergence of fairer, more ecologically sound trade rules for agricultural commodities and food. It focuses on the role of trade, investment, and competition rules and their role in the problem of concentrated markets, and concludes with some recommendations for policy change and organizing to confront the imbalances of power throughout the food chain.

The paper is available for download as EcoFair Trade Dialogue Discussion paper No. 1 under www.globalalternative.org/en/web/328.htm. Publication of the other nine policy papers follows during the following weeks.

EcoFair Trade Dialogue Regional Consultations – Senegal, Thailand, Brazil

During 2006, the EcoFair Trade Dialogue has conducted a series of Regional Consultations. These meetings are stakeholder dialogues, which bring together experts from governmental bodies, civil society organizations, farmer unions, academics, media, and other constituencies. They serve to get feedback and to further develop the ideas and proposals developed by the Expert Panel along with the experiences and realities of the

participants. Furthermore, they are intended to root the project, and some of its messages and results, in the respective world regions. They also hope to support and promote regional dialogue processes on the issues.



left: Lorenzen and Pijnappel at Brazil Consultation; right: Expert Panel on Field Trip in Senegal

West Africa Regional Consultation

The first Regional Consultation took place in Mbour, Senegal, back to back with the fourth Expert Panel meeting. About 25 participants from six French-speaking West African countries ensured unique views and feedback to the process. The consultation was hosted by the West Africa representative of MISEREOR. Three issues were on the agenda. Participants considered the experiences made in the protection of local markets and small farmers, and the effects trade liberalization has had in the past. It also focused on whether such a thing as “market ownership” exists, and how this relates to export opportunities and the need to access other (Northern) markets. The discussion concluded in considering instruments for the governing of imports, while still allowing for a fair and non-discriminatory trade regime. Second, participants considered their experiences with agricultural exports, and discussed what kinds of exports are desirable, and what kind of exports are have proved rather detrimental? The discussion aimed at setting out criteria for exports in order to ensure their contribution to sustainability and long-term rural development.

South and Southeast Asia Regional Consultation

The second Regional Consultation took place in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on May 30-31, 2006, and was hosted by the Southeast Asia office of the Heinrich-Boell-Foundation. Some 35 participants joined the consultation, including participants from Thailand, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, The Philippines, Indonesia, and Australia. Participants discussed a draft version of the “Key Messages Paper” and gave valuable feedback on their overall impressions of the project. In addition, participants discussed once again the issue of the “Role of Exports”, i.e. which role agricultural exports may play in a country’s overall development, and which experiences have been had with exports in Asia. Discussion then continued with the “Governance of Imports” issue. Participants spoke about their experiences market liberalization and policies to regulate and govern imports, and which instruments would be needed in the future. In addition, the issue of “Market Concentration” was on the agenda, looking at the role of transnational corporations within the food chain, respective experiences with corporate practices in the region, and approaches on how to tackle concentration of power in agricultural markets.

South America Regional Consultation

On the 7th and 8th of August, 2006 the EcoFair Trade Dialogue conducted the South America Regional Consultation in Curitiba, Brazil. Participants were mostly from Cono Sur countries, with some participants from adjacent countries. Issues on the Agenda were again the Role of Exports for sustainable rural development. Participants were also confronted with the idea of Qualified Market Access, an instrument which would seek to set sustainability standards for imports, while products not complying with the standards would face additional tariffs; the revenue from the tariffs would then potentially be collected into a fund that promotes sustainable rural development world wide. In addition, the instrument of Supply Management was presented, and participants discussed potential effects if such an instrument were to be implemented, even within countries like Brazil or Argentina.

Future meetings

Three more Regional Consultations will take place in the coming weeks: in Washington for the North American region on September 12-13, in Mexico for Central America on October 17-19, and in Brussels for Europe on November 7-8. For organizations and interested people from Germany, there will be a smaller, additional consultation on October 27 in Berlin.

The EcoFair Trade Dialogue will also be present at the 'WTO Public Forum,' a Symposium held in Geneva from September 25-26. The slot for the project's session, titled "New Directions for Agricultural Trade Rules," is on Tuesday, September 26, 16.30 -18.00.

The next Expert Panel meeting will take place in Mexico after the Regional Consultation, from October 19-21. There, building on the "Key Message Paper," a first draft of the final report of the project will be discussed.

Webpage - keeping updated with the project

www.ecofair-trade.org

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