



FOOD MATTERS

**A one-day conference on food security
run jointly by Chester World Development Forum and the Department of Geography &
Development Studies, Best Building, University of Chester, 16th November 2013**

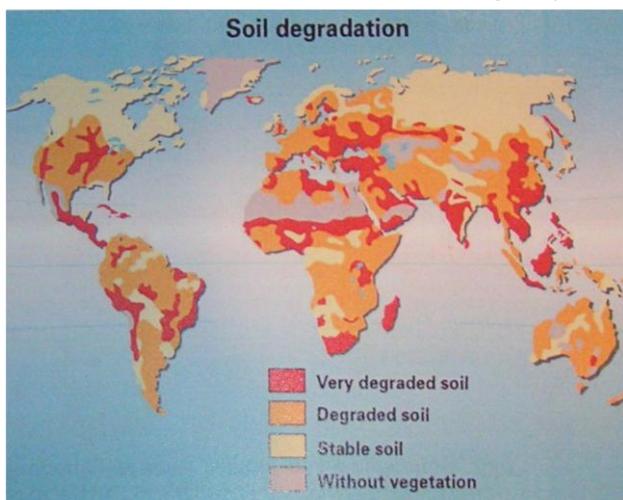
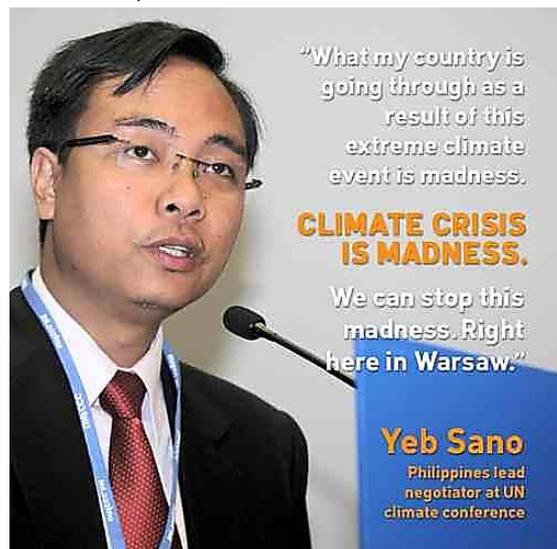
Vice Chancellor Prof Timothy Wheeler welcomed an audience of 90, students and older delegates in equal measure. He said the University was a very appropriate venue because students are expected to ask difficult and important questions, such as those being put today. He introduced the key topics. There was food for all, given the political will to distribute it fairly. Large companies would have to pay the taxes due in Development Countries, and stop “grabbing” land for large scale agriculture – largely for biofuels, sugar cane and animal feed. Biofuels and the not unrelated problem of climate chaos were massive issues calling for serious political decisions.

Patrick Mulvany

Securing Future Food – challenges for a just and sustainable world

Gill Miller, International Development Studies, introduced our keynote speaker, formerly Senior Policy Adviser for *Practical Action* and author of works on sustainable agriculture, essential for both food and livelihood security.

Patrick’s headline title *Securing Future Food – challenges for a just and sustainable world* immediately hinted at a more positive, combative approach than might have been expected, though his first illustration – of Typhoon Haiyan, 7th November 2013 - recalled the Philippines disaster which led Yeb Sano the Philippine negotiator at the Warsaw Climate Change Conference to say that carbon emissions had to be reduced now. He went on a hunger strike, to no immediate avail. The developing world sees the cause of climate change as the indifference of the rich North. Patrick quoted E.F. (Fritz) Schumacher in this connection: “ the indefinite growth of material consumption is impossible”. Patrick agreed that we must act on climate chaos, and simultaneously work on defence measures. One such measure existed in Batad Banaue, Philippines: terraced and protected rice fields which had survived former typhoons, including one 2 years ago. Similarly, robust planting in the ecological farms of Cuba survived Hurricane Ike 2008, while larger scale commercial crop areas were devastated. The key to survival was small fields, mixed planting sheltered by trees and shrubs – biodiverse and ecological production.



Good soil helps too. Early in this century an International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) was done by 900 experts from 110 countries. This concluded that agroecology, delivered by small farms, was the best chance to “feed the world”. The FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation) came to the same conclusion. There was concern about soil degradation, erosion and drought. There was a need for regeneration and drought-resistant practices. Deforestation could bring drought even to the

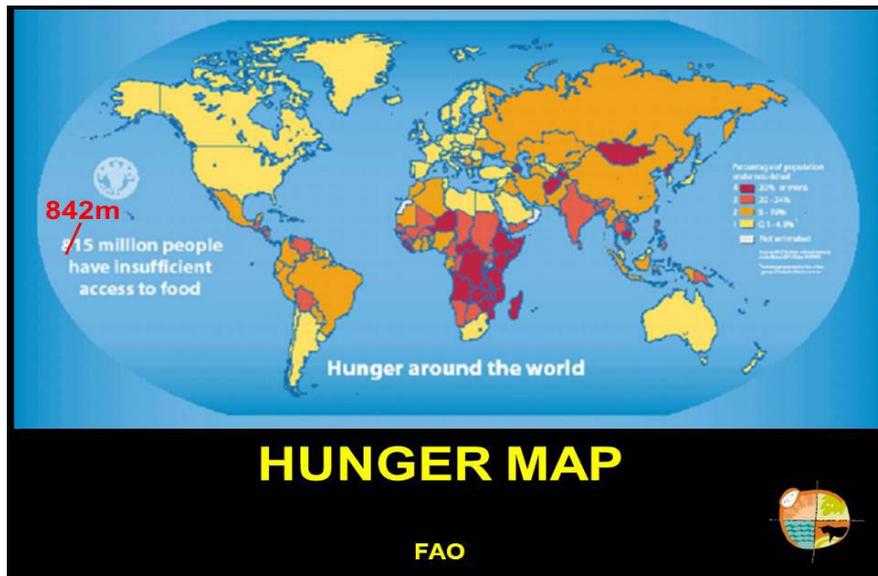
Amazon, Patrick said. Hunger was already prevalent: 842 million people have insufficient access to food. The contrast between North and South was significant: bright lights in the North - darkness in the South; food excess in the North – hunger in the South (NASA illustration shown).



Who will feed us?

The Industrial Food Chains that use 70% of agricultural resources to feed 30% of the people, or the Peasant “Food Web” that feeds 70%, using 30% of resources? The latter fosters diversity, breeding millions of varieties of thousands of crops, nurturing many different livestock and aquatic species while the Industrial

Chain depends on a dozen crops, a handful of animal species and collapsing fish stocks.



It also destroys ecosystems, degrades soil and wastes a third of its production. The knowledge is with the peasant farmers (often women). The resource is there, and if supported instead of destroyed can provide the food we need.

Patents on life and farmer suicides

The World’s top three seed companies are Monsanto (USA), DuPont (USA), Syngenta (Swiss). The top agrochemical companies are Syngenta, Bayer (German), BASF (German), Monsanto, Dow and DuPont.

Terminator seeds (which rule out seed saving) are just one of the ploys of big seed companies.

The seed is usually dependent on the use of chemical products from the same companies’ products, so the farmers’ costs and dependency mount up. Terminator seeds (which rule out seed saving) are just one of the ploys sought by big seed companies.

The monopoly of supply is akin to slavery. Debt and crop failures have driven some farmers to suicide (years ago noted particularly in India, by Vandana Shiva and others). Patrick contended that the G8’s

Three Agribusinesses Monopolise Industrial Seeds

Compliant with their Agrochemicals

Company	Seed Sales 2009 (US\$ million)	Market Share
Top 3 = 54% (Headquarters)		
1. Monsanto (USA)	7,297	27%
2. DuPont (Pioneer) (USA)	4,641	17%
3. Syngenta (Switzerland)	2,564	9%
4. Groupe Limagrain (France)	1,252	5%
5. Land O’ Lakes/Winfield Solutions (USA)	1,100	4%
6. KWS AG (Germany)	997	4%
7. Bayer CropScience (Germany)	700	3%
8. Dow AgroSciences (USA)	635	2%
9. Sakata (Japan)	491	2%
10. DLF-Trifolium A/S (Denmark)	385	1%
Total Top 10	20,062	64%

**Monsanto
DuPont
Syngenta**

Source: ETC Group (reporting currencies converted to US\$ using historical exchange rates)

www.etcgroup.org

Rank / Company	Agrochemical Sales, 2009 (US\$ million)	Market Share
(Headquarters)		
1. Syngenta (Switzerland)	8,491	19%
2. Bayer CropScience (Germany)	7,544	17%
3. BASF (Germany)	5,007	11%
4. Monsanto (USA)	4,427	10%
5. Dow AgroSciences (USA)	3,902	9%
6. DuPont (USA)	2,403	5%
7. Sumitomo Chemical (Japan)	2,374	5%
8. Nufarm (Australia)	2,082	5%
9. Maktshim-Agan Industries (Israel)	2,042	5%
10. Arysta LifeScience (Japan)	1,196	3%
Total Top 10	39,468	89%

Patrick contended that the G8’s *New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition* hijacked the “IF” campaign. The UK government is among those which claimed a commitment to ending hunger but backed a scheme to increase corporate control

over African agriculture. This will give multinational firms unprecedented access to African governments which would have to change their policies, including those about seeds.

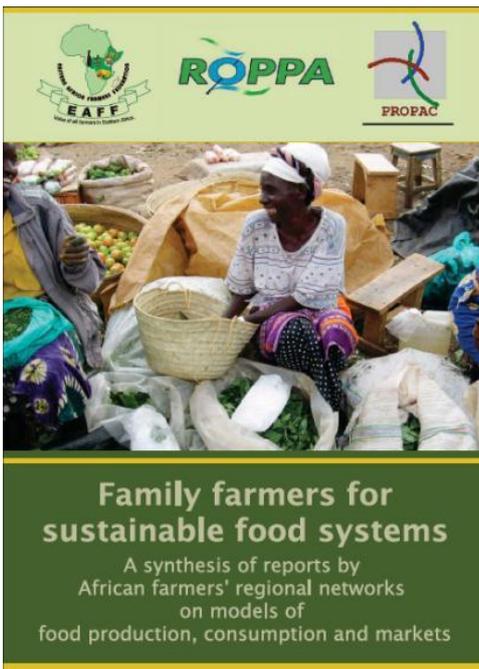
Agroecology, Agricultural Biodiversity and Food Sovereignty

The first is a holistic and cultural approach, meeting the need for food but giving equal weight to sustainability, resilience and equity.

The second implies diverse plant seeds, livestock breeds and support species (i.e. not edible) typically comes from small scale women and men farmers, gardeners, livestock keepers, fishers, forest dwellers, indigenous people.

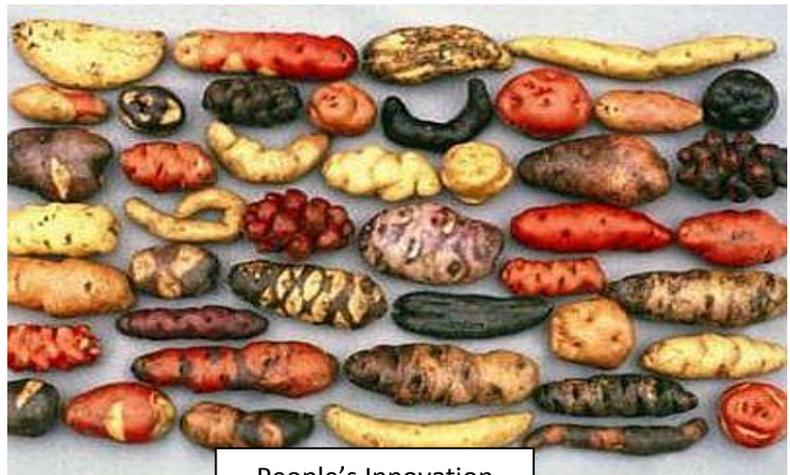
Agroecology, Agricultural Biodiversity and Food Sovereignty

- AGROECOLOGY is a holistic and cultural approach to food provision, based on meeting people's need for food, which gives equal attention to the goals of sustainability, resilience and equity and not only to production.
- AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY – diverse seeds, livestock breeds, aquatic species, support species, ecosystems and functions – underpins Agroecology which also regenerates it. **It is the outcome of the innovations and practices of (usually small-scale) women and men farmers, gardeners, livestock keepers, fishers, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples, and other small-scale food providers, working in the framework of...**
- ...FOOD SOVEREIGNTY - the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.



Food Sovereignty focuses on the right of people to healthy and appropriate food, valuing producers, localised systems rather than unfair global trade, local control, biodiverse knowledge and skills, working with nature.

La Via Campesina, the international peasant movement cited as a great example, is celebrating 20 years of realising food sovereignty. It promises social and environmental sustainability and local livelihoods. These people are innovative; they run seed fairs, promote agroecology and defend the interests of the world's food providers - not good news for global corporations.



Patrick amazed us with a picture of an enormous range of potatoes selected and developed by small-scale farmers. He could not get in the whole 5,000!

Patrick's brilliant lecture, a bravura performance, received the appropriate response – 100% applause.

After a short break delegates attended NGO workshops of their choice: Oxfam on Food Corporations; CAFOD on small farms; Christian Aid on tax dodging; Action Aid on land grabs. These were repeated in the afternoon and reported back at the final panel session which led to more discussions from the floor. Delegates were able to attend a second workshop in the afternoon. The report of these sessions is consolidated.

Lunch followed the morning workshops, giving delegates a chance to mingle and compare notes. In the breaks and at lunchtime the foyer of the Best Building was thronged – it had been turned into a publications bazaar by many organisations, with their staff attending. Good use was made of this.

Workshop sessions

Christian Aid: on Tax Dodging, led by Alasdair Roxburgh, Campaign Manager at Christian Aid.

The first part of the session was spent on hearing about the way developing countries, as well as our own, lose vital tax revenue. The lost revenue could go towards support for farming and education as well as emergency food provision.

A registration of companies involved was discussed, but when would this be done and would other countries join in. There are tax incentives for companies to invest in Africa, but these are generally of little benefit.

There are changes to public perception of tax, caused by: the MP expenses scandal – putting morality on the agenda; perceived big business attitudes; reluctance to support the unemployed; questions about how tax spent; the voice of little people being ignored.

Action. There appeared to be a move away from a commitment to the Common Good and towards individualism. How could we change the public attitude to paying tax?

Education in schools; explaining simply what tax achieves. We need to know the truth rather than what the media tells us.

We need to challenge companies and pension funds on how they invest and how they pay tax. Christian Aid will provide training.

CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development): on Small Farmers, led by Sue Bownas, CAFOD Diocesan Manager – Shrewsbury.

CAFOD approaches development as a process of empowering people to have more control over their own lives - seeking to tackle the causes of poverty and to change unjust structures. CAFOD Partners are trusted, local organisations, staffed by local people who are working to reduce poverty in their own countries.

The CAFOD campaign “**Hungry for Change**” is calling on our Prime Minister to “champion:- empowering aid for small –scale farmers, especially women, to help them access markets and increase their income, bargaining power and voice in decisions”. (N.B: IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, defines a small scale farm as “a farm of 2 hectares of less of land”.)

Why this focus?

Estimated 450 million small scale farmers worldwide, making up 85% of the world’s farms and supporting a population of roughly 2.2 billion people (i.e. 1/3 of the world’s population).

50% of the world’s hungry are themselves farmers, and 60% of them are women.

75% of the world’s farmers are women on small scale farms.

60% of the world’s food is produced by small scale farmers.

“Women farmers need to be targeted explicitly for support. Currently women own only 1% of the land in Africa and receive only 7% of the advisory services and only 1% of agricultural credit. (UN Millennium Project -“Halving Hunger – it can be done” UNDP 2005)

“GDP Growth originating in agriculture is 5 times more effective in reducing poverty in low income countries than growth in other sectors, in sub – Saharan Africa it is 11 times more effective” (“The state of Food and Agriculture 2012 “ – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN)

N.B: China and Vietnam reduced rural poverty the most in recent decades through empowering small scale farmers.

International Aid to agriculture has not fully recovered from massive decline from 17% of aid in 1980 to just 3.4% by 2006. At summit in 2009 G8 Countries pledged to work “towards a goal of mobilizing” US\$22bn for agriculture and food security within 3 years. Overall , only 1/5 of the promised funding had been disbursed by mid 2011. (Save The Children – “A Life Free from Hunger” 2012)

The workshop then highlighted a number of models of support for small scale farmers producing results, eg Fair trade premiums and notably COMAL – a network of 40 grass-root organisations in Honduras working with small scale farmers – helping them distribute and market products; getting and owning land.

The next phase of the campaign in 2014 will highlight the disproportionate impact on small farmers of climate change.

Discussion

- Development Aid – How much money reaches people; aid not going to small farmers; governments invest aid in public/private partnerships and companies profit.
- Impact of Agribusinesses – empowering small scale peasants.
- Need impact in education for progress.
- Emergency Aid.

Action Aid: Food not Fuel, led by Caroline Jones, Campaigns Officer for Action Aid UK.

At the introduction the audience were interested to learn that Action Aid have their base, not in London but in Johannesburg, South Africa - perhaps giving them an edge.

Biofuels are made mostly from food crops, this causes food prices to rise. The demand for biofuels is leading to land grabs. European policy is helping indirectly to increase this trend. The UK froze its targets to 5% but has now gone back on this.

There are alternative sources for biofuels, seaweed for example. We invested in biofuels before adequate research had been done. If the use of plants as biofuels were stopped jobs would be lost but employees could be transferred to the renewables industry. Working in this industry is not always desirable in any case – it depends on who is in charge.

The amount of biofuels in the tank of a car could feed a child for 200 days. This is an outrage and inefficient too. Sadly the grim economic system in which we travail means that as long as a barrel of oil is selling at \$100 “biofuels take on an economic logic of their own” *Feeding Frenzy – Paul McMahon, 2013 (pp104-5)*.

Since the conference, Action Aid’s campaign cards have “sold” well, perhaps to some extent a result of the workshop.

Oxfam: The Companies Behind the Brand, led by Kelly Paes, Community Campaign Coordinator (N) for Oxfam.

Seven million people go hungry each day, including the family farmers who supply our food. The aim of Oxfam’s *Grow* campaign is to allow farmers to grow enough food sustainably. Within this general target *Behind the Brands* scrutinizes 10 of the world’s biggest food companies. They have huge supply chains. The astounding number of subsidiaries is astounding (the audience found it shocking that many of their favourite “independent” brands belonged to giant companies). The giants and their performance scores this November were :

Nestle – 61%, Unilever - 56, Coca-Cola 51, Pepsico 36, Danone 33, Mars 31, Mondelez 30, General Mills 24, Kelloggs 23, Associated British Foods plc 19. The scores are based on transparency, treatment of women and all workers/producers/small farmers growing the commodities; land and water rights and access. The high Nestle score is surprising, but 61% is still bad. Not one giant rated as good. The information is taken from publicly accessible sources – annual reports etc. There was a brief expression of doubt about this, but

Kelly explained that Oxfam does not let up on checking performance, using many campaign techniques, including stunts outside head offices. Only one company has failed to respond.

At least one delegate remained unconvinced but most agreed that there are many ways of progressing in the Food campaign and this was one of them. At both sessions a familiar issue was raised. How could we in the UK bring pressure on massive multi-nationals. Well the law might be local, but public pressure was possible everywhere since Oxfam was world-wide itself – there is, for example, an Oxfam USA.

Panel discussion

The one disappointment of the day was the absence of the second keynote speaker, Dr Michel Pimbert of Coventry University, due to a family bereavement. Instead, Gill Miller of Development Studies arranged a Panel comprising Patrick Mulvany and 2 members of the University staff, Dr Basma Ellahi and Dr Martin Evans. The later afternoon of the conference was thus used for a more extended question time and discussion.

Useful discussion was generated by delegates – not just from Cheshire and Wirral, but Wales, Lancashire, and Leeds. During this session it emerged that Patrick was critical of the “IF” campaign for placing too little emphasis on the need for an ecologically sound approach to food production and it became too involved with the Government and big firms. *Practical Action* and the *World Development Movement* took the same line.

In answer to a question about seeds PM said big companies were seeking to prevent farmers using their own seeds, the norm in developing countries. France & Mozambique have criminalised the use of one's own seeds.

With GM crops; if the GM gene is found in another variety, the GM producer owns that variety where the gene has gone by natural process! And the victim is often pressed to pay up. There is need for much more research on GM crops. There is pressure from scientists to 'meddle' with genes.

On climate chaos PM said that Lord Lawson and those against man-made climate change were dangerous and financed by the fossil fuel industries.

A Nutritionist on the panel, Basma Ellahi, made the point that not enough attention was being paid to nutrition. There was not much point in supplying rubbish food. This was true in fact and in our thinking about development.

CWDF chair Terry Green wound up the day, thanking all present, particularly the Vice Chancellor Prof Wheeler, Gill Miller of International Development Studies and the University as a whole for providing the venue, staff and student helpers, making a great day possible.

Our last message: this is not the end. 2014 will be the *UN International Year of Family Farming*. Keep your eye on www.chesterwdf.org.uk for information on follow-up events.

Patrick has commented that a useful reflection on the IF campaign and related matters is summarised in a recent paper by War on Want's Executive Director John Hilary – “Putting the Politics Back In”:

<http://progressivedevelopmentforum.wordpress.com/2013/11/04/putting-the-politics-back-in/>

Sites for further information:

www.europaffrica.info

<http://ag-transition.org>

www.foodsovereignty.org

www.ukfg.org.uk

www.ukabc.org

www.practicalaction.org