



Letter From the President by Ben Burkett

When elected President of the Coalition at the NFFC board meeting in February, I pledged to carry the torch of family farmers throughout the United States and the world. As you will read in more detail in this newsletter, the Coalition has been deeply involved in a strategic planning process since last November. Our retreat in Chicago laid the groundwork for the winter and summer board meetings at which we decided upon the process for prioritizing our campaigns and then selected the campaigns. Our members agreed to address cost of production and pricing corruption; oppose the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) while seeking true food safety; help beginning, transitioning and socially disadvantaged farmers to benefit from new farm bill provisions and expand into local markets; bring accountability and credit access to farmers; and respond to the global food crisis and international trade issues.

To fulfill my pledge to NFFC and family farmers, I have represented NFFC at several international conferences already this year, including the "Our World Is Not For Sale" meeting in Brussels on free trade, third world debt and social movements. On April 13 we spoke about indigenous people and their right to save their own seeds, produce their own food and not rely on imported foods. Mr. Sameer Dosssani from "Fifty Years Is Enough", Mr. Scott Sinclair of the Vredeseilanden organization in Canada and I were the only three representatives from North America.

The next day I attended the European Union Free Trade Agreement Strategy Meeting with about 75 participants from Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America and the European Union. We continued the discussion on free trade, NAFTA, CAFTA and other bilateral agreements. On Tuesday we went to the European Union's opening session and heard discussion from the members of the Union from France, Belgium and Spain. The following day we visited the Belgium Parliament to listen to two members interested in returning the control of food back to local countries, which can be difficult to do. More importantly, they felt that free trade agreements are a form of colonialism in which poor countries send to the rich countries and the rich sell it back to the poor. Later that day I left for Casablanca, Morocco, and went on to Dakar, West Senegal, where I visited farmers and cooperative members. We also toured farmers markets within the city of Dakar, which had an abundance of herbs, spices, fresh fish, fruits and vegetables. One farmer was from Gambia.



Ben and George at NFFC winter board meeting; A. McFarlen photo

As NFFC's new President, I also affirmed that one of our concentration areas must be the farm bill and pushing the issues of family farmers in America. In June we sent a letter to USDA Secretary Schafer regarding potential cuts to the Community Outreach Partnership Programs of USDA's Risk Management Agency. These partnerships have been an effective strategy to help socially disadvantaged, beginning and transitioning producers manage their risk, especially as many of these farmers offer products not well-served under the existing crop insurance programs. The new Farm Bill contains many important provisions that, for the first time, specifically call on USDA to target all its programs to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers.

July 21-25 I was in Spain for Via Campesina's Food Sovereignty Committee Meeting. There were 13 of us from Asia, Africa, the European Union and the Americas. I was the only one from North America, but there were representatives from Haiti and the Dominican Republic; Jose' Bove' was there from the European Union, the largest contingent. We visited farmers on the Canary Islands, only 70 miles from Africa, and discussed ways to circumvent the Doha round of the World Trade Organization. The coordinators divided us into groups based on language to work on a presentation paper for the 5th International Conference taking place in Mozambique this October. We also drafted a piece for the next WTO meeting in Jakarta. The food was local and excellent; one night we were treated to an organic dinner featuring pork at one of the farmer's homes.

Via Campesina's V International Conference this October comes at an opportune time since the Doha Round just collapsed in July, seven years after the WTO kicked off the Development Round. India, China and 33 developing countries demanded a special safeguard mechanism to protect their domestic farmers from dumping and import surges, but United States trade reps found this unacceptable. Farmers everywhere should be producing for their local markets, not undercutting farmers in other countries. The importance of food sovereignty is finally gaining notice; unfortunately it took a global food crisis to accomplish this. Our movement against more free trade agreements is expanding as more people realize how risky it is to let global markets determine our citizens' food security.

In addition to participating in the upcoming V conference I was asked to speak at West Virginia's Land Grant College Farmers Program, so I will be on the road again. I am grateful for supportive family and friends to maintain my farm and sell my produce at the market when I'm away. These meetings are extremely important for building our movement of global food security and food sovereignty.

Farmer to Farmer Campaign

2008 NFFC Executive Committee

President: Ben Burkett, Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Mississippi Association of Cooperatives

Vice President: Dena Hoff, Northern Plains Resource Council/MT

Secretary: John Kinsman, Family Farm Defenders/WI

Treasurer: Bill Christison, Missouri Rural Crisis Center

At Large Members: Joel Greeno, American Raw Milk Producers' Pricing Association/WI; Bryan Wolfe, Ashtabula, Lake and Geauga Chapter/Ohio Farmers Union. OH; Tina Carlin, Progressive Agriculture, PA; and Adam Barr, Community Farm Alliance, KY



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The Family Farm Agenda is published quarterly by the National Family Farm Coalition, a non-profit providing a voice for grassroots groups on farm, food, trade, and rural economic issues to ensure fair prices for family farmers, safe and healthy food, and vibrant, environmentally sound rural communities here and around the world.

In 2007 the Farmer to Farmer Campaign on Genetic Engineering (F2FGE) initiated efforts to organize farm groups to address federal policy issues on agricultural biotechnology which previously had been largely focused on crop-specific campaigns and state-based policy initiatives.

That strategy of providing public education, training and capacity building assistance to farm groups organizing on crop specific and state-based policy initiatives has led to many successes. No new major genetically-engineered crops have been commercialized since 1996 and many states have introduced or enacted laws making biotech manufacturers liable for economic harm to farmers caused by GMO contamination, limiting the ability of biotech companies to sue farmers for patent infringement and requiring third party participation in investigations involving farmers' alleged unauthorized use of patented seed products.

Through our campaign development work we have built alliances with state and national farm groups throughout the country representing virtually all major commodity groups. With the change in Congressional leadership after the 2006 elections, Farmer to Farmer began to explore new opportunities to mobilize farmers on federal policy issues.

Last year, we led an organizing effort among farm groups to oppose provisions in the 2007 Farm Bill that would have prohibited states and local governments from enacting laws and ordinances on biotechnology issues. That successful organizing effort set the stage for a major initiative to overhaul the USDA/APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) regulatory system involving GE crops.

In his 2007 Decision in the Roundup Ready (RR) Alfalfa case, Judge Breyer condemned the USDA's regulatory processes for de-regulating GE crops as "wholly inadequate," "arbitrary and capricious" and "cavalier." Two years prior to that ruling, an Audit by the U.S. Inspector General determined that USDA's management of GE field trials was so deficient that GMO contamination was a virtual certainty. Predictably, those regulatory failures resulted in a major contamination event that cost rice producers an estimated \$1.25 billion.

Based on these regulatory failures and malfeasance, F2F decided to press for Congressional Oversight hearing/investigation to get an objective review outside the purview of the USDA and the Agriculture Committees.

In January 2008, The House Oversight Subcommittee on Domestic Policy, chaired by Rep. Kucinich, agreed to hold hearings focused on the agency's failure to comply with

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) mandates and the costs that those failures had on farmers.

Over the course of the next 3 months, F2F briefed Subcommittee Members and staff, identified farmer panelists and experts, drafted farmer testimony and raised funds to support organizing and hearing expenses.

A hearing was held on March 13. Fred Clark, former appointee to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for two past Presidents, testified that despite considerable likelihood for contamination and enormous potential for economic harm not one Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) had been ordered by the Agency in the entire history of biotech crop regulation. Even staunch pro-biotech ag economist, Dr. Colin Carter (UC-Davis), argued that lax regulation and inadequate regulatory standards and processes were largely responsible for failure in gaining worldwide consumer and market acceptance of GMOs. However, it was the farmer panelists who demonstrated the very real consequences of USDA failures in the regulation of GE crops.

Todd Leake, wheat grower and Dakota Resource Council member, testified that despite overwhelming evidence that the commercialization of RR wheat would result in contamination and the loss of most critical foreign markets and buyers, the USDA refused to order an EIS. Harvey Howington, rice grower and Board member of the Arkansas Rice Growers Association and US Rice Producers Association, testified that years of USDA Liberty Link field trial mismanagement resulted in GMO rice contamination throughout rice producing states at a cost of \$1.25 billion to rice producers, noting that the agency's oversight was so poor that they couldn't accurately determine where, when or how contamination occurred. Fred Kirschenmann, Iowa State University Professor and North Dakota organic farmer, detailed the hardship caused to organic producers through delicately balanced cropping systems and rotations necessitated by GMO varietal commercialization.

The investigation is on-going and will play a crucial role in the upcoming regulatory changes the USDA plans to propose this fall. The Chair made it clear that the hearing would not be the end of Subcommittee involvement on this issue and that "he and his staff would be living in her office" until they were satisfied with the results of their investigation and that the USDA had made the changes necessary to comply with NEPA and to protect farmers' livelihoods.

For more information, please contact Bill Wenzel, National Director of the Farmer to Farmer Campaign on Genetic Engineering at (877) 968-3276 or bwenzel2@aol.com.

Strategic Planning Update

In 2007, NFFC's Executive Committee began a strategic planning process to determine how to engage more of its membership while prioritizing its efforts and campaigns more effectively. Twenty-four board members, allies and staff met for a retreat in Chicago over a November weekend. The meeting allowed everyone to record and review NFFC's history and assess the positive and negative aspects of the Coalition. After some thoughtful soul-searching and discussion, the group agreed on some immediate steps and some longer-term goals. These included: the board taking a more active decision-making role; NFFC focusing on fewer issues; and NFFC working toward an annual cycle of evaluating accomplishments, selecting new issues and developing work plans for the coming year.

These discussions continued at the February 2008 board meeting held near Baltimore. The group approved NFFC's new Mission Statement: *NFFC unites and strengthens the voices and actions of its diverse grassroots members to demand viable livelihoods for family farmers, safe and healthy food for everyone, and economically and environmentally sound rural communities;* and NFFC's new Vision Statement: *We envision empowered communities everywhere working together democratically to advance a food and agriculture system that ensures health, justice and dignity for all. Future generations will thrive when the family farm is an economically viable livelihood supported by environmentally sustainable and socially diverse vibrant rural communities.*

Breakout sessions were held for outreach and membership, board descriptions, draft agreements, organizational issue selection and decision-making. Additional sessions allowed members to list future tasks to address cost of production, credit problems and local food sovereignty. Committees were formed around these issues, as well as for the summer meeting and the issue application.



Chukou Thao, Annette Hiatt, Charles Houston. John Peck at winter 2008 meeting; A. McFarlen photo



City Fresh Cleveland garden; M. Grassbaugh photo

Other activities at the February meeting included George Naylor stepping aside and Ben Burkett stepping up as the newly elected President. Dena Hoff was elected Vice-President; John Kinsman and Bill Christison retained their Secretary and Treasurer posts. Adam Barr and Tina Carlin were elected new at-large board members, with Joel Greeno and Bryan Wolfe maintaining their at-large posts. NFFC approved new members Farms Not Arms, the National Hmong-American Farmers, Inc. and Protect Maine Farmers.

Members also discussed some positives and negatives of current society. The concurrence of climate change, the illegal and expensive Iraq war and growing concern over our food supply make these historic times. As citizens with the freedom to express our views to the media and to demand accountability of our governments and corporations, we are encouraged to promote and engage in our work as revolutionaries, not reactionaries. The time for focus and collaboration is at hand.

NFFC held its summer board meeting June 27-29 in Cleveland among flood, farming and food crisis concerns. The days were packed with activities, starting with a tour of some of Cleveland's exemplary urban farms by City Fresh Cleveland's volunteer coordinator, Maurice Small. Afterward members and guests, including Mr. Small and Bob Gavlak from Fresh Fork Market, shared issues, stories and local organic food prepared by Nature's Bin. They were joined by Representative Dennis Kucinich (Ohio 10th congressional district) who emphasized that there are members of Congress who truly understand today's precarious economy and challenges.

The main goal of this meeting was to establish priority issues and develop the process for building their campaigns. While meeting attendees (35 people representing 16 groups) played a major role as decision-makers, the work leading up to it was done by members who had participated in the process since the February board meeting, such as the Issues Committee, who developed a process and criteria for considering the proposals. NFFC received 16 statements of interest, which were then expanded, consolidated or abbreviated to 6 full proposals. Board members spent a great deal of time writing, reviewing, discussing and selecting these proposals - their active participation is inspiring and integral to the success of these campaigns - and they voted to support the following:

- * A new campaign countering the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) while furthering a farmer-based system that advances real food safety; NFFC would work with state-based efforts and possibly identify federal opportunities. The committee will include organizational representatives from groups identified in the issue application and other interested NFFC members and allies.

- * Ongoing efforts of the Dairy Subcommittee with focus on exposing corruption in the system and the cost of production pricing;

- * The Credit Committee's emphasis on natural disasters and opportunities to bring accountability, fair services and credit access to farmers through the FSA/USDA system;

- * Reviving a Farm Policy Committee to focus on NFFC's response to the Global Food Crisis, promoting NFFC's Food from Family Farms Act as part of a long-term solution and the TRADE Act whose agricultural provisions encourage the farm and food programs NFFC supports;

- * Creating a Local Foods Committee to secure the best use possible of new farm bill provisions and existing resources to assist beginning and minority farmers, community food projects and farm-to-school programs; they will also seek to incorporate the farmer's voice into more national and international discussions.



Rep. Kucinich and Wayne Allen in Cleveland; M. Grassbaugh photo

There is more work ahead to develop campaign plans and raise funds to support these plans, but everyone is determined to strengthen the Coalition and its member groups. We look forward to the collaboration to bring farmer voices to the debate, from the local to the global level, and to affect fundamental changes in our farm and food system.

Beware of Suspect Bedfellows When Battling Food Crisis by George Naylor & Irene Lin

The question of ethanol and its role in the food crisis is one of the most divisive issues raging in the world today. Factory farm and food processing interests cry out for relief from higher grain prices while in the general population, consumers reeling from rising food costs and environmentalists questioning the benefits of corn ethanol are also raising their concerns. One important question remains unasked in the midst of all this: How low do agribusinesses want corn prices to go? If farm programs had set a price floor adjusted for inflation over the last three decades, many more sustainable family farms would be raising livestock rather than destructive factory farms and the idea of turning valuable food into fuel would seem dubious at best. Since we have no real price floor, corn prices could plummet below cost of production that would ironically then rejuvenate ethanol plants and expand factory farm livestock production while wiping out family farmers.

Within NFFC, the subject of ethanol has also provoked division, with some groups wanting an abrupt end to all ethanol subsidies and others believing biofuels offer some promise to our energy crisis. NFFC has a vital role to play as one of the few farm organizations willing to question ethanol's benefits for farmers, while making sure our arguments are distinct from anti-ethanol agribusiness interests seeking a return to \$2 cheap corn. Agribusiness's other big plan is to dismantle the Conservation Reserve Program in a futile attempt to have us grow our way out of the food crisis.

In Washington, a major schism has arisen in the big Ag community, with the National Corn Growers Association, American Farm Bureau and pro-ethanol interests battling against their normal partners-in-crime, the Grocery Manufacturers Association and livestock interests like the National Cattlemen Beef Association (NCBA) and the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC). The Bush Administration so far has sided with the pro-ethanol camp, with USDA attributing only 4% of food price increases to the increase in corn prices. Meanwhile, food processors and livestock corporations blame high corn prices and ethanol for shrinking their profits and cite a World Bank economist's estimates that 75% of the food price increase can be blamed on ethanol. The truth probably lies somewhat in between those numbers. Ethanol critics need to be wary before they jump aboard the anti-ethanol campaigns and let off the hook the real bad actors behind our food crisis.

In May 2008, it was revealed in a DC paper that the Grocery Manufacturers of America (GMA) had hired Glover Park Group, a well-connected lobbying firm, to conduct a massive 6-month PR campaign to discredit ethanol and push for eliminating the Renewable Fuel Standards that call for 36 billion gallons of ethanol by 2022 and other ethanol subsidies. GMA members include Cargill, Coca-Cola, ConAgra and many more. The PR campaign would use anti-poverty, environmental and consumers groups to help "ring the alarm about diverting so much of our food to our fuel supplies." GMA, along with the American Meat Institute, Environmental Working Group and National Chicken Council, is also behind the "Food Before Fuel" lobbying campaign that in July 2008 conducted a press conference in Boston featuring Representative James McGovern, Co-Chair of the House Hunger Caucus, denouncing ethanol mandates as behind the food crisis impacting so many hungry people in the world. Kraft Food also hired former longtime USDA economist Keith Collins to conduct a study showing 25-35% of food price increases were due to ethanol.

Other states are also taking initiative at the behest of agribusiness interests. In June 2008, Texas governor Rick Perry requested that the Environmental Protection Agency grant his state a partial waiver from the RFS mandates. Perry then met privately with EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson in July, prompting an outcry from farm state Senators who fired off a letter to EPA warning them about the consequences of having an undemocratic backroom deal decide such an important policy matter. It was also revealed

deal decide such an important policy matter. It was also revealed that Perry flew to DC at the expense of Pilgrim Pride CEO Lonnie Pilgrim. The chicken tycoon also donated \$25,000 to Perry's political committee about a month after the waiver request was made and \$100,000 to the Republican Governors Association, chaired by Perry. The EPA is now expected to make a decision in August.

It's clear that those of us farmers who have questioned the viability of ethanol, both as a mechanism for raising commodity prices and helping us wean ourselves off foreign oil, need to be very clear in making our message distinct from the agribusiness interests who are busy co-opting hunger and environmental groups. When corn was under \$2 and wheat was under \$3, we didn't hear much from the Grocery Manufacturers Association about how this was starving farmers and causing massive taxpayer bailouts to sustain the rural economy. When commodity prices collapse again, will the likes of Pilgrim's Pride and Coca-Cola lower the cost of food to reflect this fact?

Already, General Mills (makers of Yoplait yogurt and Cheerios) reported profits up 61% over the previous quarter. National Beef, one of the nation's largest beef processors, reported in July a whopping 429% increase in profits over the same time period in May. Thus, blaming higher commodity prices as the root of the food crisis means attention is shifted away from the real corporate profiteers making money off millions of hungry people. It is clear we can't count on these anti-ethanol interests to put their millions towards reviving a system of price supports and grain reserves so we could actually have stable markets that ensure people around the world have access to affordable food and ensure farmers can make a living without relying on taxpayer subsidies.

FFD Revives Solidarity Effort by John Peck

Total losses from the 2008 Midwest flooding episode are still unknown, but requests for assistance have been coming to FFD. In August 2007 when much of southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota and eastern Iowa were devastated by similar flooding, FFD quickly raised over \$5000 in relief funds that were distributed to four farmers and seven farm workers adversely affected.

Losses in Wisconsin are now estimated at \$470+ million and in Dane County alone it is estimated there is nearly \$65 million in crop damage. Much worse damage occurred in Iowa, and farmers were also affected severely in Minnesota, Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana. While larger conventional farmers have access to subsidized crop insurance, this is not true for most small-scale, organic and sustainable farmers. Many farms that suffered heavily in the flooding of August 2007 have now endured a second devastating round. While commodity speculators and the grain giants in Chicago make big bucks off the disaster, it is once again farmers (as well as consumers) who stand to suffer the most.

Those who would like to contribute to local family farm recovery efforts in the wake of the 2008 flood can send checks to Family Farm Defenders, PO Box 1772, Madison, WI 53701. Please be sure to indicate that your donation is for "flood relief" in the memo line. Since FFD is a 501 c(3) charitable organization, your gift is also tax deductible. Those in the greater Madison area are welcome to drop off donations in person at Willy St. Co-op, 1221 Williamson St. (608-251-0884). Some may recall that Willy St. Co-op raised several thousand dollars in farmer flood relief funds last year, thanks to the generosity of its members.

If you know family farmers adversely affected by this most recent flooding who could benefit from solidarity, please provide their contact info to the FFD office (608-260-0900) and we will follow-up. Farm Aid is also providing help to farmers who have been affected by the flooding and can be reached at 1-800-327-6243.

The Future of Farming: Business As Usual Is Not an Option by Molly Anderson

On April 7, as the world's newspapers carried headlines about falling grain stockpiles, soaring prices and food riots, representatives from 61 nations gathered in Johannesburg to hammer out a plan to address the underlying problems of the global food system and identify urgently needed solutions.

The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) asked: What must we do differently to overcome persistent poverty and hunger, achieve equitable and sustainable development and sustain productive and resilient farming in the face of environmental crises? The IAASTD, under the auspices of the UN, World Bank and other institutions, reviewed the work of more than 400 scientists and development experts over the past four years. Their findings sent shockwaves through the conventional agricultural establishment.

The final report (released worldwide April 12) concluded that industrial agriculture has degraded the natural resource base on which human survival depends and now threatens water, energy and climate security. The report documented the inequitable costs and benefits associated with Western agricultural practices and policies, assessed the enormous influence of transnational agribusiness over public policy, and decried the unfair global trade policies that have left more than half of the world's population malnourished.

"Business as usual is not an option," declared IAASTD Director Robert Watson, echoing the IAASTD's call for a radical transformation of the world's food and farming systems. The report, endorsed by 57 governments, warns that continued reliance on simplistic technological fixes—including transgenic crops—will not reduce persistent hunger and poverty in the world, and could exacerbate environmental problems. Reversing the severe inequities within and between societies will require grappling with the adverse impacts trade liberalization and Northern crop subsidies have had on the world's poorest countries. The report noted that ensuring food security and recognizing food sovereignty requires ending the institutional marginalization of the world's small-scale producers. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to invest in appropriate agroecological science and technologies—taking care to engage local and Indigenous knowledge through equitable, participatory processes for both small- and large-scale farming.

Environmental delegates hailed the report as a "wake-up call for governments and international agencies to act now to ensure the survival of the planet's food systems." For the first time, an independent, global assessment acknowledged that small-scale, low-impact farming offers diverse ecological and social functions that must be protected, and that nations and peoples have the right to democratically determine their own food and agricultural policies.

Though today's global food crisis has been triggered by a number of short-term factors, the deeper roots of today's crisis lie in decades of government neglect of the small-farm sector, grossly unfair trade arrangements and Northern governments' practice of dumping cheap subsidized food in developing countries.

Fortunately, the IAASTD concludes, we have options. The report clearly establishes that small-scale, agroecological farming is more efficient and less polluting than the prevailing energy- and chemical-intensive paradigm of industrial agricultural. By investing in agroecological and organic farming, we can ensure that poor farmers have control over resources and we can reduce the environmental footprint of larger-scale farm operations. We can and must create more equitable trade agreements and increase local participation in policy-formation and other decision-making processes.

The radical shifts will inevitably shake up the status quo. Indeed, two powerful multinationals, Monsanto and Syngenta, walked out of the IAASTD process in its final days, complaining that their syn-

thetic pesticides and genetically engineered products had not been properly appreciated. The US and Australia were especially upset by criticism of their trade liberalization policies.

Four of the 61 countries attending the Johannesburg plenary—Australia, Canada, the UK and US—refused to endorse the report. Just as the climate crisis is "an inconvenient truth," the IAASTD's recommendations are likely to be considered an "inconvenient truth" for the industrial/agricultural establishment and the world's dominant economies.

Pesticide Action Network is calling on the remaining four governments to quickly endorse IAASTD's innovative, science-based vision for the future and to work closely with all segments of civil society to adopt more resilient and sustainable food and farming practices. The outcome of the Johannesburg meeting is our best chance to apply the lessons of climate change to agricultural policy—and to take a decisive step towards advancing the productive, healthy and resilient farming on which our future depends.

Seven Key Findings (see <http://www.panna.org/jt/agAssessment>):

- Agriculture involves more than obtaining yields: it has multiple social, political, cultural and environmental impacts and benefits.
- The future of agriculture lies in agroecological farming practices and "triple-bottom-line" business practices that meet social, environmental and economic goals.
- Reliance on resource-extractive industrial agriculture is dangerous and unsustainable; short-term technical fixes do not address complex challenges, often augmenting socio-environmental harm.
- Achieving food security and sustainable livelihoods for people in chronic poverty depends on protecting access to and control of resources by small-scale farmers.
- Fair local, regional and global trading regimes can build local economies, reduce poverty and improve livelihoods.
- Strengthening the human and ecological resilience of agricultural systems improves our capacity to respond to changing environmental and social stresses. Indigenous knowledge and community-based innovations are an invaluable part of the solution.
- Building better governance mechanisms ensures democratic participation by the full range of stakeholders in decision-making.

Legislative and Disaster Updates

September 8-26: Congress will be in session and NFFC is urging the Senate Judiciary Committee and Senate Agriculture Committees to hold hearings on anti-trust and corruption that impact dairy farmers and access to credit.

September 16: the deadline for farmers to sign up for the new disaster program and still receive benefits even if they do not currently have crop insurance. Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc.'s website (www.flaginc.org) has their updated disaster manual to download at no charge. A bound copy is available at no cost to financially distressed Minnesota farmers by calling 877.860.4349. The charge to others is \$40 per book which may be obtained by calling FLAG's office at 651.223.5400, as can the CD version for \$10. Per a recent USDA announcement, eligible farmers and ranchers will receive funding to repair land damage created by natural disasters in 34 states since September 2007. For land to be eligible, the natural disaster must create new conservation problems that:

- if left untreated, will impair or endanger the land;
- materially affect the land's productive capacity;
- represent unusual damage that, except for wind erosion, is not of the type likely to recur frequently in the same area; and
- would be so costly to repair that federal assistance is or will be required to return the land to productive agricultural use.

Farm Bill Saga Finally Draws to an End

The never-ending Farm Bill finally saw closure in May 2008, when it overwhelmingly passed the House and Senate by veto-proof majorities. President Bush decided to veto the bill, supposedly because it did not offer enough “reform.” While NFFC certainly would agree this was a broken farm bill that only continues the status quo on commodity and dairy policy, Bush’s version of “reform” meant further deregulation and cutting out the safety net for farmers to satisfy the free trade dictates of the World Trade Organization. The Doha Round has yet to be finalized, mostly due to many countries’ displeasure with the hypocrisy of the U.S. Farm Bill that allows us to subsidize our farmers while lowering trade barriers and protection for developing countries. Meanwhile, corporate agribusiness are the real beneficiaries of such policies to pit farmers around the world against each other in a race to the bottom. Bush’s agenda could easily be seen since his USDA had proposed spending billions more in direct payments—the type of payments that are most unjustifiable in times of higher commodity prices.

Ironically, a mix-up occurred where the bill sent to the President lacked Title 3, the trade section of the Farm Bill and probably the section most supported by the Bush Administration. Due to this error on the part of House Democrats, the House and Senate had to re-vote on the measure and then re-vote to override the President’s veto.

NFFC chose not to sign onto the letter signed by 1,000 in support of the Farm Bill. We believe the Farm Bill represented a wasted opportunity to reform our farm policies from a subsidy-based system to one based on price floors and grain reserves. With the global food crisis upon us and unprecedented volatility in the commodity markets, NFFC believed continuing with the status quo would be disastrous for farmers in the US and around the world who are suffering from dumping and displacement as a result of our farm bill.

There were incremental improvements made to help fund organic, conservation, local food and diversity initiatives, but the underlying bill continues to favor industrial agriculture models at the expense of family farmers and rural communities.

LOSSES:

No Grain Reserves: Congress refused to revive our grain reserves and the Farmer-Owned Reserve. Since the 1996 Farm Bill eliminated all government-held reserves for commodities, NFFC has warned that this put our food system in severe jeopardy. With the global food crisis upon us, implementing grain reserves now is just as urgent a necessity for the U.S. to have as the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Without the reserve, farmers never knew how low prices would go and had to rely on taxpayer subsidies for the past few years as prices fell far short of their cost of production. By letting prices fluctuate without any price floor or government reserves, the Farm Bill only heightens economic uncertainty for both family farmers and consumers in an already precarious economy.

Dairy Pricing: NFFC’s Dairy Subcommittee worked tirelessly to alert Congress to the dire state of the dairy industry. Despite an increase in milk income loss contract (MILC) payments tied to a feed adjuster, the farm bill does nothing to address a broken dairy pricing system prone to manipulation and corruption, and included a harmful forward contracting provision.

ACRE Program: The new Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program being offered in the Farm Bill ties subsidies to revenues instead of prices. Though some may see this as a better deal for farmers, the ACRE program would offer virtually no safety net should prices become depressed for several years, as occurred after the disastrous 1996 Freedom to Farm Act. Any assumption that “high prices are here to stay forever” ignores decades of history and the lessons of the 1980s Farm Crisis that occurred after the 1970s export boom. It is akin to the misguided mentality that caused our current mortgage foreclosure crisis, where the underlying assumption was “housing prices will always increase.”

Packer Ban: As occurred in the 2002 Farm Bill, the ban forbidding packers from also owning livestock was included in the Senate Farm Bill, but ultimately dropped in conference committee due to the loud opposition of the meatpackers. With the proposed JBS Swift merger, the packer ban was more urgently needed than ever.

WINS:

Livestock Title: The Farm Bill contains the first-ever livestock title that will provide some much needed protections for independent ranchers and farmers raising livestock under contract. Provisions include preventing mandatory arbitration clauses for livestock/poultry contracts; allowing a three-day period to cancel contracts; and requiring contracts to disclose the requirement of large capital investments. Though Congress did not include an Office of Special Counsel within USDA to deal with enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards Act (PSA), the Farm Bill requires USDA to report annually on its investigations into violations of the PSA and directs USDA to define “undue pricing preferences” so that unjust pricing practices do not unfairly discriminate against small and independent livestock producers.

Diversity Initiative: The Farm Bill gives significant recognition to the importance of minority and socially disadvantaged farmers. There are specific targets for minority and socially disadvantaged farmer participation in conservation, farm credit, Value Added Producer Grants and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Programs. Minority Outreach and Education (Section 2501) authorized in the 1990 farm bill receives for the first time mandatory funding at \$75 million over 4 years. This competitive grant program to community-based organizations and educational institutions helps minority and socially disadvantaged farmers access USDA programs through effective outreach programs. Additionally, there is language halting foreclosure on minority farms that may have resulted from discrimination and allowing more qualifying black farmers to file for the Pigford settlement if they were unable to the first time.

Country-of-Origin Labeling and Interstate Meat Shipment: The Farm Bill includes language to implement long-awaited COOL requirements for produce, beef, pork, chicken, lamb and goat that will go into effect in September 2008. COOL was included in the 2002 Farm Bill, but food industry, USDA and meatpackers’ opposition have delayed its implementation. There are also provisions allowing for the interstate shipment of state-inspected beef that meets federal inspection standards. Both of these policies represent victories for consumers and farmers aiming to rebuild local food systems.

Food Aid Pilot Program: \$25 million for purchases of food aid in the recipient country, not shipped from the US.

Farm Bill Saga Finally Draws to an End (cont.)

Community Food Projects and Geographic Preferences: The Farm Bill provides \$5 million in mandatory annual funding for innovative Community Food Projects for matching grants to community groups building sustainable local food systems addressing hunger, nutrition, and meeting food security goals. There is new statutory language clearly stating that preference can be given to local purchasing of agriculture products for schools serving meals that receive federal assistance, resolving a conflict in USDA's interpretation of the 2002 farm bill.

GMO Oversight: New mandates to strengthen USDA oversight of GMO crops will help prevent the disaster that occurred when an unauthorized GM rice strain entered the US rice crop and caused massive losses to export markets. The new regulatory framework will reduce the potential for future GMO contamination events at field trial test sites.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: The Farm Bill provides \$75 million over 4 years in mandatory money for competitive grants to groups providing technical assistance and other services to beginning farmers and ranchers. This program was created in the 2002 Farm Bill but was never funded.

Permanent Disaster Program: The new \$3.8 billion permanent disaster relief fund is important to ensure timely funding for natural disasters. NFFC is still concerned that minority, socially disadvantaged, limited resource and organic farmers will not have access to the funds.

Local Food Initiatives: \$33 million in mandatory funds for the Farmers Market Promotion Program, \$56 million for the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and \$1.2 billion to expand the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program that will enable 3 million children across the country to have access to healthier food options.

Via Campesina: *On the road to Mozambique*

Our farmer organizations have had a busy year planting seeds for success at the V International Conference of the Via Campesina in Mozambique, October 16-23, an anticipated event held only once every five years. Via Campesina North America (LVC NA) worked hard hosting the International Women's Commission (IWC) in Canada and the Regional meeting of US, Canadian and Mexican organizations.

The IWC was held April 23-26 in Toronto with the National Farmers Union of Canada. Women farmer leaders from eight countries gathered to strategize on key issues for women: gender parity, leadership development and empowerment; and women as stewards of the land and seeds. The commission defined plans for the III Assembly of Women to be held in Maputo. A blueprint for the Stop Violence Against Women campaign is being circulated and will hopefully launch at the V Conference.

North American organizations held their preparation meeting April 26-29 in Ottawa, hosted by the NFU and the Union Paysanne. Farmer leaders from the 13 regional organizations assumed new commission responsibilities and renewed current representation to the International Coordinating Committee of LVC: Dena Hoff of the NFFC and Northern Plains Resource Council, and Alberto Gomez of UNORCA, Mexico. The organizations built on processes to plan high level promotion of food sovereignty, mobilize against NAFTA and DOHA and construct solutions for the current food crisis.

Farmer leaders in Ottawa agreed to fight NAFTA and the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), currently being pushed into law by the three heads of state and big-business representatives. The peasant organizations recognize SPP as a continuation of NAFTA's failed model which adds a distinct military aspect to unpopular trade policies. Leaders plan to uncover more information about this undemocratic process, which will promote the privatization of national and regional security through contracts to private paramilitary operations, including border militarization, like those started along the Mexican border near Tijuana and other places in Texas.

The Border Agricultural Workers' Union will organize a 60-mile march against the border 'wall of shame' starting August 25, with allies from the southwest US and Mexico. Regional groups also plan to mobilize against plans to build a 'NAFTA superhighway', which would stretch from southern Mexico through Wisconsin up to Canada, potentially displacing communities and family farmers in its path. LVC and UNORCA have hosted workshops and public forums on the current political climate, the food crisis and food sovereignty. In early October Peasant leaders from across Mexico will converge on Mexico City in a final National Forum on the Food Crisis and Food Sovereignty before the send-off to Mozambique.

Our farmer leaders have represented LVC NA in many important places. Dena Hoff, Alberto Gomez and Ubali Guerrero of UNORCA Mexico joined other LVC leaders in June at the emergency FAO meeting in Rome. Civil society was practically uninvited to the formal sessions, but Via Campesina was involved in side meetings with governments, public forums, press work and protests to denounce official efforts to promote the same failed trade policies undermining food sovereignty for the past 20 years.

Food sovereignty initiatives on behalf of LVC organizations have never been as vibrant, or as necessary. South East Asian ICC members Mr. Saragih and Ms. Yoon mobilized an important delegation of Asian farmers (many of whom were detained upon entry) to the G-8 Summit held in Japan this July. There the world's most powerful government leadership met and displayed little conviction for solving the pressing issues of energy, climate and food crises. When the third DOHA Round finally arrived and collapsed in Geneva, a poignant LVC delegation was there, while two more progressive meetings were convened in Spain and Nicaragua.

As things heat up in anticipation of Mozambique, starting with the Youth Assembly on October 16, the various entities of LVC can be sure that their delegates will make it an exciting and fruitful V International Conference. Via Campesina is due for a great harvest in October, as the movement for Food Sovereignty and a cool planet gains momentum.

(For more information on Via Campesina's regional and international work, visit <http://viacampesina.org> or contact Jessica Roe at jroe@nffc.net.)

News Briefs

NFFC has played a central role in two key organizing efforts recently: 1.) Sending a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee requesting oversight and investigation into the corruption of Dairy Farmers of America, the largest US "co-op" that has been betraying farmers for decades; 2.) Instigating and coordinating the first group letter to Congress protesting NAIS and any linkage to the School Lunch program.

Dairy

After revelations of an illegal \$1 million payment from the former DFA CEO to the DFA Board president spurred coverage on America's largest dairy cooperative in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, our Dairy Subcommittee organized a letter signed by 25 organizations in July 2008 to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee asking for DFA oversight. Since the Department of Justice refuses to make public its 2-year antitrust investigation into DFA, NFFC members believed the Senate had a responsibility to crack down on Daft's enormous corruption and harm to America's dairy farmers. The letter to the Senate generated press coverage in several newspapers across the country, including a front-page business story in the *Kansas City Star*. NFFC's Dairy Subcommittee is excited at the momentum generated towards finally exposing DFA and their cronies Dean Food, DMS and others.

NAIS

Since 2005, grassroots opposition to the USDA's National Animal Identification System (NAIS) has been growing more vocal and intense across rural America. Until now, most organizing efforts have been scattered and local- and state- based. In June 2008, House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee chair Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) announced she would include a provision requiring that the federal School Lunch Program purchase meat only from sources in NAIS. NFFC and the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance generated a letter to Congress in a first-time nationwide effort to register opposition to NAIS. Over 80 groups signed letters to House and Senate Appropriations protesting the linkage. NFFC also issued a group press release and placed an op-ed in newspapers. Rep. David Obey's staff has since met with NFFC to discuss our objections to the NAIS program. At the Summer Meeting NFFC members decided to make NAIS a priority issue and began building off these initial efforts to coordinate a campaign to stop NAIS.

Other efforts against NAIS have taken hold. Attorney and farmer Mary Zanoni filed a lawsuit to prevent USDA from shielding all NAIS data under the Privacy Act. In June USDA was forced to stop its efforts to convert the database, which would have prevented farmers from learning if they were unknowingly enrolled in NAIS. Another lawsuit is pending from the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund in US District Court against USDA and the Michigan Department of Agriculture for an injunction to stop the implementation of NAIS at either the state or federal levels by any state or federal agency. The suit will charge that NAIS has never performed an Environmental Impact Statement as required by the National Environmental Policy Act and violates other regulations. R-CALF USA also in July sent a letter to the Senate and House Government Oversight Committees asking them to investigate NAIS and USDA's heavy-handed implementation tactics.



John Kinsman Farm, WI; Troy Freund photo

Critical Reports Expose Perils of CAFOs

Family farmers have always known that CAFOs are bad for communities, consumers and the environment. With the recent release of two major reports blasting CAFOs for their recklessness, the harm they inflict on America by factory farms will hopefully become common knowledge.

In its report, 'CAFOs Uncovered--The Untold Costs of Confined Animal Feeding Operations,' the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) argues that CAFOs have externalized a huge portion of their costs to American taxpayers. The Pew Commission's major report, "Putting Meat on the Table--Industrial Farm Animal Production in America," illustrates CAFOs' detrimental effects on public health, the environment, animal welfare and rural communities.

According to UCS, CAFOs make up only 5% of US animal operations, yet produce more than 50% of our food animals. Many assume that the proliferation of CAFOs is a natural result of their 'efficiency' and reduced costs, but these reports show that CAFOs are not significantly more efficient than other farms. USDA studies show that nearly 40% of medium-sized animal feeding operations (AFOs) are roughly as cost-effective as the average large hog CAFO. Other means of animal production, like hog hoop barns, can be even more effective than CAFOs. CAFOs have not proliferated due to market forces or low costs, but to their ability to push their expenses onto other aspects of society and avoid responsibility for their damage.

When CAFOs clean up after themselves, they often exploit government funding to remove their messes. UCS suggests that CAFOs received \$125 million in EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) subsidies in 2007. EQIP was meant to help smaller farms reduce their pollution, but criteria prioritizing programs like manure disposal have caused CAFOs to receive favor over pasture-based farms.

Meanwhile, the agency in charge of protecting free markets, USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyard Administration (GIPSA), sits by while anti-trust laws are repeatedly violated. Processors now own or acquire by contract the large majority of the livestock they process, excluding smaller producers from the market. GIPSA officials have repeatedly interfered with investigation by the Government Accountability Office since 2000, and failed to implement many important agreed-upon improvements.

The Pew Commission makes six major recommendations: phase out the non-therapeutic use of antimicrobials; improve disease monitoring and tracking (an unfortunate endorsement for NAIS); improve Industrial Farm Animal Production regulation; phase out intensive confinement; increase competition in the livestock market; and improve research in animal agriculture.

UCS proposes enforcement of anti-trust laws under Packers and Stockyards Act; enforcement of Clean Water Act and development of new regulations; continued monitoring and reporting of ammonia and hydrogen sulfide emissions; replacement of farm bill commodity crop subsidies with subsidies strengthening conservation programs and support prices when supplies are high (rather than allowing prices to fall below the cost of production); reducing EQIP project cap to levels appropriate to smaller farms; revising slaughterhouse regulations; and providing enough funding for research to improve alternative animal production methods.

For the Pew Commission report see: <http://www.ncifap.org>; for the UCS report see: http://ucsusa.org/food_and_environment/sustainable_food/cafos-uncovered.html.

Interview with Raj Patel

NFFC summer intern, Rebecca Kanter, queries author and activist Raj Patel; the complete interview may be read at our website:

What drove you to write *Stuffed & Starved*?

I have been into the anti-globalization movement for decades. In 1999 I attended the WTO meetings in Seattle and was absolutely moved by Via Campesina and their struggle for a better world, then started working for Food First in 2002 and made the connection between Via Campesina and urban areas--tremendously disconnected from agricultural policies yet mediated by powerful corporate agribusiness.

The release of *Stuffed & Starved* eerily preceded the global food crisis. What do you make of the recommendations from the recent June FAO Summit in Rome and the G8 Conference in Japan for relevant financial institutions, like World Bank and IMF, to assist developing countries with agricultural production, food stocks and a new WTO Doha Round? They also suggested increased private sector investment in science and technology for food and agriculture; liberalizing international agricultural trade by reducing trade barriers and market-distorting policies; and addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by biofuels.

These are just RE-statements and RE-newals of the same policies. This is a crisis from which big corporations profit and agriculture is dying. With these statements, the corporate agenda continues and the U.S. government just gets deeper into the pockets of corporations who have wrestled their way into the solution rather than the problem.

Right now, agricultural policy is a war of experts and corporations as farmers are left to twist in the wind. There needs to be an active, democratic debate that includes family farmers/peasants because they are the ones who live or die by these decisions. Conventional industrial agriculture is now much less viable; with the increasing oil prices, it is NOT efficient.

The reason people go hungry is because they are poor--genetically modified seeds and organisms will not solve that. We need serious social policy so working Americans can afford healthy food. Agroecological sustainability, where the entire ecology of the environment is incorporated, is imperative. Support for agricultural production and infrastructure, such as building soil fertility, is also important. Permaculture does not depend on oils and it is a tough sell to small farmers, but there are more and more farmers being successful at it. Educating consumers that fresh food will cost more and respect for the reality of family farmers are needed, as well as agricultural support that protects small US farmers. We also need grain reserves and to change US foreign policy; we need to think about how US agriculture does or does not affect other countries, what we do with a surplus when we have one.

Could you comment on the report you worked on that looked at the failed effects of the World Bank's view of agricultural support?

I was involved for a month with a report called "Voices of the Poor," which was window dressing for the World Bank--it was a public relations catastrophe. World Bank was to be the only interpreter of what the poor wanted. Via Campesina countered that beautifully.

The World Bank wants to destroy peasants and believes that the market is the only solution to making agriculture efficient. South Africa is the World Bank poster child for agriculture reform. However, since apartheid, less than five percent of land has been transferred from whites to blacks, because 'the market is the only solution to inequality.'

In the book you recognized family farmers around the world; do you have anything you want to say to them right now?

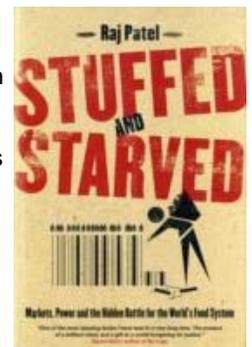
I would say, 'Thank you. I would not be able to eat if it was not for you.' I try to make my gratitude for family farmers known as much as possible, especially when I purchase my food from my local farmers markets. I also want them to know not just how they can contribute to making our food system better through changes on their farm, but how they would envision building bridges with the urban low-income population. There is still very much a rural poor and urban poor divide in the US. It is hard to have a conversation about food sovereignty when this is the case, as urban people also do not realize where their food comes from. I do not know how best to help this urban-rural poor divide, but I am very curious to know what they think and how we further the food sovereignty discussion.

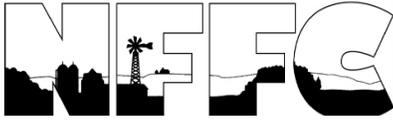
While you lay out ten things readers can do at the end of *Stuffed & Starved* (Transform our tastes; Eat locally and seasonally; Eat agroecologically; Support locally owned businesses; All workers have the right to dignity; Profound and comprehensive rural change; Living wages for all; Support for a sustainable architecture of food; Snapping the food system's bottleneck; Owning and providing restitution for the injustices of the past and present), what if they think that buying an organic product from Whole Foods is good enough?

It is a very American delusion that we create together by shopping; there is no way we are going to shop our way out of the global food crisis. I hope people realize that we must take direct action and just how effective it can be to fighting agriculture policies.

Book Review

Stuffed & Starved by Raj Patel is a broad evaluation of the global food system, carefully outlining the two sides of the food-scale, consumers and distributors. His focused attention on family farmers as the central balancing component to this food-scale and the plight inflicted upon them as they are continuously pulled in either direction is what makes *Stuffed & Starved* an important contribution to the current discussion of the global food system. The infamous multinational The United Fruit Company (now Chiquita) was called '*El Pulpo*' (the octopus) by Guatemalans. While Patel does not name names, he makes clear that '*El Pulpo*' of today's global food system is corporations in general. Furthermore, both the market and free trade drive the significant reconstruction and consolidation of the global food system into mono-culture crops owned by a handful of large agribusinesses. He eloquently equates the collapse of family farms worldwide to the collapse of the heart and emotions of the farmer him/herself and a collapse of the ability to obtain local food. Patel also addresses the strong impact on a consumer or a farmer of food, or both; nutrition-related chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease affect us all. '*El Pulpo*' of the food system very much extends its reach to the everyday lives of people trying to eat what tastes and feels good, yet within their economic means and time constraints. Doing so produces either stuffed or starved people, and this has come at the expense of the freedom and food security we have long enjoyed. While we may live among supermarkets and farms and are temporarily quieted by our favorite 'comfort foods,' Patel's *Stuffed & Starved* is a ray of hope in the dark cloud of '*El Pulpo*,' holding the main entities accountable, while urging us, the consumers, to pump the life back into not just family farms (by supporting CSAs, for example), but farmers themselves who must not give up in their fight against '*El Pulpo*.'





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First Class

**Support Family
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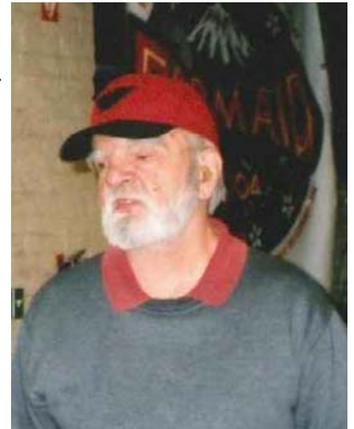
Remembering Al Krebs by Kathy Ozer

The loss of Al Krebs - his voice, his work and his fervor to change the direction of agriculture - has been greatly felt this past year. He would be analyzing the corporate agribusinesses whose practices and policies of a free trade agenda have contributed to the global food crisis while simultaneously profiting from it. As groups discuss the response to the food crisis, I think of Al's annual Thanksgiving menu listing the corporations that had bought up the companies who produced the traditional foods, from dressing to turkey. His goal was to keep the concentration and control of the food supply in the public eye. In my last phone conversation with him from his hospital bed in September 2007, he wanted to know who should be the next Secretary of Agriculture.

In addition to 40 years of tracking corporate agribusiness and their outrageous actions, Al had a love for baseball and for Farm Aid. He would attend a concert and catch the local baseball team in action. Farm Aid will be held in Boston in September; I can imagine the conversations with Al on how to get there by train, be in the media tent and have a chance to see the Red Sox.

Al was also a huge proponent of rights for laborers of all sort - farmers, migrant farmworkers, union - it didn't matter. He had such a strong sense of fairness and justice for all people, and particularly for people responsible for taking care of the rest of humanity.

NFFC misses his voice, his work tracking the press and corporations, and his presence. Al's death left a big gap in the movement. In October 2007, an obituary ran in the Washington Post that told more of Al's story. It can be found on our website at <http://www.nffc.net/Pressroom/page-pressroom.htm>.



Al Krebs at Farm Aid, Seattle, 2004



Speaking of the NFFC website...

If you have not visited the NFFC website recently, take a look. With the help of our summer interns - Jonna McKone, Margie Miller and Rebecca Kanter (seen here left to right with Community Food Security Coalition intern David Mann) - our site is updated and current with press releases, letters to the editor, op-eds and letters to Congress available. You will also find "newsletter extras", the video of Rep. Dennis Kucinich speaking at our summer board meeting and more information on our issues and campaigns.