

Report (long version) Workshop A3 The effects of the free trade treaty between the US and the EU on agriculture and our food (TTIP) – Food Otherwise Conference – 21 February 2014 with 90-100 attendees

Speakers: Paul de Clerck (Friends of the Earth Europe), Burghard Ilge (BothENDS), Hanny van Geel (European Coordination Via Campesina) Moderator/ report: Guus Geurts (XminY)

The large number of people in the audience was proof that people are very concerned about the negative effects of TTIP, but it is a very complex issue so a lot of awareness-raising about the details is necessary. By this TTIP-threat 'trade' is back on the agenda, for example at Friends of the Earth Europe 4 employees have been working on this subject since last year.

Biggest threats of TTIP for food and agriculture:

- The proposals are agri-business driven, multinationals influence the agenda by close relations with the European Commission, the same is happening in the US.
- Protection of European farming by tariffs is decreased, especially harmful in the animal husbandry sector.
- *Regulatory coherence* i.e. 'harmonising regulations' between EU and EU by a proposed Regulatory Cooperation Council, consisting of unelected bureaucrats (civil servants) influenced by agribusiness. Current social, environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards are threatened to be lowered and future improvements are prohibited by these undemocratic structures. The goal is to set global standards.
- *Mutual recognition* of standards; US can export food products which conform to the US-law but not the EU-law, leading to unfair competition, and a race to the bottom.
- There will be huge pressure on the EU to leave regulation on the basis of the *precautionary principle*. The pressure to allow growing GMO-crops will increase, labelling-schemes and traceability schemes of food will be attacked.
- *Investor to State Dispute Settlement (ISDS)*; US investors (and EU companies with a postal box in the US) can sue European member states - at an unelected court - if their new social- or environmental regulation leads to lower profits - even if this is just anticipated profits. This will lead to the chilling effect of governments that are afraid to increase environmental , animal welfare or social standards.
- The aim to strengthen protection and enforcement of '*intellectual property rights*', which could impede our rights to access to seeds, health and free expression.
- Local food initiatives between consumers and farmers will be attacked by new regulation on *public procurement*.

Free trade in general and TTIP are especially harmful for small scale farmers in Europe (average farm: 12 hectares). The process of ever larger (factory) farms with a high use of inputs, long distance transport etc. will be enhanced. This is the current model in US (average 180 hectare). Via Campesina wants WTO, TTIP and all other FTAs out of agriculture, and wants a policy based on food sovereignty.

Main conclusions:

- With a TTIP-FTA deal between US and the EU it's impossible to reach a just and ecological food supply in Europe.
- If we are successful in informing and mobilizing civil society, NGOs, farmers' organizations and trade unions, we will win this time and stop TTIP!

In the plenary session on Saturday Sieta van Keimpema from the Dutch Dairymen Board and European European Milkboard referred to TTIP as an assault to family farming and democracy in general. She emphasised that all attendants should remember 'TTIP'. In the same plenary venue Leen Laenens referred to a quote of GG in the workshop: 'After struggling for twelve years for a just and ecological agricultural and trade policy, and losing every battle, this time we will win.'

Next steps:

- Organisations only can sign a declaration for more transparency about the TTIP-negotiations: <http://www.earthwatchmedia.org/call-for-organisations-act-sign-civil-society-call-transparency-ttip-negotiations/>
- At www.bilaterals.org a Joint Statement against TTIP will be published, this can be endorsed by organisations.
- At [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/stoptafta) you can join (like) the 'Stop TAFTA' - page.
- At 7 April 3 pm a strategy meeting will be organised about the TTIP-campaign; if you would like to join contact guusgeurts@yahoo.com
- At 23 April from 19 to 22 o'clock an European election debate with MEP's will be organised about among others TTIP and ATM at the Brakke Grond in Amsterdam (by TNI, BothEnds, SOMO).
- In the beginning of May a similar debate will be organised around ATM, TTIP, agriculture and food, more information: guusgeurts@yahoo.com
- Important announcements: at 'Voedsel Anders/Food Otherwise' -page on facebook.

For more information:

- Seattle to Brussels Network - A Brave New Transatlantic Partnership: <http://corporateeurope.org/trade/2013/10/brave-new-transatlantic-partnership-social-environmental-consequences-proposed-eu-us>
- Friends of the Earth Europe: Trading away our future?: http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/foee_briefing_ttip_oct13.pdf
- FOEE - EU-US trade deal: A bumper crop for 'big food'?: http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/foee_iatp_factsheet_ttip_food_oct13.pdf
- John Hilary: The TTIP – A charter for deregulation, an attack on jobs, an end to democracy: http://rosalux.gr/sites/default/files/publications/ttip_web.pdf