

Subject: [globalization] Free Trade vs. Small Farmers | Blood Money

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Free Trade vs. Small Farmers

By Walden Bello

Today, perhaps the greatest threat to small farmers is free trade. And the farmers are fighting back. They have helped, for instance, to stalemate the Doha round of negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This tug of war between farmers and free trade is nowhere more visible than in Asia.

Practically all Asian countries with agricultural sectors tightly controlled imports via quotas and high tariffs. This protective shield, however, was severely eroded when countries signed the Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) and began joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) starting in 1995. As farmer incomes declined, farmer organizations began to resist.

Since its founding, Via Campesina -- literally translated as the Peasants' Path -- has become known as one of the most militant opponents of the WTO and bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements. While there are other international farmers' networks, Via is distinguished by its position that small farmers must not only fight to survive in the current global system of corporate-dominated industrial farming, they should lead the process to transform or replace the current system.

Walden Bello is Executive Director of Focus on the Global South, a Bangkok-based research and advocacy institute, and a Professor of Sociology at the University of the Philippines at Diliman. A longer version of this piece comes out in the April 2007 issue of Global Asia. It is republished with permission.

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Blood Money: U.S. Bank Funds Korean Project That Will Destroy Native Community

By Daphne Wysham

POSCO, the world's fourth-largest steel company, has been accused of marshaling police who jailed and beat striking union members -- one to death -- in its home country of South Korea, and it now stands poised to engage in even more violent tactics in India's eastern state of Orissa.

There, in the coastal village of Jagatsinghpur, farmers have railed against eviction orders for the past 22 months. Today, over 1,000 Indian officers -- 20 platoons -- of state police have encircled the villages where the POSCO site is planned in an attempt to repress the growing resistance. Farmers have formed "self-sacrifice squads" -- 500 men and women are prepared to die rather than move. Today, the Jagatsinghpur villagers have barricaded themselves behind bamboo fences in a desperate bid to protect their land.

Daphne Wysham is a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., where she is the director of the [Sustainable Energy & Economy Network](#).

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