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A Brief History of Work on Regional Integration in North America

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Agriculture and the Global Economy

Agriculture policy has undergone major upheavals in the last decade. Not long ago, nations operated under the assumption that each would implement the policies that would best protect its national interest. Countries determined which crops were critical for domestic consumption and national food security, which commodities should be targeted for export to earn foreign exchange and win political allies, and what kinds of domestic incentive programs and import restrictions were necessary to ensure the viability of national production. Rules that governed the global agriculture economy, though often violated, provided for sanctions against export dumping, or sales of commodities on the world market at prices below the cost of production. They allowed countries that controlled the volumes of production of key commodities to restrict imports. These policies helped ensure adequate food supplies while paying farmers an adequate price.

Farm organizing conformed to this domestic agriculture policy focus. Farmers around the world organized themselves into regional and national organizations to become more effective in their efforts to ensure that national policies reflected their interests. In North America, farmers worked for the passage of legislation that would maintain adequate prices and conserve land resources. In Latin America, peasant farmers organized to gain access to land and negotiated with their governments for access to credit, inputs and markets, relying on their power to mobilize citizens for bargaining strength.

The global economy has changed. So have the rules that govern it. The locus of authority on many key agriculture issues has shifted beyond national borders and beyond the organizational vision of most farm leaders. Today an increasing number of global agencies and institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the IMF, have broad new powers. The North American Free Trade Agreement and the Free Trade Area of the Americas, if implemented, will change the ways national economies in the Americas function.

In Latin America, structural adjustment policies imposed by international agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have led to the withdrawal of governments from the provision of credit and other support to farmers, leaving them unprotected in a global marketplace they don't understand and in which they will face stiff competition. Crops produced by peasant farmers in Latin America are the very products that suffer from competition with cheaper sources on the global market: basic grains, coffee, poultry, feeder cattle, forest products, and dairy.

In the northern part of the hemisphere, although the United States dominates global commodity trade, its family farmers for years went bankrupt, unable to meet their costs of production with the artificially low prices set by export-oriented U.S. farm policy. Suddenly, global grain shortages and high prices have brought prices up to the levels grain farmers had been seeking--but without the careful construction of market stabilizing mechanisms farmers had sought, thus making consumers vulnerable to agriculture market volatility and creating the conditions for a new cycle of careless over-production.

The globalization of policymaking poses a new challenge for agriculture organizations. Most groups in the Americas have not yet acquired an understanding of the dynamics, timing or even the stakes involved in these global processes. Focused on the demands of our own immediate agendas, many farm leaders and agriculture policy analysts have not focused sufficient attention on the decisions of distant international bodies. Many of us continue to chart our course on an increasingly out-dated map. If we are to remain relevant and effective organizations working to promote strong rural communities and civil societies, we must engage in the new global policy debate.

RIAD in North America

The Inter-American Network for Agriculture and Democracy (RIAD) was formed to develop a network of relationships among farm leaders and agriculture policy centers to face the challenges presented by our globalizing economies and to work to create viable alternatives for peasant and family farmers and indigenous communities.

RIAD's work in North America has been focused on two primary areas: sustainable food security and regional integration. This paper focuses on the work on regional integration carried out by members of RIAD in North America.

At the time RIAD was founded in the spring of 1992, the groundwork for our work in North America had already been laid through an emerging partnership between what was to become the Center for the Study of Change in Rural Mexico (CECCAM) and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). Luis Meneses and Arturo Garcia, both present at the founding meeting of RIAD, are among the co-founders of CECCAM, along with Victor Suarez, Ana de Ita and Luis Hernandez. They created CECCAM in 1992 to contribute information, analysis, and policy proposals to the debate on agricultural modernization in Mexico.

Karen Lehman of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), also present at the founding meeting of RIAD and member of the Grupo de Animacion Continental, has coordinated the work on regional integration in the United States. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy was organized in 1986 to alert citizen groups, especially those involved in sustainable agriculture and family farming issues, to the importance of international economic policymaking institutions, and to provide these organizations with the information, skills, and access they need to influence global decision-making.

Before we began our work, most of the connections between farm organizations occurred on one side of the U.S.-Mexico border or the other, but rarely crossed it. Occasionally, farm leaders from the U.S. and Canada attended meetings in Latin America, and Latin American farm leaders, particularly from Central America, visited the North. Many of these relationships were established under the rubric of solidarity. War in Central America and the role U.S. aid played in those conflicts generated a range of solidarity organizations that not only worked for change in U.S. policy, but also provided direct assistance through humanitarian aid and work brigades to those struggling countries.

With the advent of the NAFTA debate, a new era of cross-border organizing began. Unlike the solidarity efforts that were characterized by northerners standing together in support of the struggles of Latin Americans, the new emphasis on neoliberal economic policy has created a partnership of concerned citizen groups facing similar problems and seeking solutions. For the first time, the north-south dichotomy has shifted to a concern about global policy. This shift, while generating much soul searching, has also opened a space for expanded citizen-based multilateralism.

In the fall of 1991, IATP and leaders of what was soon to become CECCAM organized the first Trinational Exchange on Agriculture and Environment in Mexico City. This gathering of over 50 representatives of farming and environmental organizations from Mexico, the U.S. and Canada examined the implications of economic integration for agriculture and the environment. It followed other trinational meetings we had organized on dairy and forestry. This collaboration provided the base for RIAD's work in North America. (In Canada, the National Farmers Union, Dairy Farmers of Canada, and Oxfam Canada have participated in and sponsored significant exchanges with groups in Mexico, Central America, and the U.S. Much of the work organized by CECCAM and IATP included Canadian collaboration. For the purposes of this paper, however, we will focus on the U.S.-Mexico work on regional integration because the impacts are most strongly felt in this binational context.)

Regional Integration in North America

Our work on regional integration in North America is divided into two distinct periods: pre- and post-NAFTA. Much of our work during the first phase centered on building relationships across borders and developing shared analyses of NAFTA's impacts on peasant and family farm agriculture. We developed a program to increase North American farm organizations' capacity to understand the global economy, monitor its domestic impacts, develop policy alternatives to benefit family farms, and cooperate with similar organizations to increase the possibility that these policies be implemented. Our strategy relied on strengthening and expanding existing agriculture networks in North America through farm leader exchanges, policy meetings, and information services.

Throughout the NAFTA debate, members of RIAD expressed strong reservations about NAFTA's agriculture provisions and their possible impacts on peasant and family farmers. Several key issues emerged. Land reforms instituted by the post-revolutionary Mexican constitution were eliminated by constitutional changes deemed necessary by the Mexican government to prepare Mexico for free trade. Key sectors of Mexican agriculture, most notably basic grains and forestry, were opened up to imports, despite protests by Mexican farmers' organizations. We predicted that these policy changes would erode food security and result in increased migration from the land.

Our work shifted in the post-NAFTA period to address the unforeseen consequences of economic integration, as well as those we had predicted. Critical as we had been of the agriculture provisions of NAFTA, our worst-case scenario was a pale shadow of the actual outcome. On the day NAFTA took effect, poor indigenous people in Chiapas, many of them small-scale coffee producers whose incomes had been decimated by the destruction of the International Coffee Agreement, invoked the name of Emiliano Zapata as they mobilized in a modern peasant uprising. One year after NAFTA went into effect, the Mexican peso went into a tailspin, provoking an unprecedented loss of confidence in the global economic system and producing currency devaluations in other Latin American countries.

Our capacity to work on regional integration issues was greatly enhanced by two grants from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation which permitted us to sponsor a

series of meetings, policy residencies and exchanges over the past four years. More than 2,000 farmers and agriculture policymakers were able to meet their counterparts from other countries and, as a result, the debate on agriculture policy and economic integration grew to incorporate the concerns of peasant and family farm agriculture within and beyond national borders.

The NAFTA Debate (1991-1993)

At the time the NAFTA debate on agriculture was initiated, ideas circulating among farmers' organizations in the U.S. and Mexico were very different from those expressed after several years of working together. Mexican farmers were being told by their government that they could no longer be protected from competition with U.S. farmers, and that heavy subsidies to U.S. agriculture were the major stumbling blocks to their being able to enter the global marketplace. U.S. farmers feared that low wages in Mexico would make Mexican agricultural products much cheaper than U.S. products.

These perspectives could have led farmers' organizations to press for policies that would ultimately have resulted in damaging the future of family farm agriculture in each country. Our task was to work to find common ground and a common set of policy objectives that could be promoted on both sides of the border.

We began by working to introduce leaders of major farm organizations to the reality of agriculture across the border. During the two years prior to NAFTA's passage, we organized more than a dozen exchanges, meetings and policy residencies to provide peasant and family farm leaders with a broader perspective on agriculture in North America. Organizations involved included the Nebraska Farmers Union, Kansas Farmers Union, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Farmers Organization, American Corn Growers, and National Family Farm Coalition in the U.S., and the National Union of Autonomous Regional Peasant Organizations (UNORCA) and the National Union of Agriculture Workers (UNTA) in Mexico.

The purpose of these exchanges was to educate key leaders in agriculture organizations in the three countries in the most rapid and effective way possible about the realities of the political and productive infrastructures of counterpart countries. Our goal was to ensure that they had the tools and information they needed to work in their national political arenas to effect change. Averaging 5 days, exchanges included meetings on agriculture and trade policy, visits with farm families to see production techniques and lifestyles, and interviews with press and policy-makers in the host country. (See Appendix for a complete list of exchanges, events, and policy residencies.)

The exchanges offered host groups numerous radio, television and newspaper interviews they would not otherwise have been able to generate, as well as entree into some meetings with public officials. Frequently during the exchanges, host groups used the presence of visitors to increase public awareness of family farm issues. Mexican journalists were shocked to learn that some U.S. corn producers' organizations were opposed to NAFTA. Nebraska officials were equally surprised that Mexican farmers thought they would be hurt by free trade.

Within a short time, public statements by agriculture leaders in the two countries changed. Mexican farm leaders, upon meeting farmers in Nebraska, realized that even with some of the best soil in the world, access to credit and machinery, farmers were going bankrupt. They subsequently rejected increased modernization of Mexican agriculture as the only solution to the agriculture crisis in Mexico. They mounted a defense of peasant production that included a demand for government support for production for self-sufficiency.

In the U.S., farmers were stunned by the vitality of Mexican farming communities. They spoke out in defense of the ejido system of land tenure, supported the need for Mexican peasant farmers to produce as much as they could for their own domestic consumption before opening the border to increased U.S. imports, and began to build fair trade relationships with Mexican farmers.

The exchanges also strengthened farm leadership. The president of the Kansas Farmers Union who was the first to visit Mexico and invite Mexican farm leaders to the U.S. was named National Farmers Union Vice President for International Affairs. Mexican participants in exchanges used their international experience to advantage in negotiations with government officials both regionally and nationally.

Shifts in perspective converged in a critique of a global trading system that pitted farmers against each other in a race to the bottom in prices. At this time, U.S. grain prices to farmers were artificially low, creating unfair competition for farmers in Mexico. Farmers in both countries began to focus on NAFTA and GATT as policies detrimental to peasant and family farmers.

Our binational work on NAFTA was complicated, however, by the fact that U.S. groups were formally opposed to NAFTA, while Mexican farm organizations with whom we worked, such as UNORCA, never took a formal position of opposition. U.S. groups related both to the Mexican Network on Free Trade, which led the opposition to NAFTA in Mexico, and with the farm organizations that remained neutral. Most Mexican farm leaders did not believe that NAFTA and GATT could be stopped, while U.S. farm organizations like the National Farmers Union and National Family Farm Coalition worked intensely for their defeat in the U.S. Congress. (Organizations like the Frente Democratico Campesino in Chihuahua did oppose NAFTA and testified before the U.S. Congress on its negative impacts for family farmers.)

NAFTA Impacts (1993-1996)

Two of NAFTA's most important impacts, while they might have been predicted, were largely unforeseen--the uprising in Chiapas, and the Mexican peso devaluation. The causes of both of these impacts are fundamentally political. With the reversal of Mexico's historic land reform, the indigenous people of Chiapas, for whom land had never been made available, saw their country renege on its commitment to development in their region and focussing national resources on development in the North.

One year after Chiapas erupted, the peso, which had been artificially propped up to maintain U.S. confidence in its ability to export to Mexico under NAFTA, crashed, resulting in widespread turmoil in small and medium-sized businesses and in agriculture. Most negatively affected in the agriculture sector were Mexico's 3.5 million grain producers.

Our work after NAFTA's passage has centered on the implications of these two events, more than on specific trade conflicts that have broken out over tomatoes, avocados or other products. The structural changes resulting from regional economic integration are where the fundamental impacts on peasant and family farm agriculture will be felt for years to come.



Chiapas

Responding to the Conflict

In January 1, 1994, the EZLN took over San Cristobal and set in motion the series of events which have so permeated the debate about the future of democracy in the Mexican countryside. CECCAM, with its close ties to the National Coordination of Coffee Producers' Organizations (CNOOC), many of whose members are coffee producers in Chiapas, was plunged into the middle of the controversy both in and about Chiapas. Luis Hernandez quickly emerged as one of Mexico's most important analysts of the Chiapan conflict. He wrote numerous articles about Chiapas for the supplement to La Jornada he edits with another CECCAM founder, Julio Moguel. These were released as a book, entitled Chiapas: La Guerra y la Paz. He has subsequently been deeply involved in the peace negotiations as an advisor to the EZLN.

IATP sought to make as much information about the situation in Chiapas available to the U.S. public, particularly the realities of the antecedents of the conflict. Karen Lehman and her assistant, Hannah Holm, produced an electronic bulletin, Chiapas Digest, as a means to disseminate news and analysis about the conflict.

The binational network we facilitated, while not a solidarity network, was able to respond rapidly to calls for assistance from counterparts. In February 1995, as military involvement escalated in Chiapas, several of the most important farmers' organizations in the United States signed a letter condemning the military occupation and calling for the protection of human rights. The National Farmers Union, the National Family Farm Coalition, the Wisconsin, Kansas and Nebraska Farmers Unions, IATP, and Farm Aid, were among the first organizations in the United States to respond to the crisis.

The situation in Chiapas plunged those peasant organizations that had been organizing marketing alternatives into an extremely difficult situation. Some of their members were EZLN sympathizers, others were not. The CNOOC affiliates determined to continue to advance their alternative marketing efforts, despite their location in a zone of conflict. CECCAM staff were deeply involved in rapid analyses of the negotiations among the government, the EZLN, and other organizations in the region. In an effort to weaken the EZLN's position, the government had attempted to drive a wedge between peasant organizations, offering development funds to some if they would publicly censure the EZLN. CNOOC, UNORCA and CECCAM worked to find solutions to this dilemma that would neither undercut the development work done by their organizations in the past nor create the conditions for further conflict into the future with EZLN supporters.

Fair Trade Initiatives

In December, 1995, two representatives from Chiapan coffee producers' organizations, Jose Juarez and Monica Firl, toured parts of the upper midwest United States and central Canada to open up relationships with indigenous trading partners. In the spring of 1996, the first shipment of Chiapan coffee beans arrived in Minneapolis. Relationships that had been developed to work on politics and economics now are serving to experiment with new ways to link the U.S. and Mexican agricultural economies in positive ways. Trade is being managed under the international standards of Transfair and Max Havelaar which guarantee fair prices and payment terms to producers.

The Peso Devaluation and Basic Grain Production

Whereas we had predicted that NAFTA would create stiff competition for Mexican basic grain producers with cheaper U.S. grain, the peso devaluation turned that assumption on its head. Coupled with shortages in world grain supplies and rising prices, the devaluation has jeopardized Mexican food security to an alarming degree.

Mexican government policy in the wake of the devaluation was to keep grain prices paid to farmers in Mexico low to subsidize consumption for urban consumers. Farmers, however, were faced with fertilizer and other input costs that had increased by 120%. Credit was virtually non-existent, and what was available was very expensive.

Our work on basic grains under these conditions was markedly different from what it had been prior to NAFTA's passage. We recognized that the groups we were working with in our two countries had developed an understanding of the basic framework of agriculture and identified the universe of potential collaborators through the exchanges we had promoted. Rather than expand the network broadly, leaders on both sides of the border were looking for more in-depth learning about specific policies, marketing mechanisms and potential collaborations.

We thus centered our work on three broad initiatives: increasing awareness of changes in U.S. policy that could affect Mexico, exploring new forms of marketing, and developing initiatives to promote food security.

U.S. Policy and Its Impacts on Mexico

U.S. agriculture policy has tremendous implications for Mexican agriculture. Commodity policy in the past which made grain artificially cheap rendered Mexican grains uncompetitive in both domestic and international markets. At the Trinational Agriculture Exchange co-sponsored by RIAD in January, 1995, Mexican farmers identified the 1995 Farm Bill as a key issue about which they wanted more information.

In response to that request, IATP organized a Farm Bill Policy residency for Mexican farm leaders to coincide with the Latin American Studies Association meeting in Washington D.C. in September, 1995. Leaders from UNORCA, the National Association of Producers' Marketing Organizations (ANEC), and CECCAM met with congressional staff involved in drafting competing Farm Bill proposals, and with officials at the USDA Economics Department and Foreign Agriculture Service. Participants stated that these meetings were very useful in their understandings of the directions of U.S. policy.

Mexico had already succumbed to pressures to adopt neoliberal agriculture policies with the implementation of PROCAMPO, a direct payment system that decouples support from production. The United States was soon to follow. In 1996, the U.S. passed the "Freedom to Farm" Act which effectively decoupled federal support from agricultural production, instituting in its place a program of direct payments to be phased out over seven years. Monitoring the effects of the Farm Bill in the context of grain shortages will remain a key part of our work into the next year.

Fair Trade Initiatives

As it became clear that Mexico would be increasing grain imports in the coming years, Mexican farm organizations began to approach U.S. farm groups to import grain directly from them, thus bypassing multinational grain companies. The National Association of Producers' Marketing Organizations (ANEC) is an important new network formed in

September, 1995, to meet the challenges posed by structural adjustment and free trade. ANEC is pooling its members' production to create sufficient volume to control part of the market. They are also attempting to gain control of storage and distribution infrastructure currently being privatized by the Mexican government. Part of their strategy includes importing grain from the U.S. to ensure a constant supply year-round. Through contacts made earlier through exchanges with the American Corn Growers Association, they are exploring U.S. government programs that can aid them in direct marketing initiatives. Without the relationships that had been established through the exchanges, ANEC would have had less access to contacts in the United States to aid these innovative initiatives.

Promoting Food Security

RIAD has pioneered work on the concept of sustainable food security, and through our work on the effects of regional integration in North America, we are linking the issue of food security to trade policy. At a meeting of the American Corn Growers in March, 1996, Victor Suarez, Executive Director of ANEC informed those present that high prices and grain shortages were placing Mexican food security in jeopardy, and that this development could be directly linked to NAFTA.

Despite evidence to the contrary, in the form of higher international prices, Mexican policymakers persists in the belief that Mexico should not stimulate domestic grain production. Current high prices are perceived as anomalies that will soon level out. The challenge for Mexican farm organizations is to convince the government that this situation could be long-term and that Mexico must reclaim food security as a national policy objective.

New movements for binational and trinational collaboration in North America are building with the undeniable threat to food security posed by the global economy on the eve of the World Food Summit. This is the next chapter of RIAD's work in North America. IATP organized a meeting of U.S. and Canadian family farm and urban poverty activists to plan participation in the World Food Summit in November, 1996. ANEC, CECCAM, UNORCA, the Mexican Network on Free Trade (RMALC) and others are planning a forum in Mexico in August, 1996, to develop a grassroots platform for food security in preparation for the Summit.

Challenges for the Future

Whereas we have had important inter-regional exchanges with members of RIAD working on Mercosur, the challenge ahead is to unite RIAD in a sustained effort to generate local, national and global policies to ensure sustainable food security. Our work on regional integration has put us in an excellent position to continue building our networks and focussing our efforts on this important issue.

To do so, we must reach out to communities beyond those we have considered part of RIAD--urban hunger groups, environmentalists, labor, and human rights. We have relationships with these groups in each of our countries. With their support, we will have a better chance to bring about the changes in policy necessary to guarantee equitable access to food for the world's peoples and to provide peasant and family farmers with a livelihood into the future.

US-Mexican Agriculture Exchanges and Events

July, 1991

The president of the Kansas Farmers Union, Vice President of the Texas Corn Growers, and Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture for the state of Nebraska spent five days in Mexico visiting with farm leaders, government officials, and members of the press. IATP and UNORCA organized the exchange, as they did all of the subsequent Mexican farm exchanges. Visitors met with leaders of UNORCA and the Permanent Agriculture Congress, the umbrella organization for Mexico's peasant networks. In addition, they met with officials from the Mexican Department of Agriculture, the National Indigenous Peoples' Institute, and opposition political parties. They also spent two days visiting ejidos in the state of Guanajuato where many U.S. companies have located and established vegetable export operations.

August, 1991

IATP organized a meeting of 20 representatives of dairy producers' organizations in Mexico, the U.S. and Canada. Farmers agreed that the positions their governments were adopting in the NAFTA and GATT negotiations were detrimental to family dairy farmers in all three countries.

October, 1991

IATP organized a trilateral forestry meeting in Seattle, Washington, to coincide with a tour by Mexican peasant forestry practitioners of the U.S., sponsored by the Inter-American Foundation. Participants determined that trade regimes such as GATT and NAFTA increased corporate control of wood products and created disincentives for sustainable forestry practices.

November, 1991

Members of the Kansas and Oklahoma Farmers Union, Oklahoma Wheat Growers, and Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners visited farm communities in the states of Hidalgo and Guanajuato following the Trilateral Exchange on Agriculture and the Environment. At that time, the Kansas Farmers Union extended an invitation to three members of UNORCA to attend the Kansas Farmers Union Annual Convention.

December, 1991

A member of the newly-formed Mexican Corn Producers Network (COMAGRO) attended the annual meeting of the National Family Farm Coalition in Des Moines, Iowa. He spent two days on a corn farm learning about the farm crisis in the United States, production techniques and marketing.

January, 1992

Three regional leaders of UNORCA were the guests of honor at the Kansas Farmers Union annual convention, the theme of which was "Hands Across the Borders." They met with the governor who became interested in developing a sister state relationship with the state of Guanajuato. They subsequently spent two days on a family farm learning about livestock production.



February, 1992

Two Mexican farmers returned to Kansas to purchase three pieces of farm equipment.

March, 1992

The Executive Coordinator of UNORCA attended Farm Aid V in Dallas, Texas where he participated in a pre-concert conference on free trade with the President of Dairy Farmers of Canada. At a press conference prior to the conference, he shared the podium with Jesse Jackson, Jim Hightower, Senator Bernie Sanders, and Willie Nelson and was interviewed by radio and television reporters.

April, 1992

Members of the Kansas Farmers Union drove to Mexico accompanying the equipment purchased by Mexican farmers. At the border, IATP organized a press conference which was well-attended by newspaper and television reporters. The Kansans drove on to Guanajuato where they participated in the community's annual celebration.

September, 1992

IATP hosted Luis Hernandez under the auspices of the Mexico-U.S. Dialogos Visiting Fellows Program. Mr. Hernandez spent four days at the Institute learning about U.S. agriculture policy and the networks of trade activists in the U.S. He met with members of the Hispanic community in the Twin Cities, attended a meeting with brand managers at the Pillsbury company, and was interviewed by local Hispanic press and Minnesota Public Radio. He subsequently accompanied two members of UNORCA on a visit to Nebraska, co-sponsored by IATP and the Nebraska Farmers Union.

In Nebraska, he and several Mexican farmers participated in a one-day conference with seven Nebraska farm organizations on free trade. They subsequently traveled across the state visiting a seed processing facility, a university research center, dry bean and corn producers. They also shared the podium with Senator James Exen at a Democratic party dinner.

February, 1993

Representatives from UNORCA participated in the state convention of the North Dakota Farmers Union and toured the state of South Dakota under the auspices of Dakota Rural Action, a member group of the National Family Farm Coalition. The Mexican visitors met with members of the South Dakota state legislature and spoke to several groups convened around the state to discuss NAFTA.

March, 1993

Everardo von Zoelen from COMAGRO, an important peasant corn production and marketing network in the state of Jalisco, attended the national convention of the American Corn Growers and began conversations for binational marketing arrangements. He subsequently went to Nebraska with Victor Suarez to meet with Nebraska corn marketing organizations, and then to Chicago to study the futures market and make contacts with independent commodities brokers.

March, 1993

John Hansen and Karen Lehman participated in a conference sponsored by the Mexican Department of Agriculture entitled "Corn in the Decade of the 90's." Participants were agronomists who participate in the Mexican extension service.

September, 1993

CECCAM, along with the Mexican Association of Credit Unions (AMUCCS) sponsored a meeting on "Goals and Perspectives for a New Rural Financing System in Mexico." Representatives from five national peasant organizations and sixteen credit unions from throughout the Mexican republic spent two days in dialogue about the problems of loan defaults in the countryside and the future of rural credit. Kathy Ozer, from the National Family Farm Coalition in the U.S. and Jim Rodd of the National Farmers Union of Canada attended to provide perspectives on rural credit in the U.S. and Canada. The National Family Farm Coalition emerged from the Farm Crisis of the 1980's in the U.S. in which mobilization for change in farm credit policy was central to the Coalition's agenda. The National Farmers Union of Canada has a strong connection with Canadian credit unions.

October, 1993

Karen Lehman and representatives from the Frente Democratico Campesino from Chihuahua testified before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Employment, Housing and Aviation on the impacts of NAFTA and associated Mexican agriculture reforms on Mexican corn production, and the subsequent effects on migration and employment in the U.S.

November, 1993

CECCAM sponsored a meeting on "Comparative Agriculture Support Policies for Grain," analyzing the policies in the U.S., Canada, and the European Union, especially France. The seminar included academics, public officials, and leaders of national peasant organizations. John Hansen from the Nebraska Farmers Union and Roy Atkinson from the Canadian Wheat Board provided perspectives on the impacts of international trade policy on U.S. and Canadian grain policy.

February, 1994

Jose Juarez of the Union de Ejidos de la Selva participated in the National Dialogue for Sustainable Agriculture, a meeting in which U.S. sustainable agriculture organizations developed a strategy for the 1995 Farm Bill debate. He also spoke to the board of the National Family Farm Coalition, a network of thirty nine farm organizations that have participated in past exchanges with Mexican farmers, and participated in a briefing at the Inter-American Foundation, as well as meeting with World Bank officials.

May, 1994

Nebraska Farmers Union President John Hansen participated in a technical exchange to Guadalajara. Hansen has become the most knowledgeable U.S. farm leader about Mexican agriculture and was able to help Mexican farmers explore markets in the U.S. and comment on plans for joint ventures with Maseca, a Mexican tortilla flour manufacturer.

CECCAM sponsored two workshops on the future of the Mexican countryside in which more than 40 representatives of Mexican peasant organizations participated. Karen Lehman spoke to the workshop on the projected impacts of NAFTA on Mexican and U.S. agriculture.

November, 1994

Luis Hernandez and Karen Lehman participated in a conference sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation for its Latin American grantees in which we talked about challenges to peasant and family farm agriculture in the Americas under NAFTA.

January, 1995

Thirty-five representatives of farm organizations from Mexico, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Brazil, the U.S. and Canada met in Lincoln, Nebraska, for the Trinational Agriculture Exchange. All of the participants had met at least one of their counterparts at least once before, but never had all of the people who have participated in exchanges sponsored by RIAD, CECCAM and IATP been in the same meeting. Participants discussed priority issues for farmers in each country: the impact of trade liberalization, especially in corn and wheat; the situation in Chiapas; and beneficial agriculture policies. The level of discussion and technical detail was quite sophisticated.

One of the most important outcomes was a strategy session on the 1995 Farm Bill which included Mexican representatives. All of the Mexican leaders had a working knowledge of U.S. agriculture policy more complete than most U.S. citizens' and were able to comment on and make suggestions for the policy proposals under discussion for the 1995 Farm Bill. Mexican leaders identified the Farm Bill as an important piece of legislation for them as well and requested that we continue to provide opportunities for them to learn more about the process.

February, 1995

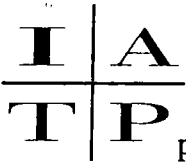
IATP and CECCAM sponsored a briefing for funders in the U.S. about Chiapas and the Mexican financial crisis. Primarily from Minnesota, participants had little understanding of the Mexican context, and some reported that it was the best event of its kind they had attended. Luis Hernandez, Mark Ritchie, Karen Lehman, and David Brooks of Mexico-U.S. Dialogos were the presenters at the half-day briefing.

September, 1995

Karen Lehman attended the founding meeting of the National Association of Producers' Marketing Organizations (ANEC) in Mexico City where she delivered messages of support from the National Family Farm Coalition, the Nebraska Farmers Union, and the National Farmers Union of Canada. ANEC has become the most important network of peasant grain marketing organizations in Mexico.

September, 1995

To follow up on the request for more information on the U.S. Farm Bill, IATP organized a Farm Bill Policy residency for Mexican farm leaders to coincide with the Latin American Studies Association meeting in Washington D.C. Leaders from UNORCA, ANEC, and CECCAM met with congressional staff involved in drafting competing Farm Bill



proposals, and with officials at the USDA Economics Department and Foreign Agriculture Service. Participants stated that these meetings were very useful in their understandings of the directions for U.S. policy.

December, 1995

Two representatives of Chiapan coffee producers' organizations went on a trade tour organized by IATP to establish trading relationships with indigenous groups. These contacts have opened up new markets for both Chiapan and Guatemalan coffee producers in the Upper Midwest United States and in western Canada.

February, 1996

Victor Suarez, Executive Director of the National Association of Producers' Marketing Organizations (ANEC) came to IATP for a policy residency on basic grains markets and attended the annual convention of the American Corn Growers Association, where he was a featured speaker.

Information Services

To ensure that those concerned about regional integration would have access to timely information, IATP began publishing NAFTA and Inter-American Trade Monitor, a bi-weekly bulletin on current developments in economic integration in the Americas, which is translated into Spanish and made available to RIAD. The Monitor is also available to Latin American APC users, who currently number over 1,500, and could be available to anyone with a computer and modem. Within the year, readers of the Monitor will have the capacity to search the full texts of all bulletins online. This will greatly enhance its value as a research tool. The Monitor is also available by fax and surface mail for those who don't have a modem.

