

WTO: FIX IT OR NIX IT? ► PAUL HAWKEN, ANITA RODDICK,
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down calls for more than a "fix." An appropriate body is needed to transparently enforce rules reflecting and promoting the principles of fair and sustainable trade. Events in Seattle have thrown up a real opportunity for long-term change. Let's take it. The consequences of letting this opportunity go are unthinkable.

* "Fair trade" includes custom-designed agreements to promote mutual economic development among partners. It recognizes and includes existing asymmetries (e.g., health and culture).

DOWN ON THE FARM WITH THE WTO

by Mark Ritchie

Mark Ritchie is president of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (www.iatp.org).

Since Seattle, a new round of WTO farm trade talks has been scheduled. This is both good and bad. The current agriculture rules are so terrible that they must be changed, and they can only be changed via negotiations. On the other hand, proposals being floated by the Clinton Administration for changes in WTO ag rules would make matters even worse for family farmers in the United States and around the world.

A number of key issues, such as export dumping, need to be negotiated immediately. Agribusiness corporations have been shipping grain and other commodities from the United States and Europe at prices that are roughly half of production costs. Although export dumping is illegal under its rules, dumping of agricultural products has been ignored or even encouraged by the WTO. The farm trade talks should result in decisions to either enforce the current rules or end the hypocrisy and abandon them.

Another big issue is consumer labels. Under current WTO rules, no country has the right to regulate trade in food products in terms of the standards, criteria, or methods under which they were grown or certified. Obviously, organic agriculture is distin-

guished by these factors. It is important that the WTO change this rule.

The biggest current issue is genetically engineered (GE) foods. In Montreal, we won a major victory in drafting the biosafety protocol to the Rio Convention on Biodiversity. But the United States would like the WTO to say to Europe that their current tight restrictions and bans on GE products are illegal under the WTO and must be immediately eliminated. The US is not willing, at the moment, to risk blowing apart the WTO by pursuing this issue through the dispute-process channels. It knows European consumer sentiment is so strong that consumers would never accept GE products.

Many critics of the Seattle protests claim there is no alternative to industrial ag and WTO-regulated trade. Yet millions of farmers all over the planet are moving away from the current global monopoly system, toward alternative, ethical trading schemes. A sizable, global "fair" trade movement is challenging the idea that competing with the general global commodity market is impossible.

This may be the greatest long-term impact of Seattle—establishing that globalization can be successfully challenged. For a long time agribusiness argued that the industrial model was better for the environment. It didn't take much to disprove this. Then they said that while their approach may not be ecologically better, it was necessary in order to feed the world. It didn't take long to disprove this as well. For the past few years, their main arguments have been simply "inevitability"—that there is no alternative to globalization and homogenization. Seattle has broken the dam of inevitability. Many of my colleagues around the world don't want to see any more discussion of ag and food issues inside the WTO. The key question now: are the farm and consumer groups ready for what comes next? We will see.

WTO, FORESTS, AND A POST-MODERN MOVE

by Randy Hayes

Randy Hayes is founder and president of the Rainforest Action Network (RAN; www.ran.org).

Is the WTO dying? Perhaps, but that is not all that is dying off. Environmentalists, in the traditional single-issue sense, are a dying breed. The WTO battle is perhaps the best example of their departure from the current geopolitical landscape. Who would have thought that "knee-jerk, liberal, tree-hugger types" would have their own trade representatives and legal teams suing the pants off the forces of free trade? Times have changed. I am increasingly impressed with the sophistication of advocacy groups and their worldwide campaigning. The integration of the "three Es"—ecology, economy, and equity—is afoot.

The free-trade negotiating table is still made of old-growth mahogany; we aren't winning yet. But Seattle should give industry barons an eye-opener more potent than an early-morning Bloody Mary at the golf course. Postmodern tree huggers not only have their own trade reps and lawyers stiffing the likes of US trade representative Charlene Barshefsky; we have growing people power. The forces of 50,000 in Seattle were not so hard for us to muster. A labor/environment marriage is still tenuous, but as it solidifies—and it shall—we will see signs of an authentic ecological U-turn.

An ecological U-turn is the opposite of what the WTO's Free Logging Agreement would have for the biosphere. Trade associations such as the AF&PA (American Forests & Paper Association) were licking their chops at the prospect of a 3 to 4 percent increase in wood-product profits, had they gotten their way in Seattle. Fortunately they didn't. However, people still see that cutting import and export taxes makes wood cheaper. That stimulates demand and, hence, the destruction of national efforts to protect old-growth forests.

