

July 3, 2014

Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our support for the government of El Salvador's continued ability to source seeds for its Family Agriculture Plan from small-scale, national producers and our serious concern over recent US pressure to change such procurement of seeds. Moving forward, we encourage the U.S. government to maintain a position of respect for such policies.

The Family Agriculture Plan, which has received accolades from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, provides seeds, fertilizer, and technical assistance to over 400,000 family farmers. The program was launched by the government of El Salvador in 2011 to improve the livelihoods of families living in rural poverty and to promote food self-sufficiency in the country, which had previously been importing up to 80% of its basic grains. El Salvador is now producing 100% of the corn and beans needed for domestic consumption, a dramatic improvement in terms of strengthening local capacity.

Central to the program's success was a policy implemented by El Salvador's Legislative Assembly in 2012 and 2014 to open the government's contracting process for the seeds that are distributed to family farmers. Previously, the contract to supply seeds was dominated almost entirely by Semillas Cristiani Burkard, a Monsanto subsidiary. In contrast, seeds can now be purchased from a variety of producers, with over 90% being supplied by small-scale, domestic producers, primarily co-operatives.

Unfortunately, this fundamental component of the Family Agriculture Plan came under attack by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Trade Representative. The U.S. Embassy raised concerns regarding the government's current seed purchasing policy and stated that it must be changed in order for the Salvadoran government to maintain its eligibility for a \$277 million compact with the MCC.

Though the matter appears to be resolved, we remain troubled that the Embassy's attempt to influence El Salvador's domestic policy threatens to undermine the country's advances in reducing poverty, strengthening its economy, and increasing sustainability and local control over the food system, which has been negatively impacted by free trade policies. We are also very concerned that the State Department has been delaying the disbursement of funds for the compact in order to advance the interests of U.S.-based, transnational agribusinesses.

Furthermore, the State Department's invocation of CAFTA demonstrates that our concerns about free trade agreements – including unfair competition from subsidized U.S. agriculture and incursions into national sovereignty – are well-founded, thus necessitating our continued opposition to CAFTA and its implementation.

We request your assurance that the U.S. government will not in the future pressure the Salvadoran government to change the Family Agriculture Plan or other programs to reduce poverty, insecurity and inequality. We will continue to monitor the situation to assure that the U.S. government respects such policies that have been implemented through El Salvador's sovereign democratic processes.

Sincerely:

Food & Water Watch
Oxfam America
Grassroots International
Lisa Archer, Friends of the Earth U.S.
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
National Family Farm Coalition
US Food Sovereignty Alliance
Public Citizen
Community Alliance for Global Justice
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake Counties Farmers
Union (Ohio Farmers Union)
Groundswell International
Family Farm Defenders
Community to Community Development (C2C)
WhyHunger
Rural Coalition
Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy
Selvin L. Chambers III, Executive Director, The
Food Project
Ronnie Cummins, Director, Organic Consumers
Association
Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
Other Worlds
Fair World Project
Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.
American Jewish World Service
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
IDEX (International Development Exchange)
PLANT (Partners for the Land & Agricultural
Needs of Traditional Peoples)

Lettuce Link
Legacy of Equality, Leadership and Organizing
Pesticide Action Network North America
Institute for Policy Studies, Global Economy
Project
Brooklyn Food Coalition
Community Food Projects
Agricultural Missions, Inc. (AMI)
CASA del Llano, INC
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance
Equal Exchange
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Local to Global Advocates for Justice (Kansas
City, MO)
Solidarity Committee of the Capital District
(Albany, NY)
Committee in Solidarity with the People of El
Salvador (CISPES)
Oakland Institute
Our Water Commons
Red Nacional de Salvadoreños en el Exterior
(RENASE)
US-El Salvador Sister Cities
SHARE El Salvador
Joining Hands against Hunger Network - El
Salvador
Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS)
EcoViva
Cristosal Foundation

CC:

Michael Froman, U.S. Trade Representative

Honorable Mari Carmen Aponte, U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador