Group 11 - Corporations and Agriculture

Introduction

A large issue in modern farming is the involvement of corporations in agriculture. Corporations can effect all the aspects of agricultural life, including production, transportation, and sales. As such, it is important to examine all the possible impacts that they can have on farming life. Today, farms are unlike the farms in the past, because today we have and use technology to increase production in ways that benefit the corporations that produce it. Corporate farming has been criticized for its undertaking to concentrate food production by adopting methods that are designed to maximize crop yield and through the process of vertical integration. This leads to small farms being unable to compete with larger farms and corporations. They will either sell to the larger farms, making them more powerful, or just shut down.

Figure 1: Two men working in agriculture (http://www.gfcny.net/agriculture.html) 2010: Fig. 1

Summary

This group mainly focused on how corporations are slowly replacing family farms. Each article talks about how corporations are pushing farmers into debt with their large companies, and how they are controlling the farmer’s profits. One section in this wiki also looks at legal actions being put in place to keep corporations from running family farms out of the Midwest states in America. These efforts have made it so family farms can keep their farm lands without the unfair competition with large corporations. However, it does not keep corporations completely out of the farming process, which still created problems with sustaining local farms. Another area the group covers is the sustainability of the small farms. Corporations are looking for a quick profit and are essentially turning small farms into serfs, taking almost all of the profits from the crop and giving the farming the very little back. The dilemma here is that farmers have no choice but to buy into corporate technologies and then find that there are many difficulties that come with this new relationship. The USDA is also less concerned with protecting sustainable, environmentally friendly farms and wants to make a large profit from goods produced on large, more technologically advanced corporate farms. This group also looks at the health issues related to large corporate farms. In New Zealand, small family farms have to compete with large corporate farms, leading to them hiring less skilled workers, leading to more injuries and even deaths. Also, when corporations have control over farms, the more money they put into the farms, the higher the food process are going to be and the less accessible they will be to lower income families, leading to hunger and starvation. With corporate involvement, pesticides become more prominent and can cause health problems for the public as well. However, we found that corporate involvement can also have a positive effect because they are able to distribute foods over a wider area. This makes food more accessible to people, which can result in helping farmers in get more affordable fertilizer.

Scholarly and Peer-Reviewed Sources:

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Barry, Gerard F.

Berg, Andrew G., and Terry Calvani

Chester, Matt

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Hayter, Peter; Poulton, Colin; Wiggins, Steve; and Dorward, Andrew

Berrigan, Leo, Robert S. Lawrence, and Polly Walker.

Kondro, Wayne

Lobao, Linda and Stofferahn, Curtis, W

Magoff, Fred and Brian Tokar


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Poulton, Colin, Dorward, Andrew, and Kydd, Jonathan


Ramey, Elizabeth A.


Wiggins, Steven, Kirsten, Johann, and Llambi, Luis


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