

"WHO WILL FEED US? THE FARM LABOUR CRISIS MEETS THE CLIMATE CRISIS" VIDEO

DIGGING IN: FACILITATING DIALOGUE AND ACTION

KEY THEMES AND TERMS

Urbanization, corporate food system, farm labour crisis, climate crisis, agroecology, organic agriculture, milpa, migration, biopiracy, campesino, migrant farm worker, pesticides, violence, green gold, blue gold, Via Campesina, paper pot planter, land stewardship

CATALYZING CONNECTIONS

DECODING QUESTIONS

- *Description:* What do you see/hear/feel when watching the video?
- *Personal Connection:* How does this story connect to your personal experience?
- *Common Themes:* What social issues/themes emerge from our personal stories? Is there a common issue that we share?
- *Social Analysis:* How did this situation/issue come to be? What are the historical and social processes that created this situation?
- *Planning for Action:* What can be done? What can I/we do?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- Dianne and Fulvio both confront many obstacles as they try to engage young people in carrying on their legacies of organic agriculture. Canadian farmer activists associated with the National Farmers Union identify four key structural factors: low net farm incomes, an imbalance in market power between farmers and agribusiness corporations, increasingly unaffordable farmland, and corporate- rather than farmer-focused state regulatory regimes. Discuss how these are present in your context. Can you think of other factors?
- Discuss the meaning of the subtitle of this video "The Farm Labour Crisis Meets the Climate Crisis". What changes to the corporate food system might mitigate climate change? What new policies would be necessary to implement those changes? What opportunities might such changes create for young people interested in agroecological alternatives?
- Both Fulvio and his daughter Serena describe the impact of the agrochemicals used in corporate industrial agriculture on the health of the workers and the health of the soil. Is this issue being discussed in your context?

- Serena suggests that Mexican *campesino* get trapped with 'fertilizer debt' by having to buy new inputs year after year. Research how fertilizer debt impacts small and medium producers in the Global South. How does Fulvio's production of organic inputs reduce debt and help to build a local economy?

Hands-On Activities

Like many young people, Dan doesn't want to work as hard as his mother does, with her artisanal organic agricultural practice. He proposes more efficient tools for planting that do not destroy the micro-organisms in the soil, such as the paper-pot planter, a Japanese invention. Check out the other advantages of this process through this short video clip.

Investigate other alternative tools and techniques for small-scale producers, such as Jean-Martin Fortier (<http://www.themarketgardener.com/about-jean-martin-fortier>).

North American consumers enjoy the avocados and berries grown in transnational agribusinesses in the Mexican state of Michoacán. Fulvio denounces the slave-like conditions of the avocado and berry fields, noting that avocados are considered "green gold" and berries called "blue gold." What does this metaphor mean? Visit a supermarket and consider your own consumption of these products and the hands that produced them.

INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

The industrialization of agriculture and urbanization have been major factors in the decline of farming in all three countries. But while the rural population in both Canada and the U.S. has dropped from around 30% to 20% since 1960, Mexico has experienced a drop from 50% to 20%. Discuss the impact of this drop on the self-sufficiency of Mexican *campesinos*, the growth of poor barrios in burgeoning cities, and increasing unemployment.

Since the implementation of NAFTA, many *campesinos* have been forced to stop producing corn, for example, because of the cheap and highly subsidized corn imports available from the United States. What work options are available to displaced *campesinos* in Mexico?

Dianne laments that many young people today have their thumbs stuck in the digital world, that "their feet aren't on the ground and their hands aren't in the soil." Discuss the impact of young people's obsession with digital communication on the future of farming.

Dianne augments her already extensive knowledge of weather patterns by monitoring the daily forecasts on the internet. What other positive roles can computers

play to educate organic farmers? How can Mr. Google be used to interest and train young people in sustainable agriculture?

Fulvio faces different challenges to interest Mexican and Indigenous youth in agroecology. Discuss some of these obstacles: the power of transnational industrial agribusinesses, control of production by narcotrafficking cartels, threats of violence, lack of government support for agroecology, racist and classist attitudes toward campesinos, the lure of the excitement of the cities and higher wages in migrating to the U.S. or Canada. Which of these obstacles are also present in the United States and Canada or in your local context?

Migration continues to be a major source of foreign exchange in Mexico, and U.S. and Canadian agribusinesses continue to depend on Mexican farm labour. Miguel's father and Serena's grandparents have worked in large poultry factories in the U.S., for example. Both Canadian Dan (teaching in China) and Mexican Miguel (farming in Canada) see migration as part of a strategy to earn money so they can create alternatives to the corporate industrial food system in their own countries. How is this strategy similar to and different from the migration experiences of their parents?

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded in 2019 that "Farming and eating need to change to curb global warming." According to the 2019 UN report, the industrial food system contributes 37% of global greenhouse gases and contributes to deforestation, biodiversity loss, and declining water tables. This means that how we grow our food and what we eat have helped to create the crisis. What kinds of individual and collective changes can you imagine in your context?

Dianne suggests that "the future of food production is in the hands of small and medium-sized family farms – sustainable and healthy." What structural changes are required to move in that direction?

The U.S. continues to need migrant farm labour but Mexicans have few legal routes to meet that demand. In reflecting on her family's history of migration, Serena refers to children of Mexican migrants being held at the border while their parents are deported, a U.S. government action that has provoked social movement advocacy. Research the current state of children and families at the border, and the protest actions by groups such as the Families Belong Together Coalition (see below under Organizations).

Dianne concludes the video this way: "For every problem, there's a solution, But it doesn't come from one individual. It comes from everybody thinking about it and getting together to share." What ways can you imagine to generate an intergenerational and intercultural exchange of food knowledge and practice in your area?

DIGGING DEEPER: RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND ACTION

VIDEOS

Al Jazeera English. "Drug cartels weigh down Mexico's 'green gold'." April 1, 2013. Video, 2:31. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fH5EqTH8O4>.

CNBC Television. "Mexican avocado growers take up arms against cartel violence." October 24, 2019. Video, 1:29. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yEKqp_KvBU.

Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro. "ANEC Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro." ANECMEXICO. July 22, 2019. Video, 7:58. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YDhVMkhtik&list=PLjl3hIKCSVletBc6MK5SGgqdm26Z-cvk9&index=1>.

AUDIO

CBC Radio. "The Current for Oct. 7, 2019." October 7, 2019. Podcast, MP3 audio, 1:14:27. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-oct-7-2019-1.5311435>.

Fleming, Severine v T. "Next gen Farmers: A Land-Loving Story - Severine v T Fleming." *Bioneers*. Accessed July 5, 2020. Podcast, MP3 audio, 27:38. <https://soundcloud.com/bioneers/next-gen-farmers-a-land-loving>.

Rolling Stone. "Judy Collins - Dreamers." MSN. July 27, 2018. Video, 3:47. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/music/news/judy-collins-dreamers/vi-BBL95m9>.

Wright, Colin. "Deportee (Plane Crash At Los Gatos) Woody Guthrie." October 3, 2015. Video, 2:27. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qu-duTWccyl>.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

CBC News. "Changing climate is affecting how we feed ourselves." November 29, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/changing-climate-is-affecting-how-we-feed-ourselves-1.5378178>.

Desmarais, Annette Aurélie, ed. *Frontline Farmers: How the National Farmers Union Resists Agribusiness and Creates Our New Food Future*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2019.

Hernandez, Tim Z. *All They Will Call You*. Phoenix: University of Arizona Press, 2017.

La Via Campesina. "La Via Campesina Agroecology Training Schools and Processes." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://viacampesina.org/en/schools/>.

Qualman, Darrin, A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Annette Aurélie Desmarais, and Sharada Srinivasan. "Forever young? The crisis of generational renewal on Canada's farms." *Canadian Food Studies* 5, no. 3 (September 2018): 100-127. <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v5i3.284>.

Small Farm Works. "Small Farm Works - Paper Chain Pots, Transplanters & Systems." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://www.smallfarmworks.com/>.

ORGANIZATIONS

Agrarian Trust. "Agrarian Trust." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://agrariantrust.org/>

Nationally-supported, community-held land and agrarian property that supports diversified sustainable food production, shared ecological stewardship, agrarian community vitality and the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Families Belong Together. "Families Belong Together." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://www.familiesbelongtogether.org/>.

The Families Belong Together coalition includes nearly 250 organizations representing Americans from all backgrounds across the country who have joined together to fight family separation and promote dignity, unity, and compassion for all children and families.

Justicia for Migrant Workers. "Justice for Migrant Workers." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://www.justicia4migrantworkers.org/>.

La Via Campesina: International Peasant's Movement. "Via Campesina - Globalizing hope, globalizing the struggle!" Accessed July 1, 2020. <https://viacampesina.org/en/>.

Mariposas Sin Fronteras. "Mariposas Sin Fronteras - Facebook." Facebook, accessed July 5, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/mariposassinfronteras/?_rdc=1&_rdr.

Migrant Rights Network. "Migrant Rights Network." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://migrantrights.ca/>.

The Migrant Rights Network is a cross-Canada alliance to combat racism and fight for migrant justice. We are an alliance of self-organized groups of refugees and migrants and allies.

Migrant Workers Alliance for Change. "Migrant Workers Alliance for Change." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://migrantworkersalliance.org/>.

The Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC) is Canada's largest coalition of self-organized groups of migrant workers, with the support of grassroots organizations, unions, faith groups, activists and researchers that have come together to fight for justice and dignity for migrant workers.

National Family Farm Coalition. "Home - National Family Farm Coalition." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://nffc.net/>.

National Farmers Union. "National Farmers Union." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://www.nfu.ca/>.

The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services. "RAICES - Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services." Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://www.raicestexas.org/>.

Young Agrarians. "Young Agrarians - Growing the next generation of farmers and food lovers in Canada!" Accessed July 5, 2020. <https://youngagrarians.org/>.