



Sustaining Life on the Land

Reflections on Rural Life

Summary of USCC Position on Food and Agriculture Issues

Based on Catholic Social Teaching and experience through the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Catholic Charities Organizations, CHD

Agriculture:

Overall Policy Goal: Support moderate-sized family farms and wide distribution of ownership of productive property.

- Land is power.
- Food is unlike any other product: we all need it.
- Smaller communities help democracy survive.
- Environmental stewardship, community and family life and civic participation are often higher priorities than profit for the family farmer.

This policy is over and against current national and state agriculture policy that tends to reward larger, more heavily capitalized farms. As a result, concentration of land continues, and family farms are being lost at a rate of over 500 week.

Practical advocacy efforts focus primarily on:

- Agricultural Concentration
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Rural Development
- Concern for migrant farm workers
- Target benefits to minority farmers

Food and Nutrition:

Overall Policy Goal: In a world where hundreds of millions of people are hungry or malnourished, we must use our voice and rely on our experience to help end hunger at home and abroad.

- 40,000 children die each day from hunger or hunger related diseases.
- Sound mental and physical development is at risk in hungry children.
- Most agree that we can feed all who are hungry.
- The elimination of the nutritional safety net is of great concern.
- Overall poverty rate, especially among children continues to rise.

Practical advocacy efforts focus on:

- Increased funding for (PL480) or “Food for Peace” programs that help feed populations in developing countries.
- Insuring that there remains a national commitment to domestic anti-hunger efforts through programs such as:
 - * Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
 - * Food Stamps
 - * School-based nutrition programs
 - * Child care and adult care food programs.
 - * Emergency food programs

Not necessarily opposed to block grants but the essential programs insure uniform standards and provide services at times of greatest need. To eliminate the entitlement status of these anti-hunger programs would not enable them to respond in times of natural disaster and economic downturns.

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