



Colombia FTA: Another Raw Deal

**A Global Justice for Animals and the
Environment Report**



Introduction

After failing to pass a multilateral Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, the Bush Administration has endeavored on a campaign to form Free Trade Agreements bilaterally with key Latin American nations. Signing an agreement with Peru in late 2007, in spite of massive protests that included a two day general strike held by workers against the agreement, the U.S. has now turned its neo-liberal agenda to Colombia. The problem is that the Bush administration has neither the mandate nor the power to push the Colombia FTA through on a fast track basis.

Regardless of the provisions for environmental and labor protections writ into the agreement on trade, Congress has lost faith in the Bush administration's plans to encompass the world in trade agreements that manifest a hidden agenda. Most recently, a pro-FTA resolution put before the Labor and Economic Development Committee during a meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) incurred such a trouncing that it garnered too few votes to merit a roll call. Lori Wallach of Citizens Trade Watch commented, "That a bipartisan organization representing state legislatures so resoundingly rejects the Colombia FTA sends a loud signal that most Americans do not want to be connected with either an expansion of NAFTA or the Colombian government's record of horrible human rights atrocities."[\[1\]](#)

Wallach is right: the Colombia FTA can only posit an extension of NAFTA-like trade policy, which dispossesses rural, subsistence farmers, replacing them with environmentally hazardous factory farmed produce and filthy industrial development. Because more farmers lose their jobs than can join the industrial work force, a labor vacuum ensues, inevitably leading to increased illegal activity including wildlife slaughter, timber trade, civil unrest, and emigration. Undocumented migration, such as experienced directly after NAFTA, creates a cheap labor market in the developed world, combining with the opportunity for corporations to exploit cheap resources in under-developed countries to undercut and devalue the legal labor market in the developed world.

This pattern of dispossession and exploitation represents a cyclical complex caused by Free Trade, which has proven to increase the gap between rich and poor while causing irreversible damage to the environment. The Peru FTA, which passed through Congress with the help of environmental and labor provisions that pledged to reverse the cycle of degradation and rapine, is already being used by President Alan García to arrogate indigenous land for corporate exploitation by writ of presidential decree amidst the turmoil of general strike and rebellion in the countryside.[\[2\]](#) As the voices of the multitude, raised in defense of their precious land against the hazardous waste dumping and animal slaughter of mining and oil companies, drown in the resounding movement of industrialism throughout Peru's Amazon region, the rapacious green eye of FTA greed turns on Colombia, whose human rights record follows a course of economic development that only affirms the predictions of the NCSL.

Why Colombia?

Investor relations under the proposed Free Trade Agreement with Colombia provide corporations with impunity to wreak catastrophic environmental damage. Should a signatory nation of an FTA enact a law that decreases corporate profits, foreign investors have the privilege to sue that nation for lost capital. These investor privileges wreck the democratic mandate of a sovereign nation to legislate based upon the health and welfare of its citizenry, and not the profit-to-value ratio of private investors. Meanwhile, by eliminating tariffs and taxes on trade, the FTAs will cause these governments to lose any protections they have over domestic industry. Factory farming and monocrop agriculture provide enormous threats to the ecology of the world, but investor protections will cut short the development of new laws that could refine and better the process of agricultural production while tariff elimination will destroy democratic economic sovereignty.

The recent history of Colombia poses an example of hard and fast industrial and agricultural development against the grain of human rights and environmental integrity. In recent years, the Uribe administration has yoked the productive capacity of Colombia with the production of bio-fuels including palm oil, sugar cane, and corn. The Colombia FTA includes special incentives towards the development of these industries. These products, grown on massive scale, dedicate vast amounts of farm land to the production of single crops. Called mono-crops because of the method of production that maintains large tracts of land for the purposes of growing the one, single crop, the monocrop cultivation of palm, corn, and sugar cane presents an array of environmental hazards.

First of all, mono-crops threaten the soil, the very integrity of land and promise of future production, by nature of their incessant, industrialized development. Deforesting large areas of land to develop industrial-sized farms, mono-crops begin by invading the harmonious eco-systems with destructive agriculture. Mono-crops deplete the soil of key nutrients that they would otherwise gain from a diverse array of endemic plant life. Instead of raising organically the plant life of a given country, the implementation of mono-crop production eliminates the natural development of the soil and replaces it with the tireless development of single species. Rather than allow the natural cycles of the earth to generate and then replace endemic life, mono-crop production excessively exploits the earth's productive capacity with artificial fertilizers and pest-asides in order to produce a single species until the land is ultimately destroyed. Ecologists like John Jeavons, a California based author and farming researcher, have already begun talking about 'peak soil', the point at which the earth's soil will no longer have the ability to continue yielding mono-crops, and will depreciate into the fallow.[3]

Depleting the soil of micro-organisms that prevent plant-diseases and nutrients that encourage healthy initiates the attack on bio-diversity by mono-crop production. According to the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization, 75% the crop varieties harvested before 1900 have disappeared in the last century. The world's calorie intake now comes almost entirely from twenty crop species – four of which (rice, corn, wheat and potatoes) constitute half of the world's calories.[4] Developed in laboratories, many of these crops manifest the labor of science and industry – they have little to do with natural cycles. Devlin Kuyek, author of *Good Crop/Bad Crop: Seed Politics and the Future of Food in Canada*, explains: "They (corporations) try to do the Coca-Cola or Pepsi of corn: one crop that could be sold everywhere... What you see in corn today is nothing like what you saw before, traditionally. They've industrialized that crop to the hilt. It's quite sad because it had so much nutritional value. You could essentially just live on corn." [5] Crops now serve certain commercial purposes such as bio-fuels; because they are generated outside of the organic world, these crops act as invasive species whose focus on yield rather than ecological sustainability corrupts the land.

Even still, the chemicals that farmers need to encourage the growth of mono-crops in places like Colombia cause terrible pains to the environment. Nitrogen rich fertilizer, as well as genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that breed nitrogen rich plants from modified seeds, create an excess of nitrogen in the soil – an excess which runs into the water supply, entering rivers and creates algae blooms at the mouths of major rivers. These algae blooms destroy life in the ocean by inserting a clot that prevents important traffic from the river's basin. The effects of these fertilizers and GMOs has a mass effect that brings the devastation of the soil into the devastation of the wildlife of the seas, endangering virtually all ecosystems.

In the end, the amount of energy (i.e., petroleum products) expended to generate the fertilizer as well as import the seeds across vast territory, to tend to the crops, and finally to export them cancels out the environmentally ethical effects of bio-fuels in the last instance, providing the final measure of

irrationality in the production of these mono-crops in Colombia. For instance, the cultivation of 456 hectares of African palm – the type grown in Colombia – necessitates immense infrastructure – at least 86 kilometers of drainage systems and 11 kilometers of roads. By 2020, the Colombian government claims it wants to grow six million hectares of African palm. That's a projected 1,131,578,970 kilometers (33,638.95 km sq) of new drainage systems and 144,736,845 kilometers (12,030.7 km sq) of new roads for a combined 45,669.65 kms sq. Since Colombia is only 1,141,748 square kilometers, this enormous construction project (or deconstruction project as the case may be) threatens to cover four per cent of the entire country - and that's just the roads and drainage systems. Combined with the 6 million hectares (60,000 km sq), that's, altogether, 105,669.65 km sq, or 9.25% of Colombia's land mass. We are talking radical costs to the ecological sustainability of the country here![\[6\]](#)

Even still, the social and economic cost of these projects cannot really be measured, since they come at the environmental expense of the communities that do not even want them around and the biodiversity of the earth, whose manifold importance is ineffable. Much of the land on which the Colombian government has slated for mono-crop production lies within the historic territory of disenfranchised minorities such as Afro-Colombians whom military and paramilitary attacks have dispossessed. 79% of Afro-Colombians have become homeless as a result of the aggressive campaign to remove them from their land for the sake of agricultural production.[\[7\]](#) With the example of NAFTA, which displaced at least three million agricultural workers behind it, the FTA model threatens to increase and encourage the aggressive displacement of Colombians, supporting the government's unsafe and unwise policies of unilateral industrial development regardless of opposition.

This land slated for African Palm mono-crop expansion is extraordinarily rich in flora and fauna, and the massive development of agribusiness portends to destroy not only its traditional human heritage, but its ancient natural value to the world.[\[8\]](#) El Chocó, as region that spans the coast of Western Colombia, Panama, Ecuador and Peru is called, contains 9000 plant species and 2250 animal species. 25% of the plants and animals of El Chocó can only be found there. Yet, during the 20th Century, mining, agriculture and logging interests depleted the region, causing the endangering of at least thirty-six species. According to Myers' hotspot priority system, El Chocó remains one of the most important (top four) regions of the world's ecology, providing the most protection from climate change. "At least 65.7% and more likely 70% or more of all vascular plants occur within the 1.44% of earth's land surface occupied by the hotspots," explains Myers, and El Chocó is one of only nine hotspots that comprise that 1.44%.[\[9\]](#) However, only 6.3% of El Chocó is protected under environmental law, meaning that industrial progress could continue the exploitation that has destroyed much of its delicate ecological balance.[\[10\]](#)

A recent forestry law passed through Colombian Congress with the support of the U.S. Agency of International Development echoes the danger of institutional timber exploitation by insisting that ownership of land only extends to three meters above the ground.[\[11\]](#) Bogotá's University of the Andes and German Development Agencies declares: "The law creates the concept of "vuelo forestal" (forestry overflight), which separates the land from the trees and all else above ground level, opening the door to the forests' exploitation by multinational companies."[\[12\]](#) The frightening part of this forestry overflight law resides not only in the alienation of human rights to private property, but in the potential for corporate expropriation of sovereign land – an utter betrayal of democracy that will certainly lead to massive environmental destruction given the history of pollution from which the world has suffered in the grip of industrialism.

Should the government of Colombia attempt to curb such on-going devastation, it could be met by the

same type of economic resistance that set Canada back during the '90s. Following the passage of NAFTA illustrates this point, Canada attempted to halt Ethyl Corporation from including a fuel additive deemed a potential neurotoxin, but Ethyl Corporation sued Canada under NAFTA provisions that give corporations the right to sue sovereign nations. Rather than face a lawsuit, Canada gave Ethyl a twenty million dollar settlement and agreed to remove the ban. Since the debacle, new studies have been produced that go further to prove that manganese in the fuel can bond with prions in the brain to create a condition not unlike Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis, or, Mad Cow Disease, yet Canada still has not banned the additive for fear of legal damages.[\[13\]](#)

The implementation of new laws that render ownership of forest land completely irrelevant in Colombia raise doubts about whether or not things would even be allowed to go that far in the first place. Given the linkages between ultra-right wing paramilitaries to the governments policies of industrial expansion, it is dubious whether Colombia would halt its current policy of relinquishing human rights to corporate arrogance and expropriation in order to effect any type of environmental reform what-so-ever.

As recently as August 12, 2008, the government of Colombia fined Coca-Cola's bottling company, Femsa, for 201 million Colombian pesos (about \$110,000 U.S.) for practices of industrial waste dumping that has been going on since 2006 in marshes located in the outskirts of Bogota. "We won't be flexible with those who caused the environment damage in the capital city. When paying this fine, Coca-Cola will have to meet the obligations regarding the district and to respect the current environmental rules," stated Bogota's environmental secretary, Juan Antonio Nieto.[\[14\]](#) Nieto's asseveration may prove inutile in the future, should the Colombia FTA pass. Investor rights would feasibly deny Colombia the power to progressively sanction corporations who perpetrate environmental hazard within its borders.

Factory Farming

The most dangerous element of Free Trade Agreements actually takes place in the United States of America. Free Trade Agreements call for the elimination of trade barriers like import taxes or tariffs. These tariffs help to support local industries that do not have the efficient productive capacity of the wealthy industrialized nations. By reducing trade barriers, proponents of Free Trade Agreements insist that they open borders to the opportunities of mutually beneficial exchange, but a problem arises when the exchange becomes too one-dimensional towards a certain group of people.

In the United States, for instance, the government caters huge subsidies to massive agribusiness so that multi-national conglomerates will produce large quantities of industrial mono-crops such as wheat, soybeans, rice, and, most importantly, feed grains. The industrial production of agricultural plant-life in the U.S. already accounts for all the ecological damage encouraged in Colombia by the proposed FTA, but the U.S. has a greater ecological dilemma that tips the balance of trade against the developing world: that tipping point is the factory farming of live animals.

Like mono-crop production, factory farming provides intensive development of single species for sale on the free market. These animals, namely chickens and pigs are born, raised, and slaughtered in the deplorable conditions of high density farms. These farms rely on hormones, antibiotics to compensate for the execrable conditions of high density farms. The cruelty to these animals is paralleled only by the hazard presented to the environment.

Poultry factory farms raise chickens in 'battery cages' stacked on top of each other to fulfill the maximum quantity of chickens alive in one place as possible. These cages do not even have enough

space for the chicken to live inside of them, and the chicken must extend its neck outside of its metal grid in order to fit. The chickens do not have the privilege of leaving these cages, even to defecate, and their waste often falls down onto the helpless chickens living in the cages below. The execrable living conditions of these chickens leads to disease and the harmful ecological implications of non-useful wastage.

To prevent the chickens from spreading disease in such dense living conditions, the farmers give them antibiotics, yet the over-used antibiotics have produced resistant strains of bacteria which leave the cages of factory farms and spread far and wide into the environment. In an article published August 10, 2008, *The Daily Mail* draws on a recent study of the European Food Safety Authority, explaining, “Heavy use of antibiotics on factory farms is creating a range of superbugs, causing illness on a massive scale and numerous fatalities.” Factory farms have become cesspools of bacterial infections transferred to humans through water and food, and now, these bacterium are now developing resistances that could lead to massive ecological crises. [15]

Instead of protecting the people of the world from these epidemics, the FTAs lower sanitary and phytosanitary regulations for the sake of easy commercial exchange. Coming out in favor of the Colombia FTA, also known as the Colombia Trade Promotion Authority (CTPA), the Farm Bureau explains their notion of Free Trade in a report entitled, *Implications of a Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement on U.S. Agriculture*:

While the CTPA does not guarantee the United States expanded exports, the United States will be able to land product duty free, along with Colombia’s other regional suppliers. This levels the playing field by providing U.S. products exported to Colombia with the same duty-free access already enjoyed by Colombian products exported to the United States. *Colombia would also agree to deal with sanitary and phytosanitary barriers and other non-tariff barriers to U.S. exports.* [16]

The implication within the text of the Farm Bureau’s report is that the U.S. will not be guaranteed exports, but if it works to produce competitively, its products will be afforded the same privilege as most local products of Colombia. According to the same report, this privilege will increase the demand for meat products drastically, “the United States to use its cost advantages and its wide variety of beef, pork and poultry products to fill a growing share of this market.” [17] Phytosanitary and Sanitary regulations in Colombia, which the American Farm Bureau euphemistically call ‘non-tariff barriers to trade’ would be ‘dealt with’ by Colombia, or, in other words, lowered to comply with the outrageous standards of the U.S. and its factory farm system.

Pig and Hog farms do not pose a better model of environmental ethics than the poultry farms. In fact, pigs, raised in relatively small cages (individual cubicles or more densely populated cages), neither exercised nor nurtured, provide an arguably worse environmental hazard. Pig waste is full of nitrogen and other chemicals that inevitably enters the water supply and causes damage to ecosystems through algae blooms and well pollution. While runts are slain indifferently soon after birth, the larger pigs are given hormones, antibiotics and vitamins which have detrimental effects to the natural life of the pigs as well as devastating potential to generate cancer and resistant strains of bacteria that could be passed on to humans. In spite of the danger these supplements present, they are used, because without them, the conditions of factory farms would be untenable. The factory farming methods present a cycle of mounting danger that government should re-evaluate rather than export. Yet, live hog prices are positively impacted by the introduction of new export market. According to Iowa State University economist Dermot Hayes, the Colombia agreement, when fully implemented, will cause live U.S. hog

prices to jump \$1.63. That means that the profits of the average U.S. pork producer will expand by 14 percent, based on 2007 data, encouraging the reproduction of hog factory farms.[\[18\]](#)

Although not technically factory farms, cow farms provide perhaps the worst ecological menace of all. Cattle grazing in the United States damages the soil. Cows also produce too much manure, and farmers leave piles of it on isolated plots of land to fester and deteriorate into the soil and water, providing immense ecological problems (disease, algae blooms, etc.). Aside from the manure, ruminant animals such as cows are producing the greatest contribution to green house gasses in the world, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. These ecological problems are tantamount to the miserable lives of farm-raised cattle, who are subject to claustrophobic living conditions, brutal milking machines which scab and blister their udders, forced insemination to prolong lactation, and inhumane slaughter practices that are excessively painful. Diseases like Mad Cow do not make life easier, as farmers feed cattle unnatural food, tainted with disease, feces and, sometimes, the remains of other cows, including their brains and spinal chords, causing tremendous epidemics.

Historically, the removal of trade barriers has given the agribusiness industry the shot in the arm that it needs to expand its current system by opening markets abroad to eggs, poultry, beef, pork, milk, and other dairy products. In Mexico, for instance, the cheap, duty free agricultural products, including meat, flowing in from the U.S. as a result of NAFTA eliminated the market for more traditional, free-range, family farmed poultry and subsistence agriculture, dispossessing millions of farmers of their livelihoods. Free trade supplants the more ecologically friendly way of life of the indigenous peoples who function on the basis of 'pre-capitalist' economy with aggressive and environmentally destructive strategies that uproot ancient, ecologically sustainable communities and lead to great economic crisis for the poor.

Although Colombia has already begun to deploy factory farming methods within its own borders, uprooting its own traditional farmers already, the invitation of foreign investors at the behest of protections under Free Trade rules will only expand the environmentally destructive and cruel practices of industrial farming.

Environmental Provisions

While the Colombia Free Trade Agreement does have certain environmental provisions, these environmental provisions exist in tandem with investor privileges that usurp the spirit of environmental ethics. While provisions to protect the environment may deliver on scant promises to protect endangered species in certain environmental reserves from industrial expansion, the externalities of industrial progress and development spurred on by the FTA will render such provisions insufficient to deliver the goals that they pledge.

The primary problem is that the language of environmental protection is too weak. The agreement states:

“That both Parties recognize sovereign right of each Party to establish its own levels of domestic environmental protection and environmental development priorities, and to adopt or modify accordingly its environmental laws and policies, each Party shall strive to ensure that those laws and policies provide for and encourage high levels of environmental protection and shall strive to continue to improve its respective levels of environmental protection.”[\[19\]](#)

The text reveals several problematic issues. Firstly, it does not provide adequate incentive to legislate

progressive laws that curtail environmental trouble as industrial development proceeds. Instead, the agreement deigns to recognize the right of the individual party to establish 'its own levels of domestic environmental protection.' These ambiguous levels of domestic environmental protection do not account for serious and direct action towards cleaning up the environmental patterns of industrialism. The FTA only avers to 'encourage high levels of environmental protection' (as opposed to 'sovereign... levels,' we are now dealing with 'high levels', a seeming contradiction within the text, surely to be exploited by corporate lawyers in the future). Without distinct, or even discreet, language pushing forward an environmental reform of the over-all system of Free Trade that encourages polluting agribusiness and industrial pollution, phrases promising to 'strive to continue to improve... respective high levels of environmental protection' seem empty of the power of change.

Where are provisions that actually protect the environment over corporate rights? Why does the FTA not rescind the rights of corporations to sue nations in the event of lost profits due to environmental protection? There are immense conflicts within the Colombia FTA, which, given the history of ecological destruction caused by Free Trade in the past, cannot possibly pass by the discretionary evaluation of an informed mind as worthy of implementation.

While environmental provisions provide governments with the right to sue corporations or private citizens for punitive damages in the event of polluting and bio-hazard, stated points of the FTA allow private corporations to sue right back for lost profits. With mono-crop production and factory farming already developing in Colombia's private sector and in full swing within the U.S.A. under the full encouragement of government, it is hard to imagine the line that the Uribe or Bush administration would draw concerning environmental protection. Should that line be drawn, it is obvious which side of the argument Free Trade tribunals would toe – the rights of the corporations, which are synonymous with Free Trade as described within the parameters of the FTA.

Particularly illustrative of the complex conflict presented by the environmental provisions is the section on 'Biological Diversity'. According to this section, "The Parties recognize the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and their role in achieving sustainable development."^[20] Given the tacit support for industrial/agricultural development provided by investor protections and the removal of trade barriers, the FTA's language of recognition supplies only a modicum of necessary protection against the spread of factory farms, industrial growth, and mono-crop production, the ambitious plans for which Uribe has already unfurled. It is clear in the statements of both the industrial multi-national corporations and the political leaders in favor of the FTA that the FTA will be used to expand growth in all arenas of industrialism, creating a paradigm that excludes environmentalism from its inner-workings.

In so far as it provides the apparatus for voluminous industrial growth, the FTA uses environmental provisions as an 'outside' resource, which could feasibly be used to tackle problems of pollution and waste excessive to the system already in place. However, the system as it exists is rotten from the inside, and expanding it will mean greater damage to precious ecosystems of Colombia. Though the provisions allow for an interlocution of community, civic and public groups with interloping corporate development projects, the process of mediation adumbrated within the agreement is long and drawn out, and ends up in the dispute resolution process in keeping with patterns set up with the WTO – an inexorable process of legality erected by constituting powers of great capitalist clout in whose interests profit reigns over the environment. Even if environmental provisions grant a small privilege to challenge the might of industrialism, the complaints will likely loose out in the echo chambers of the corridors of power.

Currently, trans-national companies like Drummond have impunity to pursue profits in Colombia at whatever cost necessary to animals and the environment. In La Loma, Drummond has created an ecological bio-hazard with open-pit coal mining tactics that have covered the local residential districts with choking dust. The constantly expanding open-pit coalmine is also proving harmful to the local environment, despite claims by Drummond that its operations are environmentally sound. Journalist Garry Leech explains, “its (Drummond’s) ever-expanding operations are devouring every tree and plant that constitute the natural habitat of the local wildlife.”[\[21\]](#) Even as Drummond causes irreversible damage to the environment, only 5% of its profits remain in Colombia, and attempts of labor to unionize have been met with unabated violence and terror. Currently, the Colombia Federation of Mine Workers is suing Drummond for refusing to stop the murders of three union organizers. A Free Trade Agreement with Colombia would encourage the impunity of multi-nationals like Drummond, plundering the natural resources of Colombia without regard to ecological sustainability, local economy, or even basic human rights.

Enabling Violence

Finally, multi-lateral treaties upheld in the FTA are presented as providing some comfort, but in reality, they simply reiterate the authority of pre-existing agreements that have already been signed on to. Engaging in this sort of redundancy is unnecessary, and conceals the lack of defense against the externalities created by industrial development. For example, mono-crop production, linked to paramilitary violence in Chocó, Nariño, South of Urabá and the East Llanos region, causes dispossession, and leads to illegal economic activity such as deforestation, wildlife traffic and cocaine production. The Colombia Support Network explains: “Indeed, sugar cane, African oil palm, plantain plantations in the past and the present have been characterize by violent expropriation of land, slave like labor conditions, and labor union repression.”[\[22\]](#) Dispossessed people who lose status within their communities as a result of foreign investment which buries traditional life in exploitation often move into illegal methods of securing income.

In Colombia’s Amazon region, poachers and trappers capture seven million creatures every year for sale on the illegal wildlife market. These lucrative species include toucans, parots, macaws, ocelots, marmosets, the golden lion tamarin, and other endangered species. Journalist Timothy Ross writes: “Large areas of jungle are stripped of every living thing. The bigger animals are packed into boxes and often flown out on the same illegal flights used for smuggling cocaine because, as one animal trafficker said, pound for pound parrots pay better than drugs.” Forty-nine endangered species whose names appear on lists of multi-lateral bans on wildlife traffic are endemic to Colombia. In 1997, the Colombian Environmental Ministry counted 1,805 species of birds and 456 species of mammals (22% of which are endangered or critically endangered), but today, those numbers of existing species are dropping due to wildlife trade and deforestation.[\[23\]](#)

Illegal deforestation is one of the most disturbing aspects of the ecological crisis befalling the Amazon Rain Forest and El Chocó. At the same time as wildlife is exploited, illegal deforestation attacks the jungles in an ongoing struggle to find resources that are not precluded from the poor by the preemptive exploitation of government or by multi-national corporations.

People dispossessed and needing income in Colombia fuel the civil war by entering into the illegal economy that is, in part, managed by the interests of FARC. Perhaps the greatest opposition to the Colombian government, FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), which has mounted civil war against the Colombian government since the mid-1960s, either controls or has presence in 15-20% of Colombian territory. In all likelihood, people dispossessed by the expansion of mono-crop production would provide fodder for FARC’s campaign against the Colombian government.

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FARC profits from the dense flora and fauna that provides shelter from authorities within the regions of Rain Forest in Serranía de la Macarena and the mountainous Andes of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Within these ecosystems, FARC provides incentive to grow coca, not for traditional use as tea, in which form it is virtually harmless, but for the purposes of cocaine export, the cultivation of which includes the pollution of pesticides, soil erosion, and the soil and water pollution from toxic chemicals employed in the refining process. FARC also attacks pipelines, spilling crude oil into local rivers. Fueling the civil war, the FTA will add fuel to the FARC insurgency, creating deeper environmental problems for the most ecologically diverse places in the world.[25]

Conclusion

On the basis of the overall ecological conundrums at the root of Free Trade, supporting the Colombia Free Trade agreement remains untenable, even in consideration of environmental provisions. Free Trade does not, as Ricardo stated in his 1817 treatise, *The Principles of Trade and Taxation*, provide mutual beneficence based on comparative advantage. Instead, Free Trade distorts the means of production to the advantage of multinational corporations at the expense of the environment and the people. Ecologically speaking, Free Trade pushes forward an already exhausted system more deeply into resource exploitation and pollution in spite of popular opinion and democracy.

The people of the United States have shown their disdain for Free Trade in the 2006 congressional elections, where Democrats routed Republicans supporting Bush's trade agenda. Yet, the Democrats have answered the mandate of government with vacillation on Free Trade: they have called for re-evaluation, the administration of environmental and labor reform, but never the instrumental change that the system needs. Today, the political atmosphere on Capitol Hill feels different. With politicians from both sides of the aisle attacking Free Trade and the latest round of G7 trade talks falling apart on the embattled issue of Free Trade, the Colombia FTA seems threatened.

Without the Fast Track authority to usher the FTA through Congress quickly, President Bush encounters a harder sell, and the future may hold great debates over the definition of economic progress and sovereignty. Does Free Trade mean free markets or does it mean free people? The resolution that comes will have tremendous effects on the environment and the economy – will power continue to be consolidated in the hands of the richest trans-national corporations, who perpetrate crimes against the environment with impunity? Time alone will tell.

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[4] Ibid

[5] Ibid

[6] Colombia Support Network, "The Colombia FTA is a threat to Afro- Colombian Rights" April 3, 2008. <http://colombiasupport.net/news/2008/04/colombia-fta-is-threat-to-afro.html>

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[11] American Friends Service Committee, "The U.S.-Colombia FTA: Fuels the Fires of the Conflict," <http://www.afsc.org/trade-matters/trade-agreements/Colombia/statement.htm#footnotes>

[12] Adam Isacson, "Plan Colombia and Beyond: An ugly environmental law, with US-aided lobbying", Center for International Policy, December 2005.

[13] Graeme Fletcher, "While the U.S. Bans It, Canada Burns It: While many nations have banned MMT, we keep pumping it", *National Post* (Canada), September 10, 2002, found at Organic Consumers Association, Finland, MN, September 10, 2002 <http://www.organicconsumers.org/corp/CanadaMMT.cfm>

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[15] Sean Poulter, "Factory farms 'to blame for new superbugs'", *The Daily Mail*, August 11, 2008, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1043383/Factory-farms-blame-new-superbugs.html>

[16] American Farm Bureau Federation: Economic Analysis Team, *Implications of a Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement on U.S. Agriculture*, pp. 19 (my emphasis)

[17] Ibid 18

[18] National Pork Producers Council, *International Trade*, June 21, 2007, http://www.nppc.org/public_policy/trade.html

[19] USTR, Colombia TPA Final Texts, November 22, 2006, 18-2

[20] Ibid 18-9

[21] Garry Leech, "Drummond Generates Profits and Misery in Colombia", *Colombia Journal* 2008, <http://www.colombiajournal.org/colombia244.htm>

[22] Colombia Support Network, <http://colombiasupport.net/news/2008/04/colombia-fta-is-threat-to-afro.html>

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