

Korean Catholic Farmer's Movement wto position paper

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WTO KILLS FARMERS

(The deceased Mr. Lee Kyung-Hae's last will)

Current Situations and Choice of Korean Agriculture in Crisis

1. For thousands of years, human beings have developed agricultural sector through diverse and sustainable agricultural systems all around the world. However, Such diverse and sustainable agricultural systems have been seriously undermined under the name of raising efficiency of farming practices and are increasingly transformed into export-oriented monoculture by multinational grain companies.
2. Korean agriculture, which is dominated by small subsistence family farmers, has no competitiveness in the world markets. As of the end of 2004, average arable land per farm household stands only at 1.45 ha. In contrast, classifying farms with less than 20 ha of farmland into small farms, EU provides various forms of support for them.
3. Rice is a staple food for Korean people and a representative crop for Korean agriculture. Rice is cultivated by 80 percent of total Korean farm households and accounts for 50 percent of agricultural income of Korean farmers. As the UR Agreement on Agriculture took effect in 1995, Korea has liberalized imports of a total of 1,412 agricultural and livestock products except for rice. Over the UR implementation period from 1995 to 2004, farmers' income increased only 1.8-fold while farmers' debt rose about 4 times. During the same period, the number of farm households decreased from 1.55 million to 1.24 million and rural population from 4.85 million to 3.41 million. Farmers above the age of 60, who will have no other livelihood to earn if they quit farming, account for more than 60 percent of farm employment. The income gap between urban and farm households increased to 80.6 percent in 2000 and further to 76.5 percent in 2003 from 95.1 percent in 1995 when the WTO system was launched.
4. As Korea is located in an Asian monsoon belt, heavy rain is concentrated during June to August. Daily rainfall over 300 mm is often received almost all over the country during the period, causing huge flood damages to the country every year. According to an analysis, the total amount of water which can be stored in rice paddy fields during each flood in Korea is estimated at as much as 2.62 billion MT. Taking into account the construction cost of a dam with the same flood control effect as paddy fields is 14 trillion won, economic value of flood control effects by rice paddy fields reaches at least as much as 14 trillion won. This is known as positive external effects of agriculture. The positive external effects of agriculture in Korea includes not only flood control, but also environmental conservation and the maintenance of rural landscape
5. Korea's food self-sufficiency ratio reached as high as 80.5 percent in 1970's, but it dropped substantially to 25.3 percent in 2004 due to continued decreases in farm population and arable land. Korea's food self-sufficiency, if rice is not included, stands only at 3 percent, making Korea a country

with the 114th lowest food self-sufficiency ratio in the world.

Food Self-sufficiency in Selected Countries

US	UK	Canada	France	Germany	Korea
133.5%	99.6%	162.0%	194.5%	132.1%	26.9%

6. It should be kept in mind that developed countries have had about 100-200 years or more in carrying out their industrialization and agricultural structural adjustment. This being said, it is unjustifiable to force Korea, which has only a 40-year experience with industrialization, to implement agricultural restructuring in a much shorter period.

7. WTO attempts to apply huge reductions in high levels of border protection and domestic support, which developed countries have enjoyed for long, to developing countries such as Korea. The level of Korea's domestic support per agricultural labor force stands only at one-ninth of that of the US or that of EU. It is unfair and unbalanced to place limitations on the levels of domestic support provided without due consideration of this inequality in domestic support levels among WTO member countries.

8. Article 20 of the UR Agreement on Agriculture stipulates that negotiations for continuing the reform process should take into account the experience from implementing the UR reduction commitments and non-trade concerns including food security. Therefore, as far as a staple food is concerned, WTO should allow member countries food sovereignty and exclude it from trade liberalization. And WTO must allow all of sovereign countries the right to make an autonomous decision on food policies that are directly related with national security.

9. Securing an adequate level of food supplies for the people on a stable basis and thereby ensuring national security is both right and obligation of a sovereign country. For this reason, matters of national security and sovereign right should be preceded by any other international rules, and a sovereign country has the right to reject any disciplines to affect such matters. The DDA agricultural negotiations, going beyond unrestricted movement of agricultural products from one country to another, are now trying to infringe upon and even control a political and economic sovereignty of a country.

10. The right to food is what God gives us and therefore, it is one of the fundamental human rights upon which cannot be infringed, and the sovereign right of a country as well. According to FAO and UN Commission on Human Rights, the right to food encompasses the right to access food on a stable basis, have safe food and choose whatever he/she wishes to eat, the right to choose seeds to plant, and the right of national governments to make a decision on their own food policies autonomously. For this reason, we declare that food, military and energy sovereignty are three fundamental sovereign rights of national governments.

11. Korean agriculture is now facing an unprecedented crisis and in particular, the WTO system is a major force of disrupting Korean agriculture. Rice is not just something to eat, but also life and culture for Korean people. And it also plays a key role to preserve the environment and natural ecosystem. Therefore, every country needs to provide an appropriate level of protection for the agricultural sector, taking into account the non-trade concerns of agriculture and the monopolistic nature of world food markets. We believe that staple foods of individual countries should be provided with more special and flexible treatment. All in all, we make it clear that food is the life of the people and therefore is a matter of a sovereign right.

12. After a close examination of the 10-year-old WTO system, we came to a conclusion that WTO's

blind push for comprehensive tariffication of all products should be repealed. Affirming that non-market and non-capitalistic ways of living do exist against the basic spirits of WTO that tries to put everything into trade, we also make it clear that the world where we live is not for sale.

Food is Life and Sovereignty.

We cannot give in our lives.

There is no sovereign right for sale.

The world where we live is not for sale.