



Archdiocese of Southwark  
Commission for  
*Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*



JPIC Update November 2009

**Poor farmers escape poverty by going organic.**

(From Independent catholic news)

As debate rages in Britain about the relative benefits of organic food, international development charity Progressio says that 'going organic' is changing the lives of poor farmers and their families across the developing world.

Following a recent report by the UK's Food Standards Agency, which suggested that organic food has little difference in nutritional value and "no health benefits", debate has been raging about whether organically grown produce is superior to non-organic food.

But Progressio's work with poor farmers shows that a key aspect of organic food has been forgotten - how the use of natural pesticides, fertilisers and seeds is leading to bigger harvests, less indebtedness and higher standards of living in the developing world.

"I recently returned from visiting organic farmers in Ecuador - where 40% of the population live on less than \$2 a day - and it seems a vital group of people are being forgotten in the debate about the relative benefits of organic food", said Progressio's Campaigns Officer, Brie O'Keefe.

Brie continued: "Poor farmers around the world are lifting themselves out of poverty by going organic. Farmers like Alfredo Ruiz and his fellow villagers in the tiny hamlet of El Cristal in the Andean foothills told me how they have stopped forking out for expensive chemicals in favour of traditional methods of growing which they haven't used for decades."

She concluded: "Communities are re-learning how to manage their natural resources and producing

more reliable, bigger crops and a better living wage".

Alfredo now sells his produce at the local market and has even started converting his neighbours to organics.

In Malawi, another farmer, Angelina Ngoza, is also reaping the rewards of going organic. "Before I knew about organic farming I was forced to buy high-priced chemical fertilisers to make my crops grow. But I could never afford all I needed. I was taught to use pesticides and herbicides too, but they killed small animals and left burns on my arms. I always worried that these chemicals might one day kill me", Angelina said.

A year ago Progressio helped Angelina and 40 of her neighbours switch to organic production. So instead of spending most of the profit from their crops paying for the fertilisers and chemicals used to grow them, they became self-sufficient.

Angelina said: "After only one year of being organic, I am already harvesting one extra bag of maize for my family and I know my harvests will get bigger in future. Organic farming doesn't harm the soil, it is healthier and I can charge more for my vegetables in the market."

One of Angelina's neighbours, Grace, added: "We are now in control of our farming. It means we have more food to eat, more food to sell, it is disease free and nutritious."

Tim Aldred, Progressio's Advocacy Manager, said: "For many of the world's 1.4bn small-scale farmers, the benefit of organics is clear: better food security and a better life. It is really important that the public debate on organics takes note of positive stories

***ACAT (Action by Christians Against Torture)***

Would you send a greeting card to someone in prison for being a member of a human rights group, a prisoner of conscience or a persecuted Christian? ACAT have a list of suitable recipients and advice which can be downloaded from [www.southwarkjandp.co.uk](http://www.southwarkjandp.co.uk). The lists could be cut into individual names and handed out in parishes.

For more information on topics or events please look at our web site [www.southwarkjandp.co.uk](http://www.southwarkjandp.co.uk) We would welcome any feedback on the format and content of the site following the recent revisions.

*If you do not have internet access please contact the office and we will print and post any materials mentioned in this update to you.*

## **Forthcoming Events**

### **November 19th Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) open debate**

4.30-6.15 p.m. Friends House, Small Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Entrance is free. For further details please see [www.eccr.org.uk](http://www.eccr.org.uk) To book, please email Miles Litvinoff: [miles.litvinoff@eccr.org.uk](mailto:miles.litvinoff@eccr.org.uk).

The banking crisis has receded, and stability has returned. Lessons about excessive risk-taking have been learned. Or have they? Is the banking system back on solid ground? Or is more radical change needed?

ECCR's 2009 open debate will explore these questions with a panel chaired by Lord Harries of Pentregarth (former Bishop of Oxford).

### **November 19th Mary Ward lecture - "Be lovers of truth and workers of justice"**

6.30 to 9.00 pm (Hors d'ouvers and wine reception from 6.30) at Southwark [Anglican](http://www.southwarkcathedral.org) Cathedral. Speaker Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ.

### **November 27th CAFOD Pope Paul VI Memorial Lecture**

7.15 Emmanuel Centre, 9-23 Marsham Street SW1P 3DW  
Capitalism, Catholicism and Community.  
Speaker Baroness Williams of Crosby.  
Tickets £6 from CAFOD office or web site [www.cafod.org.uk/PaulVILecture](http://www.cafod.org.uk/PaulVILecture)

### **December 1st World AIDS Day**

Advent Vespers Service 7pm at St Paul's Church, Bedford St, Covent Garden WC2  
Many other events throughout the country, see [www.worldaidsday.org](http://www.worldaidsday.org) for full details.

### **December 3rd World Migration Day**

The observation of World Migration Day gives us an opportunity to reflect on the roles we play as pastoral activists, working for and with refugees and migrants and to ask some of the more difficult questions about migration; questions such as, why the rich countries of the world are unwilling to sign or ratify international treaties protecting migrants and why are they now shifting their asylum policies overseas?

### **December 7th 7.30 pm**

#### ***Pax Christi Advent Service***

St Aloysius Church, Phoenix Road, London NW1  
Readings and Carols for Peace. Music led by Bernadette Farrell  
Further information from [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk) or 0208 203 4884

## **DON'T FORGET TO JOIN**



# **THE WAVE**

**COME TOGETHER TO STOP CLIMATE CHAOS**

## **LONDON 5.12.09**

### **ASSISTED SUICIDE CONSULTATION**

The Director of Public Prosecutions recently announced new guidelines that make clear that he is unlikely to prosecute those "motivated by compassion" who help a relative or close friend with a "clear, settled and informed" wish to commit suicide. He insists there is no need for a change in the law. There has been no parliamentary debate.

The Crown Prosecution Service is conducting a public consultation on the new regulations. This can be accessed via the CPS website at [www.cps.gov.uk/consultations/as\\_index.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/consultations/as_index.html).

The consultation ends on December 16<sup>th</sup>. Please take the time to read the document and make your views known.

### **A voice against the assertion that the current food crisis is due to population growth**

Frances Moore Lappe:  
Between 1870-2000 the world population 'grew by 65 per cent and cereal production by 75 per cent. Since then, the pattern has held'.  
'In grain alone the world produces roughly 3,300 calories per person, or about 40 per cent more than we need'.

Population growth is not responsible for the food crisis. There is enough food in the world for people, animals and automobiles. Governance is the main issue which needs to be addressed in countries in the developing world.

### **And finally:**

"It is not only anonymous financiers and obscure entities that are guilty for causing the distressing situation that we find ourselves in. The guilt also lies with those of us who forget the strength that we have in He who remains by our side, those who cease to act as He would wish: with generosity and with all our intellectual and material resources, to fight the suffering that is to be found nearby and further afield"

*Jose Ramon Diaz-Torremocha.*  
*SVP President General.*