

U.S., Mexican Farmers Find Common Interest vs. Cartels, Big Finance

by Gretchen Small

March 29—The groundwork has been laid for Mexican and U.S. farm leaders to actively join forces, together with European farmers, in a common fight to defend their right to produce good food, and more of it, for the people of the world. The message of support sent by 22 U.S. farm leaders to a March 15 meeting of their Mexican counterparts called by the “National Front To Save the Mexican Countryside,” set this needed process in motion, by addressing “our common fight to save independent family farming, and independent national economies everywhere.”

Mexican farmers had formed the Save the Countryside movement in the spring of 2023 as independent food producers across the country began sending their tractors into the streets in protest against economic policies which are bankrupting them. The topics on the agenda at their March 15 meeting, held on the sidelines of this year’s annual three-day ExpoCeres agriculture fair, were big: the world food crisis and the urgency of renegotiating the fraudulent free trade agreements, restoring parity pricing and a national agricultural plan, and the urgency of building the great water projects to confront the deepening North American-wide drought—and the shortage of sufficient fresh water even in non-drought periods.

Organizers opened the meeting by reading the message from the U.S. farmers in Spanish, as the English original was projected onto a large screen behind them. The statement caused a commotion. Many of the producers were surprised to hear



Frente Nacional para el Rescate del Campo Mexicano



Alberto Vizcarra Ozuna (left) and Baltazar Valdez Armentia at the Mexican farmers’ press conference, March 15, 2024.

American farmers denouncing the same system which is crushing them! They had assumed that U.S. ag producers had benefited from the last 30 years of NAFTA



USDA/Bob Nichols

Corn destroyed by drought in Texas.

free trade policies at the expense of Mexican ag producers, as the mass media and lots of political leaders had told them for years, but now they were hearing otherwise.

The U.S. farm leaders stressed the common interest shared by farm producers on both sides of the border:

Our common enemy is the monopolistic complex of global banks, and transnational corporations. They impose a below-cost-of-production trade policy. They prevent a parity-oriented price policy, which would maintain the farm producer sector in each of our countries, and in nations around the world.

They are stealing the “family farm” culture out of agri-culture. The same agro-financial complex has prevented infrastructure construction in North America, to serve our common interest in necessary improvements, especially water systems—dams, canals, irrigation, desalination, flood control. They block high-tech power, transportation, health care and thousands of other projects.

The U.S. farm message proposed common action:

Now is the time to stop this destruction. Re-control trade. Build infrastructure and set the agenda for a new economic system worldwide serving productive forces—from farmer producers to manufacturing, not globalist, speculator predators. Our fellow ranchers and farmers are on the streets in Europe, and in India. There were hundreds of farm demonstrations in the Americas in 2023. We fight here in the U.S.... We stand with you and look forward to working together to get the job done.

(See the full statement and the signers below.)
The message was read by Baltazar Valdez Ar-



Frente Nacional Para el Rescate del Campo Mexicano

Pictured here are some of the leaders of the National Front to Save the Mexican Countryside who led the meeting of the movement held during this year’s Expoceres, the big annual fair in Sinaloa, known as the granary of Mexico. Los Mochis, Sinaloa, March 15, 2024.

mentía, a leading ag producer from the state of Sinaloa (one of the breadbaskets of Mexico), who plays a key role in the national Save the Countryside movement. When he finished, he gave it his whole-hearted support. “The world needs more production,” he told the meeting. Wars and geopolitical issues are determining the rules, not the so-called “free market,” and this is wiping us out. “It is clear that the problem is international, and we have to see it that way in order to be able to measure our forces accordingly.”

That message then shaped the several-hour discussion which followed.

The Save the Countryside leaders gave the message further prominence at the press conference they had called on their meeting, by also reading it there before they made their statements. Two local papers published articles on the movement’s meeting, and reported that a message from U.S. farmers had been read. One article emphasized the message of the Mexican farm leaders that the “[Farm Crisis Is Worldwide](#).” The other reported Valdez’s charge that ag producers in Mexico, the U.S., and Europe face the same disastrous policies from governments pressuring farmers to give up farming. [He was quoted](#): “It is very clear that this situation is caused by the world’s large financial consortiums.”

Change the Speculative System, or Go Under

Mexico's Save the Countryside movement was organized out of a recognition that, in order for protests to succeed, ag producers have to propose a solution, and that nothing short of a change in the speculative financier-run system will work. They have been fighting to get their fellow producers to understand that merely fighting for some measly financial handout from the government will not save them, because the existing parasitical system as a whole is collapsing and only a return to a system based on tried-and-proven principles of physical economy will work. This effort has been strengthened as Mexican farmers see "spectacular mo-

linked to food production. Private, global agro-financial corporations have subjugated the government of [Mexican President] Andrés Manuel López Obrador, as they have done with most European governments and others in the Americas.

The growing outpouring of producers from Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland and other countries, who have taken thousands of tractors and farm equipment to the highways to gather them in front of government offices and parliaments, protesting against the same free trade policies affecting Mexican pro-



Frete Nacional Para el Rescate del Campo Mexicano

Mexican farmers rally to defend their right to produce good food in 2023. One of their banners reads, "Get wheat and corn out of the Chicago Board of Trade! Parity prices for grain!"

bilizations of hundreds of tractors" occupying the capitals of Europe, from Berlin to Brussels and Paris, and other developing nations joining forces in an effort to create such an alternative system around the BRICS.

A statement [posted Feb. 5](#) by leading Save the Countryside organizer Alberto Vizcarra Ozuna gives an idea of the kind of organizing this movement is carrying out. He wrote:

We are witnessing the end-stage of an economic, commercial and financial model that, accustomed as it is to speculation, has for decades disregarded development and social welfare, especially socio-productive activities

ducers, is an unequivocal sign that the world's producers will not accept being sacrificed on the altar of the markets controlled by Wall Street and London in the Chicago Stock Exchange and other speculative centers.

When we are suffering from a government cowed by these forces, and from presidential candidates who, out of ignorance or complicity, refuse to discuss the structural problems affecting the countryside and the national economy, it is up to the people, as the repository of national sovereignty under the Constitution, to organize ourselves

with the necessary strength to reestablish the powers of the Mexican State and protect national food production, as well as the economic development and industrialization of the country.

Organizing Presidential Candidates

The movement has done just that. With Mexico's presidential elections scheduled for June 2 this year, that campaign is in full swing. Last Jan. 8, when one of the two leading presidential candidates, Xóchitl Gálvez, agreed to meet with agricultural producers in the northwest of the country, more than a thousand producers turned out for the meeting. Baltazar Valdez addressed the meeting and the candidate, in the

name of the National Front To Save the Mexican Countryside.

It's time for Mexico's ag producers to wake up, Valdez Armentía stated from the outset. There are measures we can take to solve the great crisis we face. He held up the statement on the crisis prepared by his movement, which he then gave to the candidate. The document identifies the root of the crisis as being the abandonment of the policy of maintaining national food security through parity pricing and government protection which Mexico had maintained for a half century, from 1934–1982. The policy shift that occurred starting in 1983 towards the free trade policies then codified in NAFTA and today's USMCA, has left grain prices to be decided at the whim of international speculative markets, it charges.

With limited time to speak, Valdez summarized the four measures the movement argues must be taken to save Mexico's food and farmers:

1) Urgently revise the agricultural chapter of the USMCA, in order to correct all regulations which harm the farmers, and, at the same time, take up proposals that Mexico diversify its foreign and economic relations by turning towards the BRICS for alternative trade relations and joint investment projects, to get around the control by the cartels that ma-

nipulate prices on the Chicago Board of Trade, and the like.

2) Establish national production goals, and ensure those goals can be met through a universal policy of parity pricing for basic grains, and establish reasonable tariff policies to prevent cheap food imports from harming national producers.

3) Return to a policy of developing water resources, rather than today's doomed effort to manage existing resources. Great infrastructure projects, like [the Northwest Hydraulic Plan \(PLHINO\)](#), and seawater desalination plants to supply coastal cities, must be built.

4) Re-establish all the policies which Mexico employed from 1934 to 1982 to protect and develop the productivity of Mexican agriculture. "We are not proposing a return to the past; we are proposing re-establishing the basic economic principles" which assured social well-being.

Valdez Armentía told the candidate and the mass of farmers listening that he was willing to meet any candidate willing to listen, with the message: "Forget ideologies and dogmas. Let us be really practical. Let us take up again what worked for 50 years, and throw out everything in the last 30 years which has not worked."

Salute to the Farmers and Ranchers of Mexico, Our Comrades in Common Purpose

March 26—*The following message of support and policy, signed by the 22 U.S. farm leaders from 14 states, whose names follow, was read in Spanish translation to farmers meeting at their conference in Los Mochis, Sinaloa, March 15, to discuss how to overcome the extreme crisis they, too, face today.*

We farmers and ranchers in the U.S. salute you in Mexico. We greet your organization, the "National Front To Save the Mexican Countryside," and its deliberations at your March 15 conference. We respect and value your guts and courage in our common fight to save independent family farming, and independent national economies everywhere.

Our common enemy is the monopolistic complex of global banks, and transnational corporations. They impose a below-cost-of-production trade policy. They prevent a parity-oriented price policy, which would

maintain the farm producer sector in each of our countries, and in nations around the world. They are stealing the "family farm" culture out of agri-culture.

The same agro-financial complex has prevented infrastructure construction in North America, to serve our common interest in necessary improvements, especially water systems—dams, canals, irrigation, desalination, flood control. They block high-tech power, transportation, health care and thousands of other projects.

Now is the time to stop this destruction. Re-control trade. Build infrastructure and set the agenda for a new economic system worldwide serving productive forces—from farmer producers to manufacturing, not globalist, speculator predators.

Our fellow ranchers and farmers are on the streets in Europe, and in India. There were hundreds of farm

demonstrations in the Americas in 2023. We fight here in the U.S., and we encourage and support our brother farmers, ranchers, and all food producers in Mexico.

In this spirit, we send our support to your conference, “Let’s Recover a Sovereign Policy in Food Production.” We stand with you and look forward to working together to get the job done.

Robert “Bob” Baker, Leesburg, Virginia; Former Grain and Livestock Producer; Director of Schiller Institute Agricultural Commission

Jon Baker, Harper, Iowa; Cattle and Grain Farmer; Agricultural Bank Vice President and Loan Officer; Vice President of the Iowa Stockgrowers Association

James Benham, Versailles, Indiana; Former State President of the Indiana Farmers Union; National Board Member of the National Farmers Union

Bill Bullard, Billings, Montana; Chief Executive Officer, R-CALF USA (Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America)

Mike Callicrate, Colorado Springs, Colorado; Cattleman; President and Founder, Ranch Foods Direct

Angel Cushing, Allen, Kansas; Goat Farmer; Independent Farm Activist against the Green New Deal / 30×30 land grab

Frank Endres, Corning, California; Wheat and Cattle Rancher; National Board Member of National Farmers Organization (NFO) and of R-CALF USA

Taylor H. Haynes, M.D., Laramie, Wyoming; Rancher; President, and member of the Board of Directors, Organization for Competitive Markets

Angela Huffman, Wharton, Ohio; Sheep Farmer; President of Farm Action

Wilbur Kehrli, Manchester, Iowa; Cattle, Pigs and Grain Farmer; Board of Directors of American Blue Cattle Association, retired

Bill Kluck, Mud Butte, South Dakota; Sheep and Cattle Rancher; Chairman of Sheep Committee, R-CALF USA; on Board of Directors of South Dakota Stockgrowers Association

Vaughn Meyer, Reva, South Dakota; Cattle Rancher; Former President of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association; Former President of the Organization for Competitive Markets

James Moore, Alaska; Fisherman, Past Chairman of the Alaska Trollers Association

Eric Nelson, Merville, Iowa; Farm/Feeder and Rancher; Vice President R-CALF USA, and Director, Region VII (Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin)

Andrew Olson, Windom, Minnesota; Grain Producer; Farm Leader and Chairman of the Minnesota Schiller Institute Agricultural Commission

Mike Schultz, Brewster, Kansas; Rancher and Farmer; Vice-President of Organization for Competitive Markets

Randy Sowers, Middletown, Maryland; Dairy Farmer, independent creamery owner

Matthew Steele, Manhattan, Kansas; Executive Director of the Kansas Cattlemen’s Association

Herman Steffen, Detour, Maryland; Beef Cattle and Grain Farmer; Farm Leader

Mike Weaver, Franklin, West Virginia; Board of Directors, and former President of Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias

Charles White, Fowlerville, Michigan; Dairy and Grain Farmer

Ron Wiczorek, Mitchell, South Dakota; Rancher and Farm Leader; Former Candidate for U.S. Congress; Chairman of the South Dakota Schiller Institute Agricultural Commission