

**Charles University Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**Masters Thesis: The WTO, Agribusiness, and The Third Food Regime**  
**Written by: Sam Wilhelm-Ross**  
**Adviser: Hrishabh Sandilya**  
**Opponent: Antonin Mikes. FSV (June 2, 2011)**

This masters thesis has a well defined structure which flows throughout the work. The incorporation of theory related to Global Food Systems allows the reader to clearly understand the potential outcomes that are to be expected from the paper. The author of this work provides a very clear overview of the Global Food System from the perspective of Food Regime Theory (Friedmann as seen in McMichael 2009). The author explains the historical evolution of the global systems and provides a cursory history of the GATT or WTO.

The paper provides a very comprehensive overview of issues pertaining to subsidies and how Agribusiness controls or influences policy, albeit with a focus on the US system to the neglect of the EU system at times. The authors use of several case studies is enlightening, however the studies of the Punjab and Malawi would fit more appropriately into section 6 where other case studies are discussed.

While the author has provided a realistic critique of the current system the lack of a clear and objective solution to the negative impacts of the current system is lacking. In addition the lack of objective language throughout the paper is of some concern. The writer uses colourful language throughout the work yet the over exaggeration of the evils of the global system and somewhat reactionary rhetorical flair in writing fails to contribute to our understanding the issue at hand (examples appended below). On a more technical note, the writer does not clearly cite the statements made by American presidents on page 10 and 11.

One major concern that this opponent has is the writers liberal use somewhat confusing terminology without clear definitions. (i.e. selective development or development - 'first world' in combination with 'Global North') This lack of clarity in definition when combined with radical language and broad generalizations weakens the papers argumentation; especially when the writer is lacking of firm grounding that would normally be provided by data. The case studies are perhaps the most revealing part of this work, although even within the case studies the author has felt the need to add superfluous information (see case study 6.4 on Mexico where information on suicide rates in India are discussed unnecessarily)

Generally speaking this is an adequate overview of the evolution of the WTO and agribusiness control over the global food regime. Clear case studies are revealing, while the discussion of the *La Via Campesina* movement is relevant and topical. The writer may take into account that when discussing market speculation the writer does not discuss the fact that only about 7 % of rice or wheat is actually traded on the open market and thus susceptible to speculative prices changes. Similarly the writer argues that developing countries have 42% of their exports on the world market (a decline from 46%), however, the information does not actually tell the reader anything substantive as it does not stipulate the share of developed economies nor what class of goods this 42% refers too.

Questions - The writer of this work is clearly well read in this topic, however the panel may wish to ask the writer about:

- 1) The greater impact that the Cairns Group of Fair Traders in Agriculture has had in modifying the global food regime as the author only briefly mentions this influential group in passing.
- 2) When discussing market speculation and food prices the theory of social justice could have been discussed. The writer could be asked to discuss this concept of 'responsibility'.

Overall the paper is well written and topical unfortunately the writer has taken a very negative approach to the current situation which is clear thought the paper. As a result of the negative undertones throughout the work, combined with the radical banter and liberal peppering of off hand remarks, makes the paper difficult to read without questioning its viability as an academic work.

The writer has a very strong conclusion although some concluding remarks are unjustified as they have not been demonstrated, if discussed at all, in the paper. An example of this is "Agribusiness has emerged as the dominant actor in a corporate food regime that is characterized by inefficiency and inequality." The writer did not appear to discuss this inefficiency clearly in the paper, inequality yes, inefficiency not.

It is the view of the opponent that this paper should be graded as a 2. This is due primarily to the radical biased undertones throughout the paper and the fact that many statements made throughout which are not grounded in data.

Opponent: \_\_\_\_\_ Antonin Mikes

FSV

June 2, 2011

-Examples of questionably language use- Or used without substantiation.

"the lower classes ....a seemingly insatiable appetite for reproduction," pg 5

"it is their nation's poor who end up suffering the brunt of the ill effects of the system that was essentially imposed on them"pg 15

"but LDCs must have expected a higher moral integrity from the WTO than that of the conquistadors."pg 16

"The WTO's lack of a clear democratic procedure and the subsequent hunger produced from its policies bare a similar resemblance." pg 16

"they must be capable of influencing the measly WTO whose agenda is notoriously driven by the interests of the United States and other nations influential to the food system." pg 40