



CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE

Agricultural Ethics for a Global Generation

Church Role in Agriculture

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI:

It is necessary, then, to point in a truly unified way to a new balance between agriculture, industry and services, so that development be sustainable, and no one go without bread and work, and so that air and water and the other primary resources be preserved as universal goods.

"Caritas in Veritate," No. 27

When it comes to economic sectors like agriculture, some believe the Church should not get involved in business or policy matters. The Church should only provide “spiritual nourishment” to its members.

But bishops and church leaders follow a different track: Hearing the cry of vulnerable farmers in a merciless global market beyond their control, the Church is compelled to act in the secular world.

The Catholic Church speaks out on agricultural issues because much is at stake in moral and human terms: food is essential to sustain life. Who can deny that providing food for all is a Gospel imperative?

When the U.S. Farm Bill is periodically reauthorized by Congress, the Church gives due attention to agricultural, food assistance and rural development issues. The bishops give careful consideration and offer their perspectives based on Catholic social teachings. They do so not to set public policy, but rather to create a moral framework.

By doing so, the Church reminds us of the common good and "living in the light" of Gospel teachings. Church leaders can raise questions and ask policy-makers -- political leaders, agricultural experts, advocates, and activists -- to make policy choices with the most vulnerable in mind.

This goes beyond providing food for all: the Church cares for all those who produce the food – farmers and farmworkers – and calls for good stewardship of the land for future generations.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. (Matthew 25:35)