



MAURICE OUDET

Maurice Oudet, who was born in Paris in 1944, is a missionary in Africa. He has lived in Burkina Faso since 1972, has written case studies on agricultural economics, and supports the rural community. He has been studying the impacts of trade agreements since the 2001 cotton crisis, when subsidised American cotton drove global market prices to rock-bottom. Growers in Burkina Faso could not sell their products, or had to sell at below production cost. In a joint statement with the president of the National Union of Cotton Producers and his counterparts in Mali and Benin, Oudet demanded a ruling against US subsidies from the dispute settlement body of the World Trade Organization. «That was the beginning of a long struggle that is still going on,» says the missionary, who opposes the Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU. «Our countries would lose important tax revenues and our market would be flooded with European goods,» continues Oudet, who is confident that the people of Burkina Faso still live by the motto of former President Sankara: «Produce what you want with the means available to you». «Today,» says Oudet, «that is known as food sovereignty».

No abolition of or increase in the EU milk quota.

Subsidies for farmers in the EU are not a problem, as long as their products are not exported.

Protection of Burkina Faso's market with duties, as long as the EU subsidises exports.

No Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU.

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ECOFAIR TRADE DIALOGUE

AGRICULTURAL TRADE POLICY JEOPARDISES HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURKINA FASO

«The African continent could still feed itself if it were allowed to.»
Korotoumou Gariko, milk producer

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Despite difficult natural and political conditions, the farmers of Burkina Faso produce enough cereals to feed the entire population. Yet the country's government adopts policies designed to favour imports of foreign produce. This harms smallholders – and indeed the entire economy: for the value creation that could result from domestic processing activities is lost to the country.

The dairy sector is no exception. The livestock breeders who, like our ambassador Korotoumou Gariko, almost all belong to the pastoral Peul people make up around ten percent of the population. For a long time, the low import duty of five percent on milk powder made it almost impossible for these people to sell their own milk in the towns. The massive subsidies used by the EU to underpin its milk exports made things even worse.

But world market prices are now on the rise, holding out new hope for many farmers. Over the period from 2004 to 2008 the prices of imported milk powder from the EU doubled; the amount of locally marketed dairy produce similarly almost doubled over the same period. Over the long term such a trend can also be to the benefit of consumers, as it reduces the country's dependence upon imports and thus mitigates the risk of abrupt price hikes.

The planned Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and the West African Union could, however, stall this success. If the EU has its way, Burkina Faso would have to abolish 80 percent of duties by 2022 at the latest and in times of low global market prices would often be unable to shield its agriculture from cheap imports. The fact that the EU plans to further expand its dairy production and exports further exacerbates the situation.



KOROTOUMOU GARIKO

Born in 1956, Korotoumou Gariko is a farmer with eighteen dairy cattle and a small dairy. She is president of the National Union of Mini-Dairies. «The EU subsidises its milk so heavily that they can supply milk powder more cheaply than we can,» complains Gariko. «This sort of dumping is destroying our milk sector and taking my small business with it as well.» As in African countries there is no social system comparable with those in the EU, many people would lose their livelihood because of this, she explains, declaring, «Food is the engine of life and should not be subordinated to free trade». Gariko is proud of the fact that eighty percent of the population has been able to produce their own food until now. «The smallholders in Burkina Faso and in the neighbouring countries are demanding a no to Economic Partnership Agreements,» she says, «We demonstrated on the streets of the capital Ouagadougou against the Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU, otherwise our government would have signed long ago».

FACTS & FIGURES

Population	16 million
Percentage of population below the poverty line	43.9%
Number working in agriculture	13 million
Agricultural exports	0.25 billion dollars (cotton, sesame, mangoes and cashew nuts)
Agricultural imports	0.25 billion dollars (rice, wheat, milk powder)
Percentage of population undernourished	8.45%
Average life expectancy	53 years