

# Form commission to save European farms

Farmers from all across Europe met on May 31-June 1 in Ginsheim, West Germany, and announced the formation of a new agricultural commission of the Schiller Institute, to combat the suicidal farm policy of the European Community (EC), and to map out a political offensive to revive European agriculture. "If we do not implement a different agricultural policy in the European Community now," said Schiller Institute representative Uwe Friesecke in his keynote address, "we will suffer the same fate as thousands of American farmers, who have been driven off their land in recent years by forced auctions, or have been plunged into new dependency."

Attending the founding meeting of the commission were nearly 50 farm leaders, from regional and national organizations from the West German states of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, and Lower Saxony; the French Federation of Agriculture; the Spanish independent farmers' organization COAG; and Danish and American farmers.

The commission's founding declaration (see below) called for European-wide solidarity among farmers to overturn the disastrous effort of the EC bureaucracy to cartelize agriculture and destroy independent family farming. Speakers outlined the depth of the crisis being faced in Europe, especially since the EC's new austerity prices and "co-responsibility levy" were imposed on "excess" grain production.

The delegates agreed to carry the new initiative back to their respective countries, to establish national organizations in the weeks ahead, and to make detailed policy recommendations on such issues as the role of farmer cooperatives, farm credit banks, and processing industries. They will meet again before year's end.

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## Documentation

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*The following are excerpts from the founding declaration of the Schiller Institute Agriculture Commission:*

The agricultural policy of the European Commission has led to a crisis in European agriculture, which, if continued, will endanger the food supply of the European population. Every third family farm in the European Community today is over-indebted, and the number of insolvent farms is growing daily. Reductions in agricultural prices this year will mean the end

for many farms. Farms that have grown over centuries and are still family-owned, face their final ruin.

We recognize that for years, the same crisis of agriculture has hit our fellow farmers, the independent family farmers in the United States. If we do not implement a different agricultural policy in the European Community now, we will suffer the same fate as thousands of American farmers, who have been driven off their land in recent years by forced auctions, or have been plunged into new dependency.

In view of the catastrophic under-nourishment of the world population, we cannot see why the most productive agricultural economies in America and Europe should be ruined by a wrong policy. With a world population of 5 billion, more than 1 billion live at or beneath the subsistence level. . . .

We therefore demand the creation of a new just world economic order, in which every nation is assured the right to a modern development of its infrastructure, agriculture and industry. Only in this context of new and expanding markets, can the solution to the crisis of agriculture finally be achieved. . . .

In European agricultural policy, we demand:

1) Immediate price increases according to the parity-price system for all agricultural products, in order to put a halt to the steady erosion of the incomes of family farmers.

2) Reorganization of the EC financial budget in the framework of European participation in the creation of a new world monetary system, which re-establishes the prerequisites for development in common and expanded trade relations of the partners, both within and outside the Community.

3) National emergency programs to save the family farms on the brink of ruin due to a wrong policy, taking due consideration of regional agricultural structures.

4) Rescinding of exaggerated environmental and hygiene regulations.

5) Disengagement of agricultural cooperatives from the banks and food chains. Uncompromising application of the Cartel Law and the laws regulating ownership of agricultural land. Legal and taxation regulations to prevent the cartelization of agriculture.

6) Disengagement of agricultural cooperatives from uncontrolled international financial interests, and reform of the cooperative system:

a) Uncompromising application of the Cartel Law and the laws regulating ownership of agricultural land.

b) Legal and taxation regulations to prevent the control of the production of agricultural products by giant conglomerates.

We urgently appeal to our colleagues in all countries and our colleagues in various associations to join in endorsing our justified demands.

We appeal to the consumers and to the consumer associations, to take up our demands as their own, because the policy of the Brussels European Commission is a direct attack against the favorable cost of current food production, and the guaranteed food supply of our populations.