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EU Trade Policies are Destroying Sustainable Farming and Exacerbating Rural Poverty in Africa

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The dumping of chicken exports in South Africa reflects an ongoing pattern of the EU ignoring its own international development and co-operation objectives. Over the past decade the EU has all but destroyed the livelihoods of rural communities that depend on poultry farming in Senegal, Cameroon and Ghana and now seeks to do the same in South Africa.

Among the expressed goals of EU policies on International Cooperation and Development are: "Creating a sustainable agricultural development path as a means to improving the quality of life in rural areas, ensuring enough food for present and future generations and generating sufficient income for farmers."

To this end, in 2006, the EU commissioned a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) of the negotiations of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the European Union (EU) and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States.

The EU's sustainability impact assessment report asserted that the aim of its Economic Partnership Agreements in developing countries is "to promote sustainable development and poverty alleviation."

The report noted that the purpose of this sustainability impact assessment was "to help ensure that the trade and development fostered by the EPAs support economic, social and environmental sustainability."

The Sustainability Impact Assessment specifically called out concerns related to the agri-food sector in general and made specific reference to poultry farming in particular noting the potential for "damage to local production that could disproportionately threaten the livelihoods and food security of rural populations."

There is clear evidence of the "damage" among other EPA partner countries and now in South Africa. But rather than seek to help alleviate the potential for further damage to the agri-food sector the EU attempts to bully South Africa and any EPA partner other country that seeks to protect its own rural populations by pushing back against the dumping of chicken exports by EU countries.

The dumping of chicken by EU member countries is doing huge damage to the South African chicken industry. An estimated 4 000 to 5 000 jobs have already been lost, and thousands

more people will be out of work in 2017 as producers scale back because of the massive volumes of imports. According to Francois Baird of the FairPlay campaign in South Africa: "Dumping is not fair trade, or fair competition. FairPlay is a movement to fight dumping. We are not against business, and we are not against competition, but we are against people and companies who do not play by the rules and end up destroying livelihoods, particularly among those living in rural areas where rates of unemployment and poverty are already very high"

Over the next 5 years the EU will spend 81 billion Euros in foreign aid. According to the EU Commission's webpage promoting their International Co-operation and Development agenda there is a recognition that: "The EU believes that to reduce poverty and hunger and promote inclusive growth, substantial investment in rural areas and in agriculture is needed. Most poor and undernourished people live in rural areas, where small-scale farming forms the backbone of the economy."

The hypocrisy of the EU is blatant. The EU Commission's own website lays out the actions that it will take to protect the EU's poultry sector from foreign imports yet threatens its EPA partners when they seek the same protections for their own farmers.

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