



FACTS AND FIGURES

- Since NAFTA took effect:
 - Wages for workers in Mexico have stagnated and, in some industries, declined.
 - The devastation of Mexico's farming economy by subsidized grain from the U.S. and Canada has led to the dislocation of over a million farmers in the corn sector alone.
 - Undocumented migration from Mexico has more than doubled and its workers, desperate to find employment and support their families, risk their lives to cross the U.S./Mexico border in search of jobs.
- According to advocacy groups in Arizona, more than 4000 people have died trying to cross into the United States since border policies were enacted in 1990.
- The annual death toll along the U.S./ Mexico border continues to rise as U.S. policies militarize the border and force people into dangerous, desert regions.
- The United States continues to enact and pursue trade arrangements similar to NAFTA. Examples include the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), the Colombia Free Trade Agreement and the Peru Free Trade Agreement.
- According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the United States is expected to "dominate" the global corn export market in 2007.
- Some analysts believe increased ethanol consumption will improve corn prices for farmers worldwide. Without market reforms, however, unpredictable price fluctuations will continue to harm the world's most vulnerable farmers the most, thereby driving migration.

More on the Internet

- The U.S. Interfaith Trade Justice Campaign: www.tradejusticeusa.org
- The National Immigration Forum: www.immigrationforum.org
- Church World Service: www.churchworldservice.org
- Oxfam International advocates on trade and globalization: www.oxfam.org
- Ten Thousand Villages, a fair trade organization: www.tenthousandvillages.com
- Just Coffee, a coffee project that seeks to respond to immigration through economic development: www.justcoffee.org
- The MCC U.S. Coffee Project: www.mcc.org/us/washington/coffee



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MCC U.S. Washington Office Guide to Immigration and Globalization



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The Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office is a Mennonite and Brethren in Christ presence on Capitol Hill, providing and encouraging prophetic witness to the way of Christ on matters of U.S. public policy.

Globalization and immigration

Much of the debate surrounding immigration into the United States focuses on keeping people out. Few participants in the dialogue think to ask, “Why do people come?”

Unquestionably, immigrants’ motivations are as unique and diverse as the people themselves. But common sets of experiences among immigrants suggest that globalization and U.S. trade policies have decreased opportunities in countries of origin, especially Latin America and Africa.

For example, in 1992, Mexico, the United States and Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA promised Mexico increased economic opportunity in exchange for its willingness to remove trade protections, opening Mexican markets to U.S. and Canadian goods.

U.S. surpluses of corn, and other commodities, were then “dumped” on the Mexican market, undercutting the price of Mexican crops, and resulting in a bleak struggle for survival by poor Mexican farmers. Not surprisingly, many Mexican farmers decided to look north for jobs and survival.

MCC works with an agricultural community in Mexico that struggles to survive despite plummeting corn prices. Of the 80 families left, most have someone working in the United States. They go north to find jobs and help their families survive. Many of them hope to return.



Faith reflection

The biblical prophets instructed the Israelites to share essential food with widows, orphans and strangers. The concept of the “stranger” in the Old Testament was an important one in terms of achieving justice in relationships, both individual and societal. People did not have to be Jews, or even local, to have a claim to the necessities of survival through the system of gleaning rights.

And Jesus continued the Mosaic tradition of assisting strangers. He taught and broke bread with the outcasts of his society: lepers, prostitutes and tax collectors.

At home, what kind of community do we seek, and do we share it with strangers? Do we also apply our faith to the reality of people suffering in other countries?

How should public policy respond?

1. *The removal of trade barriers in developing nations should correspond with the removal of barriers in developed nations.* Although trade agreements, the World Bank and foreign donors pressure developing countries to liberalize trade, many developed countries, including the United States, resist calls to remove their own trade barriers.
2. *Trade agreements and immigration policies should affirm human rights.* The needs of individuals in developing countries, environmental degradation, fair labor standards and human rights should be recognized as important aspects of immigration reform and just trade policy.
3. *Public policies should protect the most vulnerable.* Trade, immigration and border protection policies need to make the reduction of human suffering a priority.

How can Christians respond?

Democratic governments are ultimately responsible to and reflective of their citizenry. Because Christians are called to care for both strangers and neighbors, U.S. Christians have a compelling reason to call their elected officials to care for them as well. To learn more about effective advocacy and sign up for e-mail action alerts, visit the Washington Office website at mcc.org/us/washington.

Christians can also make lifestyle choices that reflect their values. Consider supporting fair trade products and organizations, participating in a learning tour, assisting immigrants in your community and pursuing socially responsible investing.