



## 10 Reasons YOU Should Oppose CAFTA

### 1. CAFTA Is Based on a Flawed Model.

CAFTA is based on the same model as NAFTA. As a result of NAFTA, the number of unemployed workers in the Mexican rural sector has nearly quadrupled, the real price for corn paid to farmers has fallen by 45%, and despite growth in the *maquiladora* sector, employment in the manufacturing sector is down 9.4%. CAFTA will create greater levels of economic inequality and will benefit a small group of business elites, at the expense of the poor majority.

### 2. CAFTA Will Force Thousands North to the U.S.

As poverty and indigence deepen, thousands of Central American workers will flee to the north in hopes of finding work. This migration is both a risky prospect for the individuals and a challenging reality for the U.S. cities that will receive them.

### 3. CAFTA Promotes Abuse of Workers.

With no regional labor standards included in the agreement, CAFTA will reward businesses that keep costs down by mistreating their workers and squelching all attempts to organize.

### 4. CAFTA Means Higher Prices for Medicines.

CAFTA will extend the monopolies of pharmaceutical companies because intellectual property laws will make it illegal for local producers to manufacture generic drugs. Those suffering with AIDS and other diseases will be nearly unable to access the medicines they need.

### 5. Central American Small-Farmers Will Be Devastated.

Small Central American farmers, who account for more than half of the region's population, are even more vulnerable to the impacts of free trade. With no governmental support and few resources of their own, Central American *campesinos* will have no means of competing against subsidized American agri-business.

### 6. American Small Farms Will Be Devastated.

Free trade benefits large-scale producers at the expense of the U.S.' 1.5 million small farms. For example, in Florida, NAFTA led to an overall farm income growth by 13%, but a 74% decrease for non-corporate farms.

### 7. CAFTA Will Promote Environmental Damage.

CAFTA gives companies the right to sue any government that obstructs their capacity for profit with environmental regulations. This allows corporations to trump local-lawmakers' ability to protect the environment, both in the U.S. and in Central America.

### 8. CAFTA Negotiations Were Un-Democratic.

Genuine input and participation in the negotiations by civil society groups in the U.S. and Central America were severely limited. The U.S. Business Roundtable and financial leaders in Central America, however, had constant access to their governments' negotiation teams and trade ministers.

### 9. CAFTA Will Be Bad For Democracy in the Region.

Throughout Central America, liberalization has been associated with rising levels of poverty, criminal violence, and social and political instability. The people are becoming disillusioned with democracy: 85% have little or no confidence in their political parties; 80% believe corruption has increased; and 50% say democracy doesn't function in the region.

### 10. Our Brothers and Sisters in El Salvador Have Asked Us To.

## 7 Ways to Make Trade Fair

### 1. International Labor Standards

The right to organize and the right to a safe and dignified working environment, as designated in the United Nation's International Labor Standards, should be required in trade agreements. Likewise, there should be market-based incentives for nations to improve labor conditions for their workers, as is achieved in the U.S. free trade agreement with Jordan.

### 2. End Export Subsidies for US Agriculture

"Dumping" goods on a foreign economy at below the cost of production is not free trade and should be prohibited. This means the US should eliminate subsidies given to large agribusinesses for products produced for export.

### 3. Ensure Food Security

All countries have a right to protect their agricultural sector in order to feed their own population. The destruction of the rural sector in developing countries should be stemmed before the countries become entirely dependant on grains imported from the north.

### 4. Greater Democratic Involvement

Trade talks should be open to civil society organizations so that all stake holders are able to help craft the treaty. Just as big business has a seat at the table, citizens who are most vulnerable to the effects of trade must also have a voice in negotiations.

### 5. Local Power to Protect the Environment

Cities in the US and abroad must have the power to set meaningful environmental standards for their own communities. The rights of multi-national corporations should not supercede those of the host communities.

### 6. Greater Control Over Investment

A successful "development strategy" for any country must include the power to influence how money is invested within its borders. Trade agreements should not obstruct the capacity of governments to steer investment so that it can promote sustainable development.

### 7. Development of Local Linkages

International corporations should be given incentives to create linkages with the economy of their host country by finding local companies to supply their inputs. This promotes local growth and encourages businesses to commit to the region.

## Act now! Use Congressional Pressure

Congressional pressure will play a critical role in whether or not we defeat CAFTA. Sometimes, all that is needed to convince a representative to take a stand is to ask (subtly demand) that s/he do so; at other times we must force him/her to do so through grassroots political pressure. In this instance, there will be very strong pressure from groups that support this accord. With many new members joining Congress, and some who are still deciding their position, it is crucial that we focus on educating them why CAFTA is unfair. Even if your representative has voted against past trade agreements and claims that s/he will vote against other free trade legislation in the future, it is still vital to maintain political pressure. By maintaining such pressure we send our representatives a clear message: your constituents do not want CAFTA, there is no room for a change of heart. There are many different ways to express to our representatives our opposition to CAFTA and demand for fair trade alternatives:

- **Visit, write or call your representatives.** While visits are the most effective way to sway your representatives, calls, faxes or emails are also effective. Contact info for your representatives can be found at: [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)
- **Write a letter to the editor;** representatives closely follow local newspapers to monitor their constituents' opinions and concerns.

For helpful tools to advocate for just economic relationships between Central America and the U.S.—sample letters, talking points, creative action ideas, visit our website: <[www.share-elsalvador.org](http://www.share-elsalvador.org)>