



Special Issue: Mapping the Global Food Landscape

Section IV

Corporate role in food and agriculture

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Transnational corporations are powerful agents on the global food landscape. They have been able to shift and adapt their activities in a global food economy that has been constantly in flux in recent decades, while at the same time shaping it in ways that serve their interests. The papers in this section highlight the strategies corporations have taken to enhance their power and control in the food system across a range of activities from production to consumption and assess the wider implications of corporate activity in the sector.

Focusing on the first link in the industrial food chain, the agricultural input industry, Pat Mooney argues that corporate concentration and control has had devastating impacts on agricultural biodiversity and has pushed against the expansion of the peasant food web. Transnational grain trading companies, as Jennifer Clapp argues, also push against peasant based farming systems by deepening their integration in global agricultural value chains in ways that enhance their own power and control. Corporate strategy in the face of changes has also occurred in the Big Food companies, as Gyorgy Scrinis shows in his paper. As the public and governments have become more aware of the health risks associated with processed and packaged foods, these firms have shifted their strategies to profit from marketing nutritionally enhanced products.

As Caitlin Scott highlights in her synthesis paper, the growing tendency toward corporate concentration and corporate “innovation” in the face of change are key themes that cut across all of the contributions on this topic. Each of the papers points to the difficulties of regulating such

powerful actors, who seem to be able to shape the regulatory context in ways that further cement their power. All of the papers suggest that states can play a more forceful role in regulating firms in the sector, as the risks of not doing so have become abundantly clear.