

## Free Trade Agreements Threaten Global Environmental Health

In his recent State of the Union address, President Obama signaled his renewed commitment to push free trade agreements through Congress. But civil society organizations across the world are speaking out louder than ever in firm opposition to the secretive negotiations of the two global trade agreements now on the table: the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

TTIP is one of the latest agreements in the queue, currently in negotiation between the U.S. and the European Union (EU). Along with TPP, TTIP is threatening international policy change that puts the interests of multinational corporations ahead of everything else, and strips away a slew of protections that social movements across the world have won in recent years.

Free trade agreements have become a mainstay of international policy, part of sweeping deregulation serving corporate interests. For those of us who believe in a food system that ensures rights for workers and protections for local communities and the environment, free trade agreements have been bearers of terrible news—and have encountered immense resistance across the globe.

### What's different?

In the past, many free trade agreements aimed to dismantle tariffs—taxes on imports designed to protect domestic goods from outside competition. Today, most of these tariffs have already been slashed.

TTIP is unique because it seeks to change *regulations*, not tariffs or other economic aspects of international trade. According to the major corporations pushing for its passage, many regulations that the EU has fought long and hard to implement are “barriers” to trade.

The treaty would move both U.S. and EU policy to the lowest common denominator. That means that if one trade party has a more stringent law than the other, the *least protective law* would become the law of both lands. The free trade agreement would then put some muscle behind the enforcement of these lowered standards. A mechanism called “investor-state dispute settlement” allows corporations to sue a government that seeks to create stronger protections for its citizens.

Governments can then be forced to pay compensation for lost corporate profits—and even losses in perceived future profits.

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Photo: Leigh McAlea

**H** health standards already now do not sufficiently protect people and the environment ... Deregulation will, without doubt, lead to more pollution.

— PAN Europe

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# International Year of Soils Reveals Crisis and Camaraderie

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization has named 2015 the International Year of Soils. At PAN, this gives the year ahead special significance.

Living, healthy soils provide the foundation for production of our feed, fiber and fuel—and about 95 percent of all the food we consume. At least a quarter of the world’s biodiversity lives underground. This community of worms, nematodes, bacteria, fungi, insects and micro-organisms work together to cycle and deliver nutrients to the plants, and to provide natural resilience and resistance to plant pests and disease. And soil biology suffers serious adverse effects from the indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides.

Some of the worst offenders are fumigant pesticides like chloropicrin and methyl bromide. Used to sterilize soil before planting, they reduce soil to an almost inert substance that merely holds plants in place with dramatically reduced capacity to support diverse plant functions.

And then there’s soil loss. Agricultural production around the globe takes place on a thin layer of topsoil covering about 1/32 of the Earth’s surface. This vital resource has been systematically squandered through decades of aggressive implementation of industrial, monoculture agriculture, with

increasing dependence on petroleum-fueled heavy equipment, chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

**T**he loss of topsoil is the single greatest threat to our food supply and to the continued existence of civilization.

—Wes Jackson, Land Institute

This misguided approach to agriculture was largely responsible for massive losses of topsoil leading to the infamous dust bowl

of the 1920s. Despite the creation in 1935 of important federal soil conservation programs, industrial agriculture largely continues its rampage.

## Farmers (and PAN) finding solutions

PAN works with farmers and ranchers across the U.S. and around the world, showcasing strategies that maintain and enhance the land’s capacity to sustain long-term production without soil-harming pesticides. We press for state and federal policies that support farmers who demonstrate good soil stewardship. And we strengthen programs that encourage those who want to transition to sustainable agricultural practices, including young and beginning farmers.

**I**n fact, it’s often in times of crisis that positive change occurs on a wide and public scale.

—Dr. Margaret Reeves, PAN Scientist

We recognize a powerful ray of hope in the soil crisis. The movement against industrial agriculture brings together stalwart practitioners of organic and agroecological production, “good food” and labor advocates, and food justice and climate activists. Our planet’s soils have more advocates today than ever before.

## Make PAN a Part of Your Day

Do you want to stay current with the science? Or know what issues PAN staff are working on? Sign up for our blog, GroundTruth, and be a part of our global online activist community at [www.panna.org](http://www.panna.org).



Join tens of thousands of people around the world fighting to reclaim the future of food and farming.

# A Scientist for the Ages: Theo Colborn 1927–2014

by Pete Myers

Theo Colborn was a force of nature, and a force *for* nature. She led a scientific revolution that has dramatically changed how we think about the ways that chemical exposures interact with our biology. Her relentless energy, astoundingly eclectic mind, and remarkable scientific skills and instincts made endocrine disruption a global public health issue.

How did she do it? First, she was an impeccably careful scientist—but one not afraid to perceive potential connections that no one else was seeing. That ability to detect possible connections and patterns where everyone else saw random data was a remarkable skill that was only possible because she could hold in her head the big picture and the tiny details both at the same time. And this didn't happen once. It happened many times over the 26 years I knew her.

Second, she was fiercely and fearlessly determined to use her scientific skills to protect human and wildlife health. This played out in many ways. She didn't shy away from asking big questions. She knew all too well that the issues she was raising threatened large commercial interests and entrenched scientific paradigms. She never gave up.

She also realized very early on that endocrine disruption cuts across many different areas of science. To really wrap her head, and the scientific community, around the issue would require her to recruit scientists of many different stripes. She didn't hesitate to get on the phone (or a plane) to convince a world-class scientist whom she didn't yet know to apply their knowledge to the science of endocrine disruption. She then nurtured their engagement and participation.

Theo kept her eyes on the prize. Working in Washington, DC, for over a decade, she saw that science was necessary, but not sufficient. She didn't hesitate to engage with policymakers in Congress and the White House, lawyers, advocates, the media and industry, helping these multiple audiences understand the science of endocrine disruption and why it



From L to R, all three authors of *Our Stolen Future*: Pete Myers, Dianne Dumanoski and Theo Colborn. Photo: Pete Myers

was important. In these interactions, she never flinched from sometimes brutal honesty, when it was needed.

The revolution in science Theo started and led now has too much momentum and too many participants to fade. Her impact on Earth has been global and will grow as the scientific inquiries she sparked and inspired continue to bear fruit.

**Note:** From 1990 to 1994, Theo was a Senior Fellow at the W. Alton Jones Foundation, where Pete Myers was director. In 1991 they organized a workshop that led to the Wingspread Consensus Statement, viewed now as one of the seminal papers in the field.

In 1996, along with Dianne Dumanoski, Theo and Pete wrote *Our Stolen Future*, which sparked investments in research totaling hundreds of millions of dollars and fueled the scientific revolution that endocrine disruption has become. They also co-authored multiple scientific papers, including a new consensus statement about to be published.

**OUR MISSION**

**30+ YEARS** works to replace the use of hazardous pesticides with ecologically sound and socially just alternatives. As one of five PAN Regional Centers worldwide, we link local and international consumer, labor, health, environment and agriculture groups into an international citizens' action network. This network challenges the global proliferation of pesticides, defends basic rights to health and environmental quality, and works to ensure the transition to a just and viable society.

**90 COUNTRIES**

## Protecting hard-won victories

Government leaders in the U.S. and Europe have vowed that TTIP won't force changes in chemical policy on either side of the Atlantic. But industry lobbyists are under a different impression, and they seem to be right: a recently leaked draft of TTIP documents indicates that the EU's pesticide residue laws would be relaxed within 12 months.

Our colleagues at PAN Europe are concerned that passage of TTIP would undermine many of their hard-won victories to protect communities across the continent from pesticide harms.

The passage of TTIP and TPP could also undermine the progress PAN and our allies have worked so hard for here in the U.S.—including California and Minnesota—for better pesticide protections for people and pollinators.

**TAKE ACTION:** Help PAN open up the Trans-Pacific Partnership for public scrutiny and debate at [bit.ly/nofasttrack](http://bit.ly/nofasttrack).



The problem is that a major corporation's "regulatory barriers" are the people's and the planet's best protection against the harms of human rights abuses and toxic chemicals.

—Lex Horan,  
PAN North America

**Our time has come. PAN UK protestors defy TTIP pesticide deregulation.** Photo: Leigh McAlea

## TTIP & Pesticides

The Center for International Environmental Law's report tracks the efforts of CropLife and the European Crop Protection Association that represent the economic interests of the Big 6 agrichemical companies. If they are successful, TTIP will:

- Roll back protections against endocrine-disrupting pesticides like the infamous herbicide atrazine. Notorious for poisoning waterways, atrazine is banned in Europe but is widely used in the U.S.
- Lift the 2013 moratorium on neonicotinoids to align with U.S. policy—reintroducing neonicotinoids into European crop production, and putting honey bees and other pollinators back in harm's way.
- Increase the limit on allowable pesticide residues on food in Europe, a direct and significant public health threat.

## In Tandem with TTIP

A super-treaty, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), is currently being negotiated behind closed doors and, if passed, will be the largest global trade agreement in history:

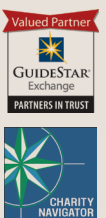
- There are currently 11 nations involved: U.S., New Zealand, Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, Mexico and Canada. Japan has shown interest.
- TPP will limit food GMO labeling and allow the import of goods that do not meet U.S. safe standards.
- TPP will give multinational corporations and private investors the right to sue nations in private tribunals. These tribunals have the power to overturn environmental, labor, or any other laws that limit profit, awarding taxpayer-funded damages.

Source: [stoptpp.org](http://stoptpp.org)

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Main Office: 1611 Telegraph Ave, Suite 1200 • Oakland, CA 94612 • 510.788.9020  
Midwest Office: 3438 Snelling Ave • Minneapolis, MN 55406  
Sacramento Office: 909 12th St, Suite 200 • Sacramento, CA 95814 • [www.panna.org](http://www.panna.org)