

# TAA AWARD FUND

## Ed Hamer - Case Study

I graduated from Bangor University in 2005 with a B.Sc degree in Agroforestry. I wanted to pursue a career in International Development but I encountered the common problem of limited employment opportunities due to my lack of field experience.

Within three months of graduating I applied to the Tropical Agricultural Award Fund, having seen their posters on display at my university, to help me gain practical experience in my particular area of interest. In November 2005 I was awarded a TAAF grant to investigate the impacts of agricultural globalisation on subsistence farming communities in southern Mexico.

For six months from January to July 2006 I worked with a number of rural communities in the remote highlands of Chiapas on participatory appraisal exercises for identifying opportunities for improving land use. During this time I developed skills in interviewing farmers, facilitating workshops, subsistence farming and agroecology.



While in Mexico I also became interested in journalism as a way of publicising the impacts of agricultural globalisation to a wider audience. On my return to the UK I followed a post graduate diploma course at the London School of Journalism. I was also offered an internship at The Ecologist, the UK's longest running environmental magazine, which led to a part-time position at the magazine writing feature articles on agricultural globalisation issues.

During my time at The Ecologist I covered the international conference of La Via Campesina in Mozambique in 2008 as well as Via Campesina's lobbying and actions at the UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen in 2009. My work with Via Campesina brought me in contact with a handful of other young food and farming activists from across Europe and between us we founded a grassroots campaigning organisation called Reclaim the Fields in 2008.

In 2009 I co-founded a community supported market garden called Chagfood in the town where I grew up in Devon, using organic cultivation and horse power. I work on this with another post-TAAF awardee, Chinnie Kingsbury. Chagfood is a relatively new model of subscription farming, in which our customers become members of the association and buy a share of the harvest from the farm for the entire growing season. Since 2010 we have expanded from supplying 25 shares a week from a single acre to providing 75 local households with a weekly vegetable box from five acres of land.

In 2009 I also became co-editor of The Land magazine ([www.thelandmagazine.org.uk](http://www.thelandmagazine.org.uk)). This is a bi-annual magazine about land rights and the politics of food and farming. In 2012 I helped to establish the UK Land Workers' Alliance, the first Via Campesina affiliated farming organisation in England and Wales.

Although my work so far has not followed a typical template in terms of International Development, I believe my varied and diverse experiences have given me the practical skills, knowledge and confidence to become a part-time farmer and journalist. My TAAF award was fundamental in providing me with the first hand experience of the impacts of agricultural globalisation which have inspired the path of my career to date.