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**The Food Crisis:
A Global Challenge**

Working Paper

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FOREWORD

The Global Food Crisis is one of the most serious and pressing issues facing humanity today. It affects each and every nation around the globe in a myriad of ways. Its effects run from starvation to riots to weakening economies. The victims of this global crisis come from every level of society, and everyone suffers. From young children to the elderly, from the poorest slum dwellers to middle and working class families, from small farms and business to giant titans of industry, the Food Crisis has had and continues to have a major impact.

The UNIS-UN Organizing Committee of 2009 recognizes the immense challenges presented by the Global Food Crisis, and through this working paper and the conference, seeks to highlight as many aspects of this increasing dire threat. In order to better understand the nature of the Crisis, an exploration of potential causes must be and has been undertaken, from the impact of biofuels to water mismanagement. Through examining the roles that the various NGOs and international organizations have played and the change and aid that they have brought about can we understand that there are solutions to this grave problem and how we and others can provide assistance to those in need. Finally, we hope to provide a glimpse into the effects of the Food Crisis around the world through case studies from around the world. In this process we demonstrate how both the developing and the industrialized world have suffered due to the ever expanding Food Crisis.

As it touches upon the lives of citizens of Malawi, Vietnam, the United States, Russia, and Egypt, the Crisis throws the social, economic, and political facets of each of these nations into chaos. The Food Crisis has hit the developing world hard, increasing poverty and starvation. In addition, it has sent fragile governments into a state of further disorder and contributed to a massive rise in discontent as populations no longer have enough food to survive. But the shockwaves being generated by this Crisis are not limited to the developing world, having hit the industrial world almost just as hard. The middle and working classes in places such as the EU and the U.S. are suffering as they find themselves spending more and more of their income on basic food supplies. This in turn has led to a weakening of the economies of these nations and a decline in business as more money is funneled into the daily cost of food and out of manufactured products. As a highly contextual issue, the Food Crisis differs in scope and magnitude depending on each nation but one thing is clear, the threat it presents cannot be ignored.

Through the information presented in this working paper and during the conference proper, we the members of the UNIS-UN Organizing Committee hope to present a thorough description of not only the extreme challenges posed by the Global Food Crisis but also some of the causes behind it, and just as importantly the presence of viable solutions to this global, all encompassing threat to the stability of our globe.

USEFUL ACRONYMS

UN - United Nations

NGO - Non-governmental Organization

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

WFP - World Food Programme

IMF - International Monetary Fund

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization

NAFTA - North American Free Trade Agreement

FVO - Food & Veterinary Office

EFSA- European Food Safety Authority

IPC- International Food and Agricultural Trade Policy Council

CFA- Communauté Financière Africaine

CHAPTER I: THE CRISIS

BIOFUELS

The recent increase in gas prices and a more environmentally friendly social attitude have caused scientists and consumers alike to search for an alternative means of energy. Biofuels, made from natural materials such as wheat and maize, have skyrocketed in popularity due to their relatively cheap and eco-friendly properties. However, there is a rising concern that the increased use of biofuels is contributing to high food prices and food shortage.

One confidential World Bank source has claimed that biofuels have raised global food prices by about 75%. Robert Bailey, a policy adviser at Oxfam, adds that “political leaders seem intent on suppressing and ignoring the strong evidence that biofuels are a major factor in recent food price rises.” Economists attribute this rise in price to the increased use of wheat and maize for biofuels such as ethanol as opposed to their use as a food source. Recent reports have shown that without the increase in biofuels, global wheat and maize stocks would not have declined appreciably and price increases due to other factors would have been moderate.

The report later states that the production of biofuels has diverted grain away from food for fuel, with about a third of US corn and about half of EU vegetable oils in the EU being used for the production of biofuels. Farmers have also been encouraged to set land aside for growing crops for biofuel production. This diversion has sparked financial speculation in grains, driving prices higher. The combination of these factors has distorted the world food market, and it is said that it has made a major contribution to the current food crisis.

Though these claims are a popular explanation for the rise in oil prices, many dispute that biofuels have had a major impact on the rise in food prices. One United Nations report contains data suggesting that biofuels account for a mere 15% of the rise in food prices, significantly less than previously estimated numbers. Even FAO authors admit that “it is important to keep in mind that biofuels are only one of many drivers of high food prices.” According to one USDA report, annually about 79 million out of 2,500 million metric tons of maize are converted to biofuels like ethanol. This does not agree with the suggestion that the diversion of



maize from food to fuel accounts for 75% of the rise in food prices, causing skeptical views of the certain World Bank's initial report.

Though it remains disputed whether the conversion of crops to biofuels is having a major impact on the rise of food prices, the reality is that the world is facing a food crisis, and farmers and governments will do everything in their power to increase the supply of food in order to lower prices, and to increase the use of biofuels for a more environmentally and consumer friendly society.

URBANIZATION

Urbanization is the process through which rural or farming areas become densely populated, creating city regions. Since the Industrial Revolution, more and more countries have undergone some level of urbanization. Urbanization has many effects on the area on which it takes place. Agriculture is one of the many economic sectors affected by urbanization. In new or growing urban areas, food has to be shipped into the city to stock supermarkets. Since products imported from overseas are usually less expensive, a rise in food prices bought internationally is often seen. The decrease in locally purchased food has many negative effects. A lack of business for local farmers and an increase in green house gas emissions,

migrating to cities are poor. As has been the main subject at hand, agriculture is negatively affected. Prime agriculture land is bought up for development purposes and the areas surrounding the cities often suffer from the inherently created pollution. An example of this is “runoff,” a term used to describe the chemicals used in farming that drip into the water supply through irrigation systems. Runoff is a common by-product of urbanization and is seen in many countries, especially the developing ones. Water polluted by runoff, air polluted by industry, and many other factors caused by urbanization negatively impact health. Additionally lack of sanitation, lack of clean water and large numbers of people living in a constrained area also

By 2020, two thirds of the African population will be living in urban areas.

created during the transportation of foodstuffs are just a few examples. Rises in gas prices have also increased the cost of food transportation, causing food prices to subsequently go up while urbanization has by no means slowed. Urbanization also results in an increase in land value, as the amount of land available for farming decreases. When developed land is in high demand, the value of farm land is lowered, therefore enabling developers to outbid farmers and buy the land. Maintaining and preserving farmland has many useful outcomes, such as flood control, groundwater recharge, biodiversity, soil conservation as well as social benefits (such as preserving the culture of rural lifestyles).

There are many harmful aspects to urbanization, especially since the majority of people

cause poor health in urban areas. Diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and diarrhea affect many in overcrowded slums and low-income areas in rapidly expanding cities. According to United Nations senior official Klaus Topfer, urbanization is taking place at such a rate in Africa that by 2020, two thirds of the African population will be living in urban areas such as the one described above.

Although urbanization can make way for commerce, business opportunity, and cultural flourishing, the negative impact on the health of the people, the environment and those living outside of the cities is not often considered. Urbanization can be a positive force in developing countries so long as it is tempered by regulations that make it safer for inhabitants as well as support rural and suburban development.

POVERTY AND FOOD

Meera Shekar, a World Bank nutrition specialist, believes that “it’s time to recognize how important nutrition is to the overall well-being of a country.” Shekar is one of the very few people who understands that food and poverty are interconnected. The relationship between food and poverty is very important to understand, as these two problems are the cause of many serious issues in the world today.

It is predicted that by 2050, the world will have a population of nine-billion (Karwal). With the population growing rapidly, we see extensive pressure on many resources, such as land, water, oil, and food. It has been discovered that “over 9 million people die worldwide each year because of hunger and malnutrition. Five-million are children” according to Anup Shah. There are over four-billion people suffering from deficiencies related to calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals. With millions of people dying of starvation, other nations do not manage their resources well. In the United States alone, 40-50% of all food ready

of the problem is looking at food as aggregate without looking at the issue of nutrition. You have situations, for example, where children are suddenly forced to have a diet, which is completely composed of instant noodles, or something that does not meet nutritional need. They are clearly not receiving their human right to food, which includes the notion of adequacy, including nutritional adequacy.”

Such tragic increases in the death rate concerning hunger related illnesses lead some to conclude that hunger has some sort of relationship with poverty. One typical example goes like this: An individual is poor and doesn’t have enough money to afford food. This can mean that either they can’t afford proper nutrition or that their daily income can’t pay for basic dietary necessities. If the number of these people grows, the lack of food evolves from a personal level to a socio-political one, resulting in slow or no economic and infrastructural development. As a population starves, so too does a country’s chances of progressing in the modern world shrink.

An immediate solution to this problem must be found as corporations like the World Bank

“Over 9 million people die worldwide every year due to hunger and malnutrition.”

for harvest never gets eaten (Shah). Children are particularly vulnerable and affected by this global issue.

“Children have the least voice. They have the most to lose and they are often the most vulnerable,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Deputy Director Craig Mokhiber. “Part

pay \$800 million for foreign aid in African agriculture. Nutrition could double the economic growth rate of poor countries; this is simply by having well-nourished children, who “haveshown to have much higher income potential as adults,” said by Shekar. This will increase the job openings and opportunities to trade with foreign countries. Hunger

and poverty are invariably linked in a vicious cycle; one causes the other and vice-versa. With foreign aid, the cycle could be broken in many of the world's poverty-stricken areas.

COST OF TRANSPORT

Globally speaking, the cost of transport has risen dramatically over the last decade; from every corner of the world, people have felt the effects. The increase of fuel costs is arguably directly responsible for sky rocketing transport costs. This increase has driven the costs of basic necessities such as food and water to an all-time high, causing added hardships for many people. These necessities are, in fact, in excess in the world, but the cost of transport has diminished their availability for the needy. It is quite clear that a solution must be



found to reduce these mounting expenses.

Soaring oil prices are primarily driven by speculations of low supply, an increasingly weak

US dollar, and price gouging. Many financial analysts claim that the high prices are due to an overwhelming global demand. For example, ten years ago the Asian continent consumed only ten percent of the world's oil; today it consumes over one third. Markets worldwide have become "tight and vulnerable to crisis." The US economy alone has fallen into an economic recession as a result, which will subsequently threaten the stability of the world's markets if these startling trends continue.

Transport costs have risen in England by a rate of 7% a year since 1997. British meat and dairy products have increased drastically in price: fresh chicken (1.55kg) by 77%, British beef mince (500g) 64%, English butter (255g salted) 62%, medium free range eggs (12) 42%, and skimmed milk (3.4L) 17%. Families that would have normally spent 100 £ a week on groceries would now have to pay an extra 600 £ a year on food expenses. "Worldwide food shortages have been caused by increased demand from countries such as China and India, together with poor harvests linked to droughts and floods. A decision by farmers to turn over their land to the growing of bio fuels is also a factor. While bio-fuels have been presented as the solution to global oil shortages, they are now contributing to a reduction of food availability." In countries where people live on less than a dollar a day, the price increase of food necessities by similar and even greater proportions has pushed people into starvation. The English Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, frequently comments on the increasing effects on the world's population: "Oil, coal and gas prices are up 60 per cent, wheat and rice prices have doubled pushing total world food prices up 45 per cent and global food reserves are at their lowest level in 30 years."

The impact of rising transport costs on everyday people has made somewhat of a ripple effect. While the costs of living have increased, individual salaries have not. Soaring food prices alone have sparked numerous riots in over 30 different countries. Political stability of many impoverished nations has seriously been tested. Many people have found their "livelihood threatened" as a large

portion of their income has gone towards the transport necessary for delivering food.

Solutions to the rising cost of gas have caused the prices of food to rise. For example, international demand for corn has increased dramatically due to its use as grain based ethanol fuel. In Mexico, the subsequent rise in the price of corn-based tortillas has caused widespread protest, especially amongst the poor. In this manner, fuel costs are a great concern because of the capacity to cause catastrophes, such as starvation. It is our responsibility to find the delicate balance between satisfying our enormous demand for energy as well as our enormous demand for food.

WATER MIS- MANAGEMENT

Water, and the mismanagement of water, is one of the underlying causes of the global food crisis. In the words of World Wildlife Foundation Director General James Leape, “Behind the world food crisis is a global freshwater crisis, expected to rapidly worsen as climate change impacts intensify. Irrigation-fed agriculture provides forty-five percent of the world’s food supplies, and without it, we could not feed our planet’s population of six billion people.” The UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, agrees with this, and has warned that the global food crises had already reached emergency levels. These two important figures have true reason to be worried about the global food crisis and the pivotal role that water plays.

There is a vast amount of water on our planet, but approximately three percent of it is fresh water. Not everyone around the world has access to clean, fresh water for drinking, bathing, irrigation and other crucial needs. Johannes Linn, an environmental reporter, states that Central Asia is in the midst of a water crisis. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and especially Afghanistan have all received up to fifty percent less precipitation

between September 2007 and July 2008. This massive rainfall decrease, believed to be caused by global warming, has killed crops, and dried hundreds of wells. Although Central Asia may face large water and food problems, those facing Africa are even more intense. There are millions of starving children in Africa, all in need of food and water.

A new study presented by the International Water Management Institute, carried out in fifty-three African cities, found that eighty percent of participants used untreated or partially treated waste water for agricultural purposes. Wastewater is usually used to grow vegetables, cereals and especially rice. It becomes a health concern for those who eat raw, uncooked vegetables, and can cause many diseases, some of which are potentially lethal. An example of the waste water usage is in Accra, Ghana’s capital city, where an estimated one-tenth of the city’s two-million occupants purchase vegetables grown on lands irrigated with waste water. The mismanagement of freshwater, which is so essential to our existence, causes a myriad of problems, and only intensifies the current food crisis.



CHAPTER II: THE ROLE OF NGOs

Every sixty seconds, 21 children die of malnutrition and preventable diseases. With the rising global food crisis, these numbers are likely to increase. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as CARE US, the World Food Programme (WFP), and many organizations under the International Food and Agricultural Trade Policy Council (IPC), are trying to help “save lives in refugee crisis and other emergencies; improve nutrition and quality of life of the world’s most vulnerable people at critical times of their lives; and enable development by (a) helping people build assets that benefit them directly; (b) promoting self-reliance of poor people and their communities.”

On September 25th, 2008, former US president Bill Clinton “announced a private sector commitment to school meals,” which included an eighty-million dollar pledge from ‘YUM!’ a major American food conglomerate. The WFP announced that they will provide meals to one million children each school day and pledged to bring in forty top food experts to help. In addition, they launched a worldwide competition to

micro-credit loans, and health services.” They plan to teach how to produce more food, increase income, and preserve the environment for future generations.

One problem that many of these organizations face is transportation. At least 65 percent of the total expenditure for the largest US emergency food program is spent on transportation, meaning that “every dollar worth of food ends up costing three dollars to get to the people who need it.” This inefficient way of transportation greatly diminishes the value of the fund. Also, local food producers have to pay more money for imported food. This created problems for local retailers, adding pressure to the already struggling market. In April, U.S. senators Tom Harkin and Saxby Chambliss discovered that sixty-five percent of the money used for the food aid program was spent on transportation. This was because at least three quarters of the food aid loads had to be carried out by U.S.-flagged delivery services. In comparison to delivery services of other countries, the U.S. transportation is much more expensive. To help alleviate the food crisis, the NGOs are getting some

“Every sixty seconds, 21 children die of malnutrition and preventable diseases.”

promote the use of locally grown, nutritious food and encouraged countries to take over their own school programs with “community-based school feeding.”

The US government and NGOs intend on helping families “through training, education,

assistance from the WFP. To avoid these problems, the WFP is buying food from local markets as much as possible so that it can be transported for the right cost at the right time when people need it the most, “purchasing 70% of their food from developing countries.” About seventy percent of

the food is now bought locally by the WFP. This also helps the small traders and markets with their products and prices.

Local areas will now provide their own foods and will improve upon their quality as to not only provide self-sufficiency, but healthier foods. NGOs, such as Oxfam, are working hand-in-hand with the UN and WFP in drafting new policies. Oxfam declares: “Rich countries must now: give more money to poor countries to help reduce the immediate shock of high food prices, review their current targets for bio-fuels, which often directly compete against food and feed crops, reform the food aid system. Providing cash for governments and aid agencies to buy locally is usually more efficient and better for local agriculture than “in kind” food aid.”

Oxfam is among the most involved and prominent organizations for providing “aid.” In response to an emergency meeting held in Rome in 2008, Oxfam international senior policy researcher, Teresa Caverio Gomez declared: “It is shocking that the international community has failed to organize itself to respond adequately to

this. The UN taskforce produced a good plan — the Comprehensive Framework for Action — but there is still not clear leadership to implement it. Developing countries are being bombarded with different initiatives and asked to produce multiple plans for different donors. We need to see one coordinated international response, led by the UN, which channels funds urgently to those in need, and leads on implementation of longer-term reforms.”

Oxfam is working hand-in-hand with various NGOs as well as the World Bank in shaping new campaigns, emphasizing what must be done in order to ease the burden of the food crisis. The governments of developing countries are expected to invest and support local agriculture and establish protection policies alongside a renewed focus on education and healthcare. NGOs, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are, in turn, expected to support and implement these policies. Only through international co-operation will new, successful policies be implemented in order to combat the food crisis and its detrimental effects.



CHAPTER III: CASE STUDIES

This next section of the UNIS UN working paper, the regional case studies on the effects of the Global Food Crisis in different countries, is the most extensive for an important reason. While it cannot be argued that the Food Crisis touches upon every nation around the world and presents an immense problem, it is equally true that much of the difficulty in finding a solution to the Crisis stems from the fact that it is such a contextual problem. It may affect every part of the world but it does so in such a different manner for each nation or region that no uniform strategy for solving the Crisis is truly viable or desirable. Each nation reacts and is impacted differently by the Crisis depending on a whole host of factors. The political and economic systems, the history, the social structures, the cultures; each of these elements differ between nations and the different blend of these elements means that the Food Crisis affects each nation according to the combination of these factors. It is for this reason that so much emphasis has been placed on the individual case studies, as they highlight the fluid nature of the Food Crisis. Only by understanding that no singular solution can be found, and by understanding the effects of the Crisis in individual areas and avoiding broad generalizations can we grasp a clearer picture of the nature and scale of this challenge, and successfully confront it.

AFRICA

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

The food crisis has had a major effect on the West-African nation of Côte d'Ivoire. A faltering economy and numerous food riots are some of the consequences of this crisis. In late March 2008, riots broke out protesting an increase in already high food prices. Goods, including food, are selling at maximum prices because of several imposed transportation taxes. The instability caused by the crisis has left the government on unstable grounds; organized protests and riots against the expensive cost of food have resulted in division and disunity between the people and the regime.

The country has split in two: between the government and various rebel groups. This has hindered the growth opportunities for the country and trends indicate that it will continue to do so. The combination of the food shortage and the riots will have short and long term effects on growth opportunities for Côte d'Ivoire. People are eating on average once a day as the food prices rise, leading to many cases of starvation and malnutrition. Education, infrastructure and social programs are suffering as many people are not able to afford to send their children to school; the lack of formal education is stunting the potential for economic and social growth.

However, there are government plans in action to counter the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. For example, there have been increased investments in rice production, programs against malnourishment, and other such campaigns. The administration is also working in collaboration with UNICEF, other UN agencies, and several food programs in order to create a formal response plan. The plan includes the building of hospitals and health centers along the north, which will also feed the malnourished and raise nutritional awareness. The agencies have yet to say how much funding is necessary, but are appealing for more

funds in order to implement the plan. Meanwhile, UNICEF and health officials are providing nutritional care at a number of health centers. Since the food prices were raised and riots broke out, the government has resorted to emergency measures such as abolishing export taxes on certain consumer items. To fight corruption, a campaign has been called by the president of the CES (the country's economic and social council). The government has also promised to invest eighteen billion Communauté Financière Africaine francs in rice production over the next four years. The government of Côte d'Ivoire is working diligently to cope with the grave impact the food crisis is having on the nation.

EGYPT

At this moment Egypt is on the brink of a serious crisis. The world-wide food shortage is threatening the socio-political equilibrium of this North-African country. Due to rising food prices, many Egyptians have been forced into daily struggle for survival. Many families have been greatly affected by food scarcity and have been forced to leave their homes. Egypt is the most populated country in the Arab world, and millions of its citizens are struggling to sustain enough food to support their families.

Food prices have recently skyrocketed, partially due to rising energy costs. Other factors are contributing to rising food prices such as unusual weather patterns. Competition from bio-fuels is also putting strain on food production output. Inflation has also played a large role in the development of the food crisis in Egypt. As of February 2008, inflation had reached 12.1%, further driving up the price of food. The costs of dairy and vegetables have risen by twenty and fifteen percent, respectively. Cooking oils have also joined the percentage hike, rising about fifteen percent. An Egyptian woman expressed her frustration with the rising meat prices saying: "Chicken, what chicken? I can't even afford a drumstick. What

are people going to do, eat pebbles?” Egypt is the world’s largest importer of wheat which also had a sharp increase. The price of one loaf of bread has become so expensive that Egyptians, many of whom live close to the poverty line, cannot afford it. The price of wheat world-wide has risen to 144%. This increase has been especially detrimental to Egypt. The country is also in a difficult position to feed its hungry population as less than three percent of the country consists of arable land. The current food crisis is not only affecting underprivileged citizens in Egypt, but the rich are also suffering from the jump in food prices. Merchants who are unable to sell their goods, as well as producers, will gradually lose business, resulting in a significant decrease in their incomes. This is a detriment to the country because as incomes fall, demand decreases, and the economy will subsequently suffer.

Currently, Egyptian farmers only supply half the food needed to feed their population. This causes a food shortage, resulting in high food prices. The Investment Minister of Egypt, Mahmud Safwat Mohieldin, plans to reclaim potentially fertile desert land in order to increase food production in his country, thus increasing the supply of food, and decreasing prices. In addition, an Egyptian-Sudanese alliance in agricultural production is underway. This alliance would allow the two countries to produce ample amounts of food to feed and supply the whole continent of Africa, and still have surplus enough for export and trade beyond the continent. This alliance would be beneficial to Africa and to other countries, who are continuously donating money to Africa to help them get through their current food crisis.

The government has acted in response to this crisis by distributing subsidized bread called ‘Balidy,’ which is often sold for less than one cent. This subsidy on bread will cost the government an estimated \$180 million. The food crisis has also had a social impact in Egypt, as there have been many protests against the rising prices of food. Forty percent of Egyptians live below the poverty line, surviving on less than two dollars

a day. Many riots have broken out because of the civil unrest caused by the huge demand and relatively small supply of bread and other foodstuffs. This situation is similar to 1977, during which the government instituted measures to help people suffering from the impact of the rising cost of food. Food riots have killed scores of people in bread lines, causing people to fear a simple trip to the bakery. Gouda Abdel Khalek, a Cairo University economist stated: “It may be something far more reaching and much more violent, I’m afraid, because people are increasingly feeling that their faces are to the wall”.

Egypt is in a precarious situation because it does not produce enough food to meet the demands of its burgeoning population. As a result, it will continue to rely on imports, and will be in a tenuous situation as long as the crisis persists.



ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia, like most of the world, is currently facing the woes of the global food crisis. The direct causes include government intervention, the rising cost of food, and drought. In the 1990’s, Ethiopia was emerging out of a thirty-year civil war. Since then, the government has been trying to improve the economy and its social and physical infrastructure; however, problems with famine and

irrigation have formed considerable obstacles to achieving this goal. Although a large amount of Ethiopian land could potentially be irrigated, currently only about 5% of the arable land is used for food production.

Another major cause of the Ethiopian food crisis is drought. Ethiopia is already a very dry country, which is not ideal for large-scale agricultural production. However, 85% of the population is agriculture-based, and 80% of men are farmers. Ethiopia's agricultural productivity is almost completely dependent on the weather. Its dry lands and proximity to the equator make the country prone to drought 30-40% of the year.

Many Ethiopian citizens are very poor, and cannot afford the rising cost of food. Over the past six months, the price of food almost doubled. The average annual income in Ethiopia is 100 U.S. dollars. Even when there is a surplus of food, and prices are relatively low, almost six million citizens still cannot afford adequately feed themselves.

The regions in Ethiopia that have been hit hardest are Afar, Somali, SNNPR (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region) and Oromiya. Approximately twenty-five million people are affected by the food crisis. The food prices put people, animals, and habitats at risk. Many animals are malnourished and in some areas 60-100% of livestock have been lost. These animals are sources of meat, dairy, and income for many Ethiopian citizens. In addition, farmers cannot grow any crops because of the extremely dry land; therefore, the farmers do not receive any money, and cannot provide their families with food. Because of these factors, around 100, 000 children are left severely malnourished.

NGOs like Oxfam and other international organizations are working in Ethiopia to help with the food crisis. Oxfam is working with 110,000 men, women, and children in the regions that have been hit hardest; supplying water, food, money and other resources to these areas.

Factors such as extreme weather conditions, the rising cost of food, and several inefficient governmental policies have made Ethiopia

vulnerable to the dire consequences of the food crisis. Farmers are not able to produce ample amounts of food, resulting in diminished incomes and nation-wide food shortages. All over the nation people are dying of starvation and related diseases. In addition, the malnutrition of livestock is cleaving local incomes, which has a tremendous effect on the economy. Though NGOs are trying to aid these countries, without significant infrastructural change, Ethiopia will continue to suffer, socially and economically, from the food crisis.

MALAWI

For over a decade, the nation of Malawi has been undergoing a serious food crisis. The effects have been mounting up since 1998; the damage was really felt on October 15, 2005, when President Bingu wa Mutharika declared a national disaster, based on estimations that there were over 46,000 dangerously malnourished children in the country.

The food crisis could have been avoided because the Malawi government was warned multiple times about the potential danger that was coming. The government was urged to quickly reduce the nation's dependency on agriculture. Taking this advice, the Malawi government cut off and abolished the free seeds program and the national fertilizing program. Naturally, this caused a short famine, lowering the overall Malawi corn production from 2.4 million tons a year to 1.3 million tons a year from 1998 to 2001. This caused a chain reaction. In 2000 corn prices deflated all across the country, thus reducing the budget for farmers. These farmers were not able to then purchase enough seed and fertilizer for the next year's harvest. Therefore the maize harvest was much smaller than the normal harvests, and with raising maize prices the farmers' economy was not where it should have been.

The harvest of 2001 was so bad that the Malawi government was forced to import food from other nations. In 2001 over 150,000 metric

tons were imported into the nation of Malawi. Labor forces in the country were severely depleted by diseases such as AIDS, and this brought further burden on the food situation. The government was then forced to sell off the National Strategic Grain Reserves due to serious budget deficits. After the national disaster declaration on October 15, 2005 President Bingu wa Mutharika called for another import of 330,000 tons of corn from South Africa. He then declared that another 158,000 tons of corn were required to keep the country alive until next year's harvest.

These circumstances have contributed to the current food crisis in Malawi. It is an urgent situation that must be remedied, by the UN and other nations that are capable of helping. The citizens of Malawi are feeling the effects of the crisis right now, with almost 50,000 children who run the risk of dying from starvation. The country is in dire need of food, and a new irrigation system, as their current system is not sufficient to sustain the needs of the people.

MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique is heading for its third consecutive year of drought, which will worsen the food crisis that's already affecting the country. Many parts of Mozambique are affected, especially the southern and central regions. There has been 50% less rainfall than usual, leaving more than half a million people in need of food aid. The World Food Program in Mozambique estimated that more than 650,000 people are in need of food aid, but only 580,000 are actually getting it. When agricultural production figures are created at the end of a season, we don't see the severity of the food crisis in Mozambique because there is always a surplus of food produced in the north of the country. This food is mostly consumed by other countries which import their food. They are not able to transport this to the south for lack of physical infrastructure. Therefore, Mozambique relies on importing food from other places such as South America. However, because the food crisis

is affecting that region too, the prices of food in South America rose, thus creating more problems for Mozambique and other importing countries.

The government of Mozambique says that it is experiencing serious shortages of basic food groups, such as wheat, rice, vegetable oil, chicken, and potatoes. The country had to import 470,000 metric tons of wheat, 169,000 tons of potatoes, 316,000 tons of rice, 50,400 tons of vegetable oil, 54,000 tons of fish, and 24,000 tons of chicken. The food crisis hit hardest in the urban areas of Mozambique. Mozambique has a difficult time keeping up with the demands of the citizens because of the natural disasters, poor farming and transportation, and a general lack of investment in agriculture. Mozambique has also been hit by many floods since February of 2008. Around 150,000 people were in vital need of food aid after the floods.

In response to the crisis, the Government of Mozambique founded a committee in April of 2008, chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture. The committee created a 3-year Food Production Action Plan that was approved by the Council of Ministers in June, 2008. The main goals of the plan are to first, eradicate the food deficit of major food groups, and second, to decrease the dependency on imported food from other countries.



SOMALIA

Due to current droughts and military threats, Somalia is undergoing an extremely acute phase of the food crisis.

Physical evidence and surveys have shown a severe, consistent drop in precipitation in the past several years, and further studies have suggested that the trend will continue. Due to this, the harvest in August was not as plentiful, leaving most of Somalia's poor even hungrier. A decrease in food availability has detrimental effects on the small amounts of food remaining. For example, the cereal prices have risen between 110 and 375 percent within the last year, resulting in an increase in poverty. 2.6 million people now cannot feed themselves (an increase of 40 percent since last January). The WFP has donated 34,000 tons of food to 1.7 million people and UNICEF has helped 54,000 children under the age of five.

In addition, the lack of a true government in Somalia has also taken a toll on the economy. The lack of authority of any sort has propelled pirating to occur. Pirating causes two major problems. First, it stops foreign food aid from reaching civilians and second, it reduces profits from imports and exports. The pirates are unable to be stopped due to the weapons that they control. As a result, the need for an organized government is growing, along with the need for international assistance. If the pirates can be fully removed, then secure trading can occur again. Furthermore, if global economic conditions make a turn for the better, Somalia will once again start to receive food aid from other countries. All in all, Somalia's main problem is the lack of food, and this stems from a poor system of government.

In addition to the problems relating to food growth and poverty, there were also many military threats. There is great military tension between Baidoa (a city under the control of rebel forces) and the Somali government, draining Somalia's financial reserves. The government also has difficulty controlling the slums scattered throughout the capital city of Mogadishu, which

are run by separate warlords. This disunity further hampers Somalia's ability to develop economically and socially.

Somalia faces a serious threat to its prosperity in the midst of this predicament. Although its grasp has spread everywhere, Somalia's food crisis has been exacerbated by military instability coupled unreliable rains.



SOUTH AFRICA

The food crisis has run rampant, not because of a shortfall of commodities, but because of the costs to produce them. While the professional large scale farmers are producing a surplus of commodities, such as maize, the prices for those commodities are rising. Combined with the rapidly rising costs of fuel and fuel production and the lack of available bank financing, profitability is threatened.

Meanwhile, the government's policy of providing land to poor, unskilled farmers is proving to be ineffective. The subsistence farmers, who often use inefficient farming techniques, are producing low quantities of maize, but must sell them for high prices to compensate for high fuel prices. Even so, farmers are failing to meet the local demand and their yields only equate to roughly one-third of those of professional farms.

Agricultural independence, alongside high food prices and unemployment, are negatively affecting South Africa's poor. Due to the global increase in both the costs of food and fuel, around thirty percent of income is spent on food, while

local citizens are earning less than 300 dollars a month.

Big farmers sell their goods internationally, as many neighboring countries rely on South Africa economically. The production costs are rising faster than the price at which the maize produced is being sold, thus yielding a lower profit. Because of this, farmers are forced to lower the production of maize by 800,000 hectares on average.

Simultaneously, small farmers with poor farming practices are given land by the government. Their crop yield is low, and with the high cost of production, there is very little profit. Because of this low yield with high prices, people cannot afford other basic commodities.

With low yields and small profitability, little money is made and little money can be put towards the cost of growing and producing the next crop; therefore yields will fall, causing prices and demand to rise while supply dips, all resulting in a crisis.

However, the price of other essential food items have almost all risen up by at least six percent, while maize has gone up less than that. While the rural poor have food security, because they have land and can support themselves, the unemployed and underpaid urban poor cannot procure access to either.

In an attempt to cushion the impact of the food crisis, Zola Skweyiya, the South African minister of social development, raised the minimum earnings for social grants as a way to aid a million people during this economic food crisis.

NORTH AMERICA

USA

With a weakened economy and rising food prices, it is no surprise that the global food

crisis has affected the United States. Food prices have skyrocketed since the turn of the millennium, dragging the middle class into economic turmoil. Middle-income families are now forced to spend less money on education and healthcare just to satisfy their essential food needs.

According to statistics provided by the US department of Agriculture in 2006, over thirty-five million Americans are living in “food-insecure” homes (including thirteen million children). Furthermore, due to an insufficient amount of food in homes, twelve million adults could not eat balanced meals. Meanwhile, in more than seven million households, people had smaller portions or skipped meals and in five million families, a child didn’t get enough to eat during the course of a day. As the average American family can barely afford to pay the food bills, they have had increased difficulty in paying for luxuries, further contributing to the deteriorating economic conditions that have gripped the country. Due to the shortage, stores such as Sam’s Club and Wal-Mart have imposed limits on rice purchases. According to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) food prices in the U.S. rose four percent in 2007, the largest increase in seventeen years. The CPI predicted a further increase of three or four percent in 2008. A survey conducted in May 2008 showed that food banks and pantries across the United States have been forced to cut back on food distribution when there was a reported fifteen to twenty percent increase in the number of people needing their services. Factors like rising gas prices, unemployment, rent and mortgage costs, and lack of food stamp benefits have contributed to such conditions. Local food bank donations were down by nine percent nationally. As food prices rise the United States government is planning to take a number of steps in order to help the American people.

In 2008, the United States government sent out economic stimulus checks to people nationwide. These checks were meant to “kick start” the economy after the recent Wall Street meltdown. Even though the U.S. government is trying to help American citizens by sending out stimulus checks, many feel that its hesitancy signifies the embrace-

ment of more “socialist” methods. For example, as of May 2008, as a result of the growing rice shortage, Brazil has banned exporting rice, ensuring its citizens ample amounts of food in the midst of the crisis. Many American supporters of the free market object to such methods, as they feel the government is invading the freedom of the free market.

Despite all of its food problems, the United States still plays a controversial part in the raging debate over the use of bio-fuels, in an attempt to wean itself off of foreign oil. A study done by the World Bank showed that bio-fuels have risen global food costs by seventy five percent, whereas the U.S. government claims naturally based fuels add less than three percent to the growing food prices. Timothy Lang, a researcher for Chatham House said, “They [biofuels] not only compete with food for land use, but require more energy to produce than they generate.” Bio-fuels are made from organic, food based products, such as wheat, sugarcane, molasses, sugar beet, soy, algae, and a particularly well-known one, corn. Bio-fuels do have their benefits, as they are considered a “clean” source of energy, but with it comes food scarcity, igniting the “food vs. fuel” debate. As bio-fuels are made from food products, farmers and companies are forced to choose between developing bio-fuels and producing food. The food that developed countries like America are using for fuel could be used in poor countries to feed hungry people. The food vs. fuel debate is causing much controversy, but currently, Americans are pushing for bio-fuels in order to reverse the negative effects of current energy sources.

Despite many American companies finding the bio-fuel business profitable, former President Bush recently asked Congress to approve \$770 million for emergency food aid in the U.S. The future of the debate remains in question, as do the effects of the Global Food Crisis in the United States.

THE CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

BRAZIL

The modern world is faced with many challenges which must be overcome to ensure its prosperity. Although the relevance of the food and energy crisis has diminished in light of the recent economic catastrophe, the high cost of food and gas is still one of the major social issues facing us today. The oil crisis has perhaps garnered more attention, due to its immediate effect on the day to day lives of developed countries. Because of this, many possible solutions have been proposed and are starting to be adopted; the most popular and tangible of which is bio-fuels. However, another issue now faces us: arable land may be used to grow crops for alternative energy, which keeps



food prices steadily rising.

Brazil's history with bio-fuels is much older than the current obsession with finding alternative energy sources. Brazil began its state-sponsored bio-fuel program in response to the 1973 oil crisis and the mounting national debt, effectively launching the program in 1975. Although it struggled during its initial years—since the technology and infrastructure necessary had not been fully developed—the program proved its value and was enlarged and renewed in 1979 when a second oil crisis shook the global market. With more than thirty years of experience “Brazil now produces enough ethanol to power 45% of its passenger vehicles using only 3.4 million hectares, or 1%, of its arable land”, and has reached the highest levels of productivity worldwide. This sparks the question—has the Brazilian ethanol industry had an impact on the rest of its agricultural sector, contributing to the rise in food prices?

In Brazil's case the answer is no. Although ethanol production occupies less than one percent of Brazil's total cultivated area, Brazil has managed to increase exponentially both food and bio-fuel production. Furthermore, unlike the ethanol produced from corn in the United States, sugar cane based ethanol does not directly divert the harvest from food production—since sugar is not a staple food and cannot be used as fodder for cattle. The greatest strength of sugar cane based ethanol is simply its efficiency in energy production, as well as its carbon emission efficiency. Sugar cane ethanol produces 8.3 times more energy than it consumes, while corn ethanol produces only 1.5 times.

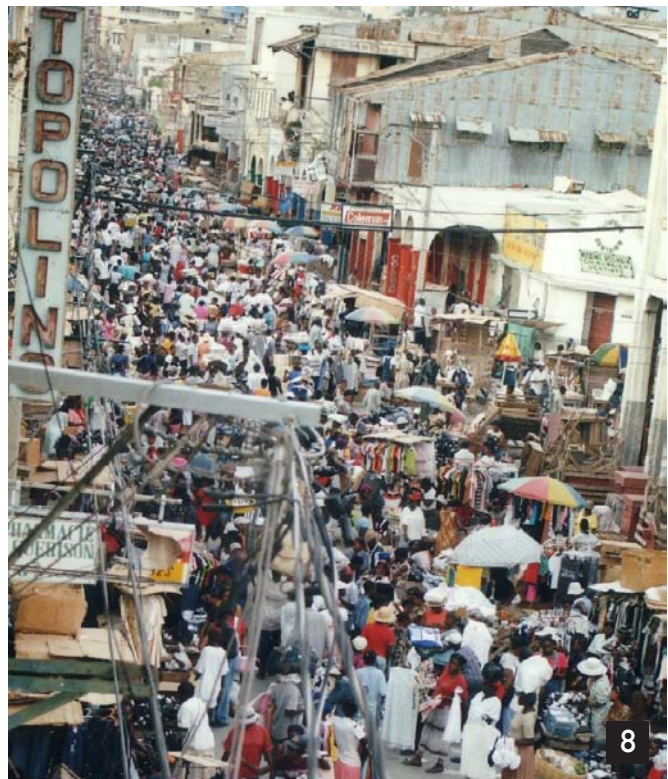
Developing nations have huge untapped farmland resources—Brazil alone has 77 million hectares of untapped farmland. What we need now is to invest in expanding agriculture and increasing productivity, not blaming ethanol for encroaching on agriculture. Sugar cane ethanol's efficiency has grown dramatically over the years, and if we can continue this trend by investing in agricultural efficiency and expanding farmlands—especially in developing countries—we can help solve two problems at once by providing cleaner

energy and a surplus of food.

HAITI

As the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, the food crisis is hitting Haiti harder than many other countries. In other western countries people spend just 10% of their income on food, but Haitians are forced to spend 80% of their significantly lower income just to feed themselves. Even with contributions from the United Nation's World Food Program, many are left hungry. This is part of the world hunger epidemic the UN calls the “silent tsunami”.

The silent tsunami has been affecting developing countries around the world for months, but rioting in Haiti has recently brought this problem into the spotlight. In October of 2008, 3.8 out of the 9 million living in Haiti faced food shortages and famine. The poor water and sanitation services only exacerbate the unfortunate living conditions people must endure. In addition, hurricanes and tropical storms continue to damage Haiti. It is truly a perfect breeding-ground for political unrest.



There is mounting evidence that resentment over the lack of food quickly turns to violence. Haiti's prison population has doubled since 2004, and there have been a series of protests. There were several demonstrations against the high cost of living over two days, and when the tension reached its peak on April 3rd 2008, a riot broke out in Les Cayes, killing and injuring both UN Peacekeepers and Haitians. Over 5,000 people protested the high prices of food, chanting 'lavi che', which means "down with the high cost of living!"

Angered by the government's ineffective economic policies, rioters in Port-au-Prince demanded the resignation of President Rene Preval. A new Prime Minister with much more economic experience, Eric Pierre, was chosen on April 27th. There were attempts to lower the prices of staple foods, like rice, by up to 16%, but the food crisis continues to worsen as poverty stricken people resort to taking dangerous boat voyages to the US, as well as eating dirt and mud to satisfy their hunger.

According to the Secretary General of the United Nations, "the price of food in Haiti has risen more than 500%. This means that a family that has once been able to afford five bowls of rice, is now trying to survive with just one." This raises a troubling question: is this merely a food crisis, or a humanitarian crisis? Prominent figures in American politics now think the US government has a "moral obligation" to send food and humanitarian aid to Haiti, and other suffering developing countries. Starving and malnourished children are abundant, and the health of the general public has begun to decline. Because of a high HIV/AIDS rate, many people are forced to choose between food and medication. Furthermore, the billions of dollars pledged by developed nations are not appearing, without which the UN World Food Program cannot effectively distribute food.

However, the World Food Program (WFP) has been making an effort to relieve the Haitian people of their constant hunger. It has set up a system where children of 315 different schools are given at least one meal a day. Over a thou-

sand other Haitian schools want to be admitted into this program, but the WFP is limited in funding. The WFP also supplies food to many health clinics, aiding almost 47,000 people who suffer from major hunger related diseases such as tuberculosis, and mal-nutrition. The WFP has an incredibly large task to fulfill, considering that over 75 percent of the Haitian people live well below the poverty line, and more than 4 million people are 'food insecure'. However, the WFP has not obtained enough money to help Haiti. It was supposed to receive a total of 5.6 billion dollars in aid, but only 3.4 billion was actually collected.

At a further disadvantage are Haitian women with AIDS. They have to pay for their medicines, along with their food. An example is Marie Chantale Georges. She suffers from HIV/AIDS, and she has a daughter. As a single parent, she finds it extremely difficult to raise her daughter, look after herself, and have to pay the high price of food. "All prices are going up. This morning I had to take my medicine without eating... when I stay on an empty stomach like this for more than two days I get very sick with severe stomach burns." Marie is a perfect example of how severe the food crisis is and action should be taken immediately to solve this issue. There is no question about the level of suffering in Haiti, but it is the conditions that existed before the food crisis struck that raise disturbing concerns. The food crisis in Haiti is, indeed, a humanitarian crisis, and aid must be multifaceted to overcome the plethora of problems the Haitian government and population face.

MEXICO

The fresh smell of doughy tortilla swathing the streets... Once there used to be lines of people queuing up for their staple food. But now the shopkeepers only see disappointed faces of customers looking at the incredibly high prices: "A 60% rise over only 40 years!" says one customer angrily. Although Felipe Calderón, president of

Mexico, set ceiling prices on corn-based tortillas at 78 cents per kilogram, some shops are ignoring this threshold by setting an average price of tortillas between 59 cents and \$1.04 higher than the threshold. Consequently, some Mexicans are not even able to afford tortillas- the food that forms 40% of their protein intake. While some are going hungry and becoming more susceptible to rickets, others are becoming unhealthier due to the consumption of cheap fast food. These are just a few of the effects of the corn crisis on the homeland of corn- the country that now has to import corn from the USA.

As demand for corn-based ethanol rises and the corn producing countries are diverting the production of corn for ethanol rather than for food, Mexico seems to be the country suffering the most in this corn crisis. But why Mexico? The answer lies in the promotion of free trade.

High tariffs, state regulations and government support for institutions led to a financial debt crisis in Mexico in the 1960s. The IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank, tried to assist Mexico by promoting a free market policy. This policy was further emphasized when Mexico was asking the World Bank and IMF for loan money to pay off debts with international commercial banks. In 1982, 19% of government expenditures were spent in order to pay interest and in 1988 the figure rose up to 57%. Consequently, state credit, government-subsidized agricultural inputs, price supports, state marketing boards and extension services were dismantled.

Due to decrease in government-subsidy on agricultural inputs, the farmers of Mexico were unable to compete with external markets, especially the US. The US government paid its corn farmers \$10 billion a year; this large subsidy engendered an escalating amount of corn produced in the US which led to a surplus of US corn. In 1994, the situation worsened due to NAFTA's (North American Free Trade Agreement) stronger encouragement on free trade. Regardless of NAFTA fixing the price on agricultural products, including corn, the free trade policy caused US-subsidized corn to flood in Mexico at artificially



low prices. Calculations done by Oxfam show that the US corn dumped in Mexico cost between \$105m and \$145m a year less than the cost of corn produced in Mexico, leading to a surplus of corn in Mexico. Suppliers had to decrease the price of corn to reach equilibrium price but this meant that the Mexican farmers were earning less money than before, putting many of them out of business. Consequently, Mexico had to import more corn from the USA and thus Mexico, which used to be a self sufficient corn producer, was established as a net corn importer. Many Mexican state marketing agencies were forced to shut down and trans-nationalized traders (e.g. US-owned Cargill and partly US-owned Maseca) monopolized the corn market. Hence, Mexico lost control over food prices whereas US transnational companies could speculate on trade prices in order to manipulate and magnify demand.

According to a 2003 Carnegie Endowment report, imports of US agricultural products has put at least 1.3 million farmers out of work. However, all blame cannot be placed on US or on WB or IMF because it was partly the Mexican government's fault for accepting to liberalize the corn market without taking into consideration the adverse effects of such a policy. "10 years of 'free trade' is destroying 10,000 years heritage of corn production"- Oxfam.

ASIA

INDIA

As one of the most rapidly developing countries in the world, India has had to deal with the setbacks of its rapid growth. The food crisis is a worldwide epidemic that has come to affect each country differently through its multi-faceted consequences. Although the nation has not yet been affected as severely by rising prices of food as other countries have, there have nonetheless been significant indicators and changes in price. In New Delhi, India's capital, milk costs 11% more than it did last year. Edible oil prices have skyrocketed by 40% over the same amount of time. Rice prices have also risen by 20% and some lentils by 18% (the latter two foods are staples in the Indian diet). Although the economy has been flourishing by 8.5% a year, its agricultural output is roughly at the level it was in the 1970s. Considering that farming provides a source of income for almost 60% of Indian people and only 18% of the country's GDP is compromised of farm produce, India is facing a serious food problem.

“60% of India's total cropped area is not irrigated.”

India continues to face large scale food scarcity amongst its poor population, which constitutes the majority of its inhabitants. Reports of cholera, typhoid, dysentery, and malaria have been frequent in areas suffering from famine. Cholera has spread in Bengal, as well as in the city of Chennai, affecting thousands. As a highly independent country, India has hardly relied on foreign import leaving the cause of such famine undetermined. However, possible grounds for this widespread scarcity

include the immensity of the nation, corruption, various tax policies, and inevitably, climate change.

Unlike today, six years ago food stocks had peaked. Current low production and exports have lead to a significant decrease of food. In recent times, whenever India has tried to export wheat, international wheat prices have swelled immensely. In addition to this, there has been conflict resulting from the Indian government having to pay twice as much for imported wheat than local farmers are paid for domestically grown wheat. Indian farmers are facing more difficulty as 60% of India's total cropped area is not irrigated. Climate change is also having a grave effect on India's serious food crisis. Floods and droughts obviously have severe negative effects on agricultural progress and with an increase in environmental change; this is likely to contribute to the deteriorating conditions. Farmers are largely dependent on India's monsoon season, a period of rain lasting for four months culminating almost 80% of the year's rain in one period. A fluctuation in this season could upset an already fragile farming system.

Indian farmers are showing frustration towards the fact that the government is paying the wheat imported “often twice as high as the minimum price the government” pays “its own farmers for domestically grown wheat.” Indian farmers

are “vulnerable” because approximately 60% of India's “total cropped area is not irrigated.” About 10,000 Indian farmers committed suicides over the past several years because they could not repay their loans from “local moneylenders”, who often use violent methods to intimidate. Many factors such as “low rise in farm productivity, meager prices for cultivators, poor food storage facilities resulting in high levels of wastage” are to blame for the food crisis in India.

In order to lessen the effects of the food crisis on poor children, “the retail giant IKEA is supporting UNICEF India with an \$80 million package of health, nutrition, and water and sanitation programs over the next five years.” The state of Madhya Pradesh, “which has the highest child mortality and child malnutrition rates” in India, “government supplementary programs are under threat” because the community workers are complaining that they cannot provide “malnourished children a healthy, balanced diet” with the two Rupees they receive per day from the government for “each child.”

Never has food proved to be such an issue in India as it is now. Its inhabitants, of which one fourth are surviving with under one dollar a day, are unable to access food at affordable prices. Even a small increase in prices of food could lead to serious consequences for India’s population, including a drastic fall in income.



PAKISTAN

The United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization rated Pakistan among the top thirty-seven countries that suffer the devastating effects of the

food crisis. Contributing factors include Pakistan’s largely poverty-stricken population, a deteriorating economy, food insecurity, and political instability. Pakistan has one of the highest populations in the region, and 24% of its people are living in poverty with over 17% of Pakistanis earning less than one dollar a day.

The country’s poor are most affected by the food crisis. A recent study of 1,407 households showed that 22% of the homes suffered from acute malnutrition. In Pakistan, one of the leading causes of death and illness among children is malnutrition. 41% of children under the age of five are classified as underweight and more than half of all Pakistani children suffer from stunted growth as a result. Malnutrition, however does not only affect children. Adults also suffer this severe effect of the food crisis.

Malnutrition is caused by many factors, including the economy. Pakistan’s economy is weakening, and inflation is prevalent. The rising cost of basic food is beginning to affect Pakistan’s citizens. One major problem is that the price of wheat, a dietary staple in Pakistan, rose by 26% in only one month. People are being forced to buy less nutritious food because it is cheaper. If people cannot afford to pay for their food, they will end up eating smaller portions and fewer meals, especially in urban areas. Today, you can feed someone in Karachi, Pakistan’s largest city, for 33 US cents; compared to last year, when you could have fed somebody for just 15 US cents.

Children are especially affected by the food crisis, and malnutrition is quickly becoming a pandemic. 38 percent of children are under weight as a result of the scarcity of food. This is causing a sharp increase in global child mortality. Riots have broken out because of the lack of food, and poverty is increasing in Pakistan. While the demand for food continues to rise, the supply seems to be decreasing. This lack of supply is partially due to issues such as climate change, inadequate harvesting methods and poor distribution practices. It is clear that Pakistan is in major need of agricultural reforms in order to sustain economic growth and to continue exporting commodities and keep up

global food distribution. Pakistan's economy is also affected by malnutrition. Undernourishment leads to low literacy rates and a lack of productivity at work. With lower work activity, things become more expensive. This leads to an increase in the number of impoverished people and a variety of social problems. Food insecurity, or a lack of availability, and dependable access to food, also has a major effect on Pakistan's economy. Because of rising food prices, people must rely on the charity of others.

Pakistan elected a new president on September 6th 2008: Asif Zardari. President Zardari has inherited an unstable government and a weak economy from his predecessor, Pervez Musharraf. Pervez Musharraf implemented martial law in November of 2007, costing the Pakistani government a large portion of their financial reserves. After this act, there was only money left to cover two months of imports—and import prices have been soaring upwards. It is Zardari's responsibility to rescue the economy. The government has formed a plan in hopes of saving the nation's financial system. They plan to halve the budget deficit while raising fuel and electricity prices to eliminate subsidies. Mr. Kahn, of the International Monetary Fund, said, "If they can put the plan together, implement it and get financing, they can prevent a crisis and stabilize the economy. But that's a lot of ifs."

There is also an organization called the Benazir Income Support Programme which is a plan organized by the government. This plan assures that each qualifying low-income family will receive fifteen extra dollars a month. Pakistani citizens are skeptical, saying that this plan will hardly help at all. According to the 2001 Modern School Atlas's graph on family size, the average Pakistani family has between four and five children, so fifteen dollars won't do much for most families.

VIETNAM

Despite being the world's second largest rice exporter, Vietnam and the livelihood of its citizens have been negatively impacted by the food crisis. Inflation rose up 21%, and the cost of buying food has greatly increased the cost of living. Even though Vietnam has been going through an economic boom, the skyrocketing prices of food have caused a number of problems in the economy. It has resulted in lowered wages for ordinary workers, leading to about 40 strikes and the loss of 25,000 jobs in early 2008. This in turn resulted in an increase in the world rice prices by 80%. The rising prices of food cause an increase in the price of housing, fuel and almost every other necessity. This has pushed many of the low income families in Vietnam to the brink of poverty. Vietnam's farmers, who form 70 percent of the population, have been hit hardest. The cost of farming has reached the point where farmers can barely make enough to feed themselves. Meanwhile, the urban poor, who are now spending almost 70 percent of their income on food, can barely survive. In addition, it has been said that Vietnam's agricultural sector, due to the small farm size and lack of necessary support, will be slow to respond to such changes in the market, making the food crisis an even more pressing issue. There are a number of other factors adding to the food crisis. Vietnam's weather, which includes unusually cold winters in the north and flooding across the central area, has the potential to damage crop yields. Additionally, urbanization has taken away many acres of land (in most cases the more fertile and useful land for farming) from food production, resulting in a shortage of food, putting even more strain on the home market.

However, Vietnam's government has taken steps in order to try to solve the crisis, both domestically and internationally. Several emergency measures have been taken in order to increase the production of rice for the domestic market. In order to provide Asian and African nations that have been

struggling with food shortages, Vietnam has exported rice to these regions. To improve the home market itself, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has implemented new cropping patterns which monitor and control the price of precuts used for agricultural input, promoting domestically made fertilizers as well as providing aid for struggling farmers in order to increase their productivity.



EUROPE AND RUSSIA

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The U.S. “Energy Independence and Security Act” passed in December 2007 states that thirty-six billion gallons of bio-fuel will be produced in the United States each year by 2022, five times the rate of what was generated in the year 2006. Many European governments have increased production of bio-fuels, hoping

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and decrease dependency on foreign oil. Bio-fuel crops include corn, soybeans, rapeseed, sugarcane, palm trees, and cassava. However, there is evidence that the increase in bio-fuel production has a direct impact on the food crisis. According to the World Bank, increased production of bio-fuels has caused global food prices to rise 75%, much higher than previously estimated.

There are three specific standards that apply to produced food and imports, including the legislation on the safety of animal and food feed; scientific advice; and control of food safety. The European Union (EU) hopes that the traditional foods will not be off the market due to the constant monitoring of the quality and high standards of the EU. The EU will not allow products to be sold if they do not meet the set quality standards. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), an independent organization that is situated in Parma, Italy, gives advice that is necessary when the legislation is being drafted or when there is a food safety scare. Another organization that helps maintain the high standards of the EU is the Food & Veterinary Office (FVO), which is located in Grange, Ireland. FVO inspects individual food production and checks if EU governments have the necessary machinery to monitor whether their producers are safeguarding their standards. The consequences of maintaining such high cost standards are increased food prices throughout Europe.

Other causes for the rise in global food prices are the increase of global demand, high energy prices, alternative markets, and a decrease in the rate of food production. There is an increase of global demand for food staples and rich quality foods in countries with growing economies, such as China, Brazil, and India. Energy prices are high due to the rigorous standards of the EU, as well as the cost of transporting the food products. Alternative markets such as bio-fuels are also affecting increasing food prices; although in Europe the demand for bio-fuels is significantly less than that of other regions. The slow production of food is partly caused by the inconsistent weather conditions that are affecting countries that produce large

amounts of food, including Australia, the United States, and European nations.

According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the world food price index rose 45% this past year (qualifying as hyperinflation). The World Bank reported that staple food prices have increased 83% since 2005. The United Nations stated that its food programs can no longer afford to feed the hungry people around the world. This has been linked to high costs of staple foods caused by bio-fuel production. In addition, a large amount of property goes into the production of bio-fuels, taking away from land that could be used for conventional commercial farming.

Proof that an increase in the production of bio fuels has played a major role in the food crisis is that grain is being used for fuel rather than food. Currently, half of the vegetable oil in the EU goes toward the production of biodiesel. This has caused the price of grains to increase. Another factor that has affected the food crisis is the fact that farmers have been encouraged to set aside land for bio-fuel production.

In addition, there is also a plan to curb the use of pesticides, proposed by the European Parliament Environmental Committee. While pesticides are necessary to protect crops from insects, rodents and fungi, they can also accumulate and cause risks to human health, especially when they end up in drinking water. These health risks include cancers, genetic disturbances, and damage to the immune system. A major threat to the use of successful pesticide products is the potential loss of triazoles – the main group of pesticides used to protect wheat in the EU. It may become impossible to grow crops such as carrots, parsnips and onions because the pesticides that safeguard them are under threat of becoming banned. Conventional commercial farming would no longer be feasible in the EU due to these strict regulations, which will indubitably escalate the world's current food crisis.

RUSSIA

Even though Russia has more than enough fertile land to feed the country, it has not escaped the detrimental consequences of the food crisis. Russia does not use all of its land to grow crops. As a result, the average Russian spends more than 60% of his or her income on food, and like many other countries around the world, Russia will have to battle economic mismanagement, and corruption.

Russia faces a tremendous economic challenge when it comes to fighting the rising food prices. This is partially because many Russians receive wages that are not high enough to meet their daily living expenses and basic necessities. Currently, the cost of food is at least three times greater than that of any other nation in the European Union. Over the last year, prices rose by 6.4%, compared to the rest of Europe's 1.8%. The Russian government is now planning to implement a food security law that would lower the costs of seven "socially important" products, but it is still not enough to assuage the decreasing level of consumer confidence. In addition to battling the food crises at home, Russia is too reliant on foreign imports of food; for example, it imports more than 75% of its gross meat and vegetable oil, and this value is increasing annually. This often triggers unrest among the local farmers who face competition from the exporting countries. This situation only intensifies the difficulties of reshaping and diversifying the national economy.

Another main problem in Russia's agricultural industry is its ineffective allocation of resources, which results in a lower output than its capacity would allow. In 1992, more than 120 million hectares of farmland were being cultivated, but fifteen years later, approximately 40 million hectares of these became unused. Instead of growing at its potential of five tons of wheat per hectare, Russia only grows two tons of wheat per hectare. If this land was efficiently utilized, Russia could become a major exporter of wheat and thus

improve its economy. However, in order for this to happen, two things need to be done: efficient planning and investment. First, there needs to be a transfer of ownership, from ineffective organizations that have no capital, to large corporations. Second, the unused land needs to be farmed to ensure a plentiful harvest. This is not only time consuming and costly, but also does not guarantee success. As President Dmitri Medvedev clearly pointed out, such hopeful policies might face “opposition from those who seek to profit from the problems that have been created.”

Despite domestic food problems, Russia still helps countries that are also suffering from food

shortages.

In September 2008, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) received 3150 metric tons—worth \$4 million— of wheat flour from Russia to support the people in Ethiopia. Russia has also helped its neighbor, Tajikistan, a country where more than 7 % of children suffer from acute malnutrition and 21 % suffer from chronic malnutrition. Since 2003, Russia has donated more than \$8 million to support the WFP in Tajikistan. Russia’s ability to help other countries in times of crises makes the possibility of Russia finding solutions to its myriad of problems seem a little more promising, and portrays a more hopeful future.



AFTERWORD

This issue is truly global as those in the 'developed' world have not escaped the omnipresent threat that the food crisis represents to global prosperity. The so-called 'invincible' free-market economy of the United States has buckled, causing subsequent economic fragility around the world. This, combined with already skyrocketing food prices caused by overpopulation, poor food distribution, bad harvests and global warming, has resulted in further economic havoc. The food crisis has also sparked fresh debate over the need to better balance the enormous demand for energy with our expanding food requirements. The use of bio-fuel, as a source of alternative 'clean' energy, was championed as a way to relieve the world's reliance on fossil fuels in order to slowdown the effects of climate change. Their production has unfortunately caused the prices of food to rise further, resulting in millions more 'food insecure' peoples.

Amidst the recent media coverage of economic turmoil, military conflict and environmental emergencies, the privileged often overlook the severity of the mounting food crisis. As we have shown throughout the working paper, its effects extend far beyond developing countries, which continually struggle with mass starvation, food shortages, lack of social and physical infrastructure, contaminated water sources and numerous health problems. In these cases, the food crisis impedes progress, as nutritional health and socio-economic development are inevitably intertwined. As more and more people turn their primary focus to their meals for the day, little energy is left to spend on other pursuits, leading to stagnation on all fronts.

We hope that the working paper has convinced you that the food crisis is indeed an urgent global challenge. People on all continents will suffer growing hardship while enduring increasing economic deprivation and food shortages. Finding a practical solution will be difficult, as the "developed world" remains staunchly in favour of developing bio-fuels while developing countries spiral into enormous debt and stagnation. Our aim is to focus world attention on this critical situation, as continuous international dialogue and cooperation would remain essential if a solution is to be found.

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