
Farmers

Are A Dying Breed

**FARMERS AS A SPECIES
ARE GOING EXTINCT
AND
FARMING IS
WILTING EVERYWHERE**



Dr. Sahadeva dasa

Farmers Are A Dying Breed

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By
Dr. Sahadeva dasa

B.com., FCA., AICWA., PhD
Chartered Accountant



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Readers interested in the subject matter of this
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SoulScienceUniversity@gmail.com +91 98490 95990
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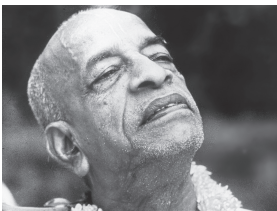
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Dedicated to....

His Divine Grace A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



But when traders become too greedy and materialistic they take to large-scale commerce and industry and allure the poor agriculturalist to unsanitary industrial towns with a false hope of earning more money. The industrialist and the capitalist do not want the farmer to remain at home, satisfied with his agricultural produce. When the farmers are satisfied by a luxuriant growth of food grains, the capitalist becomes gloomy at heart. But the real fact is that humanity must depend on agriculture and subsist on agricultural produce.

No one can produce rice and wheat in big iron factories.

~ Srila Prabhupada (Light of Bhagavata, verse 9)

By The Same Author

Oil-Final Countdown To A Global Crisis And Its Solutions
End of Modern Civilization And Alternative Future
To Kill Cow Means To End Human Civilization
Cow And Humanity - Made For Each Other
Cows Are Cool - Love 'Em!
Let's Be Friends - A Curious, Calm Cow
Wondrous Glories of Vraja
We Feel Just Like You Do
Tsunami Of Diseases Headed Our Way - Know Your Food Before Time
Runs Out
Cow Killing And Beef Export - The Master Plan To Turn India Into A
Desert
Capitalism Communism And Cowism - A New Economics For The 21st`
Century
Noble Cow - Munching Grass, Looking Curious And Just Hanging Around
World - Through The Eyes Of Scriptures
To Save Time Is To Lengthen Life
Life Is Nothing But Time - Time Is Life, Life Is Time
Lost Time Is Never Found Again
Spare Us Some Carcasses - An Appeal From The Vultures
An Inch of Time Can Not Be Bought With A Mile of Gold
Cow Dung For Food Security And Survival of Human Race
Cow Dung - A Down To Earth Solution To Global Warming And
Climate Change
Career Women - The Violence of Modern Jobs And The Lost Art of Home
Making
Working Moms And Rise of A Lost Generation
Glories of Thy Wondrous Name
India A World Leader in Cow Killing And Beef Export - An Italian Did
It In 10 Years
As Long As There Are Slaughterhouses, There Will Be Wars
Peak Soil - Industrial Civilization, On The Verge of Eating Itself
Corporatocracy : The New Gods - Greedy, Ruthless And Reckless
(More information on availability on DrDasa.com)

Contents

Preface

1. Farmers Are A Dying Breed
 No One Wants To Be A Farmer Anymore
2. UN: Small-Scale Organic Farming
 The Only Way to Feed the World
3. Japan's Micro Farms Face Extinction
4. In America
 The Family Farm Is Being Systematically
 Wiped Out Of Existence
5. Young American Farmers - Where Have They All Gone?
6. Family Farms - Headed for Extinction
7. French Small Farmers Head For Extinction
8. 72% Of Family Farms
 Don't Earn Enough To Support The Family On Them
9. Colonization of Agriculture
 Under The Old Colonialist Pretext Of Helping The Poor
10. If Our Small Farms Are Allowed To Wither
 The Whole Nation Will Suffer
11. The Suicide Economy of Corporate Globalisation
12. Rush To Buy Up Farmland All Around The World
 The Overwhelming Majority Of Farming Families
 Today Have Less Than Two Hectares To Cultivate
13. Kissinger's 1974 Plan For Food Control Genocide

14. The New Livestock Policy
A Policy Of Ecocide Of Indigenous Cattle Breeds
And A Policy Of Genocide For India's Small Farmers
15. Destruction of an ancient way of life, a culture.
16. African Famine
A Creation of The World Bank And IMF
17. Africa - Food Crisis Is A Policy Crisis
18. Financial Terrorism - Americans Milk Africa To Death
19. A Heartbreaking Journey
Through The Famine-Stricken Territories
20. India - A Genocide In Progress
21. Displacing Farmers
India Will Have 400 million Agricultural Refugees
22. India - Everyday 2000 Farmers
Calling It Quits And Heading For Urban Shanty Towns.
23. 67 Years After Independence
Indian Farmers Have Disappeared
From The Economic Radar Screen
24. There Is No Reason Why India Should Face Hunger
And Farmers Should Commit Suicide
25. GMOs And The Destruction Of Indian Agriculture
Government In Collusion With The Biotech Conglomerates
26. Those Responsible For The Agrarian Crisis
Cannot Be Expected To Provide A Solution.
27. Society Will Collapse By 2040
Due To Catastrophic Food Shortages, Says Study
The Author

Preface

Every 5 years the United States Department of Agriculture sends all the farmers a survey called the Agricultural Census. And every five years once all the results are tallied and without fail, an alarm bell goes off. The national average age in farming keeps climbing up and the trend is ever upward. Farmers around the world are getting old.

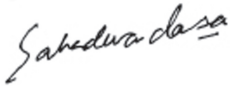
Where have all the young farmers gone? Why the youngsters are leaving the family farms and showing no interest in what's supposed to be the oldest and the 'noblest' profession?

This is because small scale agriculture is being deliberately stifled. Pro-corporate policies are making farming non-viable and farmers are left with no other choice but to quit. Farmers are a dying breed and family farming will become history soon.

Writing in the Newsweek magazine (April 10, 2014), Max Kutner says: "For decades, farmers across the country have been dying by suicide at higher rates than the general population. The exact numbers are hard to determine, mainly because suicide by farmers are under-reported (they may get mislabeled as hunting

or tractor accidents, advocates for prevention say) and because the exact definition of a farmer is elusive.”

A society disconnected from its food source can never know peace, prosperity and good health. Aldo Leopold warns, “There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sahadeva dasa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

Dr. Sahadeva dasa
6th Septmber 2015
Secunderabad, India`

1.

Farmers Are A Dying Breed

No One Wants To Be A Farmer Anymore

Some years back, the celebrated Indian President Abdul Kalam was addressing students at an annual event organised by K Govindacharya's Bhartiya Swabhiman Andolan at Gulbarga in Karnataka. He exhorted students to work hard, educated themselves to become doctors, engineers, civil servants, scientists, economists and entrepreneurs. After he had ended his talk, a young student got up and asked why he didn't say that they should also become farmers.

Abdul Kalam was floored. Whatever be his long winding answer, the young student had actually punctured his argument, and at the same time brought out the great bias towards farming.

This incident came to my mind when I was reading this moving essay by a farmer from the United States. Bren Smith, a shellfish and seaweed farmer writes in the New York Times (Aug 9, 2014) Don't Let Your Children Grow up to be Farmers (<http://nyti.ms/VeffqD>): "The dirty secret of the food movement is that the much-celebrated small -scale farmer isn't making a living. After the tools are put away, we head out to second and third jobs to keep our farms afloat." Accordingly, 91 per cent of all farm households in the US rely on multiple sources of income. This is happening in a country

where the Farm Bill 2014 makes a provision for \$ 962 billion of federal subsidy support for agriculture for the next 10 years.

Ironically, the stark reality remains hidden in the Year of Family Farms.

Farmers are a dying breed. Writing in the Newsweek magazine (April 10, 2014), Max Kutner says: "For decades, farmers across the country have been dying by suicide at higher rates than the general population. The exact numbers are hard to determine, mainly because suicide by farmers are under-reported (they may get mislabeled as hunting or tractor accidents, advocates for prevention say) and because the exact definition of a farmer is elusive." (Death on the Farm <http://www.newsweek.com/death-farm-248127>).

Well, what is happening in America is not an isolated development, farmers are dying across the globe.

When some weeks back I said on a prominent TV channel that on an average 2,80,000 people living in rural areas every year have been committing suicide for the past decade in China, the nation was shocked. A lot of concerned viewers called me up and wrote to me wanting to know more about the death on the Chinese farm. According to news report, nearly 80 per cent of the rural people who take their own lives in China are victims of farm land grab. In India, almost 300,000 farmers have ended their life since 1995. Again, like in the US, farm suicides are also under-reported in India with some States now trying to hide them by shifting these deaths to some other categories. Even in Europe, which provides massive subsidy support under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the serial death dance continues unabated. In France, 500 suicides have been reported in a year. In Ireland, in UK, in Russia, and in Australia farmers are a dying breed.

In India, although we keep on saying that agriculture is the mainstay on the economy, in reality it isn't. Employing some 52 per cent of the population, the share of agriculture in country's GDP has been progressively on the decline. It is less than 14 per cent now. I have been saying for long that small farmers have to

get into multiple of jobs to keep their ovens burning. Some studies point out to roughly 58 per cent farmers relying on the rural employment guarantee programme (MNREGA), which provides for 100 days guaranteed employment. Still worse, the people who feed the country actually sleep hungry. More than 60 per cent go to bed hungry every night. Nothing can be a worse illustration of the great tragedy on the farm.

It's not because of any unexplained natural calamity or a virus that the farms across the globe are first being hit by recession, and then depression. *It is part of global economic design to move farmers out of agriculture, and by doing so to shift food production into the hands of heavily subsidised and environmentally-destructive agribusiness companies.* It is generally believed that for any country to grow economically, the share of agriculture in the GDP must be brought down. In US, agriculture is only 4 per cent of its GDP. In India, it is less than 14 per cent now. By the end of 2020, I am sure it would be somewhere in the range of 10 per cent. Small scale agriculture is therefore being deliberately stifled.

In my understanding, the unwritten economic prescription is to make farming non-viable so that farmers are left with no other choice but to quit. In a quest to keep food prices low, the economic paradigm support large agribusiness conglomerates. The demise of the farmer therefore is predetermined. It's only a matter of time before the farmer as a species goes extinct.

Source

By Devinder Sharma, Aug 12, 2014

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2.

UN: Small-Scale Organic Farming

The Only Way to Feed the World

Modern industrial agricultural methods can no longer feed the world, due to the impacts of overlapping environmental and ecological crises linked to land, water and resource availability.

The stark warning comes from the new United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Prof Hilal Elver, in her first public speech since being appointed in June.

“Food policies which do not address the root causes of world hunger would be bound to fail”, she told a packed audience in Amsterdam.

One billion people globally are hungry, she declared, before calling on governments to support a transition to “agricultural democracy” which would empower rural small farmers.

Agriculture Needs A New Direction: Agroecology

“The 2009 global food crisis signalled the need for a turning point in the global food system”, she said at the event hosted by the Transnational Institute (TNI), a leading international think tank.

“Modern agriculture, which began in the 1950s, is more resource intensive, very fossil fuel dependent, using fertilisers, and based on massive production. This policy has to change.

“We are already facing a range of challenges. Resource scarcity, increased population, decreasing land availability and accessibility, emerging water scarcity, and soil degradation require us to re-think how best to use our resources for future generations.”

The UN official said that new scientific research increasingly shows how ‘agroecology’ offers far more environmentally sustainable methods that can still meet the rapidly growing demand for food:

“Agroecology is a traditional way of using farming methods that are less resource oriented, and which work in harmony with society. New research in agroecology allows us to explore more effectively how we can use traditional knowledge to protect people and their environment at the same time.”

Small Farmers Are The Key To Feeding The World

“There is a geographical and distributional imbalance in who is consuming and producing. Global agricultural policy needs to adjust. In the crowded and hot world of tomorrow, the challenge of how to protect the vulnerable is heightened”, Hilal Elver continued.

“That entails recognising women’s role in food production — from farmer, to housewife, to working mother, women are the world’s major food providers. It also means recognising small farmers, who are also the most vulnerable, and the most hungry.

“Across Europe, the US and the developing world, small farms face shrinking numbers. So if we deal with small farmers we solve hunger and we also deal with food production.”

Governments must shift subsidies and research funding from agro-industrial monoculture to small farmers using ‘agroecological’ methods, according to the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. And as Nafeez Ahmed notes, her call coincides with a new agroecology initiative within the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation.

And Elver speaks not just with the authority of her UN role, but as a respected academic. She is research professor and co-director at the Project on Global Climate Change, Human Security, and Democracy in the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Industrial Agriculture Grabs 80% Of Subsidies And 90% Of Research Funds

Hinting at the future direction of her research and policy recommendations, she criticised the vast subsidies going to large monocultural agribusiness companies. Currently, in the European Union about 80% of subsidies and 90% of research funding go to support conventional industrial agriculture.

“Empirical and scientific evidence shows that small farmers feed the world. According to the UN Food & Agricultural Organisation (FAO), 70% of food we consume globally comes from small farmers”, said Prof Elver.

“This is critical for future agricultural policies. Currently, most subsidies go to large agribusiness. This must change. Governments must support small farmers. As rural people are migrating increasingly to cities, this is generating huge problems.

“If these trends continue, by 2050, 75% of the entire human population will live in urban areas. We must reverse these trends by providing new possibilities and incentives to small farmers, especially for young people in rural areas.”

If implemented, Elver’s suggestions would represent a major shift in current government food policies.

“Human society needs only sufficient grain and sufficient cows to solve its economic problems. All other things but these two are artificial necessities created by man to kill his valuable life at the human level and waste his time in things which are not needed.”

~Srla Prabhupada

(Srimad Bhagavatam 3.2.29)

A UN Initiative On Agroecology?

The new UN food rapporteur's debut speech coincided with a landmark two-day International Symposium on Agroecology for Food and Nutrition Security in Rome, hosted by the FAO. Over 50 experts participated in the symposium, including scientists, the private sector, government officials, and civil society leaders.

A high-level roundtable at the close of the symposium included the agricultural ministers of France, Algeria, Costa Rica, Japan, Brazil and the European Union agricultural commissioner.

FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva said: "Agroecology continues to grow, both in science and in policies. It is an approach that will help to address the challenge of ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, in the context of the climate change adaptation needed."

A letter to the FAO signed by nearly 70 international food scientists congratulated the UN agency for convening the agroecology symposium and called for a "UN system-wide initiative on agroecology as the central strategy for addressing climate change and building resilience in the face of water crises."

The scientists described agroecology as "a well-grounded science, a set of time-tested agronomic practices and, when embedded in sound socio-political institutions, the most promising pathway for achieving sustainable food production."

More Than Just A Science — A Social Movement!

A signatory to the letter, Mindi Schneider, assistant professor of Agrarian, Food and Environmental Studies at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, said: "Agroecology is more than just a science, it's also a social movement for justice that recognises and respects the right of communities of farmers to decide what they grow and how they grow it."

Several other food experts at the Transnational Institute offered criticisms of prevailing industrial practices. Dr David Fig, who serves

on the board of Biowatch South Africa, an NGO concerned with food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture, said:

“We are being far too kind to industrialised agriculture. The private sector has endorsed it, but it has failed to feed the world, it has contributed to major environmental contamination and misuse of natural resources. It’s time we switched more attention, public funds and policy measures to agroecology, to replace the old model as soon as possible.”

Prof Sergio Sauer, formerly Brazil’s National Rapporteur for Human Rights in Land, Territory and Food, added:

“Agroecology is related to the way you relate to land, to nature to each other — it is more than just organic production, it is a sustainable livelihood.

“In Brazil we have the National Association of Agroecology which brings together 7,000 people from all over the country pooling together their concrete empirical experiences of agroecological practices. They try to base all their knowledge on practice, not just on concepts.

“Generally, nobody talks about agroecology, because it’s too political. The simple fact that the FAO is calling a major international gathering to discuss agroecology is therefore a very significant milestone.”

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By Nafeez Ahmed, September 26, 2014

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3.

Japan's Micro Farms Face Extinction

Takashi Nakajima makes \$100,000 a year growing lettuce on 12 acres in Japan's Nagano prefecture. The 35-year-old third-generation farmer employs Chinese laborers to pick his crop and takes four months off in the winter to indulge his passion for speed skating. Now his way of life is endangered because of reforms set in motion by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government. "They want to streamline Japan's farming business," Nakajima says. "Small farmers won't be able to survive, and the community will die."

Government payments accounted for 56 percent of total earnings for Japanese agriculture last year, behind only Norway and Switzerland, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Abe plans to cut subsidies to rice farmers, which total 161 billion yen (\$1.6 billion) a year. He also wants to reduce the triple-digit import tariffs that apply to wheat, sugar, beef, pork, and dairy products.

The goal is to force thousands of hand-tended farms such as Nakajima's to consolidate, boosting yields and lowering the cost of food. According to OECD estimates, Japanese farmers command prices that are twice the world average. "The current system is so unproductive that it's hurting the nation as a whole," says Robert Feldman, head of Japan economic research at Morgan Stanley

MUFG Securities (MS). “Changing the agricultural laws is a good way to promote the conversion of land to more efficient use.”

Japan’s proliferation of small farms is a legacy of the country’s postwar U.S. occupation, which diminished the power of the land-owning class by distributing plots to the tenant farmers who tilled about one-third of the nation’s fields and rice paddies. As Japan’s industries boomed, villagers quit the fields and went to work in factories. Stringent regulations governing the transfer of arable land have prevented a new generation of farmers from taking their place. A 2010 survey by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries showed that almost 9 out of 10 farmers were over 50.

“Agriculture is the most difficult sector to reform,” said the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, during a Dec. 6 interview in Tokyo, a day after parliament passed a bill designed to reduce the amount of idle land by allowing farmers to lease out parcels. The law will “enable farmland to be consolidated and taken over by those who are really motivated,” Abe said. In late November the government approved a plan to end a four-decade policy of paying rice farmers to reduce their production in order to support prices. The subsidy will be halved effective April 2014 and abolished by Mar. 31, 2019.

Agriculture’s share of gross domestic product is now less than 1 percent, down from 9 percent in 1960, according to government data. Yet farmers still wield considerable political influence through the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives group. The JA, as it’s commonly known, finances and insures farms, supplies them with equipment and fertilizer, and buys their produce. With almost 10 million members, the organization is also Japan’s largest political lobby.

For a small farmer like Nakajima, Abe’s policies are likely to translate into more competition, from both farmers abroad and local rice growers switching to higher-value vegetable crops as their subsidies dry up. “I’m worried about TPP,” Nakajima says. “Our lettuce is good, and when it comes to freshness, foreign products won’t be able to match us. But I sometimes wonder whether people see the difference.”

Farmers Are A Dying Breed

Source

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4.

In America

The Family Farm Is Being Systematically Wiped Out Of Existence

By Michael Snyder

An entire way of life is rapidly dying right in front of our eyes. The family farm is being systematically wiped out of existence in America, and big agribusiness and the federal government both have blood all over their hands. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the number of farms in the United States has fallen from about 6.8 million in 1935 to only about 2 million today. That doesn't mean that there is less farming going on. U.S. farms are producing more than ever. But what it does mean is that farming is increasingly becoming dominated by the big boys. The rules of the game have been tilted in favor of big agribusiness so dramatically that most small farmers find that they simply cannot compete anymore. Back in 1900, about 39 percent of the U.S. population worked on farms. At this point, only about 2 percent of all Americans now live on farms. Big agribusiness, the food processing conglomerates, and big seed companies such as Monsanto completely dominate the industry. Unless something dramatic is done, the family farm is going to continue to be wiped out of existence. Unfortunately, it does not look like things are going to turn around any time soon.

The way that the farming industry is structured today, it is simply not economically feasible to operate a small family farm. According to Farm Aid, every week approximately 330 farmers leave their land for good.

Many old timers are trying to hang on for as long as they can. A very large percentage of family farmers are in their fifties, sixties or seventies at this point. Today, only about 6 percent of all farmers are under the age of 35.

Most young people these days are not too eager to choose farming as a career. A lot of young adults that grew up on family farms have decided that investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in a business that requires you to work 12 hours or more per day most of the year for very meager wages is simply not worth it.

In recent years, many family farmers have been forced to find second jobs in order to support their families. Many farm families are constantly on the verge of financial ruin. It is a really tough life for many of them.

Sadly, less than 25 percent of all farms in America bring in gross revenues in excess of \$50,000. The following comes from the EPA website :

It has been estimated that living expenses for the average farm family exceed \$47,000 per year. Clearly, many farms that meet the U.S. Census' definition would not produce sufficient income to meet farm family living expenses. In fact, fewer than 1 in 4 of the farms in this country produce gross revenues in excess of \$50,000.

On top of everything else, the federal government and many state governments just keep endlessly piling more rules and regulations on to the backs of farmers.

Big agribusiness has the resources to deal with all of these regulations fairly well, but most family farms do not.

With each passing year, the farming industry becomes even more centralized. If current trends continue, big agribusiness will eventually control nearly all of it. The following is from the EPA website :

By 1997, a mere 46,000 of the two million farms in this country accounted for 50% of sales of agricultural products (USDA, 1997 Census of Agriculture data). That number was down from almost 62,000 in 1992.

In certain industries the amount of consolidation has been absolutely stunning. For example, between 1970 and today the United States has lost 88 percent of its dairy farms.

Another factor that is shaping the farming business is the incredible power that the giant food processing conglomerates have accumulated.

Today, there are 10 corporations that control most of the things that Americans eat and drink on a daily basis. If you doubt this, just check out this chart.

The giant food processing conglomerates have a massive amount of influence over how food is grown in the United States today. Small farmers that try to go against the tide often have a very rough go of it.

That is also true when it comes to seeds.

For example, approximately 80 percent of all corn grown in the United States is grown using seeds that have been genetically modified by Monsanto.

If you want to try to defy companies such as Monsanto, you are playing a very dangerous game. The predatory business practices of Monsanto have been well documented. Monsanto has taken countless numbers of farmers to court, and they are absolutely ruthless.

Plus, it certainly does not help that there is a constant revolving door between Monsanto and federal government agencies. If you doubt this, just check out the chart about Monsanto on this page.

Amazingly, in spite of all this there are still some small farmers that are able to overcome all of these obstacles and run successful businesses.

But that is where the federal government comes in.

In recent years, the federal government has become absolutely obsessed with going after small farmers.

For example, a recent Food Freedom News article detailed what the feds have been doing to Randy and Karen Sowers. They were keeping their cash deposits under \$10,000 so that they would not have to fill out a bunch of paperwork, and the federal government came down on them like a hurricane :

“Structuring,” explains Overlawyered.com, “is the federal criminal offense of splitting up bank deposits so as to keep them under a threshold such as \$10,000 above which banks have to report transactions to the government.”

While being questioned, the Sowers were finally presented with a seizure order and advised that the feds had already emptied their bank account of \$70,000. The Dept. of Justice has since sued to keep \$63,000 of the Sowers’ money, though they committed no crime other than maintaining their privacy.

Without funds, they will be unable to make purchases for the spring planting.

When a similar action was taken against Taylor’s Produce Stand last year, the feds seized \$90,000, dropped the charges, and kept \$45,000 of Taylor’s money.

Knowing that most farms operate on a very thin margin, such abuse of power wipes out a family’s income, and for a bonus, the feds enhance the monopoly power of Monsanto, Big Dairy and their supply chain.

At many other small farms across America, the feds have conducted military-style raids at the crack of dawn over the smallest infractions.

Some examples of this were detailed in a documentary entitled “Farmageddon“.

The sad truth is that the federal government has been using the tax money to go after small farmers in absolutely vicious ways.

For example, the feds raided one Amish farm at 5 AM one morning.

So what was the big crime that the feds were so concerned about?

Well, the Amish farm was selling raw milk.

Oh the horror!

The feds seem content to leave big agribusiness pretty much alone, but they are constantly going after small farms in hundreds of different ways.

Did you know that the Department of Labor is instituting new regulations that will ban children from doing many kinds of farm chores?

Just another way to kill off the family farm in America.

Eventually, the big corporations and the federal government will have near total control over food production in America.

Source

Michael Snyder, Business Insider, on April 26th, 2012

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The basic principle of economic development is centered on land and cows. The necessities of human society are food grains, fruits, milk, minerals, clothing, wood, etc. One requires all these items to fulfill the material needs of the body. ...During the regime of Maharaja Yudhisthira, all over the world there were regulated rainfalls. Rainfalls are not in the control of the human being. ...Not only do regulated rains help ample production of grains and fruits, but when they combine with astronomical influences there is ample production of valuable stones and pearls. Grains and vegetables can sumptuously feed a man and animals, and a fatty cow delivers enough milk to supply a man sumptuously with vigor and vitality. If there is enough milk, enough grains, enough fruit, enough cotton, enough silk and enough jewels, then why do the people need cinemas, houses of prostitution, slaughterhouses, etc.? What is the need of an artificial luxurious life of cinema, cars, radio, flesh and hotels? Has this civilization produced anything but quarreling individually and nationally? Has this civilization enhanced the cause of equality and fraternity by sending thousands of men into a hellish factory and the war fields at the whims of a particular man?
~Srla Prabhupada (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.10.4)

Farmers Are A Dying Breed

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5.

Young American Farmers

Where Have They All Gone?

By Eric Goldschein

A few decades ago, whether because of the dominance of large-scale enterprises or general apathy, a startling trend became to develop: young people wanted out of farming.

Only five percent of America's farmers are between the ages of 25 and 35, according to The National Young Farmers' Coalition. Meanwhile, farmers over the age of 65 make up 30 percent of the farming population. The mean age of a farmer is 57.

Farming has been on the decline since the early 20th century. The U.S. went from six million farmers in 1910 to two million in 2007. This number is expected to drop considerably, as 25 percent of the nation's farmers will be retired by 2030.

The need for new blood in farming is surprising considering that farmers markets, organic produce and farming in general are incredibly popular, especially amongst young people. Couple that with high youth unemployment rates and we may be looking at the next big job market for young people.

There has already been signs of growing support for the farming lifestyle. Out of 1,300 aspiring and new farmers surveyed by the NYFC, 78 percent said they were not raised on a farm.

True to form, the vast majority of the respondents farmed organically.

But despite the growing need and a burgeoning interest, young farmers face several huge obstacles, including a dire lack of capital and land to farm. Over 73 percent of farmers said they depended on off-farm income to survive, and the price per acre of farm land doubled to \$2,140 over the last 10 years.

A lack of health care also hurts prospective farmers. Farming ranks as the fourth most dangerous occupation in the country, and young farmers often must choose between health care and paying for their farm.

The NYFC suggests both government and private initiatives for helping the youth break into the industry, including improving access to capital and credit and providing support and education initiatives, such as apprenticeships and student loan forgiveness.

Source

By Eric Goldschein , Business Insider, Nov. 15, 2011

6.

Family Farms

Vanishing Without A Trace

By John W. Whitehead

Chris Thureen, a grain farmer in Minnesota's Red River Valley, spent his life on a farm that has been in his family since 1886. But last year Thureen, along with four other farming neighbors, abandoned their family farms.

Sadly, these are not isolated cases; they are indicators of a national crisis. Today in the United States, there are 300,000 fewer farms than there were just twenty years ago. This nation's farms, particularly those owned and operated by families, are becoming extinct because increased costs and decreased profits are sending many farmers spiraling into bankruptcy.

With the decline in support and subsidies, many farmers are unable to make ends meet using farm profits alone. As a result, they have been forced to take other jobs in addition to the daily backbreaking chores of the family farm. Borrowing from banks has also become increasingly difficult.

Hoping to increase farm incomes by removing price supports, Congress passed the "Freedom to Farm" bill in 1996. Since then, however, farmers have had little control over their financial future and have seen a marked decrease in income. At the same time, however, corporate farms have increased in both number and profit.

Among other factors, corporate farms, such as Carroll Foods or Tysons, have led to the precarious financial condition of family

farms. "Pretty soon there'll be no such thing as a family farm," according to Dale Dickinson, a 75 year-old farm equipment vendor, in a recent USA Today article. "Five big grain companies control the market worldwide, and they couldn't care less about small farmers."

Environmentalists fear that the heads of these thousand-acre corporate farms care even less about the environment. The chemical and waste run-off from a 3000-acre farm is infinitely more threatening than the run-off from a 300-acre farm. Thus, land not gobbled up by these farming conglomerates may well end up being contaminated by them.

In addition to losing land to these farming behemoths, they lose a way of life. The time-honored tradition of family farming represents an American ideal of work ethic and family values. As these corporations alter the landscape and livelihood of thousands, they will inevitably alter the way food is produced and consumed. Instead of sweet summer tomatoes from the local roadside stand, we will have mass-produced and increasingly tasteless produce year-round, thanks to chemical treatments or genetic engineering.

Although 94 percent of farmers in America fall within the "small farm" category, those small farms receive only 41 percent of all farm receipts. The corporate farms and agribusiness conglomerates are advantaged by government policies including tax benefits that encourage expansion--something not readily available to the small farmer. And considering that the net farm income is estimated to decrease \$43.8 billion this year, it is inevitable that more family farms will fade into the sunset.

As farms that have been passed down generation to generation are sold off at a fraction of their worth, livelihoods are lost. Unfortunately, so are many lives. As the crop prices drop and farms are foreclosed, the suicide rate among farmers rises.

Recognizing the dire condition of our farming communities, politicians are finally offering some relief. Recently, the Senate approved a \$7.4 billion emergency aid package for America's

farmers. But is this cash infusion incentive enough for independent farmers to continue? More importantly is it the cure-all?

Tim Dufault, a Minnesota farmer who fears losing his family farm, recognized the need for "some short term fixes, 'cause there are guys hurting, and we need cash out in the country, or they're gone." Dufault, like others, is apprehensive that neither the money nor the politicians' concern will last. "We can't lose sight of the long-term, 'cause I know how politicians work. If we get a short term fix, they'll say, 'I've done my job,' and they get re-elected, and that's the last we'll hear from 'em."

Fortunately, others have heard the farmers' pleas and are offering their help. Farmers will benefit from the efforts of musicians rather than the efforts of politicians when Farm Aid, a concert founded by Neil Young, Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp, comes to Washington in September. Since its inception in 1985, Farm Aid has raised and distributed \$14.5 million to aid farmers and farming communities.

The benefit concert hopes to send a message that legislative reform is needed and that the family farm, an American tradition, must be preserved. Hopefully, the performers will play loud enough that their message is heard on Capitol Hill.

Source

by John W. Whitehead, The Rutherford Institute, August 16, 1999

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7.

French Small Farmers

Head For Extinction

By John Lichfield

When You leave the city of Paris you enter, metaphorically, the state of New Jersey: concentric circles of tower blocks, motorways, shopping malls, bungalows and Midas car-repair franchises. Once you escape from New Jersey-sur-Seine, going in any direction, you enter Nebraska or Kansas, an 80 to 100 miles belt of immense wheat and barley fields, grain silos, fertiliser-polluted streams and dying, or suburbanised villages.

It is only when you have passed through this vast, mournful, agri-industrial plain—which produces almost as much wheat as the whole of Canada—that you reach la France profonde: the quilt of small farms, natural woodlands, close-knit villages and picturesque towns that many French people still believe to be rural France.

Out there, beyond the French Nebraska, a more traditional, less polluting kind of agriculture still exists, but it is struggling for survival. In many places—in Brittany, in parts of Normandy, in the beautiful region called Berry, within the huge bend of the Loire—agri-industry also rules. The intensive pig farms of Brittany, which resemble small chemicals factories, generate so much pork that French and European market prices are constantly on the verge of

collapse. They produce so much pig effluent that one third of the water-courses in Brittany are poisonous to drink.

France finds itself waging agricultural/consumer wars on two fronts this autumn. It is fighting alongside its EU partners to resist artificial-hormone-reared beef from the US. It is also fighting against most of its EU partners—and especially Britain—to delay the lifting of the BSE-inspired ban on British beef.

In both cases, the French government, some French farmers and, up to a point, the French press have presented the issues as a straight fight between, on the one hand, traditional farming values and new BSE-awakened consumer anxieties, and, on the other hand, more intensive, more industrial, high-productivity-driven forms of agriculture. It has been presented as a battle between the French creation and appreciation of real food, and *la male bouffe* or *la sale bouffe* (filthy, dangerous, foreign-produced food).

These concerns should not be dismissed. Many people in Britain share the French consumer and farmer anxieties about food quality and safety, BSE, artificial hormones and genetically modified crops. However, the debate in France has been muddled by the country's reluctance, with some noble exceptions, to face up to an awkward fact.

France is not—or not just—a country of 600 different kinds of cheese. It is an agri-industrial superpower, the second largest food exporter in the world (after the US), a country which produces almost as much wheat (37 million tonnes) as Canada and Australia put together. It is also a mass producer of chickens and pork by methods almost as doubtful as those which caused the BSE crisis. The EU is investigating the illegal use of treated effluent in French chicken and pig feed. Although this is not human sewage, it is the liquefied by-product from slaughterhouses.

France is not just fighting external farm wars on two fronts; it is also facing a long-brewing battle between the agri-industrial interests which control 80 per cent of French food output, and the

smaller, traditional producers who own or manage two thirds of French farms.

For 30 years successive French governments have paid lip-service to the France of small farmers while supporting policies in Paris and Brussels which have marginalised them in favour of large farms, high productivity and mass exports. The smaller farmers were the willing street-fighting infantry of the large farm union federation, the FNSEA, even though the FNSEA—dominated by the big cereals producers - pursued the same high-output, export-driven, subsidy- hogging gospel that was shooting the infantry in the back. In 1982 there were 1.5 million farms in France; now there are 700,000, and falling.

In the last couple of years, two things have changed. The socialist-communist- green coalition of Lionel Jospin has abruptly switched furrows in farm policy. To the fury of the big farmers, it has introduced a subsidy tax which confiscates part of the cash they receive from Brussels and redistributes it to small farmers.

Secondly, the latter have been leaving the federation in droves and joining a new, populist, left-leaning, small farmers' organisation, the Confederation Paysanne.

One of the founders of this new group, Jose Bove, an urban former peace and green activist turned sheep farmer, became a French hero in the summer when he was jailed for vandalising a half-built branch of McDonalds. The reason? The farmers were attacking McDonalds as a symbol of the iniquities of globalism, because the US was taxing imports of Roquefort cheese and Dijon mustard in retaliation for the EU ban on American hormone-treated beef.

In short, French farm and rural politics are in violent ferment. The Jospin government has called an agricultural round-table in 10 days' time to try to agree coherent goals for French farm policy. The problem is how to satisfy the diverging demands of the big, export-conscious farmers and the small, free trade-blaming farmers before the world trade round in Seattle later this year. How can

you be against free trade when you are the world's second biggest exporter of food?

Source

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8.

72% Of Family Farms

Don't Earn Enough To Support The Family On Them

By Cara Waters

Small family-owned and managed farms are struggling for survival in the face of corporate and large-scale agriculture.

Research released by the Australian Farm Institute, entitled *Will Corporate Agriculture Swallow The Family Farm?*, found that in Victoria last year, only 28% of family farms were of sufficient scale and profitability to earn enough income to support the families owning them.

Only half of this group was classed as likely to achieve the same success in the future and more than one-third of all family farms relied on adults living on the farm to earn wages elsewhere, reinforcing the stereotype that many farm wives have to work as local doctors, hairdressers and teachers for their families to survive.

Another 39% of farmers earned so little from trying to grow and produce food that their family income was below the median of all Australian households.

AFI chief executive Mick Keogh told SmartCompany that family farms were at a disadvantage as revenue needed to be close to \$500,000 a year for a farming business to have enough scale to be profitable.

“That is the hard reality at the moment; it is too hard to be profitable with low turnovers,” Keogh says.

The figures point to a growing view among policy-makers that corporate farming is inevitably going to grow in the future, and that farm businesses increasingly need to develop the scale and professionalism that is only possible within a well-capitalised structure, such as a corporate farm business.

However, Keogh cautioned the figures also included some farmers who farmed for lifestyle reasons rather than to make an income.

“If you look at farms with under \$100,000 of sale a year, they tend to have in excess of 95% of their net income from off-farm wages,” he says.

“So the farm makes virtually no profit and they exist on off-farm wages.

“In effect they are choosing to be involved in farming for a range of different lifestyle reasons, it could be a vet who works in town and runs a farm on the weekend.”

Keogh says while many family farms are struggling, there are some family farms which are big and very profitable.

“It is not just corporates. There are farm businesses that are very big, they can be owned and operated by a farmer and they can be very big,” he says.

“I think the smaller farms have to take action, whether it is sourcing income off the farm to survive or looking at more specialised production like targeting farmers’ markets, or targeting specific markets like hospitality and finding themselves a business opportunity and surviving.”

Keogh warns there is a “strong disconnect” between the public perception of where food comes from and the reality, with 20% of farmers producing almost 80% of total production.

“While the major retailers and food producers flat out advertise their connection with the average Joe farmer, a bloke on a tractor with his hat on, that’s not the reality. The reality now is much larger scale farm businesses,” he says.

Jock Laurie, president of the National Farmers Federation, says the family farm still has an important role to play in Australia but there is no doubt there is a lot of strength in the Australian corporate sector.

“Family farms are very strong and resilient businesses. They keep plodding along; whether they are profitable or not is another thing,” he says.

“The farmers work long hours and don’t necessarily work for the money others get paid and so, in many ways, they are very efficient.”

Laurie says the drought and changing family structures are both having an impact on family farms.

“Intergenerational change is an issue as generally what happens is property sizes get smaller, but when family businesses get scale they can do pretty well,” says Laurie.

“It’s a sign of the times. Many family farms have one or two people to work off the farm to generate income.”

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9.

Colonization of Agriculture

Under The Old Colonialist Pretext Of Helping The Poor

How Global Agri-Business Destroys Farming

A new review carried out by the organization GRAIN reveals that small farms produce most of the world's food. However, they are currently squeezed onto less than a quarter of the world's farmland. The world is fast losing farms and farmers through the concentration of land into the hands of the rich and powerful. If we do nothing to reverse this trend, the world will lose its capacity to feed itself.

This claim is based on the findings of the report, 'Hungry for Land' ⁽¹⁾, which states that small farmers are often much more productive than large corporate farms. For example, if all of Kenya's farms matched the output of its small farms, the nation's agricultural productivity would double. In Central America, it would nearly triple. In Russia, it would be six fold.

Marina Dos Santos of the Coordination of the Brazilian Landless Movement (MST) states that the peasantry is currently being criminalised, taken to court and even made to disappear when it comes to the struggle for land. Small farmers are constantly exposed to systematic expulsion from their land, which not only affects peasants but also many other small farmers and indigenous peoples who are the target of foreign corporations. Dos Santos says

that small farmers want land in order to live and to produce as these are their basic rights against land-grabbing corporations who seek only speculation and profit.

If the current processes of land concentration continue, she argues that then no matter how hard-working, efficient and productive they are, small farmers will simply not be able to carry on.

While it is often stated in official circles that the planet needs to produce more food to feed the growing population, the report suggests that more food could be produced almost immediately if small farmers had access to more land and could work in a supportive policy environment, rather than under the siege conditions they are facing today.

Elizabeth Mpofu, General Coordinator of La Via Campesina, says that the vast majority of farms in Zimbabwe belong to smallholders and their average farm size has increased as a result of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Small farmers in the country now produce over 90% of diverse agricultural food crops, while they only provided 60-70% of the national food before land redistribution. Mpofu says that we need to urgently put land back in the hands of small farmers and make the struggle for genuine and comprehensive agrarian reform central to the fight for better food systems.

The world is fast losing farms and farmers in many places, while big farms are getting bigger. One major reason why small farms are disappearing is the rapid growth of monoculture plantations. In the last 50 years, 140 million hectares – well more than all the farmland in China – have been taken over for soybean, oil palm, rapeseed and sugar cane alone. By definition, peasant agriculture prioritises food production for local and national markets as well as for farmers' own families. Big agritech corporations take over scarce fertile land and

Forget the propaganda from big agritech, the key to reducing poverty and ensuring food security lies with small farmers

~ Colin Todhunter

prioritise commodities or export crops for profit and markets far away that cater for the needs of the affluent.

This process impoverishes local communities and brings about food insecurity⁽²⁾. GRAIN's Camila Montecinos concludes that the concentration of fertile agricultural land in fewer and fewer hands is directly related to the increasing number of people going hungry every day.

GRAIN's report relies on statistics that show small farms are technically more productive than big farms. While industrial farms have enormous power, influence and resources, small farms almost everywhere outperform big farms in terms of productivity.

The review comes on the heels of a September 2013 report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development⁽³⁾, which also stated that farming in rich and poor nations alike should shift from monoculture towards greater varieties of crops, reduced use of fertilisers and other inputs, greater support for small-scale farmers and more locally focused production and consumption of food. More than 60 international experts contributed to the report.

The report stated that monoculture and industrial farming methods are not providing sufficient affordable food where it is needed. The system actually causes food poverty, not addresses it.

Numerous high level reports from the UN and development agencies have argued in favour of small farmers and agro-ecology, but this has not been translated into real action on the ground where peasant farmers increasingly face marginalisation and oppression.

Despite what these reports conclude and the evidence that indicates small farms have better productivity, India for example is abandoning the small farmer in favour of foreign agritech corporations. This is resulting in a forced removal of farmers from the land and the destruction of traditional communities on a massive scale. In 2008, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram envisaged at least 600 million people from rural India eventually shifting to cities, leaving just 15% left to work the land or associated with the rural economy⁽⁴⁾.

This process is so severe, so shocking even, that environmentalist Vandana Shiva has called what is happening constitutes the biggest forced removal of people from their lands in history. According to a 2009 report commissioned by the rural development ministry and chaired by the then minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, in certain areas of India it also involves the biggest illegal land grab since Columbus⁽⁵⁾.

The trend in India, as elsewhere, is being driven by big agritech that is working with the government to ensure a shift away from diversified agriculture that guarantees balanced local food production, the protection of people's livelihoods and environmental sustainability. Policies that allow for the protection of local seeds and farmers' rights to use them are paramount. Yet small farmers are being displaced and are struggling to preserve their indigenous seeds and traditional knowledge of farming systems. By patenting and monopolising seeds, big agritech is preventing farmers from saving and exchanging their own seeds that were developed over thousands of years. Agritech corporations are being allowed to shape government policy by being granted a strategic role in trade negotiations⁽⁶⁾. They are consequently setting the policy/knowledge framework by being allowed to fund and determine the nature of research carried out in public universities and institutes⁽⁷⁾.

Throughout the world, we continue to witness land grabs for non-food crops, industry or real estate interests, monocultures for export and the hijack of agriculture by big corporations backed by their co-opted scientists, media outlets and politicians⁽⁸⁾ who continue to propagate the myth that they have the answer to global hunger and poverty. Despite mounting evidence that they do not, they continue to colonise agriculture all over the world – look no further than Africa where the Gates Foundation, Monsanto and Western governments are placing it in the hands of big agritech for private profit under the old colonialist pretext of helping the poor⁽⁹⁾.

A shift from corporate-controlled, profit oriented commodity agriculture is required and involves moving towards more biodiverse

organic systems that place emphasis on small farmers, local economies and food sovereignty.

Rather than addressing poverty, food inequality and hunger, big agritech corporations merely serve to perpetuate these problems and exploitative global power relations by sucking power, wealth and food from poorer countries, small farmers and local communities to satisfy themselves, their shareholders and affluent urban consumers in foreign lands. As long as petro-chemical corporate agriculture predominates and is expanded throughout the planet, the less food security and local/national food sovereignty we will see – and the more wars fuelled by oil interests, conflicts over land and water and damage to the environment we shall witness.

By Colin Todhunter, Global Research, 2014

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10.

If Our Small Farms Are Allowed To Wither The Whole Nation Will Suffer

by Patrick Holden

Conservationists tell us about the extinction of wildlife, but there is another more insidious extinction going on right now – the disappearance of traditional dairy farmers, who have supplied our nation’s milk for generations. As each demoralised farmer quietly gives up and goes out of milk – and there are nearly two a day being forced out right now – a precious and irreplaceable part of our national heritage is lost forever.

These farmers form the backbone of the rural economy. By their very existence, they play a crucial role in maintaining our countryside. They are the stewards of our landscapes, field boundaries and hedgerows, the guardians of the fertility of the soils, the pastures, biodiversity and the ancient green lanes for herding the cattle in to be milked. As each farm disappears, the skills of the stockmen are also lost and will be difficult or impossible to replace. These are all priceless elements of our natural and cultural capital.

The reason I feel particularly passionate about this is because I am a dairy farmer myself. I was milking my dairy herd of 80 cows in West Wales on Thursday afternoon when I got a call asking me to write this piece. I am in a lucky position compared with most milk producers, since although we have been receiving less than the cost

of production for our milk for a number of years, we have managed to stay in business, partly because we benefit from a modest premium for being organic and also because we are now adding value to our milk by making cheese. I also have a day job, the salary from which goes to shore up any losses.

However, for the majority of UK family dairy farmers, who do not enjoy these privileges, the relentless decline in milk prices has finally driven them into taking direct action, albeit in a less militant fashion than their French counterparts. In doing so, they may not realise that, ironically, they are up against a deeply entrenched orthodoxy in British food and farming circles, shared even by those who claim to represent them. The orthodoxy goes something like this: in an industrial age where reductionist science and global markets rule, we must accept that in farming and food production, as with every other industry, we will be at the mercy of global trade, fluctuating market prices and cycles of boom and bust.

In this brave new world, only the fittest will survive; modern dairy farmers must adapt by becoming ever more efficient and becoming larger and more intensive in order to survive in a competitive global market. The impressive list of individuals and organisations that sign up to this orthodoxy includes the prime minister, the secretary of state for agriculture, the president of the National Farmers' Union and the bosses of most large food retailers. If pressed to comment on this cultural cleansing by price of a whole industry, they will wring their hands and say how sad it is, but admit there is not much they can do about it. Well, that may be true, but only so long as you subscribe to the mantra of unfettered global trade in food.

It is a massive mistake for governments to treat farming like other manufacturing industries. By doing so, they are not only making life impossible for small farmers, but also doing this country a grave disservice. Their stance is based on the entirely false premise that the present food system is operating in the public interest. In fact, the exact opposite is true. In the seven decades since the Second World War, the claimed increases in efficiency of food production

have been achieved almost entirely at the expense of diminished natural and social capital.

The enlargement of average farm size, the abandonment of mixed farming in favour of continuous commodity production using chemical fertilisers and pesticides, the reduction of the agricultural workforce (ironically partially replaced by economic migrants) may have increased yields and lowered food prices, but at enormous cost, in terms of lost soil fertility, biodiversity, jobs, skills, social and cultural capital and diminished food security and negative impact on public health. Incredibly, none of these losses has been priced, as a result of which we are living in a world of dishonest food pricing, where the polluter doesn't pay and, conversely, the farmers who are delivering public and environmental benefits are not rewarded financially for so doing. That is why we are witnessing the demise of the family dairy farm.

For me, it seems glaringly obvious that agriculture should not and must not be treated like any other industry. Although the human tragedy for a displaced farming family might arguably be no greater than that of a displaced miner, shipbuilder or steel worker, the long-term impact and hidden costs for society of losing the network of family farms where cows graze in a traditional way, and replacing these with a much smaller number of mega-dairy farms

If your energy is all engaged in manufacturing tires and wheels, then who will go to the... Actually I have seen in your country. Now the farmers' son, they do not like to remain in the farm. They go in the city. I have seen it. The farmers' son, they do not like to take up the profession of his father. So gradually farming will be reduced, and the city residents, they are satisfied if they can eat meat. And the farmer means keeping the, raising the cattle and killing them, send to the city, and they will think that "We are eating. What is the use of going to..." But these rascals have no brain that "If there is no food grain or grass, how these cattle will be...?" Actually it is happening. They are eating swiftly.

*~ Srila Prabhupada (Room Conversation with Dr. Theodore Kneupper
— November 6, 1976, Vrndavana)*

with ultra high-yielding cows living on concrete, will be orders of magnitude higher.

The asset-stripping operation and the relentless replacement of farms with factories has in large part been made possible by a brilliant sleight of hand, namely the failure to put an economic value on the damaging impact of intensive farming. An auditor might even declare it to be false accounting, but unfortunately most of us are failing to make the connection between these enormous hidden costs and the way in which we are already paying for them through general taxation, water charges or NHS bills. We need a radical new approach. The government's 25-year plan for farming must serve the widest interests of the nation, not those of the largest farmers who expect to survive and benefit from much higher prices in future. For a start, let's insist on the introduction of a fair trade milk label for family dairy farmers and include the requirement that the herd size be no larger than their capacity to walk to grass twice a day during the grazing season. This would reverse the trend towards ever-larger herds.

I have to stop writing now and get my herd in to be milked. It is hard work, but I often feel most alive and have my best thoughts during milking, which is perhaps no accident, since the human body was designed to work physically, something we have forgotten in a 21st-century world of offices and gymnasiums.

Tomorrow, our milk will be made into cheese, cheese from milk with a good story behind it, the kind of story that I was told during my London childhood and which many parents still read to their children at bedtime. Such stories inspired me to take up farming. If we let these stories become fiction, we will not only be compromising our own future, we will also be denying the next generation the chance to experience truly meaningful work on the land.

Farmers Are A Dying Breed

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11.

The Suicide Economy of

Corporate Globalisation

By Vandana Shiva

The Indian peasantry, the largest body of surviving small farmers in the world, today faces a crisis of extinction.

Two thirds of India makes its living from the land. The earth is the most generous employer in this country of a billion, that has farmed this land for more than 5000 years.

However, as farming is delinked from the earth, the soil, the biodiversity, and the climate, and linked to global corporations and global markets, and the generosity of the earth is replaced by the greed of corporations, the viability of small farmers and small farms is destroyed. Farmers suicides are the most tragic and dramatic symptom of the crisis of survival faced by Indian peasants.

1997 witnessed the first emergence of farm suicides in India. A rapid increase in indebtedness, was at the root of farmers taking their lives. Debt is a reflection of a negative economy, a loosing economy. Two factors have transformed the positive economy of agriculture into a negative economy for peasants - the rising costs of production and the falling prices of farm commodities. Both these factors are rooted in the policies of trade liberalization and corporate globalisation.

In 1998, the World Bank's structural adjustment policies forced India to open up its seed sector to global corporations like Cargill, Monsanto, and Syngenta. The global corporations changed the input economy overnight. Farm saved seeds were replaced by corporate seeds which needed fertilizers and pesticides and could not be saved.

As seed saving is prevented by patents as well as by the engineering of seeds with non-renewable traits, seed has to be bought for every planting season by poor peasants. A free resource available on farms became a commodity which farmers were forced to buy every year. This increases poverty and leads to indebtedness.

As debts increase and become unpayable, farmers are compelled to sell kidneys or even commit suicide. More than 2,50,000 peasants in India have taken their lives since 1997 when the practice of seed saving was transformed under globalisation pressures and multinational seed corporations started to take control of the seed supply. Seed saving gives farmers life. Seed monopolies rob farmers of life.

The shift from farm saved seed to corporate monopolies of the seed supply is also a shift from biodiversity to monocultures in agriculture. The District of Warangal in Andhra Pradesh used to grow diverse legumes, millets, and oilseeds. Seed monopolies created crop monocultures of cotton, leading to disappearance of millions of products of nature's evolution and farmer's breeding.

Monocultures and uniformity increase the risks of crop failure as diverse seeds adapted to diverse ecosystems are replaced by rushed introduction of unadapted and often untested seeds into the market. When Monsanto first introduced Bt Cotton in India in 2002, the farmers lost Rs. 1 billion due to crop failure. Instead of 1,500 Kg / acre as promised by the company, the harvest was as low as 200 kg. Instead of increased incomes of Rs. 10,000 / acre, farmers ran into losses of Rs. 6400 / acre.

In the state of Bihar, when farm saved corn seed was displaced by Monsanto's hybrid corn, the entire crop failed creating Rs. 4 billion

losses and increased poverty for already desperately poor farmers. Poor peasants of the South cannot survive seed monopolies.

And the crisis of suicides shows how the survival of small farmers is incompatible with the seed monopolies of global corporations.

The second pressure Indian farmers are facing is the dramatic fall in prices of farm produce as a result of free trade policies of the WTO. The WTO rules for trade in agriculture are essentially rules for dumping. They have allowed an increase in agribusiness subsidies while preventing countries from protecting their farmers from the dumping of artificially cheap produce.

High subsidies of \$400 billion combined with forced removal of import restrictions is a ready-made recipe for farmer suicides. Global prices have dropped from \$216 / ton in 1995 to \$133 / ton in 2001 for wheat, \$98.2 / ton in 1995 to \$49.1 / ton in 2001 for cotton, \$273 / ton in 1995 to \$178 / ton for soyabean. This reduction to half the price is not due to a doubling in productivity but due to an increase in subsidies and an increase in market monopolies controlled by a handful of agribusiness corporations.

Thus the U.S government pays \$193 per ton to US Soya farmers, which artificially lowers the price of soya. Due to removal of Quantitative Restrictions and lowering of tariffs, cheap soya has destroyed the livelihoods of coconut growers, mustard farmers, producers of sesame, groundnut and soya.

Similarly, 25000 cotton producers in the U.S are given a subsidy of \$4 billion annually. This has brought cotton prices down artificially, allowing the U.S to capture world markets which were earlier accessible to poor African countries such as Burkina, Faso, Benin, Mali. The subsidy of \$230 per acre in the U.S is genocidal for the African farmers. African cotton farmers are losing \$250 million every year. That is why small African countries walked out of the Cancun negotiations, leading to the collapse of the WTO ministerial.

The rigged prices of globally traded agriculture commodities are stealing incomes from poor peasants of the south. Analysis

carried out by the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology shows that due to falling farm prices, Indian peasants are losing \$ 26 billion or Rs. 1.2 trillion annually. This is a burden their poverty does not allow them to bear. Hence the epidemic of farmer suicides.

India was among the countries that questioned the unfair rules of WTO in agriculture and led the G-22 alliance along with Brazil and China. India with other southern countries addressed the need to safeguard the livelihoods of small farmers from the injustice of free trade based on high subsidies and dumping. Yet at the domestic level, official agencies in India are in deep denial of any links between free trade and farmers survival.

An example of this denial is a Government of Karnataka report on "Farmers suicide in Karnataka - A scientific analysis". The report while claiming to be "scientific", makes unscientific reductionist claims that the farm suicides have only psychological causes, not economic ones, and identifies alcoholism as the root cause of suicides. Therefore, instead of proposing changes in agricultural policy, the report recommends that farmers be required to boost up their self respect (swabhiman) and self-reliance (swavalambam).

And ironically, its recommendations for farmer self-reliance are changes in the Karnataka Land Reforms Act to allow larger land holdings and leasing. These are steps towards the further decimation of small farmers who have been protected by land "ceilings" (an upper limit on land ownership) and policies that only allow peasants and agriculturalists to own agricultural land (part of the land to the tiller policies of the Devraj Urs government).

While the "expert committee" report identified "alcoholism" as the main cause for suicides, the figures of this "scientific" claim are inconsistent and do not reflect the survey. On page 10, the report states in one place that 68 percent of the suicide victims were alcoholics. Five lines later it states that 17 percent were "alcohol and illicit drinkers".

It also states that the majority of suicide victims were small and marginal farmers and the majority had high levels of indebtedness. Yet debt is not identified as a factor leading to suicide. On page 32 of the report it is stated that of the 105 cases studied among the 3544 suicides which had occurred in five districts during 2000 - 2001, 93 had debts, 54 percent had borrowed from private sources and money lenders.

More than 90% of suicide victims were in debt. Yet a table on page 63 has mysteriously reduced debt as a reason for suicide to 2.6%, and equally mysteriously, "suicide victims having a bad habit" has emerged as the primary cause of farmers suicides.

The government is desperate to delink farm suicides from economic processes linked to globalisation such as rise in indebtedness and increased frequency of crop failure due to higher ecological vulnerability arising from climate change and drought and higher economic risks due to introduction of untested, unadopted seeds.

This is evident in recommendation no. 4.3.24.3 "The government should launch prosecution on the responsible persons involved in misleading the public and government by providing false information about farmers suicide as crop failure or indebtedness" (page 113 of expert committee report).

In U.S.A. also, there are so much land vacant. They're not utilizing... Whatever production, they... Sometimes they throw it in the water. And, I, I have heard in this Geneva, that there was excess of milk production. Therefore they want to kill twenty-thousand cows to reduce the milk production. This is their brain. Actually, there is no brain. So they, for brain, they should come to these sastras. They should take guidance. Produce. Produce, utilize. But they'll not utilize. Rather, the limited number of people... At least in India, all the villagers, they have been drawn in the city for producing bolts and nuts. Now eat bolts and nuts.

~Srla Prabhupada (Lecture at World Health Organization, Geneva, June 6, 1974)

However, farmers suicides cannot be delinked from indebtedness and the economic distress small farmers are facing. Indebtedness is not new. Farmers have always organised for freedom from debt.

In the nineteenth century the so call "Deccan Riots" were farmers protests against the debt trap into which they had been pushed to supply cheap cotton to the textile mills in Britain. In the eighties they formed peasant organisations to fight for debt relief from public debt linked to Green Revolution inputs.

However, under globalisation, the farmer is loosing her / his social, cultural, economic identity as a producer. A farmer is now a "consumer" of costly seeds and costly chemicals sold by powerful global corporations through powerful landlords and money lenders locally.

This combination is leading to corporate feudalism, the most inhumane, brutal and exploitative convergence of global corporate capitalism and local feudalism, in the face of which the farmer as an individual victim feels helpless. The bureaucratic and technocratic systems of the state are coming to the rescue of the dominant economic interests by blaming the victim.

It is necessary to stop this war against small farmers. It is necessary to re-write the rules of trade in agriculture. It is necessary to change our paradigms of food production. Feeding humanity should not depend on the extinction of farmers and extinction of species. Another agriculture is possible and necessary - an agriculture that protects farmers livelihoods, the earth and its biodiversity and public health.

Source

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Farmers Are A Dying Breed

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12.

Rush To Buy Up Farmland All Around The World

The Overwhelming Majority Of Farming Families Today Have Less Than Two Hectares To Cultivate

And That Share Is Shrinking

The world is increasingly hungry because small farmers are losing access to farmland. Small farmers produce most of the world's food but are now squeezed onto less than 25 percent of the world's farmland, a new report reveals. Corporate and commercial farms, big biofuel operations and land speculators are pushing millions off their land.

“Small farmers are losing land at a tremendous rate. It's a land reform movement in reverse,” says Henk Hobbelink, coordinator of GRAIN, an international non-profit organisation that works to support small farmers, which released the report Thursday.

The overwhelming majority of farming families today have less than two hectares to cultivate and that share is shrinking. If we do nothing to reverse this trend, the world will lose its capacity to feed itself.

GRAIN's Hungry for Land report provides new data to show small farms occupy less than 25 percent of the world's farmland today – just 17 percent, if farms in India and China are excluded. Despite this they still provide most of the world's food because they are often much more productive than large corporate farms.

If all farms in Central America matched the output of small farms the region would produce three times as much food, the report says.

“Every day we are exposed to the systematic expulsion from our land,” says Marina Dos Santos of the National Coordination of the Brazilian Landless Movement.

“We want the land in order to live and to produce, as these are our basic rights against land-grabbing corporations who seek only speculation and profit,” she says.

With the launch of 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and many agriculture experts acknowledged how important small farms are for feeding the world. However, they wildly overestimate how much land is being farmed by smallholders.

“I couldn’t believe it when the FAO says family farms manage 70 percent of all farmland. This contradicts all of our experience with small farms around the world,” says Hobbelink.

Researchers at GRAIN dug into mountains of data from every country as well as FAO statistics and information to find out who owns what. In many countries farmland ownership is very difficult to determine and there are varying definitions of what is a small farm or a family farm. Some giant corporate farms are family-owned.

“Our report outlines how we did our analysis. We checked our findings with other sources and this is closer to reality than the FAO number,” he says.

“It’s an important report and corresponds to our own research,” agreed Frederic Mousseau, policy director of the Oakland Institute, a U.S.-based policy think tank focused on global land and food issues.

Small farmers can feed the future nine billion people on the planet if they have the land, Mousseau told IPS.

“The current global food system is set up to provide fuels and food for western markets,” he says. “It’s not about feeding the most people.”

Zimbabwe was harshly criticised by the international community for redistributing farmland to smallholders in 2000. They now

produce over 90 percent of the nation's food crops, compared to 60 to 70 percent before 2000.

“More [Zimbabwean] women own land in their own right, which is key to food sovereignty everywhere”, says Elizabeth Mpofu, general coordinator of La Via Campesina.

Since the 2008-2009 food crisis there has been a rush to buy up farmland all around the world by Wall St and financial institutions.

In developing countries an estimated 250 million hectares worth of land investment, also known as ‘land grabbing’, has occurred between 2000 and 2011. The same thing is happening in the U.S.

In many areas the price of land has shot upwards pushing many farmers off their land. “U.S. farms are increasingly run by corporate farm managers who hire farm workers not farmers,” he says.

Investors see farmland as a safe and secure investment, especially in the U.S., with its multi-billion dollar farm subsidies. As a result, an estimated 10 billion dollars in capital is already looking for access to U.S. farmland, according to the Oakland Institute's *Down on the Farm* report.

Over the next 20 years, 400 million acres, or nearly half of all U.S. farmland, is set to change hands as the current generation retires. Institutional investors are eagerly waiting to buy, the report says.

That will be bad news for food production, farmland, the environment and the economy. The U.S. and far too many other countries have bought into agribusiness propaganda and financial lobbying that commercial, large-scale agriculture is the way to feed the world, create jobs and grow the economy.

Instead government policies need to be aligned to favour small farmers, not corporations. The hard evidence from many studies shows that small farmers practicing agroecological farming produce more food, protect soil and water, have far lower CO2 emissions and provide better livelihoods.

Small farmers give each hectare of their precious land far more attention and care.

Farmers Are A Dying Breed

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13.

Kissinger's 1974 Plan For Food Control Genocide

On Dec. 10, 1974, the U.S. National Security Council under Henry Kissinger completed a classified 200-page study, "National Security Study Memorandum 200: Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests."

The study falsely claimed that population growth in the so-called Lesser Developed Countries (LDCs) was a grave threat to U.S. national security. Adopted as official policy in November 1975 by President Gerald Ford, NSSM 200 outlined a covert plan to reduce population growth in those countries through birth control, and also, implicitly, war and famine.

Brent Scowcroft, who had by then replaced Kissinger as national security adviser (the same post Scowcroft was to hold in the Bush administration), was put in charge of implementing the plan. CIA Director George Bush was ordered to assist Scowcroft, as were the secretaries of state, treasury, defense, and agriculture.

The bogus arguments that Kissinger advanced were not original. One of his major sources was the Royal Commission on Population, which King George VI had created in 1944, "to consider what measures should be taken in the national interest to influence the future trend of population."

The commission found that Britain was gravely threatened by population growth in its colonies, since, "a populous country has decided advantages over a sparsely-populated one for industrial production."

The combined effects of increasing population and industrialization in its colonies, it warned, "might be decisive in its effects on the prestige and influence of the West," especially effecting "military strength and security."

"NSSM 200 similarly concluded that the United States was threatened by population growth in the former colonial sector.

It paid special attention to 13 "key countries" in which the United States had a "special political and strategic interest":

- India
- Bangladesh
- Pakistan
- Indonesia
- Thailand
- Philippines
- Turkey
- Nigeria
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Mexico
- Brazil
- Colombia

It claimed that population growth in those states was especially worrisome, since it would quickly increase their relative political, economic, and military strength.

For example, Nigeria:

"Already the most populous country on the continent, with an estimated 55 million people in 1970, Nigeria's population by the end of this century is projected to number 135 million. This suggests a growing political and strategic role for Nigeria, at least in Africa."

Or Brazil:

"Brazil clearly dominated the continent demographically." The study warned of a "growing power status for Brazil in Latin America and on the world scene over the next 25 years."

Food As A Weapon

There were several measures that Kissinger advocated to deal with this alleged threat, most prominently, birth control and related population-reduction programs.

He also warned that "population growth rates are likely to increase appreciably before they begin to decline," even if such measures were adopted.

A second measure was curtailing food supplies to targeted states, in part to force compliance with birth control policies:

"There is also some established precedent for taking account of family planning performance in appraisal of assistance requirements by AID [U.S. Agency for International Development] and consultative groups. Since population growth is a major determinant of increases in food demand, allocation of scarce PL 480 resources should take account of what steps a country is taking in population control as well as food production. In these sensitive relations, however, it is important in style as well as substance to avoid the appearance of coercion."

"Mandatory programs may be needed and we should be considering these possibilities now," the document continued, adding, "Would food be considered an instrument of national power? ... Is the U.S. prepared to accept food rationing to help people who can't/won't control their population growth?"

Kissinger also predicted a return of famines that could make exclusive reliance on birth control programs unnecessary.

"Rapid population growth and lagging food production in developing countries, together with the sharp deterioration in the global food situation in 1972 and 1973, have raised serious concerns about the ability of the world to feed itself adequately over the next quarter of century and beyond," he reported.

The cause of that coming food deficit was not natural, however, but was a result of western financial policy:

"Capital investments for irrigation and infrastructure and the organization requirements for continuous improvements in agricultural yields may be beyond the financial and administrative capacity of many LDCs. For some of the areas under heaviest population pressure, there is little or no prospect for foreign exchange earnings to cover constantly increasingly imports of food."

"It is questionable," Kissinger gloated, "whether aid donor countries will be prepared to provide the sort of massive food aid called for by the import projections on a long-term continuing basis." Consequently, "large-scale famine of a kind not experienced for several decades - a kind the world thought had been permanently banished," was foreseeable - famine, which has indeed come to pass.

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14.

The New Livestock Policy

A Policy Of Ecocide Of Indigenous Cattle Breeds And A Policy Of Genocide For India's Small Farmers

By Dr. Vandana Shiva

The Livestock Policy Perspective 1995-2020 developed by the Government of India and the Swiss Development Cooperation is a policy for the destruction of India's farm animal biodiversity and a threat to the survival of small farmers who depend on a diversity based decentralised livestock economy.

India's livestock legacy has four unique dimensions :-

- 1. Cows and bulls are treated as sacred and hence are protected.
- 2. The conservation of farm animals is essential for the sustainability of agriculture and the survival of small farmers.
- 3. The conservation and utilisation of farm animals is based on diversity - both diversity of breeds as well as diversity of function of farm animals
- 4. The sustenance of cattle comes from diverse sources of fodder and feed - agricultural by products such as straw and oil cake, fodder trees planted on farms and common property resources such as village pastures and forests.

Thus, the indigenous approach to livestock is based on diversity, decentralisation, sustainability and equity. Our cattle are not just milk machines or meat machines. They are sentient beings who serve human communities through their multidimensional role in agriculture.

On the other hand, externally driven projects, programmes and policies emerging from industrial societies treat cattle as one-dimensional machines which are maintained with capital intensive and environmentally intensive inputs and which provide a single output - either milk or meat. Policies based on this approach are characterized by monocultures, concentration and centralisation, non-sustainability and inequality.

The new livestock policy has been framed in this paradigm of machines and monocultures. It is a serious attack on principles of diversity, decentralisation, sustainability and equity in the livestock sector.

The Cattle Economy: The Provider For The Poor

The policy document recognizes that the livestock economy is the economy of the poorest households in India.

As stated in Section 2.3: About 630 million people reside in rural areas (74% of total population) of which 40% have incomes which place them below the poverty line. Some 70 million households (73% of total rural households) keep and own livestock of one kind or another and derive on average 20% of their income from this source. Small and marginal farmers and landless labourers constitute almost two-thirds of these livestock keeping households. The importance of the livestock sector can therefore not be measured purely in terms of its contribution to GDP but it plays a very crucial role in generating income and employment for the weaker sections of the economy. Rapid growth of the livestock sector can be a deciding factor in the efforts at improving nutrition and relieving poverty. Women provide nearly 90% of all labour for livestock management.

However, all the analysis in the policy is totally insensitive to the systems which allow cattle to serve the needs of the poorest. As a result the recommendations are a direct assault on this survival base of the poor.

An Assault on the Culture of Conservation.

The livestock policy paper is disrespectful to the Indian culture of reverence for farm animals. These cultural beliefs are viewed as block to promoting meat production. At a time when meat consumption is going down in western countries themselves, India's livestock policy is trying to convert a predominantly vegetarian society into a beef eating culture. In the U.S. beef consumption per capita has declined from 88.9 pounds in 1976 to 63.9 pounds in 1990. Cultural attitudes have been the most significant reason for maintaining vegetarian diets for the large majority in India. The livestock policy would like to undermine these conservation policies to promote a meat culture.

As stated in Section 2.10 on Meat Production: The beef production in India is purely an adjunct to milk and draught power production. The animals slaughtered are the old and the infirm and the sterile and are in all cases malnourished. There is no organized marketing and no grading system and beef prices are at a level which makes feeding uneconomic. There is no instance of feedlots or even individual animals being raised for meat. Religious sentiments (particularly in the Northern and Western parts of India) against cattle slaughter seem to spill over also on buffaloes and prevent the utilization of a large number of surplus male calves.

The policy then recommends government interventions to stimulate meat production even though this will totally undermine the basis of sustainable agriculture. (Section 3.10)

Undermining Sustainability Of Agriculture.

The economics of meat exports is totally flawed in a diversity based culture of animal husbandry and farming. Two thirds and more of the power requirements of Indian villages are met by the 80 million work animals. Indian cattle excrete 700 million tons of recoverable manure. Half of which is used as fuel, saving 27 millions of kerosene, 35 million tons of coal or 68 million tons of wood. The remaining half is used as fertiliser.

As Maneka Gandhi has shown in the case of one export slaughter house, the value of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium provided annually by living cattle is fifty times more than the animal earnings from meat exports, which at current rates of slaughter will wipe out Indian farm animals in 10-15 years. If animals are allowed to live, we will get 19,18,562 tonnes of farmyard manure with the help of their dung and urine.

The livestock policy has nothing to say on the role of animals in the maintenance of sustainability in agriculture. In fact, the livestock policy if implemented would convert cow dung from a source of fertility into a major source of pollution since intensive factory farming of cattle for beef leads to concentration of organic waste from livestock in one place. Since such intensive production is not integrated and cannot be integrated with agriculture as in the case of small farms with decentralised livestock economies, the animal waste turns into a pollutant. Nitrogen from cattle waste is converted into Ammonia and Nitrates which leach into and pollute the surface and ground water.

A feedlot of 10,000 cattle produces as much waste as a city of 110,000 people. This is the reason the Netherlands has been able to export its toxic cow dung to India and is unable to reintegrate this animal waste into its own agricultural systems. Cow dung is a fertilizer only in small scale integrated farming systems. In large scale, concentrated and specialised factory farming systems, this wealth is converted into a hazardous waste. Further, since intensive factory farming of cattle goes hand in hand with intensive feeding and feed production which in turn requires heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides, the cattle waste from factory farms is very heavily contaminated with chemicals.

Animal Energy.

While in decentralised small scale animal husbandry, cow dung is the most significant gift of the cow to sustainable agriculture, there is total neglect of the contribution of cattle to renewal of soil

fertility in the livestock policy. While reference is made to draught power, it is only with the objective of wiping out this source of sustainable energy production, without recognising that if animals were replaced by tractors in India we would have to spend more than a thousand million US dollars annually on fossil fuels, worsening our debt crisis and our balance of payment. In total indifference to the huge economic costs to both farmers and the country generated by substituting animal energy by fossil fuel run mechanical energy, the livestock policy blindly proposes such a shift.

As Section 2.4 on Drought Power: The number of work animals continued to increase through 1977 but has since fallen by about 10 million to a level of 70 million in 1987 of which 9% are buffaloes. To ensure replacement every sixth year one needs about 0.67 breedable cows per bullock. The bullocks have been largely replaced by mechanical means in transport and irrigation and are now almost exclusively u@ for land preparation. How much of the gross cropped area (180 m ha) that is cultivated by animal power is uncertain (an estimate of 60 m ha is given in a recent WB report) but it is clear that the bullocks may only be utilized for a short period of the year (at most 100 days). Since bullocks generally are not put out to grazing except possibly during the slack season, feeding them and the necessary replacement stock imposes a major strain. Crossbreds are generally not appreciated as bullocks. Although there are opportunities to introduce improved bullock genes in F2 and subsequent crosses these are seldom utilized. In larger herds one may use some cows for crossbreeding while others are used for bullock (and marginal milk) production. In smaller herds one can however not separately pursue both the power and the dairy objective. The policy of upgrading bullocks and introducing improved implements has met with limited success (some implements like the seeder has been introduced). Where the field sizes, topography etc. allow the farmer has the choice between keeping his own bullocks (and the stock needed for their replacement), disposing of the bullocks and either hire power for cultivation (animal or tractor)

with the consequent risk that the timeliness of operations will suffer, or acquiring a tractor and offer its service for transport and cultivation. We have only limited material that illustrates the relative attractiveness of these options for different farm sizes with due consideration to the importance of timeliness of land preparation (see however Sharma and Binswanger). The trend is obviously away from animal power.

As stated in Section 5.2 on Interventions: with respect of animal power further adds, if our aim, as suggested, is to accelerate the trend towards mechanization as well as to promote upgrading of bullock power and improvement of implements we will need to consider interventions for this purpose.

In order to accelerate mechanization one may consider providing credit for tractor (incl.equipment) procurement and to make sure (through training programs and subsidy) that the weaker sections get a fair chance to exploit this opportunity. At a time when as a result of the climate change crisis we should be moving away from fossil fuel use to sustainable sources of energy, the livestock policy recommends the reverse.

It also neglects the fact that even in the affluent state of Punjab, farmers are shifting back from tractors to bullocks because the tractors have become too expensive to operate due to rise in fuel prices.

The Flawed One-Dimensional, Linear And Monoculture Logic

The livestock policy is based on a flawed logic of one dimensionality and linearity. One dimensional thinking is based on perceiving cattle as linear and mechanical input-output systems with a single function, single output usually limited to milk or meat. Linearity is displayed in treating these inputs and outputs as linear flows. *On this one dimensional and linear logic, it says that India's 70 million work animals have to be fed and managed over a "365 day feeding year" while they give a "100 day working year". On the basis of this flawed logic it is then stated that these "inefficient" work animals*

can become progressively redundant to the farming sector and cattle population can be reduced to one third of what it is.

This concept of efficiency applied to cattle is totally misplaced. Firstly, for most rural families, animals are part of their extended families and are not mere work machines. If this misplaced logic of efficiency had to be applied to humans, we too should be totally annihilated and replaced by robots because humans are "inefficient" as they have to be looked after in childhood and old age and during ill health, while they "work" only in adult life and during healthy periods. Treating humans and animals as if they were mere machines with an externally defined single function is ethically outrageous and economically flawed.

Secondly, in any case, in India, farm animals are not single output, single function machines. They have many functions only one of which is to provide work energy. Even when work animals are not pulling ploughs or bullock carts they are giving manure, the most significant contribution that cattle make to agriculture. Thirdly, a comparative energy audit of inputs and useful outputs from U.S. cattle and Indian cattle shows that Indian cattle are far more efficient than their counterparts in industrial economies in using energy. They use 29 per cent of organic matter provided to them, and 22 per cent of the energy and 3 per cent of the protein in contrast to 9, 7 and 5 per cent respectively in the intensive cattle industry in the U.S.

Indian cattle provide food in the excess of the edible food consumed, in contrast to the U.S. where 6 times as much edible food is fed to the cattle as is obtained from them.

It is this wasteful and inefficient system of livestock management that the new livestock policy introduced in India in the name of improving "efficiency" of cattle.

Undermining Farm Animal Biodiversity.

The Biodiversity Convention obliges all member states to protect biodiversity. This includes farm animal biodiversity- India's

indigenous livestock policy has been based on a wide diversity of cattle breeds. They are high milk yielders like the Gir, Sindhi, Sahiwal and Deoni. They are dual purpose breeds such as the Haryana, Ongole, Gaolao, Krishna Valley, Tbarparkar, Kankrej. Finally there are specialised draught animals such as Nagori, Bachour, Kenkatha, Malvi, Kherigarh, Hallikar, Amritmohal, Kangayam, Khillari etc.

The livestock policy document totally fails to address the issue of conservation of animal biodiversity even though it has been drafted after the Biodiversity Convention was signed. In fact, by recommending the wiping out of draught power, the policy is indirectly writing a death certificate for indigenous breeds which have been evolved as dual purpose breeds for both dairy and draught power or a specialised draught animals. By a one dimensional focus on dairy and meat alone, and a deliberate destruction of the animal energy economy, the policy promotes the replacement of diverse indigenous breeds by uniform breeds from Europe. One-dimensional thinking thus leads to a monoculture of farm animals bred and maintained through external imported inputs for an export oriented economy.

Aggravating The Fodder Crisis.

The primary reason for decline of cattle is the shortage of fodder. The fodder crisis has three roots - one lies in agriculture policy based on Green Revolution technologies which undermined the sources of fodder from agricultural crops. High Yielding Varieties were bred for grain and led to decline in fodder.

The second source of the fodder crisis lies in aid programmes such as "social forestry" and "farm forestry" projects which promoted the planting of monocultures of non-fodder species such as Eucalyptus, thus aggravating the shortage of fodder.

Finally, the enclosure of the commons has also led to scarcity of grazing lands and pastures. In addition there has been a scarcity of cattle feed both because traditional sources of cattle feed such as oil cakes have declined as a result of the Green Revolution which displaced oil seeds and because new sources such as soya bean cake

are largely exported. The Agricultural Minister recently announced that he wanted a special port set up for the export of soya bean cake.

Industrial countries such as Netherlands use seven times more land than their own in Third World countries for fodder and feed to provide inputs to their intensive factory farming. The livestock policy does recognise the crisis of fodder and feed in India but fails to provide solutions. In fact, by promoting intensive factory farming, it is indirectly proposing a system that will intensify the pressure on land, divert land from food for people to food to animals and further erode the scarce environmental resources of the country.

As Section 2.7 states: The feed and fodder resources are of course shared by all livestock. Lactating cows and bullocks receive preferential treatment while sheep and goats, dry and unproductive animals and backyard poultry to a large extent have to fend for themselves. Agricultural residues are currently estimated to provide 40%, grazing 31%, green fodder (cut and cultivated) 26%, and grain and concentrates (mainly for commercial poultry and high producing cows) 3% of total consumption. Over the last decade the straw grain ratio has deteriorated because of the large scale adoption of high yielding varieties which also produce poorer quality straw.

As Section 2.8 states: The amount of common property grazing land has deteriorated sharply from 78m ha in 1950-51 to 55 m ha in 1988-89 (admittedly very crude estimates) together with the quality of grazing in the remaining areas. This has been at least partly compensated by encroachment into reserved forest areas (67m ha) a large proportion of which (probably more than 50%) now exhibit serious degradation (other factors than grazing may have contributed to this state of affairs).

Cultivated green fodder is estimated at 7 million ha and is gaining in importance (particularly in the NW). The nutritional constraints in dairy production are very real and the conditions under which stall-feeding, concentrate feeding and cultivated fodder become viable options are not very clear.

There is no recommendation in the policy that would improve the natural resource and environmental base for ameliorating the fodder scarcity. Steps in this direction would include:

a) Shift to agricultural crops and crop varieties that produce food for both animals and humans. For example, our seed conservation programme, 'Navadanya' has shown that high fodder yielding varieties are the most popular ones among the farmers.

b) Shift to fodder trees in agroforestry and social forestry programmes.

c) Recover and rejuvenate the commons

d) Stop export of cattle feed.

The policy perspective has no recommendations with respect to (a, b and d) above. With respect to c, it recommends the opposite of what the environment movements have been saying.

As Section 3.4 states:

We are doubtful about the chances of success in relation to the village common (panchayat) lands and would not recommend any major effort to establish management for and to regenerate this resource.

The Government Livestock Policy developed in collaboration with the Swiss Development Corporation is thus the opposite of what an ecologically sound animal husbandry policy should be given the information we now have about the ecological and social externalities of intensive factory farming of animals. Instead of promoting the conservation of indigenous breeds of cattle, the policy prescribes the wiping out of local breeds. Instead of reducing dependence on fossil fuels, the policy recommends replacing ploughs and bullock carts with tractors. Instead of promoting reduction of meat eating it promotes increase of meat production. Instead of recovering the commons it suggests we should let the commons disappear.

This is a prescription for wiping out biodiversity and worsening the climate change crisis. Both the Indian government and the Swiss government are thus acting against their commitments made at the

Earth Summit in Rio, in Agenda 21 as well as in the Biodiversity Convention and the Climate Change Convention.

The official policy needs to be totally revised to reflect people's concern, government obligations and full scientific and ecological knowledge that is available about the environmental and economic costs of large scale, centralised and intensive factory farming.

The People's Ecological Agenda.

For the livestock policy to be ecologically sound and socially just the following elements must be urgently addressed.

1. Protection of native breeds and conservation of animal biodiversity.

2. Strengthening the role of farm animals in sustainable agriculture.

3. Stopping the slaughter of cattle for exports.

4. Stopping the export of oil cake and cattle feed.

5. Taking urgent steps to improve the fodder situation through planting appropriate crop species and trees and by rejuvenating the commons.

6. Preventing the import of environmentally unsound methods of intensive factory farming of animals which degrade and pollute the environment and cause health hazards to consumers.

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15.

Destruction of an ancient way of life, a culture.

An article in *The Nation*, titled “Manufacturing a Food Crisis”, by Walden Bello, explains much of the dynamics of world hunger in today’s world:

The apostles of the free market and the defenders of dumping - the policies they advocate are bringing about a globalized capitalist industrial agriculture. Developing countries are being integrated into a system where export-oriented production of meat and grain is dominated by large industrial farms. The elimination of tariff and nontariff barriers is facilitating a global agricultural supermarket of elite and middle-class consumers.

There is little room for the hundreds of millions of rural and urban poor in this integrated global market. They are confined to giant suburban slums, where they contend with high food prices or to rural reservations, where they are trapped in marginal agricultural activities and increasingly vulnerable to hunger. Indeed, within the same country, famine in the marginalized sector sometimes coexists with prosperity in the globalized sector.

This transformation is a traumatic one for hundreds of millions of people, since *peasant production is not simply an economic activity. It is an ancient way of life, a culture.*

Such is, and has always been, the results of imperialism – war, misery, and the repression of the many, so that a small minority may live in luxury beyond the imagination of most normal people.

Source

Manufacturing a Food Crisis, How “free trade” is destroying Third World agriculture-
-and who’s fighting back.

Walden Bello, The Nation, May 15, 2008

16.

African Famine

A Creation of The World Bank And IMF

By Rania Khalek, September 8, 2011

Lending policies pushed by the World Bank and IMF have transformed a self-sufficient, food-producing Africa into a continent vulnerable to food emergencies and famine.

Famine is spreading like wildfire throughout the horn of Africa. As 12 million people battle hunger, the UN warns that 750,000 people in Somalia face imminent death from starvation over the next four months, in the absence of outside intervention. Over the course of just 90 days, an estimated 29,000 children under the age of five died in Southern Somalia, with another 640,000 children suffering from acute malnourishment.

In the rush to find a culprit to blame for the tragedy unfolding in East Africa, the mainstream news outlets attributed the cause to record droughts, a rise in food prices, biofuel production and land grabs by foreign investors with an added emphasis on the role of the Somali terrorist group Al-Shabaab.

“Why, in a world that produces more than enough food to feed everybody, do so many – one in seven of us – go hungry?” -- Oxfam

Yet these factors alone are not responsible for the famine; instead they have intensified an already dire hunger crisis that has persisted in Sub-Saharan Africa for decades, thanks to lending policies pushed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) that transformed a self-sufficient, food-producing Africa into a continent dependent on imports and food aid, leaving the continent vulnerable to food emergencies and famine.

Since 1981, when these lending policies were first implemented, Oxfam found that the amount of sub-Saharan Africans surviving on less than one dollar a day doubled to 313 million by 2001, which is 46 percent of the population. Since the mid-1980s, the number of food emergencies per year on the continent has tripled.

According to Oxfam International spokesperson Caroline Pearce, the IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programs of the '80s and '90s led to “huge disinvestments in the agricultural sector.” Pearce concludes, “What we’re seeing now in poor agricultural systems partly relates to those kind of policies. In many cases, we’re actually calling for things to be reestablished that were dismantled under structural adjustment programs in the past.”

Yet the impoverished countries of Africa, imperiled by mass starvation, continue to pay for a “free market” agenda, and it’s costing them their lives.

From Food Abundance To Mass Starvation

Walden Bello, reporting for Foreign Policy in Focus, observes that Africa was self-sufficient in food production after declaring independence from its colonial rulers in the 1960s. Yet today, hunger and famine in Africa have “become recurrent phenomena” across the continent.

According to BBC analyst Martin Plaut, Africa was also a food net exporter between 1966 and 1970, with an average of 1.3 million tons of food exported each year. In stark contrast, almost all of today’s African countries are dependent on imports and food aid, a dramatic shift that took less than 40 years to transpire.

Which begs the question: how did an entire continent go from being a net food exporter to a net food importer, from food abundance to mass starvation, in such a short period of time?

In her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Naomi Klein details how global power players use times of crisis and chaos as a pretext for imposing destructive free-market policies that advance the interests of the wealthy. As far back as the 1970s, economists inspired by free-market guru Milton Friedman were inspiring U.S.-backed coups and military juntas to push an unpopular radical free-market agenda onto the unwilling populations of countries like Chile, Brazil and Argentina.

But Klein highlights a significant shift in strategy that took place in the mid-1980s, when economists recognized that a financial crisis “simulates the effects of a military war—spreading fear and confusion, creating refugees and causing large loss of life” -- the same shock-inducing conditions that left societies ripe for disaster capitalism.

Throughout the '60s and '70s, Western financial institutions went on a lending spree at extremely low interest rates, mostly to developing countries that were encouraged to borrow. By the late '70s and early '80s, U.S. interest rates soared to levels as high as 21 percent, devastating the fragile economies of developing nations that had taken on massive debt.

Klein compares the impact of this “debt shock” to “a giant Taser gun fired from Washington, sending the developing world into convulsions.” African countries could barely afford the sky-high interest payments, let alone the actual debt and were thrown into a downward spiral of financial crises. This is where the story of Africa’s famine truly begins.

'The Dictatorship Of Debt'

The erosion of African agriculture is due in large part to policies imposed on debt-ridden African countries by the World Bank and the IMF—financial institutions set up in the aftermath of World

War II with the stated aim of deterring financial crises like the ones that pushed Weimer Germany toward fascism.

The donor nations of the IMF and World Bank divvy up power within each institution based on the size of a country's economy, allowing a handful of privileged nations, led by the U.S., to dominate decision making. As a result, Klein explains that the pro-corporatist administrations of Reagan and Thatcher in the '70s and '80s were "able to harness the two institutions for their own ends, rapidly increasing their power and turning them into primary vehicles for the advancement of the corporatist crusade."

Driven by the ideology of the so-called free market, the IMF and World Bank attached conditions to desperately needed debt relief that required developing nations to implement Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), what Naomi Klein calls "the dictatorship of debt."

SAPs forced governments to impose a neoliberal package of austerity, privatization and massive deregulation. For Africa, this meant cutting government subsidies to small farmers, eliminating tariffs and price controls, selling off food and grain reserves (which kept countries from starving in cases of drought or crop failure), increasing cash crop exports of raw materials to the west, and allowing foreign imports from the US and Europe to flood their markets.

Although the IMF and World Bank argued that restructuring was necessary to reduce Africa's debt and foster economic growth, their policies produced the opposite effects: soaring debt and economic stagnation.

In a 2004 study commissioned by the Halifax Initiative, writer Asad Ismi meticulously documents the consequences of SAPs on the African continent. Between 1980 and 1993, he found a total of 566 structural adjustment programs were forced onto 70 developing countries, including 36 of Africa's 47 Sub-Saharan nations. Since the implementation of SAPs in the 1980s, Africa's debt soared more than 500 percent, with an estimated \$229 billion worth of

debt payments transferred from Sub-Saharan Africa to the west, four times the original debt owed.

According to the IMF's World Economic Outlook Database, African debt still stands at \$324.7 billion, with the overwhelming majority, \$278.5 billion, owed by Sub-Saharan Africa, demonstrating that SAPs have pushed Africa into perpetual debt, with no end in sight.

What does this have to do with famine? Well, perpetual debt forces governments to divert spending to debt repayment, rather than investing in basic infrastructure like healthcare and education, which is relatively non-existent in Sub-Saharan Africa. With only 10 percent of the world's population, the Sub-Saharan region comprises 68 percent of all people living with HIV. Yet, according to Ismi, "Africa spends four times more on debt interest payments than on health care."

The same holds true for the agricultural sector. SAPs initiated the collapse of African food security, diverting land, water and labor away from small-scale farming toward the production of cash crops, whose earnings were used to pay off debt.

Ironically, as they demanded that African states eliminate subsidies for small-scale farmers, the United States and Europe continued to provide their agricultural sectors with billions of dollars in subsidies, forcing peasant farmers to compete with an influx of cheap, subsidized commercial staples from the west—clearly a losing battle.

In 2004, Project Censored described this U.S. practice as "underselling starving nations," a process that ensures U.S. commodities cost less than their small-scale counterparts, essentially pricing local farmers out of the market.

Walden Bello points out that the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture cemented these lopsided policies, making developing countries the permanent dumping grounds for cheap surplus production from the global north. Thus,

between 1995 and 2004, agriculture subsidies in developed countries went from \$367 billion to \$388 per year.

The few subsidies the IMF did permit were strictly reserved for African commercial agriculture goods for export to Europe and America. For Kenya, where a quarter of the population lives on less than a dollar a day, this meant ditching government support for subsistence farmers and diverting resources to the production of raw exports (cash crops) for the west, like tea, coffee, tobacco and cut flowers. Earnings from exports were then used to service the country's massive debt.

After investigating the impacts of SAPs on Kenya's struggle with malnutrition, Catherine Mezzacappa concludes, "Through their role in agricultural policy and social spending, structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank have contributed to the deepening of poverty and perpetuation of malnutrition in Kenya," a country where "the leading causes of death among children are preventable and can be linked to malnutrition."

As environmental activist Vandana Shiva put it in her book *Stolen Harvest*, "The hungry starve as scarce land and water are diverted to provide luxuries for rich consumers in Northern countries."

Somalia's Road To Famine

But for Somalia, the outcome was far worse, because the application of these neoliberal policies coincided with U.S. meddling and military intervention.

Michel Chossudovsky, author of *The Globalization of Poverty*, explains that despite frequent droughts, Somalia's economy, led by small-scale farmers and pastoralists or "nomadic herdsman," was self-sufficient in food well into the 1970s.

The pastoralists proved quite successful as livestock produced 80 percent of Somalia's export earnings through 1983. But under SAPs, veterinarian services for livestock were privatized, making it difficult and unaffordable for herders in rural grazing areas to access animal healthcare, ultimately devastating pastoralists who made up half of the population.

As for agriculture, the cheap imports of rice and wheat displaced small farmers, and resources were diverted to grow export commodities. Worst of all, “Water points and boreholes dried up due to lack of maintenance, or were privatized by local merchants and rich farmers,” due to the privatization of water resources.

The impact of structural adjustment on Somalia’s food security was compounded by

American and Soviet meddling during the Cold War. Stephen Zunes, professor of politics at the University of San Francisco, explains that Somalia was initially a client state



of the Soviet Union in the early '70s until Somali dictator Said Barre switched sides following a military coup in Ethiopia that replaced the U.S.-backed Ethiopian monarchy with a Soviet-backed “Marxist-Leninist” government.

The U.S. proceeded to prop up the Barre regime with \$50 million worth of weapons a year for access to strategic military bases, despite warnings that Somalia’s authoritarian leader was committing atrocious human rights violations.

Eventually, repression and social unrest led to the outbreak of civil war in 1988 between rival factions, fought with weapons provided by the United States. When Barre was overthrown in 1991, he left behind a chaotic “power vacuum,” with rival factions vying for control in a country lacking any centralized structure capable of alleviating the food insecurity to come.

The neoliberal dismantling of Somalia’s agro-pastoralist economy combined with U.S.-fed sectarian violence left Somalia extremely vulnerable to famine when faced with a drought in 1992, causing the mass starvation of 300,000 people.

Fast forward to 2011, and conditions in Somalia remain relatively unchanged. Civil war continues unabated, food insecurity persists, and recurring U.S. intervention endures in the name of “fighting terror” as journalist Michelle Chen recently highlighted at Colorlines. Only this time, Somalia and its neighbors are battling this lethal combination after having spent decades living just above starvation levels.

While economic policies from the '80s and '90s are not solely responsible for Somalia's current famine, Chossudovsky asserts, it's impossible to ignore that “ten years of IMF economic medicine laid the foundations for the country's transition towards economic dislocation and social chaos.”

Malawi Starves

In one of most outrageous episodes of neoliberal incompetence, Walden Bello described the role of structural adjustment on Malawi in the late 1990s, when subsistence farmers were provided with “starter packs” of free fertilizers and seeds. The program yielded a surplus of corn. But then the World Bank and IMF stepped in to dismantle the program and compelled the government to sell the majority of its grain reserves in order to service its debt. Bello explains the fallout:

When the crisis in food production turned into a famine in 2001-2002, there were hardly any reserves left to rush to the countryside. About 1,500 people perished. The IMF, however, was unrepentant; in fact, it suspended its disbursements on an adjustment program with the government on the grounds that “the parastatal sector will continue to pose risks to the successful implementation of the 2002/03 budget.”

According to Bello, when the next food crisis hit in 2005, the Malawian government gave up on the “institutionalized stupidity” of the IMF and the World Bank. Bello writes:

A new president reintroduced the fertilizer subsidy program, enabling two million households to buy fertilizer at a third of the retail price and seeds at a discount. The results: bumper harvests

for two years in a row, a surplus of one million tons of maize, and the country transformed into a supplier of corn to other countries in Southern Africa.

In the 2008 World Development Report, the World Bank shocked many when it acknowledged that structural adjustment from the 1980s was a failure that “dismantled the elaborate system of public agencies that provided farmers with access to land, credit, insurance inputs, and cooperative organization.”

The Bank insists the intention was to “free up the market” so the supposed more efficient and less costly private sector could take over, but “that didn’t happen,” the report admits. It goes on to confess that the beneficiaries of privatization were “commercial farmers,” which left “smallholders exposed to extensive market failures, high transaction costs and risks, and service gaps” that threatened “their survival.”

Nevertheless, when asked whether structural adjustments increased food insecurity and vulnerability to famine in Sub-Saharan Africa, a World Bank spokesperson responded with the following statement:

“The famine that has now been declared in six regions of Somalia and the food insecurity that has affected other neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa is the result of climate-related hazards in a context

As human society is presently structured, there is sufficient production of grains all over the world. Therefore the opening of slaughterhouses cannot be supported. In some nations there is so much surplus grain that sometimes extra grain is thrown into the sea, and sometimes the government forbids further production of grain. The conclusion is that the earth produces sufficient grain to feed the entire population, but the distribution of this grain is restricted due to trade regulations and a desire for profit. Consequently in some places there is scarcity of grain and in others profuse production. If there were one government on the surface of the earth to handle the distribution of grain, there would be no question of scarcity, no necessity to open slaughterhouses, and no need to present false theories about over-population.
~ Srila Prabhupada (Srimad Bhagavatam 4.17.25)

of political instability and conflict. It would be inaccurate to blame it on structural adjustment programs implemented three decades ago.”

Recognizing Economic Violence

As tragic images of starving Africans in underdeveloped countries riddled with seemingly neverending violence and conflict fill the airwaves, a narrative emerges depicting Africa as a bottomless pit of charity and aid—one that ignores the historical context essential to understanding Africa’s impoverishment.

Writing for Al Jazeera English, David Nally, the author of *Human Encumbrances: Political Violence and the Great Irish Famine*, concludes, “The portrayal of the passive victim enables NGOs and Western governments to assume the role of rescuer without having to ask uncomfortable questions about their own complicity in the suffering that is unfolding.”

It’s time the West faced up to the reality that this famine is the inevitable consequence of a broken food system that prioritizes the hefty pockets of the privileged above the empty stomachs of the vulnerable, draining Africa of its resources and essentially stripping Africans of their right to food and life.

David Nally quotes Susan Sontag, reminding us that, “The more it's shown that 'the sort of thing which happens in that place' is partly an outcome of policies designed in this place, the more responsibility we have to do something about it. When viewing images of starving children or reading about deaths from malnutrition in the daily newspapers, we ought to consider critically the architecture of violence behind the picture or story, not merely the sad abjection of the victim.”

Farmers Are A Dying Breed

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17.

Africa

Food Crisis Is A Policy Crisis

By James Tulloch, July 28, 2011

Bad policies, not just bad weather, have created the East African famine. That's the message from experts battling the hunger.

Starving people appear to most of us as an indistinct mass of human misery. Their pain is what moves us. Their needs compel us to help. They look and suffer alike. Who they are is not really important.

But to understand why East Africans are starving, and to really help them, we need to know who they are and where they came from, says Karol Boudreaux, a poverty economist with USAID.

Then we'll see that it's not just drought that has caused the East African famine, it is bad governance. The food crisis is a policy crisis. Unless policies are changed, she warned the TEDGlobal 2011 conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, "the same thing is going to happen over and over again".

So who are these people? And what are the policies that have pushed them to the brink?

Pastoralists In Peril

"The people most affected are pastoralists who live in these arid regions of northern Kenya, Somalia and eastern Ethiopia," explained

Boudreaux afterwards. “They rely for almost all their needs on their livestock.”

They have been dealing with drought for centuries, moving their livestock between pastures, their nomadic existence a strategy to keep one step ahead of hunger. But their capacity to live this way has been crippled by the gradual loss of their grazing lands, lands held under traditional custody rights, lands that may at times appear unoccupied.

Governments moved in, ignoring those communal rights, created national parks and sold land and water sources to farmers. They also tightened border controls and so blocked pastoralists’ movement between wet and dry season pastures.

“For decades they have tried to get pastoralists to settle down. And in the development community there was a sense that pastoralism was not as viable a production system as we now know it is,” Boudreaux explains.

The result was too many farmers settling in places with too little rainfall and so squeezing pastoralists into smaller areas. This all makes it harder for people to find food when times are tough. The ongoing conflict in Somalia has made things much, much worse.

“In conflict-prone South and Central Somalia, a stable government and peace are the only solutions,” to the immediate crisis, says Christoph Mueller, Head of the German Red Cross in Eastern Africa.



*“Those who live off their livestock have a very, very difficult time now.”
~Ali Abdi, a former herder*

But what should be done in the medium to long term to prevent the endlessly repeating cycle Boudreaux warns about?

Power Back To Communities

Karol Boudreaux thinks pastoralism should be supported as it is often “more sustainable than farming” in arid areas. “They need help restocking their herds, they need secure land and water rights, and they need access to livestock markets,” she says.

Her model is Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). The poster-child for this approach is Namibia.

Since 1996 black Namibians have had robust rights to manage the lands they live on and the wildlife that shares those lands. Communities organized themselves into ‘conservancies’ and now about 10 percent of Namibians are members of the 59 conservancies that in 2009 earned about 5.5 million dollars. Wildlife numbers recovered too— between 2004 and 2009 buffalo and elephant numbers tripled.

“This is considered the gold standard worldwide for handing power back to communities,” says Boudreaux, “and the impact on the wildlife has been nothing short of astonishing”.

Also these countries lack food storage and transport facilities. Up to 40 percent of wheat grown in sub-Saharan African countries is lost to rodents or rot because it doesn’t get to market quickly enough.

Warehousing food securely for the bad times is also essential to help “get over the boom and bust cycle,” said Sheeran.

Considering that hunger costs poor countries an average of 6 percent of GDP, fighting food insecurity is clearly an economic imperative. “If a child doesn’t get adequate nutrition in its first 1000 days the damage is irreversible... we see brain volumes of 40 percent less than normal. The earnings potential of children can be cut in half,” Sheeran explained.

The right time to eat is: for a rich man when he is hungry, for a poor man when he has something to eat.

-Mexican Proverb

And fighting hunger is perfectly affordable. The World Bank says it would cost 10.3bn dollars to deal with malnutrition in the worst-affected countries. India, home to the highest numbers of malnourished children in the world, this year plans to spend 11bn dollars on 126 fighter planes.

Bad policies, unlike bad climate changes, can be quickly reversed.

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18.

Financial Terrorism

Americans Milk Africa To Death

By Bob Astles

Vulture funds buy up the debt of poor countries cheaply when it is about to be written off and then use a variety of devices to force the debtor nations to pay out.

They often recover 10 times what the speculator paid for the debt and it is poor countries in Africa or Latin America who are being targeted.

These companies are run by Americans through a maze of companies registered in offshore tax havens and they pursue legal actions in jurisdictions around the world. They have been condemned by the British chancellor, Gordon Brown, as "morally outrageous", and also by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. But no action is taken and they are still in business.

BBC TV's Newsnight team tracked down some of these vultures. Recently they have targeted Zambia and the Republic of Congo amongst others. Their bosses are coy about publicity. The biggest, Elliott Associates, told the BBC, "We have nothing to hide-we just don't do interviews."

The BBC Newsnight team caught up with one of them outside his house near Washington DC. Michael Sheehan runs an organization called Debt Advisory International which is linked to a web of British Virgin Islands companies including Donegal International which sued Zambia. He also sometimes appears to

communicate under the name of Goldfinger - a bond speculator using the name of a villain from a James Bond movie.

On Thursday February 15, 2007 he won a case against the Zambian government in London which will probably net his company US\$20 million.

A BBC Newsnight reporter asked Sheehan, "Why are you squeezing the poor nation of Zambia for US\$40 million-doesn't that make you a vulture?"

He replied, "No comment. I'm in litigation. It's not my debt".

Sheehan claims to act on behalf of a consortium of anonymous investors. The Newsnight reporter asked him if he felt guilty about freeloading on the backs of the countries and institutions who have given US\$100 billion to relieve third world debt. "Aren't you just profiteering from the work of good people who are trying to save lives by cutting the debt of these poor nations?" he was asked.

Sheehan's reply was, "Well there was a proposal for investment. That's all I can talk about right now."

Tractors Of Doom

The Zambia case shines a light on the way vulture funds operate. Back in 1979 Romania sold Zambia tractors and gave them a US\$15 million loan to finance the deal. The tractors were not of the highest quality. The tractors— and Zambia — were soon broke and the debt was not paid off.

By the mid 1990s various governments were beginning the process of debt forgiveness to the poorest nations with the multi millionaire Bob Geldof doing most of the shouting. Zambia was one of these Highly Indebted Poor Countries.

In 1999, Zambia negotiated with Romania to settle the debt for around US\$3 million. Somehow Sheehan and his agents persuaded Romania to sell the debt to them instead. They then made payments to a number of Zambian officials and persuaded them to sign a document promising to pay US\$15 million to Sheehan's company. A key figure was Fisho Mwale, an ex-mayor of Lusaka who was paid US\$270,000 and made payments to others.

Sheehan told the BBC Newsnight the money was not an offer of a bribe but "a charitable initiative" before adding, "You're contorting the facts; you're on my property and I would ask you to step off."

Zambia paid US\$2 million to Donegal International but when a new president was elected he launched a corruption investigation which raised suspicions about the deal and the payments were stopped. This left Sheehan's firm US\$1 million out of pocket - they had paid US\$3 million and were paid only US\$2 million. So they sued in the British courts for US\$43 million plus a further US\$12 million in interest.

Judge Smith said Sheehan was "deliberately evasive and even dishonest"; that he "deliberately gave false evidence" and misled courts around the world in pursuit of this claim. The judge thought US\$55 million was too much but the law required him to rule in favor of the vulture fund and Zambia will have to pay around US\$20 million — or half the annual savings to the Zambian budget of international debt relief.

An ex-adviser to current Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa is Martin Kalunga-Banda. He estimates that US\$20 million could pay for free education for 150,000 children.

Sheehan is also suing Congo along with other speculators such as FG Hemisphere and Elliott Associates. Elliott virtually invented vulture funds. They are owned by a reclusive billionaire called Paul Singer. In 1996 Elliott paid US\$11 million for some discounted Peruvian debt and then threatened to bankrupt the country unless they paid him US\$58 million. They got their US\$58 million. Then

*saka-mulamisa-ksaudra-
phala-puspasti-bhojanah
anavrstya vinanksyanti
durbhiksa-kara-piditah*

Harassed by famine and excessive taxes, people will resort to eating leaves, roots, flesh, wild honey, fruits, flowers and seeds. Struck by drought, they will become completely ruined.

-Srimad Bhagavatam 12.2.9

Singer bought some discounted debt from Congo for about US\$10 million.

Now, Singer's company has been awarded US\$127 million in a British court but they want more. The British court accepted that Congo set up a system of front companies to try to keep oil earnings out of the hands of the vultures. These arrangements inevitably made it easier for corrupt government officials to take a cut as well.

Using the British judgment about concealing earnings through front companies Elliott have now taken the case to the US where they can claim triple damages using the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) law.

This was brought in to combat Mafia money laundering by imposing massive damages but Elliott is now exploiting it to make US\$400 million profit on a US\$10 million investment. The funds comb the world looking for courts which will legally recognize their claims such as London, Brussels, Paris or wherever. Then they take those judgments back to the US and get court orders to seize the assets of those countries or any company which does business with them. FG Hemisphere even tried to take Congo's diplomatic buildings in Washington.

There is a potential problem about suing in the US though, and this is where President George Bush could come to the rescue. Lee Buchheit is a partner at a New York law firm which defends countries when they are sued. Buchheit says the president has the power to "intervene, when appropriate, in maverick lawsuits commenced in US courts against foreign sovereigns". This principle is called international comity. In other words a stroke of the presidential pen could stop these actions. Traditionally the funds have spent a fortune on lobbying in Washington. Elliott's Paul Singer is very well connected. He is the biggest donor to Bush and the Republican cause in New York City, giving around US\$2 million since Bush first ran for president. Elliott also uses lobbyists.

"Plenty sits still, hunger is a wanderer"

- Proverb

When Congo's (Brazzaville) President Denis Sassou-Nguesso visited Washington to meet Bush the press were somehow supplied with Sassou-Nguesso's extravagant hotel bills and the story became what Elliott call "Sassou's lavish lifestyle" rather than the US\$400 million which they were trying to extract from his country.

Debt Advisory International also has Washington lobbyists. Michael Sheehan's firm paid Greenberg Traurig US\$240, a year until their chief lobbyist-Jack Abramoff was jailed for bribing politicians on behalf of other clients. Many campaigners assumed the funds had political protection from Bush's administration.

Congressman John Conyers saw the BBC Newnight film before a scheduled meeting with the president and decided to speak out. He said, "It was my job, I felt, to raise the whole question of this bond speculation that goes on at the



expense of poor debtor countries, in which their debt is bought up and then they're sued for the full amount. It's bought up at pennies on the dollar, and then they're sued."

Conyers heads the House Judiciary Committee and he wants to investigate vulture funds. He says he asked Bush two questions "one, about Paul Singer and Michael Sheehan; and two, whether he would be willing to stop this incredible misuse of our government's charity toward funding aid to our poorer nations". Bush put one of his White House staff on to the issue immediately and indicated that he wanted to curb the excesses of vulture funds.

"Profiteering doesn't get any more cynical than this," says Caroline Pearce of the Jubilee Debt Campaign which calls for debt cancellation. "Zambia has been planning to spend the money released from debt cancellation on much-needed nurses, teachers and infrastructure."

Sheehan (aka Goldfinger) may face an investigation from Congressman Conyers' House Judiciary Committee and his email linking the Zambian deal to a donation may cause him problems. The BBC Newsnight went to Greenberg Traurig, Sheehan's former lobbyists.

They have a beautiful office overlooking the White House. Frederick Shaheen is a regular visitor there and he told the BBC News night that these were the "places we have to go to help our clients get what they want". Africa is being made to suffer by many Vultures, but who cares right? Cynicism abounds.

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19.

A Heartbreaking Journey Through The Famine-Stricken Territories

By Lisa, Oxfam News, July 27th, 2011

Jim Clarken, chief executive of Oxfam Ireland, spent a week in the Horn of Africa in 2011. He travelled as part of a group of NGOs sent to assess the devastating situation and hear the stories of some of those directly affected by the famine. Former UN High Commissioner Mary Robinson, who is the Honorary President of Oxfam International, also took part in the visit.

Here, Mr Clarken describes for the Irish Daily Mail his heartbreaking journey through the famine-stricken territories.

Someone once said to me that the worst sight in the world was a hungry mother trying to feed a hungry, crying baby from an empty breast. In East Africa, and particularly Somalia, this is the scenario being played out each day now.

Mothers and fathers, having literally run out of options when it comes to providing the basics for their children, are burying them instead of being able to nurture them.

As a parent myself, I could imagine the despair to which parents were driven in this terrible struggle to survive.

But this week I got to meet some of those parents, during a visit to Kenya and Somalia with former Irish President Mary Robinson – who is now the president of Oxfam International – and other Irish aid agencies.

We saw first hand the trauma experienced by exhausted people who were pouring into Kenya across the Somali border. They had been walking for days in some cases, supporting elderly parents, coaxing young children along and carrying young babies. Some had been forced to leave the weaker, older people behind, others had left infant children.

When families were lucky enough to reach the safety of Dadaab refugee camp, they were able to get food, water and shelter, along with medical attention for the severely malnourished. Thousands of people are now arriving in this camp each day.

Every single coping mechanism they might have had is gone. They have typically sold their livestock, eaten or sold any crops and run out of money to buy food if it was available.

Tears Of Blood

Eyes Are Too Parched To Shed Tears

Driving across the Chalbi Desert, on our way to Marsabit Town in Northern Kenya, we came across two herders, an old man and young boy. Jarosyl Adi was in his 70s and told us how he had lived in the area all of his life. He spoke about how much things have changed in his lifetime, about how much further they have to bring their cattle to try to find food and water. He told us that he has never seen things as bad as this.



The people here mainly live off their animals – everything you own is your cattle or your goats – but it's been so dry that the animals are weak and dying.

They that die by famine die by inches. -Matthew Henry

The only livestock we saw on our journey were camels, and even they were weak. We were told that they are dying of thirst and keeling over –things are severe if a camel can't survive. We travelled on and passed through a small village of about 1,700 women, children and old men.

All of the other men had gone to find food for their livestock. Those left behind were on the brink, waiting and hoping that the men would return with something, or that someone would come and help.

Already 40 of them had died, mostly children. On the outskirts of Marsabit, we met people who had traveled huge distances on very little food or water, all their cattle had died and they needed help. There was a great sense of frustration. These were people willing to work and help themselves. They had tried everything, planting different crops, mixing their herds, but this savage drought has had such a huge impact.

But as bad as things were in Marsabit, we had a huge sense of foreboding that we were about to see a lot worse. The following day we traveled to Dolo in Somalia.

The Death Roads

Our first stop was on the side of the road where a large group of exhausted women and children were settled under some trees. We spoke with Sadia Abdul who had walked most of the way from Birbwell – 200km away! She had left behind conflict and any means of earning an income was gone.

The group was hungry and in desperate need of food and water. Many had the listless look of people who have gone through so much and were nearly too weak to travel further. We saw some truly awful scenes of severely malnourished children, babies with arms no thicker than your finger.

As we entered the village of Dolo there was a reception party of boys and girls singing to welcome Mary Robinson and signs saying how much they appreciated the Irish focus on their plight and hoping that we can make a difference for them.

At the clinic, we saw babies being weighed, measured and checked for malnutrition. Too many babies were small and underweight for their age.

The real worry now is that this is still early in the 'hunger' season. Hunger won't peak until around October and the head of the clinic believed that it could be worse this time around than it was in 1992.

The clinic is overwhelmed. Up to 2,000 people are passing through that clinic every day. Staff work from early in the morning until late at night and people are already queuing when they open. The staff members give high-nutrition food known as plumpy-nut to those children who are most malnourished. But because families have nothing else they share this among themselves. This means no-one gets the proper nutrition.

Sodo Abdulahi Nuh, 25, was having her 14-month-old malnourished baby boy weighed. He registered just 7 kgs on the scale. She has three other children to care for too. Around six children die each week at this very clinic – because they have no food.

I met a woman who had a little baby in her arms – she had eight children and had traveled 50km on foot. Her husband had been killed in fighting in Mogadishu. She had arrived into Dolo not knowing anybody. A local family, who were desperate themselves, brought her in and were doing their best to feed her and her children, sharing the little bit they had. That's the kind of extraordinary people they are.

Amina had walked 50 kms from Luk with three-year-old daughter, Asha. She had already lost two children. All of her cattle died too.

In Kenya too, families are running out of options. Karagi village, in Turkana, Kenya has buried 40 of its people in the recent past, most of them children, and all due to hunger.

The right time to eat is: for a rich man when he is hungry, for a poor man when he has something to eat.

-Mexican Proverb

The most striking thing about Karagi is that we didn't see one man of working age. These men have travelled very long distances to try and find water for their livestock – the only source of income they have. They send back money when they can. The village is entirely comprised of women, children and elderly men who are on the brink of disaster. The sense of foreboding was palpable.

In Marsabit, we heard from 65-year-old Tabich Galgal. He simply said that they have no food. Some members of the community are receiving food aid but they share what they have with others, so everyone is trying to survive on rations.

The frustration in Tabich's voice was evident as he described how they had tried everything. It's not that they are not doing all they can to eke out a living, it's just that the drought has really placed such a huge burden on them, he said.

Then Elena Boru explained how the lack of water is having a devastating effect on women, who have to spend most of the day collecting it.

She explained that there are plenty of people in the village more than willing and able to work, to do anything where they can provide for their families and she stressed that the elderly must be taken care of. Along our travels we saw very feeble and clearly malnourished older people – a shocking prospect considering all they have contributed to their communities during their lives.

Famine has now gripped parts of Somalia. This is the inevitable consequence of drought, climate change, conflict, entrenched poverty and lack of investment in development.

Dadaab - The Biggest Refugee Camp In The World

Our next stop was Dadaab in Kenya, the biggest refugee camp in the world.

Flying in you can see the vastness of it. It goes on for miles and miles. It was originally built for 90,000 people but now there's upwards of 400,000 living there. It's completely overflowing. Up to 80,000 people are living on the outskirts of the camp.

At one point I was right beside a woman who was hiding her baby who had just died. She was sitting there, just privately mourning. What an extraordinarily terrible thing for any mother to go through.

Her father told us how things had been so very bad for them and the awful thing was, that they had survived their long journey from Somalia but the child died just as they arrived at the camp. It was shockingly sad.

The atmosphere at Dadaab is very hot, dirty, with all these desperate people continuing to stream in, about 9,000 a week. The worst thing that could happen now, in these very built up camps, is that there would be cholera or an outbreak such as that.

Up to 1.75 million people are displaced within Somalia itself. The war has been going on for several years and the fact that Somalia doesn't have a stable, democratic government is a major factor in the current hardship.

We met a woman who had travelled from Luk in Somalia, 50 km away from the camp. She just had one of her daughters with her, her other two children died on the way. As we were leaving, an old man with a very weak infant came up to me with his hand out. I've spent a lot of time in many different countries in Africa, I used to live and work running a health program in South Sudan, in Kenya, The Congo, Rwanda and other places. Nobody ever came up to me with a hand out, it's not what people here do.

Those are questions that must be addressed, in time, but first we have to deal with this humanitarian crisis. 12 million lives are on the line but if we act right now we can prevent further large-scale loss of life.

Oxfam is working right through the region, providing food, clean water, and shelter, and helping people to earn a living again. Through our programmes we intend to reach three million people.

At the moment, Oxfam is implementing the single largest nutrition programme in the capital city, Mogadishu, treating more than 12,000 severely malnourished children, pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding. We are also providing water and

sanitation for 300,000 internally displaced people and giving life-saving equipment to Somalia's only functioning children's hospital.

In Kenya and Ethiopia, we are giving people money through cash for work schemes to build water tanks and reservoirs. We are trucking in water supplies for 32,000 people in Ethiopia and treating the water for drinking, cooking, washing and keeping animals alive. We are helping people who have livestock to keep them healthy and vaccinated. We are digging and repairing wells and boreholes, and providing sanitation and latrines.

But we can't do it alone. We need the help of governments and the public to stop this human catastrophe spreading and claiming greater numbers of lives. Otherwise we are condemning countless thousands of people to a needless death.

The total amount required to resolve this crisis is estimated to be €1.9billion. It sounds like a lot of money but it isn't, not from the whole world. We have spent thousands of billions on shoring up banks and fighting useless wars. Just the Iraq war cost us more than a thousand billion in direct costs. But this is the biggest crisis in the world right now and the world needs to pay attention. I think the most ominous and most frightening thing is that local people believe things are worse than they were in 1992 when hundreds of thousands of people died.

It was my first time in Somalia and it was only afterwards, when I got home and had time to reflect, that I fully realised how desperate things are there and how sad it was witnessing it. I hope to return again and I hope it will be better. Some of the people I met and some of the images I saw will stay with me forever.

It's just so shocking that this can happen in 2011 – the word famine should have been eradicated because it should be something that happened in our past. The idea it can happen today is abhorrent.

20.

India

A Genocide In Progress

Genocide is “the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group”. While a precise definition varies among genocide scholars, a legal definition is found in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG).

Article 2 of the Convention defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Raphael Lemkin, in his work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), coined the term “genocide” by combining Greek *genos* (race, people) and Latin *cidere* (to kill).

Lemkin defined genocide as follows: “Generally speaking, genocide *does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a*

nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.

The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.” The preamble to the CPPCG states that instances of genocide have taken place throughout history,³ but it was not until Raphael Lemkin coined the term and the prosecution of perpetrators of the Holocaust at the Nuremberg trials that the United Nations

Great Scarcity of Soil Nutrients

It is estimated that every year, 20.2 million tonnes of the three major nutrients – nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium – is removed by growing crops (Tandon 1992) but the corresponding addition through chemical fertilisers and organic manures falls short of this figure. It was determined that only 23% of the applied fertiliser is consumed by plants; the remaining 77% is either leached out beyond the root zone or lost by volatilisation, etc. Thus, out of 20.2 million tonnes of nutrients removed by plants, only 2.66 million tonnes comes from fertilisers and nearly 3 million tonnes from organic sources. This leaves a little less than 14 million tonnes, which is obviously contributed by soil. If the loss of nutrients due to soil erosion is included the loss of nutrients from the top soil is 43 million tonnes, which amounts to 0.24% of the nutrient reserves of the soils.

According to Brandon, Hommann, and Kishor (1995), the annual loss in production of eleven major crops in India due to depletion of nutrient as a result of unsuitable agricultural practices amounts to 0.5 to 1.3 million tonnes. This estimate, however, does not take into account the loss due to erosion.

The problem of maintaining the nutrient balance and preventive the consequent nutrient deficiencies will be a major concern in most cultivated areas.

agreed to the CPPCG which defined the crime of genocide under international law.

According to this definition, in India, there is a genocide in progress. The food supply of 1.2 billion people is being systematically destroyed. Gradual handing over of food sector to unscrupulous corporations is a bold step in that direction.

It is happening at a rather fast pace. Agriculture, the livelihood of 70% of the Indian population, is being turned into an untenable occupation. Every day 2000 farmers are calling it quits and heading for urban shanty towns. Out of those who dare to stay on, one is committing suicide every fifteen minutes.

Indian agriculture is a fragile system which had withstood the test of time. India supports approximately 16% of the world's human population and 20% of the world's livestock population on merely 2.5% of the world's geographical area. Any tinkering in this sensitive area will have disastrous impact on the nation's food security.

Already the widespread incidence of poverty, and the current phase of economic and trade liberalisation are exerting heavy pressures on India's limited land resources for competing uses in forestry, agriculture, pastures, human settlements and industries.

This has led to very significant land degradation. According to the latest estimates (Sehgal and Abrol 1994), about 187.8 mha

Modern word for unscrupulous colonials is corporations. Corporatisation is the modern way of colonizing the world. Today's world is getting ground under the corporate jackboot. These huge corporations make obscene profits from human misery and they want the world to remain in misery.

They run our health care industry. They run our oil and gas companies. They run our bloated weapons industry. They run Wall Street and the major investment firms. They run our manufacturing firms. They also, ominously, run our government.

World is simply not a safe place in the shadows of these greedy monsters. They want profits - when economy thrives and they want profits - when economy dies. Profits in a dying economy means war, death and destruction. That's the only way to go about it.

(57% approximately) out of 328.73 mha of land area has been degraded in one way or the other. It appears therefore, that most of India's land is degraded, is undergoing degradation or is at the risk of getting degraded.

The negative effects of land degradation are telling very heavily on India's environment and economy, which are causes of grave concern.

Indian government, in tandem with the vested interests is applying the same policies that have destroyed Africa's agriculture. In just three decades Africa has gone from a net food exporter to become a net food importer.

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Formerly, men worked in the open air only as much as they liked. Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines. Their condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work, at the risk of their lives, at most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires. –Gandhi

21.

Displacing Farmers

India Will Have 400 million Agricultural Refugees

Devinder Sharma, STWR, 22nd June 07,

It was on the cards. With the Prime Minister announcing the formation of a new rehabilitation policy for farmers displaced from land acquisitions, it is now official -- farmers have to quit agriculture.

Ever since the present coalition assumed power in May 2004, the Prime Minister initiated a plethora of new policies for the spread of industrialization. After having laid the policy framework that allows private control over community resources – water, biodiversity, forests, seeds, agriculture markets, and mineral resources -- the UPA government finally looked at the possibility of divesting the poor people of their only economic security – a meagre piece of land holding.

“Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is an idea whose time has come,” the Prime Minister said at an award ceremony in Mumbai sometime back. Supported by all political parties, including the Left Front, he has actually officiated a nationwide campaign to displace farmers. Almost 500 special economic zones are being carved out. What is however less known is that successive governments are actually following a policy prescription that had been laid out by the World Bank as early as in 1995.

A former vice-president of the World Bank and a former chairman of Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a body that governs the 16 international agricultural research centers, Dr Ismail Serageldin, had forewarned a number of years ago. At a conference organised by the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai, he quoted the World Bank saying the number of people estimated to migrate from rural to urban India by the year 2015 is expected to be equal to twice the combined population of UK, France and Germany.

The combined population of UK, France and Germany is 200 million. The World Bank had therefore estimated that some 400 million people would be willingly or unwillingly moving from the rural to urban centres by 2015.

Subsequent studies have shown that massive distress migration will result in the years to come. For instance, 70 per cent of Tamil Nadu, 65 per cent of Punjab, and nearly 55 per cent of Uttar Pradesh is expected to migrate to urban centres by the year 2020.

These 400 million displaced will constitute the new class of migrants – agricultural refugees.

Aacerbating the crisis are the policy initiatives that promote privatization of natural resources, take over of farm lands, integration of Indian agriculture with the global economy, and moving farmers out of agriculture – in essence the hallmark of the neo-liberal economic growth model.

Agricultural reforms that are being introduced in the name of increasing food production and minimizing the price risks that the farmers continue to be faced with, are actually aimed at destroying the production capacity of the farm lands and would lead to further

“Innocent men, women, they are kept in that factory simply for livelihood. A little work will provide their needs. Nature has given so much facility. They can grow a little food anywhere. The cows are there in the pasturing ground. Take milk and live peacefully. Why you open factories?”

— Srila Prabhupada (New Vrindavan, June 26, 1976)

marginalisation of the farming communities. Encouraging contract farming, future trading in agriculture commodities, land leasing, forming land-sharing companies, direct procurement of farm commodities by amending the APMC Act will only drive out a majority of farmers out of subsistence agriculture.

Although the land holding size is diminishing, the answer does not lie in allowing the private companies to replace farmers. *Somehow the entire effort of the policy makers is to establish that Indian agriculture has become a burden on the nation and the sooner the country offloads the farming class the better it will be for economic growth.*

Contract farming therefore has become the new agricultural mantra. Not realising that private companies enter agriculture with the specific objective of garnering more profits from the same piece of



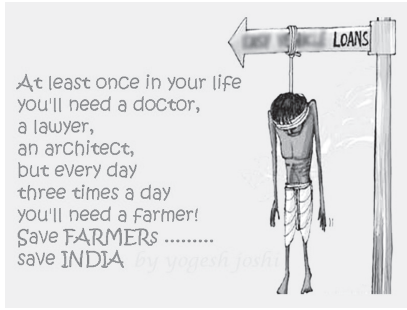
land. These companies, if the global experience is any indication, bank upon very intensive farming practices which drain the soil of nutrients and use up the ground water and render the fertile lands barren in a few years. It is estimated that the crops that are contracted by the private companies require on an average 20 times more chemical inputs and water than the staple foods.

Sugarcane farmers, for instance, who follow a system of cane bonding with the mills, actually were drawing 240 cm of water every year, which is three times more than what wheat and rice require on an average. Rose cultivation, introduced a few years back, requires 212 inches of groundwater consumption in every acre.

Contract farming will therefore further exploit whatever remains of the ground water resources. After it's all over, these companies would terminate the lease and hand over the barren land back to the farmers, and move on to other fertile areas. This has been the global experience so far.

Allowing direct procurement of farm commodities, setting up special markets for the private companies to mop up the produce, and to set up land share companies, are all directed at the uncontrolled entry of the multinational corporations in the farm sector. Coupled with the introduction of the genetically modified crops, and the unlimited credit support for the agribusiness companies, the focus is to strengthen the ability of the companies to take over the food chain.

I have always warned that agribusiness companies in reality hate farmers. Nowhere in the world have they worked in tandem with farmers. Even in North America and Europe, agribusiness companies have pushed farmers out of agriculture. As a result, only 7,00,000 farming families are left on the farms in the United



States. Despite massive subsidies in European Union, one farmer quits agriculture every minute. Knowing well that the markets will displace farmers, the same agriculture prescription is being applied in India.

Gandhi wanted it ... Village organization. He started that Wardha Ashram. But you have rejected. What Gandhi can do? That was good proposal -- to remain satisfied in one's own place. That was Gandhi's proposal. That "Don't go to the city, town, for so-called better advantage of life. Remain in your own home, produce your food, and be satisfied there." That was Gandhi's policy. The economic problem he wanted to solve by keeping cows, by agriculture, by spinning thread. "You want food, shelter and cloth? Produce here, and remain here. Don't be allured by the capitalists and go to cities and engage in industries." But Jawaharlal Nehru wanted, overnight, to Americanize the whole India. That is the folly.

-Srila Prabhupada (Room Conversation with Reporter from Researchers Magazine -- July 24, 1973, London)

A Planning Commission study has shown that 73 per cent of the cultivable land in the country is owned by 23.6 per cent of the population. With more and more farmers being displaced through land acquisitions, either for SEZ or for food processing and technology parks or for real estate purposes, land is further getting accumulated in the hands of the elite and resourceful. With chief ministers acting as property dealers, farmers are being lured to divest control over cultivable land. Food security and food self-sufficiency is no longer the country's political priority.

The government has very conveniently taken refuge behind an NSSO study (National Sample Survey Organisation) that says some 40 per cent of the farmers have expressed the desire to quit farming. After all, what the government is facilitating is to make it easier for the farmers to abandon their land. It believes that a rehabilitation policy for the farmers therefore is the need of the hour. What is however not being seen through is that an agrarian economy like India cannot afford large-scale displacement of farmers. It will lead to social unrest the kind of which has not been witnessed so far. What India needs desperately is a policy paradigm that restores pride in agriculture, stops take-over of agricultural lands, and ensures sustainable livelihoods for 600 million farmers.

22.

India - Everyday 2000 Farmers

Calling It Quits And Heading For Urban Shanty Towns.

There are nearly 15 million farmers fewer than there were in 1991. Over 7.7 million less since 2001, as the latest Census data show. On average, that's about 2,035 farmers calling it quits every single day for the last 20 years. And in a time of jobless growth, they've had few places to go beyond the lowest, menial ends of the service sector.

A December 2012 report of the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR) — a part of the Planning Commission — puts it this way: “Employment in total and in non-agricultural sectors has not been growing. This jobless growth in recent years has been accompanied by growth in casualization and informalization.” It speaks of an “an absolute shift in workers from agriculture of 15 million to services and industry.” But many within the sector also likely moved from farmer to agricultural labourer status. Swelling the agrarian underclass.

Agriculture, the livelihood of more than 50% of the Indian population, is being turned into an untenable occupation. Every day thousands of farmers are calling it quits and heading for urban shanty towns. Out of those who dare to stay on, one is committing suicide every fifteen minutes.

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population and 20% of the world's livestock population on merely 2.5% of the world's geographical area. Any tinkering in this sensitive area will have disastrous impact on the nation's food security.

Already the widespread incidence of poverty, and the current phase of economic and trade liberalisation are exerting heavy pressures on India's limited land resources for competing uses in forestry, agriculture, pastures, human settlements and industries.

Source

P. Sainath, The Hindu, May 2, 2013

23.

67 Years After Independence

Indian Farmers Have Disappeared From The Economic Radar Screen

The Neglect Of Small Scale Agriculture Is Part Of A Design

On the occasion of the 67th Independence, Aug 15, 2014, the Hindi magazine Yathawat interviewed Devinder Sharma on the state of Indian agriculture. In this short and crisp interview, he was asked to track the historical backdrop and to look at the present and future agricultural policies and approaches.

Q: When India got its Independence in 1947, how did its agriculture look like?

India got its Independence in 1947 in the backdrop of Bengal Famine. The famine happened in 1943 taking a massive human toll. Some estimates point to 3 million people perishing in the famine. But Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's work tells us that there was no shortfall in food production in 1943. It was only because the private trade had diverted the food that millions of people were left starving. In 1947, when India got Independence, agriculture was in a pathetic state, a fallout of the neglect and wanton destruction of agriculture during the days of the British Raj. With more than 80 per cent population engaged in subsistence farming, Independent India was a hungry nation.

Q: What prompted Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shashtri to give the slogan of "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan" in 1965? Was it a reflection of the grave crisis afflicting farmers and farming, and of course the threat India faced from across the borders.

When Lal Bahadur Shashtri took over as Prime Minister in 1964 India was a food importing country. It depended on food imports from North America under the PL-480 scheme. Not many people know that 1965, the year when India went to war with Pakistan, was also a drought year. In 1965 India had imported 10 million tonnes of wheat under PL-480. Knowing how precarious the food situation was, and knowing the extent of prevailing hunger, Lal Bahadur Shashtri had urged the nation to fast for a day. I know many people who have continued to fast on Monday's since then. It was primarily because Lal Bahadur Shashtri understood the role that soldiers and farmers play in maintaining national security thereby preserving national sovereignty that he gave the slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan'

Q: Green Revolution came in the late 1970s. What led to that ..

For almost 20 years after Independence in 1947 India had remained a food importing country. In fact, after the 10 million tonnes food import in 1965, the next year 1966 also turned to be a drought year in which India imported 11 million tonnes of foodgrains. That was the biggest food import at that time in history.

After the premature death of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shashtri in Jan 1966, Mrs Indira Gandhi took over. But before Shashtri died he had annoyed the then American President Lyndon Johnson when he had told an American journalist, in reply to a question, that the war in Vietnam "was an act of aggression". This sentence had annoyed Johnson who had stopped food exports to India under what is known as 'stop-go policy'. India was then in such a precarious situation that even the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations had to make an appeal to US to allow food exports to India. Food would come directly from the

ship to the hungry mouths. India was then called as a country living in a 'ship-to-mouth' existence.

The foundation of 'Green Revolution' was laid in 1966 when the government allowed the seeds of dwarf and high-yielding varieties of wheat from CIMMYT in Mexico. India imported 18,000 tonnes of wheat seed from Mexico, adapted them to Indian conditions, and as per an earlier demarcated programme, distributed these seed to farmers in Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh where irrigation was available. The first wheat harvest after cultivating high-yielding seeds in 1967 was five tonnes more than the previous.

Q: Green Revolution increased production in wheat and rice. Besides high-yielding varieties, there must be something else too?

The quantum jump in the wheat production was followed by rice two years later. India received high-yielding varieties of rice from the International Rice Research Institute in Manila, in 1968. These rice varieties were adapted to the Indian conditions and distributed to farmers in Punjab, western Uttar Pradesh and also in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Rice also recorded an increase in productivity and production. The term 'Green Revolution' was later coined by an American scientist, William Gaud.

Green Revolution turned the country self-sufficient in wheat and rice, and by early 1970s India stopped importing food under PL-480.

Since the days of Green Revolution, Indian agriculture has grown manifold. There has been an all around development in crop production not only in wheat and rice but also in coarse cereals, maize, cotton, sugarcane etc. Improved technology was packaged well with right policy decisions. The setting up of Food Corporation of India and Agricultural Prices Commission in 1965-66 were the two major planks of what Dr M S Swaminathan calls as the 'famine-avoidance' strategy.

Q: How come after Green Revolution turned the corners, farmers are committing suicide on a large scale?

By the mid-1980s, the environmental impact of intensive farming systems that used chemical fertilizers, chemical pesticides and groundwater had begun to emerge. These are called the 2nd Generation Environmental Impacts. But instead of encouraging farmers to adopt sustainable practices to thwart the negative impact of intensive agriculture, farm scientists tried to address this by encouraging more Green Revolution. In other words they asked farmers to apply more chemicals. This deteriorated the natural resource base. At the same time, the policy support for agriculture declined. Reduction in public sector investment in agriculture, failure to encourage sustainable farming practices, and unremunerative prices for agricultural produce were among the factors that turned agriculture into a losing proposition. The damage was more pronounced in cash crops like cotton. Farm suicides began as a trickle around 1987 or so and since then have taken a toll of nearly 3 lakh farmers in the past 17 years.

Q: What is behind the terrible agrarian crisis that India faces?

Farm suicides are the outcome of the continued neglect and apathy of the farm sector. Besides the policy makers, a significant role is also played by agriculture scientists and economists. They cannot simply absolve themselves from the terrible agrarian crisis that have prevailed for almost two decades now.

Q: Is it because India does not have a clear cut understanding and focus on how to prop up agriculture? Is it because of a wrong direction coming from international institutions?

About 20 years after the Green Revolution began, and somewhere in the early 1990s, the global economic thinking shifted to shrinking agriculture and boosting industry. World Bank/IMF and the international financial institutions began to propose that economic growth can only take place when fewer people are left in agriculture. In 1996, the World Development Report of the World Bank suggested moving 400 million people, equally to twice the combined population of UK, France and Germany, from the rural to the urban areas in India in the next 20 years, by the year 2015.

Meanwhile, the emergence of World Trade Organisation in 1995, also shifted the focus to trade. The mainline economic thinking shifted to reducing support for agriculture and importing highly subsidized cheaper food from the developed countries. Subsequently, the World Bank and Multinational Corporations have been pushing for land acquisitions, contract farming, creation of super markets or in other words paving the way for corporate agriculture. *In other words, the neglect of small scale agriculture is part of a design. It is part of a pre-planned economic strategy that is being imposed.*

In a country where 52 per cent of the 1.27 billion people are directly or indirectly engaged in agriculture, the thrust of the economic growth paradigm is to push farmers out of agriculture. Since the younger lot among farmer's don't know anything except farming, the World Bank had suggested a network of training schools across the country to train them to become industrial workers. That is being done. In other words, farmers have now become a burden on the country. The common thinking is the sooner the country is able to offload farmers, the better it will be.

Q: Every year the government announces support for agriculture in its annual budgets. You think that is enough?

In 2013-14, farmers produced a record harvest of 264.4 million tonnes of foodgrains. Production of oilseeds reached a record high of 34.5 million tonnes, a jump of 4.8 per cent. Maize production increased by 8.52 per cent to reach a level of 24.2 million tones. Pulses production reached an all-time high of 19.6 million tones, an increase of 7.10 per cent over the previous year. Cotton production too touched a record high.

With such record production, the nation should remain indebted to the virile and hardworking farmers. But last year, in 2013-14, when farm production recorded a quantum jump, agriculture received Rs 19,307-crore from the annual budget kitty, which is less than 1 per cent of the total budget outlay. This year, only Rs 22,652-crore has been provided for agriculture and cooperation departments. Again the outlay for agriculture remains less than

1 per cent of the total budget. In all fairness, the apathy towards agriculture continues.

Q: Is the neglect continuing?

The neglect of agriculture has become more pronounced since economic liberalization was introduced in 1991. I recall the then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh famous budget speech when he showered all the bounties on industry and in the next paragraph said that agriculture remains the mainstay of the economy. But since agriculture is a State subject, he left it to the State Governments to provide the much need impetus to farming. But what he forgot to say was that industry too is a State subject and should have been left to the State governments. The bias therefore was clearly visible.

Although agriculture grew at an impressive rate of 4.1 per cent in the Eleventh Plan period (2007-8 and 2011-12) it received a dismal financial support of Rs 1 lakh crore. For a sector which directly and indirectly employs 60-crore people, Rs 1 lakh crore outlay for five years is simply peanuts. In the 12 Plan period (2012-13 to 2017-18) agriculture is projected to receive Rs 1.5 lakh crore. Compare this with the Rs 5.73 lakh crore tax exemptions showered on the industry in 2014-15 alone. Since 2004-05, Industry has received tax concessions (computed under 'revenue foregone' in the budget documents) to the tune of Rs 36.5-lakh crores or Rs 1,100 crore per day for the past 9 years. It's therefore a matter of priorities. In fact, as I have been saying for long, farmers have disappeared from the economic radar screen.

Despite the neglect, the fact remains whatever India has been able to achieve in economic and military terms is primarily because of food self-sufficiency built so assiduously over the past five decades. *But the tragedy is that the country is deliberately destroying the agricultural foundations, and pushing it back to the days of 'ship-to-mouth' existence. Over the past few years, India is busy adopting the same economic policies that were existing at the time of Bengal Famine.*

Source

Devinder Sharma, 8th August 2014

24.

There Is No Reason Why India Should Face Hunger

And Farmers Should Commit Suicide

By Dr. Vandana Shiva

There is no reason why India should face hunger and malnutrition and why our farmers should commit suicide. India is blessed with the most fertile soils in the world. Our climate is so generous we can, in places, grow four crops in a year—compared to the industrialized west where sometimes only one crop is possible per year. We have the richest biodiversity of the world, both because of our diverse climates and because of the brilliance of our farmers as breeders. Our farmers are among the most hardworking, productive people in the world. Yet India faces an emergency, in our food and agricultural system. This emergency is man-made.

Firstly, the poor and vulnerable are dying for lack of food. According to the Deccan Herald, Lalita S. Rangari, 36, a Dalit widow and mother of two children of the Gondiya tribal belt, allegedly died due to starvation. Justice Bhushan Gavai and Justice Indu Jain of the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court have served notice to the government of Maharashtra seeking its reply to the starvation death of a Dalit widow.

Even as India gets richer, we have emerged as the capital of hunger and malnutrition. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 42.5 percent of children under five years old were underweight. This is more than double the African average of 21 percent, which until recently was the face of hunger.

The second tragedy is that our food producers, the small farmers who have provided food to more than a billion Indians and hold the potential to provide healthy food for all, are themselves dying because of agriculture and trade policies which put corporate profits above the rights and well being of our small farmers. More than 300,000 farmers have committed suicide in India since 1995, when the rules for the globalization of agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO) were implemented, transforming food into a commodity, agriculture into corporate business and shifting control over seeds and food from farmers to a handful of giant multinational corporations.

The third tragedy is that even those who get food are being denied their right to healthy and nourishing food. The explosion of junk food, of pesticides and toxics in our food, have created a disease epidemic that is a human tragedy and an economic burden. There is an epidemic of diseases related to our lifestyle and food, such as diabetes, cancer, hypertension, infertility and cardiovascular diseases.

The recent Maggi noodle scandal highlights the rapid invasion of junk food in the Indian diet. We are what we eat. When we eat food full of toxic chemicals, we pay the price with our health. India has emerged as the epicenter of diabetes.

In 2004, 8.2 lac Indians were diagnosed with diabetes and 2.6 lac succumbed to the disease. In 2012, the diabetes numbers jumped to 180 lac diagnosed and 7 lac dead. In 2010 alone, India spent 32 billion dollars on diabetes care. Cancer has also seen an increase by 30 percent in the last 5 years, with 180 million people affected in India. At 10 lac treatment per cancer victim this multiplies to 300 billion dollars, or 18 lac crores in rupees.

In extensive studies reported in *Poisons In Our Food* by Navdanya, elevated levels of PCBs, DDE and DDT have been found in the blood of women suffering from breast cancer. Studies show that 51 percent of all food commodities are contaminated by pesticides.

My research over the past three decades on food and agriculture systems in India and across the world, informs me that the three tragedies are not separate, they are related and are, in fact, different dimensions of the food and agriculture crisis linked to promotion of an ecologically, economically and socially non sustainable model of food production and distribution referred to by various names, such as the Green Revolution, Industrial Agriculture, Chemical Farming. Solutions to all 3 dimensions of the crisis lie in shifting from the focus on an unhealthy, nutritionally empty, toxic, high cost food system to a healthy, nutritious, low cost and sustainable system which improves the health and well being of the earth, of the farmers and all citizens.

The industrial model relies on intensive consumption of energy, water, chemicals, capital and fossil fuel, inflating costs of production to much higher levels than the price farmers get for their harvested crops. This high cost system, which neither the farmers nor the nation can afford, is artificially kept afloat with a huge subsidy burden which only benefits the agrichemical corporations selling toxic chemicals. Financially, it is a negative economy, vulnerable to a chaotic climate in times of climate change and a manipulated commodity market. The debt and suicides of farmers are related to this feature of economic non-sustainability.

In 2014-15, the government procured 51 million tons of wheat and paddy, which is 30 percent lower than the previous year. With farmers now selling their food grains in the open market, wholesale prices of paddy and wheat crashed by 16 percent and 6 percent, respectively. In several parts of Bundelkhand and Western U.P., farmers sold wheat at a much lower rate than Minimum Support Price. In Punjab and Haryana, farmers were dumping stocks in front

of government procurement centers. The farmers crisis is related to exploitation and injustice. Ecologically too industrial, chemical agriculture is a negative economy, using ten units of energy as input for every one unit produced as food.

The same system that drives farmers into a debt trap also creates malnutrition. Chemical monocultures and commodity production displace biodiversity which is a source of nutrition. The Green Revolution, which only works as monocultures, has destroyed our pulses and oilseeds—which were always grown as a mixture along with cereals. Today, in the land of urad and moong, tuar and chana, gahat and naurangi, we are importing “yellow pea dal,” having removed them from our fields to grow Green Revolution monocultures. In the land of til and sarson, alsi and coconut, we are importing GMO soya oil and palm oil. If we avoid growing nutritious biodiverse crops, malnutrition is a predictable outcome. If we grow our food with toxic chemicals then diseases related to these poisons are bound to increase. A recent field survey by Navdanya revealed that in a single village, Gangnauli (Bagphat), there are 100 patients suffering from various types of cancer.

Chemical monocultures are pushing our farmers to debt and suicide, they are depriving our children of the nourishment that our fertile soils and hard working farmers could be growing and they are spreading an epidemic of cancer. To address the triple crisis of farmers suicides, hunger and malnutrition and disease epidemics, Navdanya is starting a five year campaign—Anna Swaraj (Food Sovereignty) 2020—to make the growing and availability of healthy, nourishing food the foundation of a resurgent India where no child goes hungry and no farmer commits suicide.

Our work over the past 3 decades has shown that when measured in nutrition per acre, biodiverse, organic, natural farming produces more food (health per acre). And food is supposed to provide nourishment and nutrition. We can grow enough nutrition for two India's, if we cultivate biodiversity without chemicals. Our farmers are small and ecological agriculture is better suited for

them. Ecological farming also gets rid of toxics from our food crops and thus reduces the risks of diseases linked to those toxics (poisons in our food). Since hunger and poverty go hand in hand, we need to promote an agriculture that does not create poverty by haemorrhaging the scarce resources of the agrarian economy (to multinational corporations) for purchase of costly seeds and toxic chemicals.

Our research in Wealth per Acre has assessed that farmers who have their own seed, practice chemical free, ecological agriculture and shape fair trade markets are earning 10 times more than their counterparts who dependent on costly corporate seeds, chemicals from the same companies and forced dependence on exploitative commodity markets. If wheat farmers shifted from monocultures to growing diversity their net incomes would increase two to three fold. The crisis of pulses is a result of the Green Revolution monocultures of wheat and can be overcome through growing mixtures. And we would not need to import low quality dals. Pulses grown with cereals provide free nitrogen to the soil and healthy protein to us.

The Anna Swaraj agenda for a food and agriculture revolution and food democracy with the participation of citizens and all levels of government, from the local, to the state, to the national level:

We must stop treating food as a commodity, to be wasted, contaminated and profited from. Article 21, of India's constitution, guarantees the Right to Life of all citizens. Food is the basis of life, the right to food is a basic human right. The National Food Security Act is a step in this direction and needs to be implemented with full commitment. Our culture teaches us "Annam Brahman"—food is divinity. Commodification of food is a violation of food as sustenance.

We need to promote chemical free organic farming, not as a luxury, but as an imperative for the well being of our land, our farmers and our health. Chemical free ecological agriculture reduces costs of cultivation, reducing the debt burden for farmers as well as the malnutrition and disease burden for all citizens .

We need to move away from centralized, chemical and fossil fuel intensive monocultures accompanied by long distance transport (including dependence on imports) towards promotion of local Anna Swaraj food circles for direct consumer—producer links, bypassing the exploitative ‘middlemen’, like giant corporations which exploit, both, farmers and consumers. These circles will promote biodiversity on our farms and biodiversity on our plates, which is vital for nutrition. Thereby, also promoting economic diversity, creating employment and cultivating food democracy.

We need to shift the use of public tax money from subsidising toxic, nutritionally deficient commodities as food for the vulnerable—who do not have adequate purchasing power to buy healthy, safe, diverse, nutritious food—by removing subsidies offered to multinational chemical corporations that only add toxicity to our food system. There is no justification for using crores of tax money to subsidise bad food when that money could promote a healthy and sustainable food system for Mid Day Meal schemes, PDS and ICDS through people’s participation, specially that of women who would like to bring nutritious food to their children.

We need to grow more food and nutrition everywhere, in villages and in cities—in communities, in schools, in backyards, on roof tops and terraces. These Gardens of Nutrition and Gardens of Hope can contribute to creating a malnutrition and hunger free India. Gandhi Ji had started a Grow more Food campaign and Lal Bahadur Shastri encouraged turning lawns into edible gardens. That spirit needs to be cultivated again to free India from the clutches of global agrichemical corporations.

Source

Dr. Vandana Shiva, EcoWatch, 17 August 2015

25.

GMOs And The Destruction Of Indian Agriculture Government In Collusion With The Biotech Conglomerates

Released in late July, the final report of India's Supreme Court-appointed Technical Expert Committee (TEC) on field trials of genetically modified crops reveals all of what is wrong with governance and regulation in India when it comes to GMOs (genetically-modified organisms). So says Aruna Rodrigues, lead petitioner in the Supreme Court for a moratorium on GMOs. This report is the fourth official report which exposes the lack of integrity, independence and scientific expertise in assessing GMO risk.

The TEC recommends that there should be an indefinite stoppage of all open field trials of GM crops, conditional on systemic corrections, including comprehensive and rigorous risk assessment protocols. The report includes a specific focus on Bt food crops. It also calls for a ban on the environmental release of any GMO where India is the centre of origin or diversity. It also says herbicide tolerant (HT) crops, targeted for introduction by the regulator, should not be open field-tested. The TEC "finds them completely unsuitable in the Indian context as HT crops are likely to exert a highly adverse impact over time on sustainable agriculture, rural livelihoods, and environment."

Writing in *The Hindu* on 12 August, Rodrigues states:

“Sound science and factual data form the basis of the TEC decisions. There is practical and ethical sense too. The TEC insists that the government bring in independence, scientific expertise, transparency, rigour and participative democracy into GMO regulation and policy. The accent is on bio-safety.”

She goes on to discuss some of the dangers involved in exposing huge populations to the risks associated with GMO. It is simply not good enough to treat people as human guinea pigs, without their knowledge or consent:

“GMOs produce “unintended effects” that are not immediately apparent and may take years to detect. This is a laboratory-based, potent technology, described by WHO as “unnatural.” The risk assessment (RA) protocols for GMOs are an evolving process to be performed by qualified and experienced experts who must be responsive to the latest scientific knowledge. The fact is that GMOs involve us in a big experiment in the idea that human agencies can perform adequate risk assessment, which, it is expected, will deliver safety at every level/ dimension of their impact on us — the environment, farming systems, preservation of biodiversity, human and animal safety.”

As to the efficacy of GMOs, evidence is mounting that they are bad for health, bad for the environment, bad for agriculture and bad for food security:

“After 20 years since the first GM crop was commercialised in the U.S., there is increasing evidence, not less, of the health and environment risks from these crops. Furthermore, we now have 20 years of crop statistics from the U.S., of two kinds of crops that currently make up over 95 per cent of all GM crops cultivated globally, (like Bt cotton) Bt and HT crops. The statistics demonstrate declining yields. GM yields are significantly lower than yields from non-GM crops. Pesticide use, the great “industry” claim on these GM crops, instead of coming down, has gone up exponentially. In India, notwithstanding the hype of the industry, the regulators and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Bt cotton yield is levelling off to levels barely higher than they were before the introduction of Bt.”

Rodrigues also wants to know where is the advantage and why are we experimenting given all the attendant risks? We have hard evidence from every U.N. study and particularly the World Bank-funded International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge and Science for Development Report, which India signed in 2008.

“The IAASTD was the work of over 400 scientists and took four years to complete. It was twice peer reviewed. The report states we must look to small-holder, traditional farming to deliver food security in third world countries through agri-ecological systems which are sustainable. Governments must invest in these systems. This is the clear evidence.”

Unsurprisingly, the response to the TEC Final Report came immediately from the Ministry of Agriculture, which strongly opposed the report. This, according to Rodrigues, was to be expected given the conflict of interests:

“The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) promotes PPPs (Public-Private-Partnerships) with the biotechnology industry. It does this with the active backing of the Ministry of Science and Technology. The MoA has handed Monsanto and the industry access to our agri-research public institutions placing them in a position to seriously influence agri-policy in India. You cannot have a conflict of interest larger or more alarming than this one. Today, Monsanto decides which Bt cotton hybrids are planted — and where. Monsanto owns over 90 per cent of planted cotton seed, all of it Bt cotton.”

All the other staggering scams rocking the nation do have the possibility of recovery and reversal, but, as Rodrigues argues, the GM scam will be of a scale hitherto unknown:

“It will also not be reversible because environmental contamination over time will be indelible. We have had the National Academies of Science give a clean chit of biosafety to GM crops — doing that by using paragraphs lifted wholesale from the industry’s own literature! Likewise, Ministers in the PMO who know nothing about the risks of GMOs have similarly sung the virtues of Bt Brinjal and its safety to an erstwhile Minister of Health. They have used, literally, “cut & paste” evidence from the biotech lobby’s “puff” material. Are these officials then, “un-caged corporate parrots?”

Rodrigues argues that Ministries, least of all “promoting” Ministries, should not have the authority to allow the novel technology of GMOs into Indian agriculture bypassing authentic democratic processes. Such processes require the widest possible — and transparent — consultation across India, not least because it is an entire nation that will quite literally have to eat the outcome of a GM policy that delivers up Indian agriculture to it.

Source

Colin Todhunter

Global Research, August 15, 2013

Reference

Nip this in the bud, Aruna Rodrigues, The Hindu, August 12, 2013

26.

Those Responsible For The Agrarian Crisis Cannot Be Expected To Provide A Solution.

By Devinder Sharma

In India, fifty-three expert committees have submitted reports on farmer suicides in the past few decades and yet the serial death dance continues unabated. Despite so much of expert advice, nearly 3-lakh farmers have committed suicide in past 20 years, which averages to two farmers ending their lives somewhere in the country every hour. This paradoxical situation must an amazing feat that can find an entry into the Guinness Book of World Records.

I am not sure how many more committees will be set up to know why are farmer's taking their own lives. But in the meanwhile what is becoming clearly evident is that even these experts are beginning to throw up their hands. A brain-storming session organized by Punjab Farmers Commission to find some newer approaches to address the continuing and deepening agrarian crisis failed to come up with any 'out-of-the-box' solution. Except for making some routine suggestions, they had nothing new to offer.

This reminds me of a news report a few weeks back which said Maharashtra's Agriculture Minister Eknath Khadse had in an honest admission accepted that the State Government was clueless about how to put a stop to farmer suicides in Vidharbha and

Marathwada regions. Such a feeling of despondency prevails at a time when Niti Ayog has set up a task force on agriculture and has also directed State Governments to constitute similar task forces.

I don't know what the use of a task force on agriculture is when Niti Ayog vice-chairman, Dr Arvind Panagariya, has in his inaugural piece on the Niti Ayog website, already spelled out his approach to address the continuing agrarian crisis. He wants a sizeable percentage of the farming population to be forced out of agriculture. The roadmap, howsoever faulty it may be, has already been laid out and I wonder what purpose the task force at the Central and numerous others at the State level are therefore expected to achieve.

This is not the first time that an effort is being made to find solutions to the vexed farming crisis. Earlier too, and for several years now, numerous expert committees had been set up by the erstwhile Planning Commission. At the same time, many State Governments, including Punjab, have brought out Agricultural Policy documents after a series of expert consultations. Also, in preparation for the 12th Plan document, several task force and committees on sustainable agriculture, technology, water, and marketing had given their reports. The agrarian crisis meanwhile has continued to worsen.

I have time and again said that those responsible for the crisis cannot be expected to provide any plausible solutions. Most of the expert committees and panels are dominated by senior bureaucrats, farm scientists, economists and senior agriculture officers who have in one way or the other been part of the system that led to the crisis in the first place. To expect them to provide 'out-of-the-box' solutions therefore is like hoping against hope. If 53-expert committees have failed, it is futile to think that 30 more task forces to be set up across the country, both at the State and the Central level, would serve any purpose.

This is exactly what Albert Einstein had warned us about. He said: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

He was so right. What is not being admitted is that the prevailing agrarian crisis is the outcome of the same kind of policies and approaches in which unfortunately we are now again trying to look for answers. These unworkable solutions that are being routinely suggested fall within the contours of the existing agriculture cropping pattern. Some suggest diversification of crops like shifting from wheat to maize; some suggest water conservation as the key to boosting incomes; some other call for market-driven interventions; and finally everyone talks about need for raising crop productivity.

All these options have been tried in US/Europe and China. And still, US/Europe pays massive farm subsidies, exceeding \$ 1 billion per day, to sustain farming operations. Withdrawing these subsidies would mean a collapse of the high-tech agriculture in the developed countries. Introducing more sophisticated and expensive machinery in India would simply add to farmer indebtedness. Further, despite a thrust on technology-based solutions like in Punjab, the farm crisis has only exacerbated.

Every day two farmers are committing suicide somewhere in Punjab, the frontline agricultural State.

For nearly three decades now, India's rural underbelly has been gradually caving in. Excessive use of chemical fertilisers have turned the verdant lands poisonous, water mining has dried the aquifers leading to the expansion of the desert, and chemical fertilisers and pesticides have played havoc with the environment and human health. With the input prices climbing up year after year and the output prices remaining static, farmers have become a victim of the same economic policies that projected them as country's heroes. Agriculture has turned not only unsustainable but economically unviable.

With all these technological inputs has the income of farmers gone up? I looked at the costs and price calculations for Punjab farmers who are considered to be progressive, using the latest technologies and also bestowed with 99 per cent assured irrigation. The latest reports of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and

Prices (CACP) works out the average net returns from a hectare of wheat and rice Rs 36,052 or Rs 3,029 per month.

Increasing farm income without selling him a new technology or mechanical equipment requires a different approach in policy planning. It requires two immediate steps:

1) Time to discard the usual set of experts to look at agriculture. We need people from divergent streams to think and plan differently. The same set of people who were at the helm of the crisis cannot be expected to provide any meaningful suggestions. This also holds true for the Niti Ayog task force. Looking at the composition of the task force, my only worry is that Niti Ayog's recommendations might only worsen the existing crisis. Albert Einstein was not wrong.

2) The solution to the complicated and vexed Indian farming crisis does not lie in America or China. It is high time we stop citing the examples from the developed countries, which only ends up importing newer and expensive farm machinery and equipment. The solutions lie in our own backyard. If we look carefully in our own backyard, and search for local solutions meeting the specific needs of an agro-ecological zone, we can have ever-lasting answers to ensuring sustainable food security in the long-term. Technological solutions play an important part, but the bottom line has to be on how to provide an assured monthly income package for the farmers.

Source

Devinder Sharma, 30th May 2015

Reference

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27.

Society Will Collapse By 2040

Due To Catastrophic Food Shortages, Says Study

A scientific model has suggested that society will collapse in less than three decades due to catastrophic food shortages if policies do not change.

The model, developed by a team at Anglia Ruskin University's Global Sustainability Institute, does not account for society reacting to escalating crises by changing global behaviour and policies.

However the model does show that our current way of life appears to be unsustainable and could have dramatic worldwide consequences.

Dr Aled Jones, the Director of the Global Sustainability Institute, says: "We ran the model forward to the year 2040, along a business-as-usual trajectory based on 'do-nothing' trends—that is, without any feedback loops that would change the underlying trend.

"The results show that based on plausible climate trends, and a total failure to change course, the global food supply system would face catastrophic losses, and an unprecedented epidemic of food riots.

"In this scenario, global society essentially collapses as food production falls permanently short of consumption."

The model follows a report from Lloyds of London which has evaluated the extent of the impact of a shock scenario on crop

production, and has concluded that the "global food system is under chronic pressure."

The report said: "The global food system is under chronic pressure to meet an ever-rising demand, and its vulnerability to acute disruptions is compounded by factors such as climate change, water stress, ongoing globalisation and heightening political instability.

"A global production shock of the kind set out in this scenario would be expected to generate major economic and political impacts that could affect clients across a very wide spectrum of insurance classes. This analysis has presented the initial findings for some of the key risk exposures.

"Global demand for food is on the rise, driven by growth in the world's population and widespread shifts in consumption patterns as countries develop."

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) projects that global agricultural production will need to more than double by 2050 to close the gap between food supply and demand.

The FAO found this year that over 5 per cent of the population in 79 developing countries would be undernourished.

The global market for agricultural insurance is growing at an average of 20% per year, and has quadrupled in size since 2005.

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THE AUTHOR

Dr. Sahadeva dasa (Sanjay Shah) is a monk in vaisnava tradition. His areas of work include research in Vedic and contemporary thought, Corporate and educational training, social work and counselling, travelling, writing books and of course, practicing spiritual life and spreading awareness about the same.

He is also an accomplished musician, composer, singer, instruments player and sound engineer. He has more than a dozen albums to his credit so far. (SoulMelodies.com)

His varied interests include alternative holistic living, Vedic studies, social criticism, environment, linguistics, history, art & crafts, nature studies, web technologies etc.

Many of his books have been acclaimed internationally and translated in other languages.



Farmers Are A Dying Breed

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Every 5 years the United States Department of Agriculture sends all the farmers a survey called the Agricultural Census. And every five years once all the results are tallied and without fail, an alarm bell goes off. The national average age in farming keeps climbing up and the trend is ever upward. Farmers around the world are getting old.

Where have all the young farmers gone? Why the youngsters are leaving the family farms and showing no interest in what's supposed to be the oldest and the 'noblest' profession?

This is because small scale agriculture is being deliberately stifled. Pro-corporate policies are making farming non-viable and farmers are left with no other choice but to quit. Farmers are a dying breed and family farming will become history soon.

Writing in the Newsweek magazine (April 10, 2014), Max Kutner says: "For decades, farmers across the country have been dying by suicide at higher rates than the general population. The exact numbers are hard to determine, mainly because suicide by farmers are under-reported (they may get mislabeled as hunting or tractor accidents, advocates for prevention say) and because the exact definition of a farmer is elusive."

A society disconnected from its food source can never know peace, prosperity and good health. Aldo Leopold warns, "There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace."

Dr. Sahadeva dasa

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