Week 3: What is the Food Problem?

Current Situation

FAO, “Food: A Fundamental Human Right”
1. What international agreements have identified access to adequate food as both an individual right and a collective responsibility?

2. What obligations does the right to be free from hunger and the right to adequate food place on government?

Myers, “Hunger in the World: Costs and Benefits of Remedies”
1. What is “food insecurity” about and what are 4 ways that food insecurity affects peoples lives?

2. How many people in developing countries are undernourished and which regions of the world have made the greatest & least progress in reducing malnutrition during the 1990s?

3. According to Myers, in a world with plentiful food supplies, why is the world hunger situation so dismal and what are the 5 priorities areas in his business plan to fight hunger in developing countries?

Von Braaun, “The World Food Situation: An Overview”
1. According to von Braun, what are the 4 global food and nutritional problems?

2. According to von Braun (IFPRI), what are the 4 drivers that affect the world food system?
3. According to the IFPRI-Impact project, what would be the additional annual cost to come close to achieving the MDG’s goal of halving the number of malnourished children by 2015 and what are 5 types of investments (key drivers) needed?


1. Natural disasters can affect food security in uneven or complex ways. What are 3 factors that affect how natural disasters impact different communities and groups?

2. What do (3 lessons) these two emergencies (i.e., the locust infestation & the tsunami) illustrate?

**FAO, “Crop Prospects and Food Situation–Food Emergencies Update No. 3, May 2007”**

1. Which region of the world is currently facing the most food emergencies?

2. What are the main political/social and weather-related causes of the current food emergence?

**McLaughlin, “Hunger is Spreading in Africa”**

1. Despite progress in boosting democracy, ending wars, and economic growth, Africa is becoming less and less able to feed itself. What are 3 reasons for this failure?

2. According to FAO, what data indicates that malnutrition is increasing in Sub-Saharan Africa?

3. While famines are rarely a surprise today, they still occur. What is one of the stumbling block to preventing famines?

**Causes of Hunger, Famine & Food Security**

**Siegel, “In Sudan’s Darfur: Action, Not Just Aid”**

1. According to Siegel, what is the cause of the humanitarian crisis in Dafur?
2. According to Siegel, what are 5 actions that the international community should take to address the crisis in Darfur?

McLaughlin, “In Africa, When it Rains, it Swarms”
1. What may cause more destruction (in West Africa) than any current African conflicts and what spawned this plague—the worst since the 1980s?

2. What’s the tragedy about the plague and what is one reason for donor’s ineffective response?

Itano, “AIDS Adds to the African Food Crisis”
1. Why is AIDS not just a health crisis?

2. What do families do to deal with the extreme pressure on household resources, as a result of AIDS?

3. How has AIDS changed marriage customs in central Malawi?

Pepper, “Zimbabwe’s Army Takes Over Black Farms”
1. What is the Mugabe government doing to combat the food crisis and fill the government’s grain silos?

2. This year’s grain crop is expected to be only half as large as in 2000. What did the Mugabe government begin to do in 2000, which the article implies has contributed to Zimbabwe’s current food crisis?

Cobbin, “Time to End Cotton Subsidies”
1. What ruling did the WTO’s appeal panel recently make and what does the ruling require the US to do?
2. Why did a church-based social activist in Mozambique exclaim, “Is there really one law for the rich and one law for the poor?”

3. In 2004, how much aid did the US give to Sub-Saharan Africa’s 540 million residents, compared to the total support that it gave to its 7,500 cotton farmers?

Success Stories

Haines, “Massive Flooding Returns, but Mozambique to Mozambique Prevents Disaster”
1. Despite massive flooding, why did Mozambique not face a massive humanitarian disaster like the one that occurred six years ago?

2. Over the past year, how has the Mozambican government revamped (the focus of) its disaster management agency?

Ross, “Brazil Makes Headway in “Zero Hunger””
1. What has President Lula done in an effort to stamp out hunger in Brazil and how is the program funded?

2. According to Mr. Grazino, what does “Zero Hunger” do that has never been done before in Latin America?

Tergat, “How a Simple Meal Helped the World’s Top Marathoner”
1. Worldwide: a) how many people loose their lives every day because they couldn’t get enough to eat; b) how many hungry people were there last year, despite frequent & loud commitments by world leaders to cut in half the number of hungry people by 2015; and c) how many children run the risk of seeing their lives either cut short/ruined because of malnutrition?

2. Since his days as a (WFP) beneficiary, what has Tergat learned (4 examples) about what school feeding programs can do?
Future Concerns

Llana, “Ethanol Policy Divides Latin America”
1. Why are some Latin American leaders and some analysts critical of the US’s efforts to produce ethanol in order to reduce its dependance on foreign petroleum?

2. Why has the recent increase in the price of corn in the US resulted in an increase in the price of tortillas in Mexico—but has had far less of an impact on most Americans?

Dickson, “No Quick Fix to Africa’s Food Problem”
1. According to the IAC report, what are 4 factors that combine to make alleviating food shortages in Africa more complex than it was to alleviate hunger in Asia?

2. The IAC report emphasizes that creating a situation in which the continent (i.e., Africa) is able to provide enough food for its population will require actions at many levels. What are 3 actions/things that need to be done?

Baldauf, “Africans are Already Facing Climate Change”
1. According to a new UN report, what are 3 ways that global warming is predicted to impact Africa by 2080?

2. According to Jason Sterns, an analyst with the International Crisis Group, what factors are tightly linked to many of Africa’s conflicts—such as in Burundi and the horn of Africa?

3. According to Claudia Ringer of the International Food Policy Institute, why is Africa more vulnerable to climate change?