

Plant Foods For People and For Our Planet

Animal agriculture is a major contributor to world hunger. Sustainable cultivation of nutritious plant foods offers our only hope of feeding the world while preserving our planet.

(All facts and figures are referenced in www.thehungersite.com or www.globalhunger.net/global.html)

The Dimensions of Hunger

- Worldwide, 840 million, or one in seven, people suffer from chronic hunger. The vast majority live in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- 24,000 people per day or 8.8 million per year die from hunger or related causes. Three-fourths are children under five.
- Chronic hunger also causes stunted growth, poor vision, listlessness, and increased susceptibility to disease.
- In the US, more than 30 million people, including 12 million children, are classified "food insecure," meaning that they are hungry or lacking food prospects.



The Causes of Hunger

Only 10% of hunger deaths are attributed to catastrophic events like famine or war. Most are due to chronic malnutrition caused by gross maldistribution and the resulting waste of food resources.

Although food needs are fairly evenly distributed among the world's people, food resources are closely controlled by powerful economic interests. Distribution is governed by economic incentives, rather than by need. This can be illustrated by the persistence of hunger in the US, with its vast food surpluses, and by the fact that the number of the world's hungry is roughly equivalent to the number of overweight people.

Waste of Food Resources

Maldistribution of food resources encourages their waste by non-sustainable agricultural practices, such as depletion of cultivable land, topsoil, water, energy, and minerals, and the conversion of plant to animal protein.



A meat-based diet requires 10-20 times as much land as a plant-based diet. The process begins with the clear-cutting of forests to create pasture for cattle and other ruminants. Eventually, the land is turned into feedcrops for animals raised and slaughtered for food.

Depletion of topsoil and minerals begins soon after the trees are cut down and escalates with tilling. Without the plant growth to hold it in place, topsoil, laden with minerals, fertilizer, and organic debris, is carried by rain and melting snow into nearby streams. This contributes more water pollutants than all other human activities combined.



The insatiable demand for animal feed crops leads to the use of sloping land, with greater runoff, and arid land requiring irrigation. Irrigation accounts for more than 80% of all water available for human use, leading to water shortages.

Proposed Solutions

The grains and soybeans fed to animals in the US alone would provide sufficient calories to solve the world hunger problem.

Yet, production of animal protein in low-income countries is growing rapidly, exacerbating further the maldistribution of food resources. Western agribusiness interests seek to expand the demand for their products and to export factory farming practices to these nations.

Such a development would have disastrous consequences. The resulting drawdown of grain supplies would precipitate major famine. The public health impacts would impose an intolerable burden on the economies of low-income nations. The impacts on soil, water, and wildlife would threaten their fragile ecosystems.



Sustainable cultivation of plant foods favored by low-income nations offers a safe, nutritious, & affordable solution to hunger and malnutrition.

Vegetables, legumes, grains, and fruits can be grown in most climates, on small plots of land. Such crops require minimal investment in equipment, fertilizers, pesticides, water, energy, and they cause negligible soil degradation and water pollution.

Plant foods contain all the nutrients required for healthy growth and vigorous activity. They are free of the cholesterol, saturated fats, hormones, drugs, pesticides, and pathogens that and kill meat-eating residents of affluent nations.