

Agriculture by Marcia Merry

U.N. calls for food aid to Africa

Africa is facing starvation as a result of years-long disinvestment imposed by Anglo-American elites.

On Dec. 28, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) closed out the year with an urgent appeal for food shipments for Africa to relieve massive hunger from huge food shortages plaguing the continent.

On Dec. 11, Britain's Disasters Emergency Committee issued a report entitled "Crisis in Africa," warning that 20 million Africans face death by famine, in part because of the Persian Gulf war plans of the Anglo-American axis.

The FAO's latest warning follows a series of appeals for food aid for Africa by the Rome-based organization during 1990. While ironically, in every report, citing the "improvement in world food security in 1990/91," the FAO said in its November *Food Outlook* report that "regional food supply problems are becoming more acute."

The meaning of the apparent paradox of FAO estimates of "improved" food supplies globally, while food supply "problems" worsen regionally, is genocide. Food availability and the means to produce food are both being systematically denied to entire regions of Africa and other poor areas of the globe.

The annual grain statistics of the FAO reveal this. Except for 1990, the last four years running saw worldwide total grain harvests *below* minimum levels of total grain consumption. The average annual grain harvest was about 1.6 billion tons, while at least 1.7 billion tons was the average annual level of grain consumption (and, at that, a level below requirements for decent human nutrition). World grain stocks were precipitously drawn

down, well below the 17% level that the U.N. considers necessary for minimum food security.

However, the impact of the draw-down was not felt uniformly, but concentrated on the world's poorest populations. Whole nations in Africa have been experiencing the death toll from absolute food shortfalls. The nations with sufficient grain over the past few years, in the main the relatively well-off societies, traded among themselves, and both commercial and food aid grain flows were cut off to Africa and to poorer nations.

This starvation policy was knowingly coordinated by the grain brokering companies, such as Cargill, Continental, Bunge, Louis Dreyfus, Archer Daniels Midland, and by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Their euphemistic term for the process is, "decline in effective demand."

Total world food aid fell from 13 million tons in the mid-1980s, down to little more than 9 million tons last year. In sub-Saharan Africa for example, only 2.7 million tons of food aid were delivered in 1989-90, when 3.9 million tons had been pledged by donor nations. The donor nations simply reneged. And people died.

Now, the situation is worsening by the hour. And the Dec. 28 FAO report further warns that food aid needs for 1991 are expected to increase sharply. African nations have an impossible balance of payments crisis, and soaring oil prices have hit on top of that.

The new FAO report, however, cites the causes of food shortages in

Africa as civil wars and drought. The deeper, underlying cause is the deliberate obstruction of all stages of infrastructure development that has undercut farming and all sectors of vital economic activity. The food cartel companies, the IMF, World Bank, and the U.S. Departments of State and Agriculture coordinated this.

The nations most afflicted are Ethiopia, Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, and Liberia. But there are regions hit hard throughout the continent. From Mauritania in the west to Ethiopia in the east, there have been two successive years of low or poorly timed rain, so that these Sahelian nations are in severe need. The report stated, "Of most concern is the rapidly deteriorating situation in Sudan and the continuing food emergency in northern Ethiopia." The London Disasters Emergency Committee estimates that right now in Ethiopia, 3.5 million people are in need of 800,000 tons of food aid.

On Dec. 17, the Washington Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan issued a press release headlined "Statement on the Food Situation in Sudan," in which they stated that, "cereal [sorghum] production will be less than the estimated cereal requirements for the second consecutive year, and with the stocks depleted following the 1989/90 poor harvest, imports of about one 1 million tons of cereal will be required during 1991." The causes for the shortfall include two years of poor rains, and the IMF-enforced lack of means to expand irrigated agriculture and high-technology rain-fed farming.

In September, the IMF declared the Sudan to be a "non-cooperating member," and moved to cut off all funding. A U.S. State Department-funded group, the U.S. Committee on Refugees, is now calling for a trade embargo against the Sudan.