The Food Isn't There!

by Marcia Merry Baker

Nov. 5—The world now faces famine.

We are *not* facing a discrete episode of a "a repeat of the 2008 food crisis," as monetarist commentators would like you to think, as if shortages and suffering will have a beginning and an end. We are running out of food. *The food isn't there!*

Since 2007, when the world monetary system went into terminal disintegration, the needed emergency measures have not been taken, and the continuation of the globalist policies of the last 40 years which have destroyed farm and food capacity, among all other economic activities, now means that people will not eat, on a mass scale.

Figure 1 shows a current map of world hunger, which is set to worsen into world famine. Already a billion people, out of 6.8 billion around the world, are lacking enough food.

Though at the final hour, this breakdown can be reversed, as Lyndon LaRouche has outlined. The following are snapshots of some of the features of the disintegration of the food supply.

Staples Production, Far Below Need

The simplest indicator of the deadly inadequacy of food supplies worldwide, is the volume of annual production of the major foods consumed as staples (grains—rice, corn/maize, and wheat; roots and tubers). It is not increasing relative to population, even at the currently inadequate levels of nutrition. World grains production right now is declining outright.

The status of the harvests of roots and tubers does not even get reported in daily headlines, because only 5% of production of these foods—cassava (manioc), yams, potatoes, and sweet potatoes—is traded on markets internationally; the other 95% is grown, distributed, and consumed locally or nationally. What the supply is of these foods is not considered not a matter of "business" news interest. Yet millions of people depend on them for most, or even all, of their daily carbohydrates.

The world output of cassava (manioc), for example, has risen yearly in recent decades, to a level of 241 million metric tons in 2009, up from 177 mmt in 2000; but well over half of this is produced in Africa, mostly in the Sub-Saharan nations, and is completely insufficient. Per capita, only about 330 pounds of cassava per year has

FIGURE 1

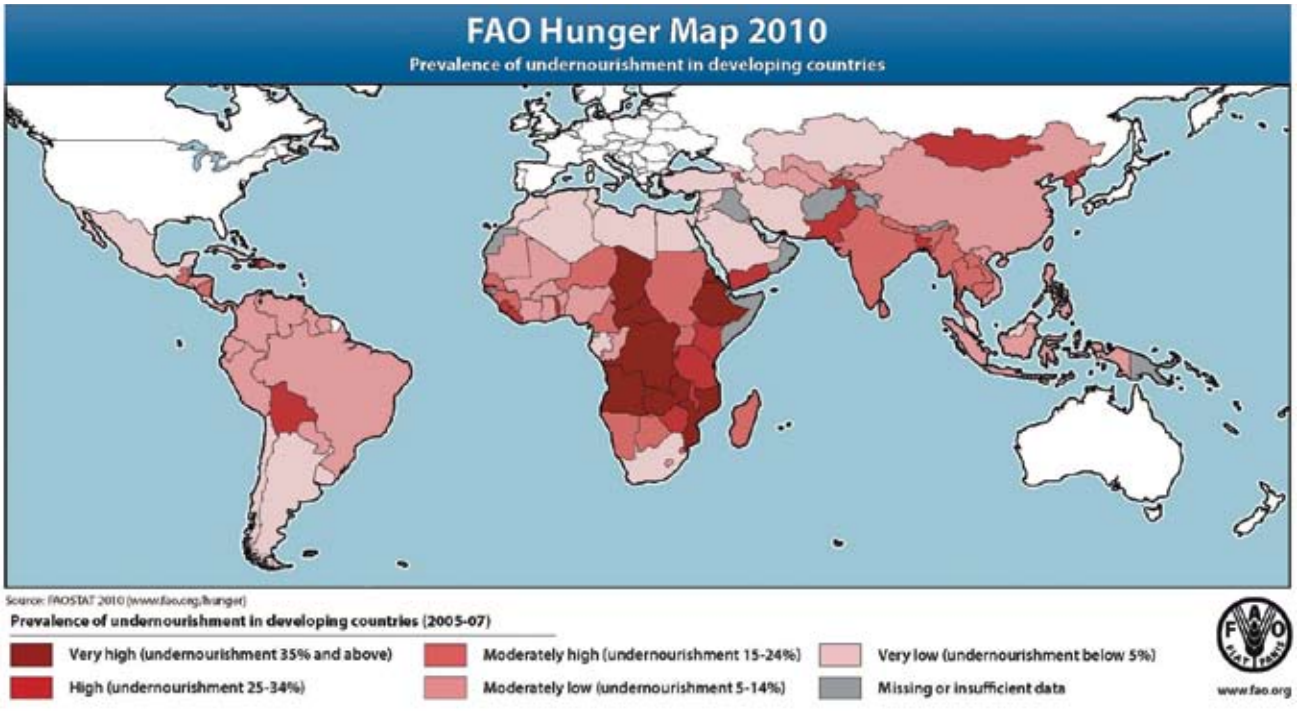

TABLE 1
Total Grains Worldwide

	Output (bmt)	Ending Stocks (mmt)
2008-09	2.241	385
2009-10	2.229	414
2010-11	2.183 (proj.)	381

Source: USDA, *World Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimates*, October 2010.

TABLE 2
U.S. Corn

	Output (mmt)	Ending Stocks (mmt)
2008-09	307.14	42.50
2009-10	333.01	43.37
2010-11	321.68 (proj.)	22.90

Source: USDA, *World Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimates*, October 2010.

been produced in Sub-Saharan Africa for the past five years, with no increase, and below requirements (for dietary quantity, quality, and reserves). Cassava has the lowest protein-to-energy ratio of any of the staple crops. Grains and other foods have not been grown or imported to make up the food-gap in Sub-Saharan Africa. The world hunger map depicts the results.

Total production of grains internationally is in fact, decreasing, and stocks are drastically falling. Look at just the past three years (**Table 1**).

30% of U.S. Corn Crop for Ethanol

Moreover, of the world's grains produced, the increasing diversion to biofuels is extreme. The United States alone accounts for more than 30% (336 mmt) of the total yearly production of corn (maize) of the planet (1.089 bmt), and now is diverting more than 30% of this output into ethanol production for blending into gasoline. **Figure 2** gives the figures for the last 30 years. In effect, the food production capacity of the U.S. cornbelt is being degraded into a monoculture for biofuel.

The U.S. corn production and drop in stocks, for the last three years, are shown in **Table 2**.

But the Obama Administration is demanding worse. On Oct. 13, the Administration raised the allowable level of ethanol to be blended into gasoline from 10% to 15% (for vehicles newer than 2007). The Environmental Protection Agency issued this E15 ruling, saying this will reduce emissions of carbon dioxide, which the EPA has decreed is a toxic pollutant, under the Clean Air Act. (Tell that to the green plants!)

The Obama EPA's action was denounced Oct. 29 in a joint statement from food groups, including the American Bakers Association, the National Meat Association, grocers, and others, who warned that the E15 mandate could result in 40% of the U.S. corn crop going for fuel, with intolerable consequences for the food supply.

Figure 3 is a location map of the current biorefineries in the United States, depicting the new "ethanol belt" concentrated in the Midwest, which once was a high-tech, high productivity food-production region. Of the 204 biorefineries, almost all are corn-ethanol, except for a sugar cane waste facility in Louisiana, and a few milo, wheat, beer waste, and whey plants. Six central cornbelt states account for 131 of the 204 distilleries, with 91 sites in three states alone: Iowa (38), Minnesota (28), and Nebraska (25).

Chain Reactions of Breakdown

One of the many ripple effects of grain shortages, along with the rampant speculation in agro-commodi-

FIGURE 2
U.S. Corn Production, and Use for Ethanol (1980-2010)
Million Tons

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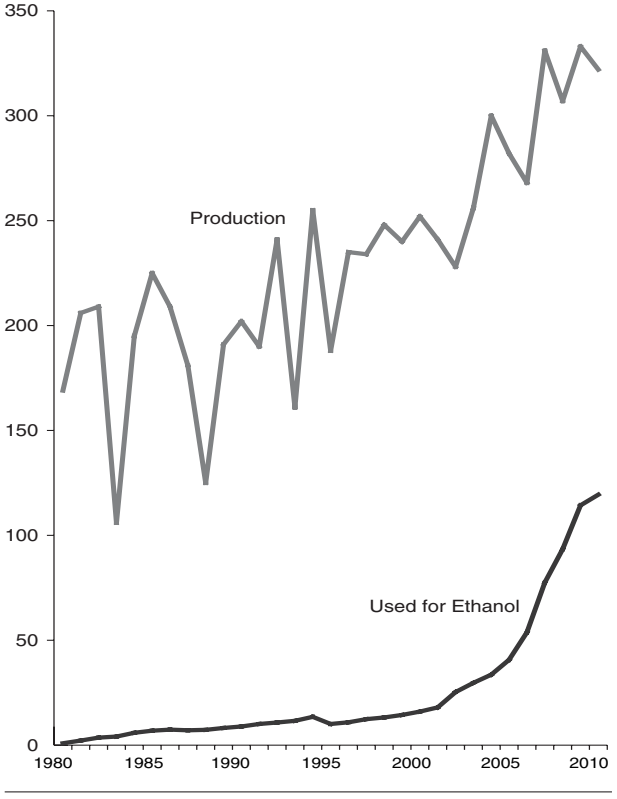

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

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ties, is the effect down the line on livestock feed, to produce eggs, milk, beef, pork, and other animal proteins. For example, the cost of feed makes up 30-40% of poultry production. Large producers of chickens in the U.S. are talking of a 5-10% increase in retail prices by Christmas. Hog farmers are asking, why even place piglets on feed, only to lose money?

The U.S. Agriculture Department's October projection for worldwide beef output next year, sees a drop of 4%, because of ongoing high feedgrain prices. But this is a linear view, leaving out the potential for major disruptions.

Besides being at levels far below need, year-to-year staples output is highly variable, because of needless susceptibility to changes in weather, pests, and other factors which are easily controllable with technology and infrastructure, which have been blocked under globalization.

FIGURE 3

The Eurasian dry spell this Summer, for example, both drastically reduced the harvest this year, and now, because of low soil moisture this Fall, will drastically reduce the area planted to Winter wheat (harvested next Spring).

On Oct. 26, Russian Agriculture Minister Elena Skrynnik projected that, because of dry soils, the planted area of Winter wheat in Russia this year will drop by 25% from desired acreage, down to only 13 million hectares.

The Ob-Irtysh river diversion projects would bring reliable water for irrigation through to vastly expand the area and reliability of the Eurasian wheat belt. But under globalism, it has been blocked.

Major crop pest threats are worsening internationally, because of the thwarting of R&D, and of the technology needed to upgrade the ecology of the planet. A modern strain of blight behind the 1840s Irish potato famine is gaining ground today. Soybean rust has moved from Asia, to South America, and is established now in the southern latitudes of North America.

UG99 wheat rust is moving from eastern Africa, where it was first identified in Uganda in 1999, eastward across the Arabian Peninsula, and has arrived in Iran. It is now threatening to invade Pakistan and the entire Indian Subcontinent.

Livestock pests are also threatening. For example, Southern Africa is now facing a potential invasion of the deadly viral disease of sheep and goats, known as PPR (*peste des petits ruminants*, small ruminants' plague). This highly destructive disease—considered on a par with the cattle disease rinderpest, of the past—is now in parts of South Asia and northern Africa. Southern Africa was spared, until now. Early in 2010, PPR showed up in Tanzania; and containment efforts (vaccinations, surveillance) needing emergency support have not been forthcoming.

All the decades of globalist talk about the efficacy of "markets" and "global sourcing" for food, is now exposed as the ruse it always has been. The food isn't there to be had.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin confirmed on Oct. 25 that the current Russian wheat export ban (implemented this Summer, during the drought and forest fires) will be extended for the whole crop year, that is, up to June 30, 2011. This works out so that only about 3.5 million tons of Russian wheat will have been exported during that time, unlike a recent high year of 18.56 million tons of Russian wheat exported. This action is necessary to protect the supplies for Russia.

Along with such individual nation-protecting measures, cooperation among nations, to implement contingency plantings collaboratively for each crop cycle, in each hemisphere—in the spirit of Lyndon LaRouche's "Four Powers" initiative (United States,

Russia, China, India), could relieve the crisis situation rapidly. But this is entirely opposed by the Obama Administration, as seen in its new ethanol-expansion mandate.

Neo-plantations *à la* the British East India Company, are being established, especially in Africa, to use soil, water, and labor resources from the victim-nation, to produce food/biofuel-for-export-only. Many such ventures are run out of the U.K., on behalf of hedge funds. A recent report stated: "Each year, investors express an interest in the acquisition of over 40 million hectares of farmland, often for the production of agrofuels, a major driver behind the recent wave of large-scale acquisitions of land. According to the World Bank, more than one-third of large-scale land acquisitions are intended to produce agrofuels" (UN Human Rights Council/Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, "Access to Land and the Right to Food," October 2010).

Hyper-Speculation

Speculation in food commodities is off the charts. The blame lies far deeper than the fairy-tale about "supply and demand"—no matter what the scarcities. At root, it's the result of refusal to ban food speculation, and the arrival of a tsunami of hot money onto commodity exchanges, as the monetary system explodes, and there's nowhere else for such zombie money to go. (It should be killed.)

As of the first week of October, the benchmark U.S. wheat price (U.S. hard red Winter wheat), was quoted as $281 per metric ton, which is 55% higher than early July (the official end of the wheat crop year), when prices started rising. Corn shot up 32% over the same time period, and has soared more since. Over the last six months, rice prices are up 45%, and sugar over 55%. Soybeans and all other food commodities, are likewise rising.

U.S. cropland values are climbing, not as a benefit to farmers, but on the speculative wave. In Iowa's Washington County, in October, a parcel of cropland sold at a record of $9,000+ an acre, up nearly 9% from last year.

Who Won't Eat?

For those seeking safe havens of plenty: Don't! Besides the immorality of this objective, reality won't oblige such stupidity. Look at the United States. Over 17% of U.S. food consumption—across all categories *by volume*—is *imported*. For many foods, the percentage is 30-60%.

Food reserves and stockpiles, as once held by many nations, are now all but non-existent. It has been a hallmark rule of the era of the World Trade Organization, to prohibit nations from setting up and maintaining contingency food reserves (milk powder, grains, butter and oils), because these reserves supposedly "distort" world trade. In only a few cases, have national governments bucked the globalist imperium on this policy. Japan, for example, has retained its "ricebowl" reserve.

True, there are trade year "ending stocks" of grains and certain other commodities, which are in the food supply pipeline, either unpurchased or undelivered; but these stocks, too, are dwindling. In recent years, worldwide ending stocks, as a share of consumption, have been barely 20%, which is at a danger level for food security.

Considered as days-of-consumption, even at present poor dietary levels for millions of people, the grains ending stocks amount to only a two-month supply—not enough to reliably bridge crop seasons, help in emergencies, nor constitute a proper food-security reserve. Such a "just-in-time" food policy, is not in time. It's been a deadly WTO pretense all along.

This year, for the combined crop seasons of 2010, the grains ending stocks are plunging, since world grains production is projected at 2.238 billion metric tons, and grains consumption is the same, at 2.236 bmt. There is a huge drawdown of stocks. (The only countertrend, is that poor households and nations won't be able to afford to buy what they need, given the hyper-prices, and thus, to WTO statisticians, grain "surpluses" might persist because people who are in need are deprived.)

Moreover, what stocks there are, are mostly in the control of the huge agro-cartel companies—Cargill, ADM, Bunge, Dreyfus, and others, and not controlled by farmers nor national governments.

Already, there are headline situations of food "gaps," and no food. An emergency situations exist in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

In North Korea, the food deficit is very specific. The nation of 24 million people needs 1.5 million tons of grains over the next few months. This Fall, the harvest is expected to total 5.1 million tons of rice, potatoes, and other crops; but 7 million tons are required. Some 300,000 tons of grain have been lined up. Where is the rest of the 1.5 million tons to be found?

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