

I. Economics

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT, MAY 6–7

Mexico's Summit Against Food Shortages and Inflation Opens Debate on a New Production System

by Marcia Merry Baker

April 22—Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) will host a multi-nation summit to combat food shortages and inflation, in Cancún, Mexico May 6–7. The significance of this food summit initiative by Mexico and collaborating nations comes not only from their response to the worsening hunger in the Hemisphere, as in Haiti and other locations, but also from their taking initiative as sovereign nations outside the structures which have perpetrated food shortages to begin with.

The May summit is, by its make-up, a break-out from the business-as-usual approach from the Western institutions associated with the City of London and Wall Street, which tolerate hunger, enforce dependence on food aid, prohibit infrastructure development, and impose predatory trade patterns. These policies are dictated in recent decades by trans-national commodity cartels, through such agencies as the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the World Trade Organization, the World Economic Forum, and related networks, especially through the UN “climate” agencies demanding reduced food production, in the false names of protecting biodiversity and preventing global warming.

Mexico's invitation to the May event is open for heads of state and other government leaders from nations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to attend, and for representatives of family farming and other organizations, businessmen, and specialists to participate as well, by attending or providing input.

Statement: Sovereign Right to Food

This May summit follows an online meeting April 5 of AMLO and leaders of 10 other nations, on the food

supply and farming crisis. At that time, they issued a [Joint Statement](#) describing the emergency, and listing their objectives. Besides the May summit, the group agreed to create a Technical Working Group to get started on analysis and proposals for concrete action to increase food production and supplies. They cite specifics ranging from mustering more fertilizer, to freezing consumer prices on a “basic basket” of food.



Lopezobrador.org.mx

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, President of Mexico.

The April 5 Joint Statement denounces the “adverse international context” and the “multidimensional crisis” facing the region, as a result of “extra-regional military conflicts ... the impact of the COVID pandemic, and enormous foreign debt ... and the application of unilateral coercive measures which are contrary to International Law,” i.e., sanctions. The statement emphasizes “the need to have a more just international financial sys-

tem” that would allow nations to have “access to the financial resources needed ... to promote economic recovery in order to guarantee the food and nutritional security of our peoples.” The statement reaffirmed the sovereign power of the participating nations, and said they would take “effective actions to eradicate poverty and promote the human right to adequate food.”

The 10 nations which met in April, alongside Mexico, are: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Venezuela, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, whose Prime Minister, Ralph Gonsalves, also represented the 33-nation Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) as its President *pro tempore*.

Over 60 million people in the CELAC region currently lack enough food. The number of people who are “food insecure” as tallied by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, rose 30% from 2019 to 2021, from 43.3 to 56.5 million, and has continued to rise in the months since. The entire nation of Haiti, with its 11.4 million people, is in need of food aid; 4.9 million of them are suffering acute hunger, and of those, 1.8 million are in an “emergency” phase. This is life and death.

What Will the New Policies Be?

The nations involved in this food summit have constituted themselves as an open-ended Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Countries Against Inflation.



WFP/Payvand Khorsandi

A cash assistance line near Les Cayes, Haiti, March 2023.

In Mexico, the AMLO Administration took domestic measures for the food supply in 2022 that, for example, designated a *canasta básica*—a basket of 24 basic food items, from sugar, to rice, beef, onions and beans—and sought to keep down prices. The monopoly food companies, including Walmart, were jawboned to freeze or lower retail prices. Import duties were lifted on certain food commodities, based on the “free market” theory that this would hold down domestic prices. In fact, this backfired, as Mexican farmers were hit hard, and demanded a stop to this destructive logic.

Thus, having on the agenda the challenge to increase production and cut inflation raises the necessity of understanding economics, and also going against the entrenched economic neo-colonialism in this Hemisphere. At present, the Latin American and Caribbean community is the world’s biggest net food exporting region. In particular, huge flows of fruits and vegetables—including everyday basics from onions to berries—go into the consumer market in the U.S., where these foods were once produced domestically. Over the past 30 years, U.S. production was re-located off-shore to Central and South America, to give the transnational cartels profits from cheap labor and production costs. Meantime, U.S. family farms are shut down. This pattern is so extreme, that for the first time, in 2023, the U.S. is expected to be, in dollar terms, a net food importing nation!

Add to this, the use of food as a geopolitical tool by Washington, London and Brussels. A blatant example is Secretary of State Antony Blinken [telling](#) Paraguay’s Foreign Minister March 27 that Paraguay can expect to resume exporting beef to



WFP/Payvand Khorsandi

Relief food is unloaded from a World Food Program truck at a school in the Brooklyn section of Cité Soleil, Haiti, March 2023.

the United States, if it continues its diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, not Beijing, as China.

Schiller Institute Policy Dialogue

The Schiller Institute has been furthering international dialogue on policy solutions to the current strategic situation, especially on the food and health emergency, through its periodic international online conferences. At its most recent conference on April 15–16 (“Without the Development of All Nations, There Can Be No Lasting Peace for the Planet”), Mexican Congressman Benjamín Robles [spoke](#) specifically on the topic, “The Fight for Food, the Fight for a New World Order,” in Panel 3, “End the Casino Economy Before It’s Too Late.” In reporting on the upcoming May conference in Cancún, he listed 16 points for action he sees as necessary.

Robles, who is also President of the National College of Economists of Mexico, said:

I’d like to tell each and every one of you about what is happening in my country, and the first cases of coordination with the nations of Latin America. I’d like to inform you that a few days ago, I issued an extensive and respectful letter of congratulations to the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, for having initiated a direct dialogue with Presidents from the Caribbean and Latin America, to search for paths to resolve the problem of inflation in various nations in the world, using the nations of Latin America as a base.

Whatever is possible to be accomplished at the May summit formally, the event reflects the process now underway worldwide toward a new architecture for economic production. The Schiller Institute’s Agriculture Commission has released three conditions that are fundamental during this transition. They were issued the first week in April, at the same time as the Presidents’ food emergency online conference hosted by AMLO. Here, we reprise those three fundamental conditions.



CC/Dr. Zeuz

Mexican Congressman Benjamín Robles Montoya addressed the Schiller Institute’s April 15–16 conference, speaking on “The Fight for Food, the Fight for a New World Order.”

Farmers, Livestock Producers & Fishermen: Commitment for World Food Production

Given the lack of food for millions, and worsening under-production of food, the current protests by farmers, ranchers, and fishermen for remedies to their own and fellow producers’ crises raise three fundamental points for action.

1. Maintain all capacity for farming, ranching, and fishing production. Suspend orders to shut down or restrict agriculture and fishing under the extreme “green” mandates, now being intensified in the European Union and the U.S.A. Suspend

all sanctions and trade embargoes. Expedite action for a replacement financial system (using the Glass-Steagall principle) to serve the credit and commerce needs of all forms of production. Preserve and expand family farm–scale food and fishing production. Regulate out of existence the speculative, billionaire system, now crashing, which lowers food producer prices and increases consumer food prices, and causes hunger and starvation. Initiate a parity-oriented pricing system for producers of food.

2. Stop playing farmers, ranchers, and fishermen of different countries off against each other. Define the best interests of each and all nations, free from the international cartels. Maintain strong family farm–based food production. Break up the financial and cartel monopoly system now dominating, limiting, and looting food production.

3. Support science-based, high-tech production, and a commodity pricing and trade system structured to enable producers to use the highest level of new food growing technology. Launch needed infrastructure construction, especially for water and power. Prevent waste and loss of production from lack of storage and transportation. Provide for maximum inputs—seeds, fuel, fertilizers, chemicals, mechanization. Launch crash programs to train up youth, and deploy teams of senior farmers, ranchers, and fishermen in nation-to-nation agriculture training programs. Spread the culture of a community of interest in production and development for all.