



Global Food Sources and Unequal Distribution

By Preston Saunders

Since 1995, the amount of malnourished and hungry people on every continent has been on the rise. The gap between wealth brackets is growing exponentially, more so in this century than in any other. Poor populations continue to grow poorer, even if hardworking and frugal, due to wealth inequality and lack of policy that supports a livable working wage. This leads to decline in availability of locally sourced and reasonably affordable produce, misconceptions about our abilities to produce food, and the hoarding of food by economic powerhouse countries. For people in already unstable financial situations, many times a choice has to be made between paying for housing and paying for adequate food supplies. Because global consumption is a volatile market, especially in less-developed countries, food prices are difficult to predict and take a toll on an impoverished family's budgeting. Many of our fruits and vegetables, which come from tropical and farming regions around the equator, are exported to "First World" countries instead of local populations in order to fetch a higher payoff. Thus, citizens in lower wage brackets gravitate toward cheaper, processed foods that negatively impact health in the long-term. This makes it more difficult to work labor-heavy jobs, which are typically gateway jobs, and can result in lowered household income. The cycle continues every day in all areas of the world.

However, policymakers instead see hunger in terms of not growing enough produce.

Productionist theories of modernization place blame on the lack of efficient technologies, and neo-Malthusianism cites the imbalanced ratio of food to humans. These have become the targeted issues in modern media. However, without guidelines, any surplus of food created due to these will simply be transported to wealthy areas. Non-productionist theory emphasizes social inequality, global trade, and poverty— as well as air and soil degradation— as the main causes. Respect for human rights lies at the root of many problems, and food insecurity is one of them.

Food security is becoming a category that requires more rigid legislation. In 1992, the world population consisted of 5.453 billion people. Scientists calculated that if everyone were to receive proper, healthy portions, the global food supply would only be able to sustainably cover 3.2 billion. We are already behind, and if population projections are correct, we will need to supply food for around 9 billion people by 2050. A major reason for this imbalance is the reckless amount of food waste we leave uneaten every year. Many food products are bought in bulk by consumers that can afford to in higher amounts than necessary, depleting supplies and leading to mass unused or spoiled food. Not only do many people in richer countries regard produce as a given, but we throw it away without a thought. For example, in American restaurants, many diners leave half of their meal uneaten. We throw away stale bread and overripe fruit instead of using a compost bin, and we rarely experience the true pain of being hungry. I have definitely wasted my fair share of food as well. In combining the dangers of climate change and overconsumption, without more restrictions on and better governance over the amount of food allotted to each region of the world, global hunger will soon become global starvation unless we learn to regulate resource distribution.

References

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