

CHAPTER 2

CURRENT GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

A. Asian demand, biofuels and natural disasters

The twentieth century witnessed a revolution in methods of food supply, the implications of which are only now being worked out at the policy and institutional levels. The period has been characterized by unprecedented changes in how food is produced, distributed, consumed and controlled – and by high levels of concentration of market share.

Massive price rises of almost 40%¹ in the past year, have triggered rioting from Haiti to Egypt and Bangladesh. Agriculture director general of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, Jacques Diouf, states that the current food crisis “is risk for peace and stability around the world”. Producer countries like Viet Nam, China, Russia and Argentina² are responding with export restrictions “starve thy neighbor policies” to keep prices stable and domestic supply intact. Meanwhile importing countries are instituting price caps to avoid social unrest.

Grain analysts noticed a spike in grain usage by 2007 as worldwide grain reserves had fallen to their lowest levels since the 1970s, when massive grain purchases followed increased Soviet demands.

B. Chinese demand

The current global food crisis was set into motion at the beginning of the decade with the rise of China, fueled by their demand for energy and the accompanying investment strategies that followed in oil and food on the commodities exchange. The dynamics of the global food chains are converging in ways resulting in what experts are calling a “perfect storm of food scarcity” resulting in higher prices globally. Global warming is contributing to shortages as Australia has suffered its

¹ Paul Krugman, Grains Gone Wild New York Times, published: April 7, 2008

² Ibid.

worst drought in more than a century losing a large percentage of its wheat harvest³. Rising costs of oil and transportation costs, changing dietary habits in Asia and investment shifting from the weak U.S. mortgage to the commodities grain markets as well as growing use of grains to produce ethanol and bio-diesel all help to create a global food shortage. Corn has risen to a twelve year high⁴ while rice doubled last year alone. Soybean and sorghum, traditional staple foods, are increasingly being used as animal feed, becoming too expensive for many of the world's marginalized. Around the world riots and demonstrations are taking place against governments' inability to control soaring food prices. Further the planet is adding an additional 70⁵ million people annually along with the desires of more than four billion people⁶ to move progressively up the food chain. Industrialization and development leads to a loss of productive agricultural land lowering production while creating affluence and driving demand for agricultural goods and consumption. However, millions of people living at the margins, those living on fifty cents to one dollar a day will be hit most severely.⁷ 73-million people in 78 countries currently depend on the WFP for food. As shortages increase, and prices rise, these numbers are likely to increase. Between 1960 and 2007 agricultural production has nearly tripled in volume during a period when the population only doubled, resulting in an increase from 285 kilograms of grain to 376 kilograms per person.⁸

As Chinese diets continue towards less traditional staple grains and appetites grow for dairy and meats, an increase in grain imports will be needed for feeding livestock as well as meeting Chinese domestic consumption. (China although a producer of grains is a net importer, importing some 30- 50 million tons to satisfy its

³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Wheat forecast slashed on drought," September 18, 2007, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/business/wheat-forecast-slashed-on-drought/2007/09/18/1189881480562.html>

⁴ *BBC World*, "World food crisis alarms media," April 30, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7373485.stm.

⁵ Lester Brown, "Food Shortages Drive Global Prices to Record Highs," *Food and Health, Tree Hugger*, April 23, 2008.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ US Department of Agriculture, The Foreign Agricultural Service's Production, Supply and Distribution (PSD), World Agricultural Production Archives at www.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/

domestic needs)⁹ This further shrinks the amounts of corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, rice and other grains available to global markets.¹⁰ As stated, much of this grain is used for meat and dairy production. This change in consumption patterns is helping to drive-up food prices. The shift in Chinese diets is happening at a rapid pace, as desires for luxury foods increase strain will be felt on global food supply. Between 1990 and 2006, household consumption of grains halved while intakes of pork, eggs, beef, poultry fish and vegetables increased. In terms of growth, dairy was the fastest growing a phenomenal 296%¹¹ followed by poultry, 144%,¹² with even higher percentages of growth in rural areas. Chinese meat consumption has risen sharply over the past decade; this rise in consumption of meats is accompanied by large grain consumption in animal husbandry. By middle 1995 China, with a population of 1.2 billion people consumed just 30 million metric tons of meat or 25 kilograms per person.¹³ According to Lester Brown, founder of World Grain Database, needs in China during this period required 150 million metric tons of grain as feed for livestock. In 2007 estimates put China's population at 1.3 billion people.¹⁴ Meat consumption by the Chinese had risen to 53 kilograms of meat per person. Chinese consumption is still less than 45% of consumption in the U.S. An additional 277 million tons of grain will be needed for China to achieve parity with the U.S.¹⁵ Overall consumption climbed to 70 million metric tons. Projections of grain needs would require China to use 350 million metric tons of grain to feed livestock alone, an increase of 199 million metric tons of grain.¹⁶ The statistics above show a significant increase in Chinese demand for grain to produce meat for demand driven consumption. These statistics beg the question; where will China source grain to meet

⁹ Antoaneta Bezlova, "Economy-China: Staring At Grain Imports," *IPS-Inter Press Service*, February 26, 2008, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=41345>.

¹⁰ Anthony Faiola, "The New Economics of Hunger," *Global Food Crisis*, *Washington Post*, April 27, 2008, A01.

¹¹ Allan Rae, "Growth in China's meat and dairy consumption may provide trade opportunity," *Massey News*, April 10, 2008, www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-us/news/articl.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Jim Lane. *Meat vs. Fuel: Grain use in the U.S. and China, 1995-2008* (Miami: Biofuels Digest Research, April 2008), pp. 1-9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ World Resources Institute, "Agriculture and Food - Country Profile" www.wri.org

¹⁶ *Meat vs. Fuel: Grain use in the U.S. and China, 1995-2008.*

its growing demands? According to advance estimates India's grain production is slated to reach an all time high of 227.3 million tons.¹⁷ With per capita Indian consumption well below that of the U.S. at 197 million metric tons in 2007¹⁸ less India's planned production of 30 million gallons of bio fuels, ethanol and bio diesel in 2007¹⁹, allows for Indian grain exportation. The United States also saw an increase in grain production of 157 million tons.²⁰ Bio fuels in the same period required 25 million tons²¹; the increase in production less ethanol production allows for net exports of grains from the U.S. Further 2007 saw an increase in global grain production with a record 2.3 billion tons, an increase of 95 million tons from 2006.²² The leading exporters of grains (including barley, corn, millet, wheat, sorghum, mixed grains, rice and oats,) are the U.S. exporting 106.1 million tons, Argentina (28.1 million tons), Canada (18.6 million tons), EU (14.3 million tons), Russia (13.1 million tons), Australia (10.6 million tons), Thailand (9.3 million tons), Kazakhstan (10 million tons), Brazil (8.7 tons), and Vietnam with 5 million tons of grain.²³

C. Biofuels

Jean Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food calls the practice of using food crops for fuel production a "crime against humanity".

The amounts of grain being diverted to fuel our car is on the rise and a significant contributor to the rise in global food prices. Globally, 255 million tons²⁴ of grain is being converted into energy. In the U.S. ethanol plants are being assembled at great

¹⁷ *Commodity Online*, "India's food grain production at record high: RBI," April 28, 2008, <http://www.commodityonline.com/news/topstory/newsdetails.php?id=7743>.

¹⁸ *Newindpress*, "India's per capita food grain consumption lower than US," May 8, 2008, <http://www.newindpress.com>.

¹⁹ Xavier Navarro, "India's first biodiesel plant has started production," *AutoblogGreen*, October 18, 2007, www.autobloggreen.com.

²⁰ Jim. Lane, *Meat vs. Fuel: Grain use in the U.S. and China, 1995-2008* (Miami: Biofuels Digest Research, April 2008), pp. 1-9.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Brian Halweil, "Grain Harvest Sets Record, But Supplies Still Tight," *World Watch* (2008), www.worldwatch.org.

²³ US Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service: Grain World Markets and Trade, "World Agricultural Production Archives"2007 at http://www.fas.usda.gov/wap_arc.asp

²⁴ "Grain Harvest Sets Record but Supplies Still Tight."

speed as a means to counter high oil costs.²⁵ Increased demand for bio fuels is turning wheat fields into corn fields for manufacturing ethanol. The U.S. has increased production by 85% with more increase expected in 2008. According to Lester R. Brown, the world is entering into the most severe food-price inflation in history with wheat reaching \$10.00²⁶ a bushel on the Chicago Board of Trade in December of 2007. Soybeans traded at \$13.42 the highest price ever. Higher oil prices have caused an explosion in the number of distilleries producing ethanol in the U.S. Ethanol production used 54 million tons of grain in 2006, rising to 64²⁷ million tons in 2007.²⁸ Moreover additional distilleries are being built (62 currently under construction). When these plants become operational in late 2008 ethanol for automotive fuel is projected to need 114 tons of grain per year or 28% of projected grain harvest in the U.S.²⁹

D. Livestock, Global Consumption of Grain

The rise in global meat consumption increases the amount of grains needed as feed for livestock. Large land areas are devoted to grain production for animal feed.³⁰ Globally some 627 million tones of grain are devoted to livestock³¹ Moreover, 5 pounds of grain is needed to produce every pound of beef.³² The U.S. where food production is said to be unsustainable, is home to seven billion livestock animals.³³

²⁵ Jim. Lane, *Meat vs. Fuel: Grain use in the U.S. and China, 1995-2008* (Miami: Biofuels Digest Research, April 2008), pp. 1-9.

²⁶ Lester R. Brown. "Why Ethanol Production Will Drive World Food Prices Even Higher in 2008," Earth Policy Institute, January 24, 2008.

²⁷ Department of Energy, Office of Fuels Development, Biofuels Program, "History of Biofuels," web site www.ott.doe.gov/biofuels/history.html.

²⁸ Brown, "Why Ethanol Production Will Drive World Food Prices Even Higher in 2008."

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ 302 million hectares of land are devoted to producing feed for the U.S. livestock population -- about 272 million hectares in pasture and about 30 million hectares for cultivated feed grains. From David Pimentel, "Eight Meaty Facts About Animal Food," <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/1997/08/970812003512.htm>.

³¹ David Morris, "Ethanol and Land Use Changes" Policy Brief, The New Rules Project, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, (February 2008), pp. 1-5.

³² Renewable Energy Works, "The Meatless Diet," <http://www.renewableenergyworks.com/sustainability/meatless.html>.

³³ Pimentel, "Eight Meaty Facts About Animal Food."

Every year an estimated 41 million tons of grain goes to produce 7 tons of animal protein. The amount of grains consumed by livestock is five times greater than consumed by the entire U.S. population.³⁴

Animal husbandry is also costly in terms of consumption of fossil fuels for agricultural inputs.³⁵

E. Soaring oil prices, Asian energy demand

Oil has also reached an all time high of \$126 dollars a barrel³⁶ as of May of 2008. Modern agriculture practices use fossil fuel products from fertilizers in production to fuels in harvesting and distribution.

Transportation costs are rising; gasoline prices in the US have breached the \$4 dollar mark. As of April of 2008 soaring oil prices have not slowed China's oil demands. Statistics show that Chinese demand is growing significantly in the 1st quarter of this year. Chinese consumption of gasoline, kerosene and diesel fuel rose by 16.5 percent to 52.73³⁷ tons while crude oil importation rose 8 % to 91.8 million tons.³⁸

F. Global Warming, changing weather patterns

Erratic weather patterns causing droughts in Australia further help drive food prices upward. Australian rice production has been devastated by six years of drought, reducing the rice crop by 98%.³⁹ The impact of shortages is being felt globally, from Port a Prince, Haiti to Bangkok Thailand where rice prices have doubled in the last

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Grain production, on average, requires 3.3 kcal of fossil fuel for every kcal of protein produced. See Pimentel, "Eight Meaty Facts About Animal Food."

³⁶ Members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries have said there is no need to increase oil output. They say high oil prices are due to the U.S. dollar's decline in value, compared to other currencies, and surging investments in commodities. From *VOA News*, "Oil Prices Still Soaring, Hit Record: \$126 a Barrel," May 9, 2008.

³⁷ China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Association (CPCIA), www.cpcia.org.cn/english/english.htm

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Keith Bradsher, "As Australia dries, a global shortage of rice: Drought contributes to shortage of food staple," *Business, International Herald Tribune*, April 17, 2008, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/04/17/business/17warm.php>

year. Australia's drought is one of many contributing factors leading to violent protests in Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Italy, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, the Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Yemen as well as export restrictions in major exporting countries.

Some of the immediate short term solutions should be reexamined. Export restrictions may cloud price structures for farmers. However, some of the Asian Development Bank approved measures such as aid cash to increase purchasing power, credit, farm inputs, food for work programs and food stamp programs are possible short term applications. Increased productivity through technology and research and development should be developed as long term programs. Threats from the global food crisis, which, according to The World Bank, threatens to push 100,000 more people into poverty, may be lessened with some key steps taken early on. World Bank President Robert Zoellick has called for a "New Deal" of global food policy and asks for an additional 500 million dollars from donor countries to fill the gap at the WFP.⁴⁰ Moreover aid should be enlarged to include humanitarian efforts and avoid practices that disrupt local markets like huge injections of grains, which have been devastating to local markets in the past. Zoellick also called for a "One Percent Solution" whereby sovereign wealth funds⁴¹ would channel 1 % of their US 3 trillion in investment potential into Sub Saharan countries. The International Monetary Fund should reform policy to address the global financial crisis including recent key reforms agreed on by the fund's Executive Board

"[t]he strategic refocusing of the Fund on its core mandate based on its comparative advantage, to strengthen the Fund's role in promoting global financial stability and international monetary cooperation"⁴².

Further exporting countries seeing windfalls from global grain price hikes should devote a percentage of increase to grain importing countries in

⁴⁰ The World Bank, News and Broadcast, Vol.03, No.08 Activities of UNEP/ROLAC April, 9th 2008.

⁴¹ Sovereign wealth fund (SWF) is a state-owned fund composed of financial assets such as stocks, bonds, property or other financial instruments. From investopedia, www.investopedia.com/terms/s/sovereign_wealth_fund.asp.

⁴² Laura Wallace, "Ministers Resolve to Counter Slowdown, Combat Food Hikes," *IMF Survey Magazine*, April 13, 2008.

order to ease food deficits. The U.S. should remove domestic support of agricultural to ease distortions in international grain trade.

G. The Losers

The World Bank reports that for every 1 percent rise in food prices the caloric intake of the poor drops by 0.5 percent while the poor spend 80% of their income on food.

Food aid from the UN World Food Program costs jumped 40% in 2007-2008⁴³ while U.S. contribution-purchase-costs have risen 40% since October of 2007, making food aid less available to the 73 million most vulnerable. The WFP currently administers aid to 37 countries⁴⁴ and is now cutting shipments to the needy as prices rise. According to the WFP 18,000 children are dying daily from hunger and related illnesses. As the next year unfolds, higher oil prices, record grain costs, diversion of staple crops like soybean and corn for ethanol plus the additional distillation plants coming online this year, will further exasperate the political stresses contributing to failed states and near failed states such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Haiti.⁴⁵

Much of the analysis of the crisis comes from a global market perspective, while ignoring the fact that many hungry people are eating from outside of global food markets. Moreover the neglect of internal agricultural policy is troubling as domestic agricultural policies effect domestic consumption. In turn hunger can be traced to low producing households. For example in India where 60 million tons of food grain sits in reserve while 200 million people are undernourished.⁴⁶ Domestic agricultural policies the world over may be motivated by economic prosperity rather than food security, at great costs to its people.

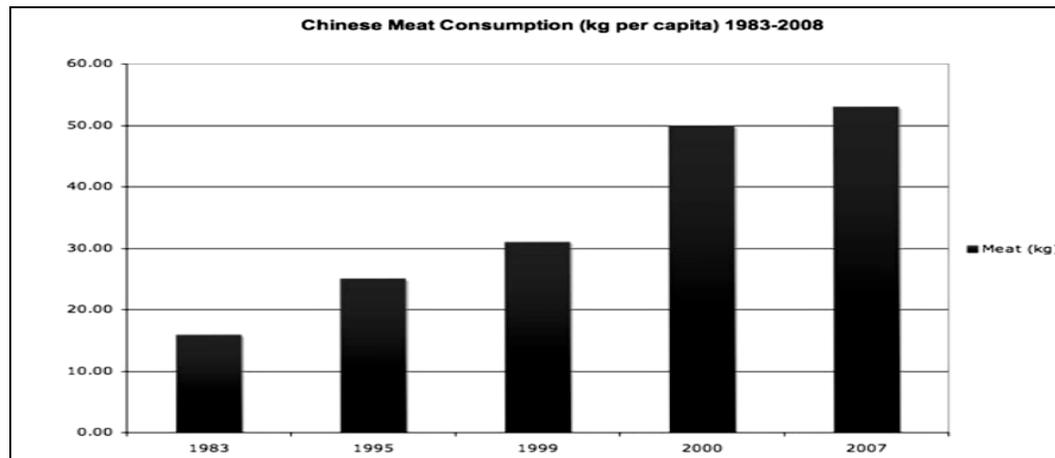
⁴³ World-Grain.com, "WFP Warns of Hunger as Food Costs Soar," February 17, 2008, *Monthly News Report on Grains*, no. 38 (February 2008), <http://www.fao.org/ES/ESC/common/ecg/55/en/mnr0208.pdf>

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ For a detailed list of demonstrations by country see FT.com at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d8184634-07cc-11dd-a922-0000779fd2ac.html>.

⁴⁶ Kunal Kumar Kundu, "What is eating into Indian food basket?" *Economy, Economic Times*, May 9, 2008.

Figure 2.1: Chinese Meat Consumption (kg per capita) 1983-2008



Source: Jim Lane, “Meat vs. Fuel: Grain use in the U.S. and China, 1995-2008,” *Biofuels Digest* (April 2008)

H. Potential for Exploitation in Agriculture/Forced, slavery and child Labor

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), more than 211 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are working globally. Of these 70% work in agriculture while many of these children are working on commercial farms producing goods for export to developed countries.⁴⁷ Moreover, these children are employed in an ever increasingly competitive global commodities market where farmers are pitted against one another in price wars. This encourages, if not necessitates, the use of less expensive child labor, often through coercion and or debt bondage, an outright form of slavery. The fair trade strategy is ignored by many of the major trading houses such as Nestle’ Cargill and ADM. Fair Trade would allow for a fair wage structure helping to alleviate poverty which is a major precursor to slavery. Further, in the case of cocoa in the Ivory Coast, multinational corporations have

⁴⁷ *Global Exchange*, “The News on Chocolate is Bittersweet: No Progress on Child Labor, But Fair Trade Chocolate is on the Rise,” June 2005, <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa/chocolatereport05.pdf>.

increased power through consolidation at the expense of small exporters. American company Cargill was the largest buyer of cocoa beans in 2001/2002 followed by its competitor ADM.⁴⁸ While farmers struggle to lower costs the same set of circumstances benefit global food houses. In the case of cocoa, international prices are kept low, keeping farmers in poverty; this poverty makes the exploitation of labor pervasive. Meanwhile, according to the International Labor Rights Forum, Cargill and ADM are “aggressively lobbying” to drop provisions that would establish a voluntary certification program related to imports made with child labor”.

This paper makes a conscious distinction between family owned farms where children work with their parents, learning the farming trade and the wisdom of their elders. Family farming builds work ethics in children, knowledge of farming practices as well as elevating self esteem. It is not the intention of this chapter to condemn these practices or the people involved in family and community farms where community labor is essential to the well being of the farm. Further, a child working alongside their families on the farm is quantitatively superior to leaving for dead-end city jobs which often end in exploitation. Further an important distinction is made between the examples of family farming and farms exploiting bonded child labor. However, it is important to point out that not all small scale farms are the benevolent type. Small scale producers are often the recipients of exploitation. Small producers in cooperatives may use bonded and child labor by hiring middlemen to supply farm laborers, making transparency difficult and distancing farmers, buyers, manufacturer and ultimately the consumer from their exploitive practices. Forced, bonded and child labor can be found in many countries the world over. From cotton production in Central Asia to cocoa farming in West Africa, sugar cane in the Philippines and vegetable farming in Central America.⁴⁹ The west however is not immune to such practices. The United States employs some 300,000 child laborers in its agricultural sector. No specific international standards on what constitutes child labor exist.

⁴⁸ Actionaid International, *Power Hungry: six reasons to regulate global food corporations*, pp. 1-72.

⁴⁹ ILO, *Bitter Harvest: Child Labor in Agriculture* (Geneva, 2002), INT/00/M17/NOR.

⁵⁰However, The ILO and United Nations set standards of minimum age, define forced labor as well as economic exploitation and slavery-like practices with its benchmark below:

“Light work that does not interfere with education is permitted from the age of 12 years, as is work by children 15 years and above that is not classified as hazardous.”

“The ILO ⁵¹Convention 29 on Forced or Compulsory Labor as:

"all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily."⁵² Convention 29 calls upon ratifying states to "suppress the use of forced or compulsory labor in all its forms."

Further slavery is defined by the United Nation's as:

⁵³ “The United Nations 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery defines slavery to include: debt bondage, serfdom and any practice whereby a person under 18 years of age is delivered by his parent/guardian, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the young person or his labor.”

And lastly, The 1956 Convention on Slavery defines debt bondage as:

⁵⁴“The status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or of those of a person under his control as security for

⁵⁰ Yoshie Noguchi, ILO standards on Child Labour in relation with the CRC-Enforcement processes and what family law specialists can contribute (2005)

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ The MULTILATERALS PROJECT, The Fletcher School, Tufts University SUPPLEMENTARY CONVENTION ON THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, THE SLAVE TRADE, AND INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES SIMILAR TO SLAVERY (7 Sep 1956) BH333.txt

⁵⁴ International Labor Standards, Forced Labor. Fact Sheet No.14, Contemporary Forms of Slavery Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1991)

a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.”

70 percent of child laborers can be found working in agriculture.⁵⁵ Further agriculture is reported to be one of the most hazardous forms of employment. Child workers are often subjected to pesticides while applying the poison to crops without proper protection. Further children lack the training, experience and maturity to operate farming machinery accounting for many fatalities among child farm workers. Child labor and debt bondage often go hand in hand. The promise of a better life, exciting jobs in big cities and loans to impoverished parents are often the catalyst of debt bondage. The interplay between unscrupulous recruiters, farmers and poverty make these forms of exploitation possible. Debt bondage is most often found in rural communities where education is minimal, poor and landless households and migrant labor and an intact class system may be prevalent. Tenant farmers are often caught between costs of production and profits for their produce, surviving from year to year. Wages are often insufficient to cover costs for inputs, tools and supplies. These farmers, often outside of the traditional economic system, are forced to look elsewhere for loans and credit to fill the gaps between income and expenditures from season to season. Tacit support from the international community makes these forms of exploitation viable. ADM claims to buy cocoa from international brokers, the cocoa is then manufactured and sold as chocolate in North American and European markets which may have been farmed using slave labor. Bonded child labor occurs when a child is secured from a family for the use of the child’s labor potential for an amount of money which may be in the form of a loan or credit, usually for an unspecified period of time. Most commonly children are held at a distance from their family; contact is limited or not allowed. Child laborers are responsible for the repayment of the debt and face uphill demands such as repayment for transportation to the jobsite, payments for food which is often inadequate and

⁵⁵ ILO, *Bitter Harvest: Child Labor in Agriculture* (Geneva, 2002), INT/00/M17/NOR.

pay for squalid living quarters. These “company store” practices make debt repayment difficult if not impossible, many children are separated from their families for years and some never see their families again. The unfortunate truth to cheap consumer goods, including food, is child exploitation. Children face a whole host of potential maladies when working in agriculture as bonded servants including: ⁵⁶exposure to pesticides which causes respiratory and nervous system disorders, skin and eye problems. Moreover physical problems occur through heavy lifting and repetitive movement; inhalation of dust and debris from production of food crops further adds to respiratory problems. Working in tropical climates hosts a plethora of potential maladies like deadly snakes as well as dengue fever and malaria. Long hours in the field leave little or no time for education, securing a bleak future for the child workers.

⁵⁷Partial list of maladies faced by child laborers in agriculture including:

⁵⁸Health Related Risks:

- muscle/skeletal disorders/injuries from:
 - repetitive strain injuries where workers are doing repetitive work. Cutting, picking, inspection of crops, root harvesting and processing tasks.
- Exposure to agrochemicals such as fertilizers that can result in forms of cancer, reproductive problems and death
- Agricultural workers suffer higher than normal rates of asthma
- Field workers are at risk to diseases passed from animals to humans (zoonoses)
- Processing agricultural goods in some cases leads to hearing loss

⁵⁶ Green Facts (2008), <http://www.greenfacts.org/en/agriculture-iaastd/1-3/7-small-farmers-trade.htm#0p0>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Bitter Harvest: Child Labor in Agriculture*, p. 16.

Additional hazards and risks to farm workers:

- dusts, fibers, mites, fumes, sprays, micro-organisms, gas vapors lead to respiratory as well as skin and eye problems
- animal husbandry handling leads to potential injuries including bites, goring, and attacks as well as transmitting disease
- unsanitary living conditions, poor water quality and lack of access to a healthy diet and toilet and bathing facilities
- stresses due to heat and cold temperatures
- health and injury risks due to poorly maintained tools equipment along with electric shock from faulty and poorly maintained equipment

The problems faced by farm workers are formidable. The options for a more just future for those working within the agricultural sector are elusive. Corporate Social Responsibility as a means by which to self-govern a corporation may amount to little more than publicity campaigns or may lead to voluntary agreements suppressing slavery and child labor. Further protection may reside within section 3104 of the 2007 U.S. Farm Bill.

The 2007 Farm Bill section 3104 calls for voluntary certification of child labor status on agricultural goods. Further the bill suggests standards that ensure agricultural goods are not made with child and/or forced labor. Finally the bill puts forth requirements including traceability as well as inspection at stages along the supply line; further suggestions include voluntary participation in the supply line and spot inspections. The U.S. State Department will also compile a list of products believed to be made using child or forced labor.⁵⁹ However significant opposition to this policy formation has occurred since the introduction of the 2007 Farm Bill, in

⁵⁹ International Labor Rights Forum, <http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-labor/1194>

particular within section 3104 (3105),⁶⁰ as a letter dated February 12th 2008 from U.S. processors and growers to the Agriculture Committee states:

URGENT: REQUEST TO STRIKE SECTION 3104:

“Dear Agriculture Committee Member: We are writing to voice our concern and opposition to Section 3104 Voluntary Certification of Child Labor Status of Agricultural Imports provisions contained in the Senate’s version of the Farm bill.”

Section 3104 of the 2007 Farm Bill in short provides a regime for anti child and slave labor.

- Section 3104. Export Enhancement Program

This section amends Section 301 of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978. It repeals authority for the Export Enhancement Program, which provides export subsidies to assist in increasing exports of US agricultural commodities. This program was first authorized in the 1985 farm bill, but has not been utilized since the mid-1990.

- Section 3105. Voluntary Certification of Child Labor Status of Agricultural Imports

This section amends Section 414 of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978. It would require the Secretary of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Secretary of Labor, to develop standards that importers of agricultural products into the United States could choose to use to certify that those products were not produced with the use of abusive forms of child labor.

I. Farm workers exploited in the United States.

The focus on poverty in agriculture is deeply rooted in studies of the global south yet exploitation of farm workers is not limited to developing countries. Farm workers are an almost invisible entity in America. However in an increasingly integrated food chain farm workers are connected in a chain that, because of the explosive growth of retail corporations has the power to draw profits towards the top of the chain leaving farm workers to toil in the field, left with inadequate compensation.

⁶⁰ Letter to Agriculture Committee Member, February 12, 2008, http://www.nopa.org/content/newsroom/2008/february/oppose_sec_3104%20_2_.pdf.

February 18, 2008:

Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney Doug Molloy told the Fort Myers News-Press “Vargas and the others are charged with...slavery, plain and simple”.

Section 3014 of the 2007 Farm Act does nothing to protect workers on U.S. soil. The indictment of six people for enslaving farm workers sheds light on a growing problem faced by migrant farm workers throughout the United States. U.S. agricultural workers are caught in the web of global food supply. A once fragmented market is now consolidating into chains of actors including retail giants wielding enormous market influence. This consolidation increases costs to farmers who in turn lower farm worker wages. The United States as much as any developing country is involved in the global race to the bottom as consolidation offers fewer sales avenues for growers thus lowering farm gate prices. Moreover, increasing competition from readily-available cheap-imports of fresh produce has eliminated many smaller farmers altogether. Competition from imports is forcing a reduction in farming costs in order for producers to remain competitive.⁶¹ Moreover adult workers are not exempt from the dangers of agricultural work which is reportedly among the most dangerous jobs in America.⁶² Injuries and illnesses are triple that of other occupations. In the state of California the death rate of farm workers is five times higher than other occupations while each year 300,000 U.S. farm workers are poisoned by pesticides.⁶³ There are more than two million seasonal and year-round farm workers in the U.S. of which 10,000 are children.⁶⁴ The average yearly salary of a farm worker in the U.S. is just \$7500.00-10,000 a year⁶⁵, putting workers below the poverty level; while ADM, the world leader in soy meal, corn, wheat and cocoa production saw a profit of 1.7 billion dollars in 2003.⁶⁶ The downward pressure on farmers is manifesting into forms of

⁶¹ University of California, *Migration, Health & Work: Facts Behind the Myths*, (Mexico: The Regents of the University of California and the Mexican Secretariat of Health (SSA), October 2007), pp. 1-29.

⁶² *Migration, Health & Work: Facts Behind the Myths*

⁶³ Margaret Reeves, et al., eds., *Fields of Poison: California Farm workers and Pesticides* (USA: Californians For Pesticide Reform, 1999), pp. 1-49.

⁶⁴ Oxfam America, *Like Machines in the Fields: Workers Without Rights in American Agriculture* (March 2004), pp. 1-68.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM), *Annual Report 2003*, pp. 1-48.

exploitation that are unacceptable to many Americans yet most of us do not realize that exploitation of farm workers, let alone slavery, is taking place in the United States. However exploitation continues, right under the noses of the average American consumer. The possibilities for strong labor will develop through the interactions between multinationals and labor rather than through direct action and confrontation.

Country Name	1969-1971	1979-1981	1990-1992	1995-1997	2001-2003 provisional	2002-2004 preliminary
Mozambique	58	59	66	58	45	44
Cameroon	27	23	33	34	25	26
Thailand	29	23	30	23	21	22
India	39	38	25	21	20	20
Senegal	23	23	23	25	23	20
Philippines	51	27	26	22	19	18
Viet Nam	32	37	31	23	17	16
Burkina Faso	58	62	21	19	17	15
China	46	30	16	12	12	12
Ghana	24	65	37	18	12	11
Mauritania	53	40	15	11	10	10
Brazil	23	15	12	10	8	7
Malaysia	5	3	3	<2.5	3	3
Russian Federation					3	3

Table 2.1: Prevalence of undernourishment in total population (%).

Source: FAO