From: vasumurti@netscape.net
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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Global Hunger

"Global hunger could be directly attributed to meat-eating." ---Chrissie Hynde

Half the world's population does not receive an adequate amount of food to eat. Ten to twenty million die annually of hunger and its effects. The Institute for Food and Development Policy reports that, "Forty thousand children starve to death on this planet every day," or one child every two seconds.

The livestock population of the United States today consumes enough grain and soybeans to feed over five times the entire human population of the country. We feed these animals over 80% of the corn we grow, and over 95% of the oats. Less than half the harvested agricultural acreage in the United States is used to grow food for people. Most of it is used to grow livestock feed.

Ronald J. Sider of Evangelicals for Social Action, in his 1977 book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, pointed out that 220 million Americans were eating enough food (largely because of the high consumption of grain-fed livestock) to feed over one billion people in the poorer countries.

The world's cattle alone, not to mention pigs and chickens, consume a quantity of food equal to the caloric needs of 8.7 billion people. It takes 16 pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef. According to Department of Agriculture statistics, one acre of land can grow 20,000 pounds of potatoes. That same acre of land, if used to grow cattlefeed, can produce less than 165 pounds of beef.

In his book, *The Hungry Planet*, Georg Bergstrom points out that protein-starved underdeveloped nations export more protein to wealthy nations than they receive. He calls this "the protein swindle." Ninety percent of the world's fish meal catch, for example, is exported to rich countries. One-third of Africa's peanut crop winds up in the stomachs of European livestock. Half the world's cereal crop is fed to livestock and the United States annually imports one million tons of vegetable protein from Third World nations--just to feed its farm animals.

Bergstrom writes: "Sometimes one wonders how many Americans and Western Europeans have grasped the fact that quite a few of their beef steaks, quarts of milk, dozens of eggs, and hundreds of broilers are the result, not of their agriculture, but of the approximately two million metric tons of protein, mostly of high quality, which astute Western businessmen channel away from the needy and hungry."

Jeremy Rifkin, author of a dozen influential books and President of the Foundation on Economic Trends, writes in his 1992 bestseller *Beyond Beef*:

"Cattle and other livestock are devouring much of the grain produced on the planet. It need be emphasized that this is a new phenomenon, unlike anything ever experienced before.

"Contrary to popular belief, the poor are getting poorer each year...Increased poverty has meant increased malnutrition. On the African continent, nearly one in every four human beings is malnourished. In Latin America, nearly one out of every seven people goes to bed hungry each night. In Asia and the Pacific, 28 percent of the people border on starvation, experiencing the gnawing pain of a perpetual hunger."

"In the Near East, one in ten people is underfed. Chronic hunger now affects upwards of 1.3 billion people, according to the world Health Organization--a statistic all the more striking in a world where one third of all the grain produced is being fed to cattle and other livestock. **Never before in human history has such a large percentage of our species--nearly 25 percent--been malnourished.**

"The transition of world agriculture from food grain to feed grains represents an...evil whose consequences may be far greater and longer lasting than any past examples of violence inflicted by men against their fellow human beings."

The Worldwatch Institute has released a remarkable report entitled *Taking Stock: Animal Farming and the Environment*, which lists nation after nation where food deprivation has followed the switch from a grain-based diet to a meat-based one.

Most of the nations importing grain from the United States were once self-sufficient in grain. The main reason they aren't is the rise in meat production and consumption.

Oxfam estimates that in Mexico, 80 percent of the children in rural areas are undernourished, yet **the livestock are fed more grain than the human population eats!** The livestock are exported of course, to satisfy the developed nations' craving for cheap hamburgers.

In the early '60s, sorghum was almost unknown in Mexico. But by 1980, it covered literally twice the acreage of wheat. Sorghum isn't grown for humans. It is fed to livestock. In the late '60s, livestock consumed only 6 percent of Mexico's grain. Today, the figure is over 50 percent.

In country after country the pattern is repeated. Livestock industries are consuming feed to such an extent that now almost all Third World nations must import grain. **Seventy-five percent of Third World imports of corn, barley, sorghum, and oats are fed to animals, not to people.** In country after country, the demand for meat among the rich is squeezing out staple production for the poor.

According to Buckminster Fuller, there are enough resources at present to feed, clothe, house and educate every human being on the planet at American middle class standards. The Institute for Food and Development Policy has shown that there is no country in the world in which the people cannot feed themselves from their own resources.

Moreover, there is no correlation between land density and hunger. China has twice as many people per cultivated acre as India, yet less of a hunger problem. Bangladesh has just one-half the people per cultivated acre that Taiwan has, yet Taiwan has no starvation, while Bangladesh has one of the highest rates in the world. The most densely populated countries in the world today are not India and Bangladesh, but Holland and Japan.

Many of us believe that hunger exists because there's not enough food to go around. But as Frances Moore Lappe' and her anti-hunger organization Food First! have shown, the real cause of hunger is a scarcity of justice, not a scarcity of food.

---Vasu Murti

vasumurti@netscape.net