FAO JUNE FOOD SUMMIT

Showdown over Gorey/WTO Plans To 'Let Them Starve'

by Marcia Merry Baker

The world food summit June 3-5 in Rome, planned last year by the Rome-based United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and others, is deep in the throes of a pre-meeting conflict, with agriculture and government leaders internationally rejecting the tenets of the FAO's theme, "High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenge of Climate Change and Bioenergy." Given the world food crisis of severe shortages and hyperinflation, many nations are re-committing to seeking food security through expanding agriculture and achieving food self-sufficiency. This rightly rejects the opinion-control myths of the era of the WTO (World Trade Organization) that free trade and bioenergy are good for you, and that climate change is the source of all woes and threats.

Lyndon LaRouche and his U.S. political action committee, LaRouche PAC, announced a mobilization in April to "Kill the WTO" in all its forms and thinking (see *EIR*, April 25, 2008). His wife, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, head of the international Schiller Institute, is calling for collaborative world action for emergency relief for all the world's hungry, and for launching agriculture programs to double world food production. She insists that this must become the agenda of the June FAO conference.

This battle for food compels anyone of good will to start thinking in terms of the *physical economy*, and how to both muster emergency aid, and to initiate longer term agriculture expansion. For example, in April, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the world's foremost rice R&D center, released a nine-point program on how to vastly expand world output of rice, which is the staple food for 3 billion people today, and unavailable at any price in some regions of the world today (see box).

The Philippines, where the IRRI is based, was once self-sufficient in rice, and famous for its beautful, centuries-old terraces; it has been downgraded over the WTO/GATT decades to being the world's biggest rice importer. But today, there is literally not enough rice available to import! In April, the Philippine government announced a $1 billion program to end its WTO-era presumption that the "world markets" are reliable for food security, and to re-commit to working toward meeting its own rice needs. These instances exemplify the general momentum building on every continent, to break with the subversion of nations by the "borderless" policies of the WTO, World Bank, IMF, and related entities.

Showdown in Rome

The FAO summit was planned from the start in mid-2007 around entirely different premises (seeAt that time, there was clearly worsening food underproduction, cartel-dictated cash-cropping and seed control, and hunger. Nevertheless, the conference was designed to strictly adhere to Al Gore's signature frauds that agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and human overpopulation are harming the planet, that biofuels are desirable, and that free trade—no farmer subsidies, nor tariffs—was a must.

The summit's co-conveners are the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the network of public-good R&D centers which has been starved for funds for 25 years, and is tagging along on the climate change hoax; the International Fund for Agriculture Development (an FAO sister UN outfit); and the UN's World Food Program, which has stood by, as annual tonnage of world food relief fell from 15 million metric tons (in the 1990s) to below 8 million last year.

The FAO website page, "Why a Conference Is Being Held Now," runs a graphic asserting that agriculture contributes 14% of the world's harmful greenhouse gas emissions. When Al Gore gave that line to rice growers in India earlier this year, he had to flee from their vehement protests.

The FAO held eight pre-conference events, called "expert meetings," over February through April. Topics included, "bio-energy policy, markets and trade, and food security," "climate change adaptation and mitigation," and similar crap. The documents produced from these sessions, now available for pre-June discussion, are rife with anti-technology, stock lies that agriculture is exceeding the resource base of the world. The Malthusian implication is that population must be reduced.

The FAO was initiated in 1943, by representatives of 44 governments meeting in Virginia—with the encouragement of President Franklin Roosevelt—to found a permanent organization for food and agriculture. (A predecessor organization, the International Agriculture Institute, was founded in Rome in 1908 by American System figure David Lubin, after whom the FAO library is named.) The first FAO session was then held in 1945 in Quebec City, as part of the United Nations; in 1951, the agency was moved to Rome. In the beginning, the workings of the FAO, involving data-keeping, and providing a forum for discussion, were nominally dedicated to ending hunger, but in recent decades the FAO has moved lock-step into line with the cartel-controlled globalization that has undercut national agriculture programs.

The FAO June meeting is intended for heads of state, ministers, and private and NGO entities. Italian President Giorgio Napolitano and Pope Benedict XVI are scheduled to address the opening session, along with FAO Director General Jacques Diouf, and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Announced as attending, so far, will be French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Brazilian President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva, who has been leading the charge for a world biofuels market. He toured Africa in April to promote biofuels plans.

President Lula personifies the clash raging over how to respond to the desperate need for more food in the world. The switchover to Al Gore's biofoolery in just the last five years, has shifted a huge part of the world's corn (maize) capacity in the U.S.A., and sugar cane capacity in Brazil, into fuel, and

Rice Research Body: New Green Revolution Needed

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) of "Green Revolution" fame, based in the Philippines, in early May, said that a "new agronomic revolution" was possible and urgently necessary to meet the global food and food-price crisis.

The IRRI's released report, "The Rice Crisis: What Needs To Be Done?" confronts the failure of the world's developed nations to continue funding the breakthrough research of the "Green Revolution," instituted after the 1980s. Already from 1991-2000, public investment in agricultural research and development from the United States, Europe, and Japan fell, in absolute terms. That has gotten worse since 2000, with the Bush Administration now at the extreme of contemplating—amidst a food crisis threatening famine in many countries—a 75% cut in U.S. funding of the Green Revolution institutes.

As a result, says IRRI head Robert Ziegler, the astonishing rice yield growth of 2.14% annual average from 1970-1990, has been replaced by virtual yield stagnation since 2000. (Dr. Ziegler was interviewed on the research funding crisis and its impact, in *EIR*, March 2, 2007.)

The IRRI puts what has to be done scientifically, in nine steps:

- "Bring about an agronomic revolution in Asian rice production" by filling an "unexploited yield gap" of 1-2 metric tons more per hectare, which Asian rice farmers could produce. Key are agricultural extension service-type programs to improve land preparation, water and nutrient management, and pest and disease control.
- "Accelerate the introduction and adoption of higher yielding rice varieties," as the first Green Revolution did.
- Reverse the decline in worldwide funding for scientific agricultural research, and develop new rice varieties with increased tolerance to drought, flooding, salinity, insects, and diseases.
- "Accelerate research on the world's thousands of rice varieties," 90% of which have not been studied scientifically.
- Cut post-harvest losses by new technologies of storing, drying, and processing.
- Train a new generation of rice scientists and researchers, particularly in Asian countries.
- Increase public investment in the infrastructure of agriculture—irrigation systems, and road and rail grids.
- Improve marketing systems for both inputs and outputs of agriculture.
- Strengthen "food safety nets" for the urban and rural poor, especially nutritional programs focussing on early childhood.

—Paul Gallagher (See full report at www.irri.org).

out of food. This is straight out of the 1700-1800s era of the British East India Company, when a private, powerful political elite dictated what crops must be grown where (e.g., jute, indigo, and cotton), and who should starve in doing it. Then, it was done at gunpoint; today, it is done by obeying the WTO, with the collaboration, to date, of the FAO.

In March 2007, Lula and President George Bush established a bilateral pact for biofuels, to promote a world market for bioenergy, including setting up biofuel plantations and export operations in Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa, as well as from the U.S.A. and Brazil. Nations involved include Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Ghana, and Kenya, among others. The powers behind the hype include Cargill, ADM, Louis Dreyfus, Bunge, George Soros, Bill Gates, and behind them, the oligarchical financial circles demanding fascist economics as the response to the financial/economic collapse, and the starvation they themselves have pushed all along.

"Crimes against humanity" has been the description for the Bush/Lula bioenergy plans, by a number of world leaders. On April 25, Giulio Tremonti, Minister for Finance and Economics of the new Italian government, used those words to denounce biofuels, and he named Al Gore as the main political figure responsible for the crime. Former President Jimmy Carter said April 29, on a Washington, D.C. radio show, that "People have been misled" about bioenergy. India's Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram called the rush for biofuels a "crime against humanity," at the recent 77th Meeting of the Development Committee of the World Bank and IMF.

Awareness of the deadly nature of the food crisis is also growing in the United States, where the primary manifestation, so far, has been skyrocketing prices of staples, especially foods based on grains. On May 7 Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-Texas) took the lead by introducing a resolution into the Congress (H. Con. Res 344) which called for recognition of the existence of the global food crisis, and a world forum to be held on the issue of rising food prices and international response. Forty-six Democrats co-sponsored her resolution. In the state of Alabama, a resolution on the food crisis was introduced into the state legislature on May 8, calling on the Federal government to "hereby cease paying farmers to produce corn for ethanol use and instead put the corn acreage into cultivation for food consumption…" (see below).

World Ethanol = Food for 400 Millions!

The measures needed to provide sufficient food to feed the world include emergency credits for expanded production, and immediate infrastructural improvements, such as roads. Many of these measures will take time, but there is one measure that can be implemented instantly, with a major beneficial effect.

Order the world's biofuels plants to shut down immediately, thereby freeing huge amounts of food and farm capacity to provide for millions of people now going hungry. If you take the food equivalent of all the edible bio-mass now going into ethanol (corn/maize, sugar cane, wheat, milo, sorghum, sugar beets), this represents food for over 400 million people!—almost half the number of people who are currently considered chronically undernourished, and thus immediately at risk of starvation. *EIR* has made this rough calculation, using the ratio of one bushel (50 pounds) of edible bio-mass to produce two gallons of ethanol. In addition, biodiesel is consuming millions more tons of edibles (soy, canola/rapeseed, palm oil, etc.) that could be in the food chain.

A closer look at the U.S. cornbelt makes the point (**Figure 1**). It is the center of global ethanol production, accounting for 6.4 billion gallons out of 13.1 billion produced worldwide in 2007. (Brazil is second, with 5.1 billion gallons from cane.) The volume of corn required to produce this much ethanol (figuring 2.77 gallons of ethanol from one 56-pound bushel of corn) would provide food for 130 million persons!

This simple calculation presumes the processing of the corn into plain meal, and similar basic products, plus taking into account losses in handling, etc. (The factor used here is for .38 metric ton of grain per person/per year—emergency rations.) Alternatively, part of the corn could be going into the livestock feed chain, as most of it has done in the past, and provide animal protein for a lesser number of people. (It takes about eight pounds of grain to produce a pound of beef, and six pounds or less for a pound of pork, and still less for a pound of poultry meat.)

But, however you refine the calculations, the point is clear that the numbers of people who could have sufficient food, if food were not being turned into fuel, are in the millions. Continuing biofuels is genocide. Those immediately in line to sicken and die are in the 70 most food-import-dependent, lowest-income nations—those which, during the 1975 food crisis, were called, MFAs—Most Seriously Affected.

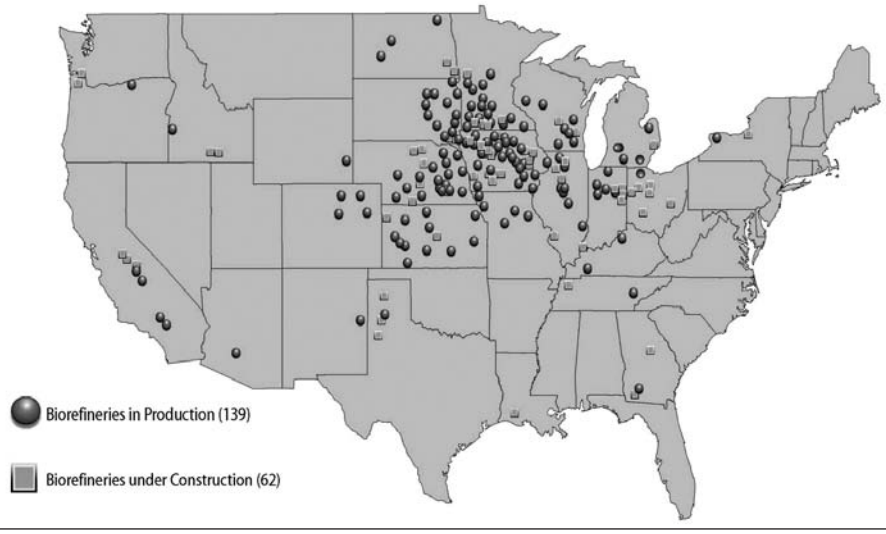
At the present rate, over 12% of the world's corn harvest is going for ethanol, as the U.S. produces half of the world's corn, and over a quarter of the U.S. harvest is now being sucked into 139 ethanol plants (**Figure 2**). The corn required to produce the volume of ethanol to fill about one tank—20 gallons—of a modern automobile, can support a person for half a year or longer.

The line-up of 15 ethanol-producing nations, whose output adds up to the world total of 13.102 billion gallons in 2007, is shown in **Table 1**. If the other grain-ethanol producing nations (marked *), not including the United States, converted their grain output back to food, this could provide for 33 millions more people.

The calculation for how many people could be supported if Brazil's cane ethanol capacity were converted to food production can also be made, but it is less simple than for U.S. corn. Outside of the Americas, sugar cane/molasses ethanol is even being produced in Pakistan, for shipment to the European Union.

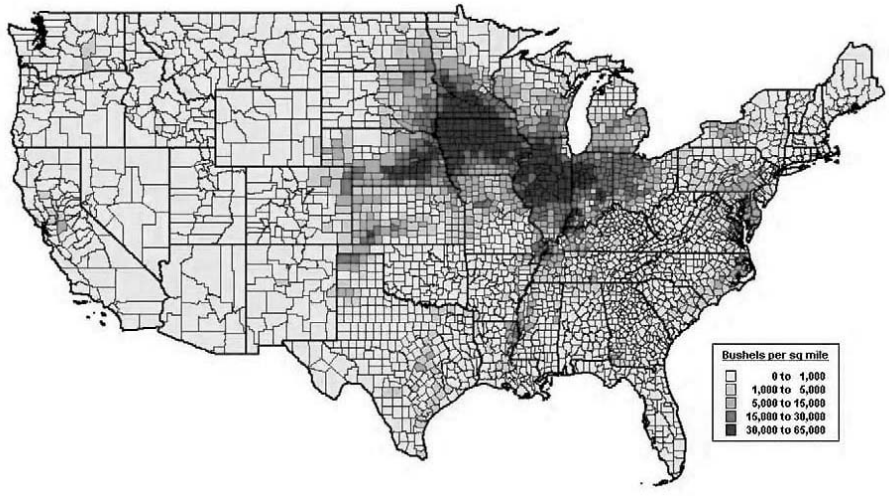
On top of the ethanol, huge volumes of the world's edible

FIGURE 1
The Corn Feeding These 139 Ethanol Plants Could Feed 130 Million People



Source: Renewable Fuels Association, January 2008.

FIGURE 2
Geographic Distribution of Annual U.S. Corn Production
(10.6 Billion Bushels; Average Over 2000-04, in Bushels per Square Mile, by County)



Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service; Kansas State University.

TABLE 1
Ethanol Production in 2007 in 15 Nations

Country	Millions of Gallons of Ethanol
U.S.A.	6,498.6
Brazil	5,019.2
European Union*	570.3
China*	486.0
Canada*	211.3
Thailand	79.2
Colombia	74.9
India	52.8
Central America	39.6
Australia	26.4
Turkey*	15.8
Pakistan	9.2
Peru	7.9
Argentina*	5.2
Paraguay*	4.7
Total	**13,101.7**

* Indicates grain as principal feedstock.
Source: Renewable Fuels Association

oil crops are being processed for biofuels, from canola (rapeseed) to soy and palm oil. There are gigantic biofuels plants under construction in several key farmbelts worldwide. For example, in Canada, Dominion Energy Services LLC has broken ground for a $400 million integrated biodiesel and ethanol refinery in Innisfall, Alberta. It is to produce 300 million gallons a year of biofuels (100 million gallons ethanol from wheat and 200 million gallons of canola biodiesel). It is designed to use 1 million tons of wheat a year—the amount that would be food for at least a million people for that time!

Canada already has six wheat-ethanol plants in its breadbasket provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as corn ethanol facilities in Ontario and Quebec. Given the grain shortage, these plants are "starving" for supplies, so much so that in Belle Plaine, Saskatchewan, the gigantic Terra Grain Fuels ethanol plant has, beside it, large stockpiles of wheat on the ground, behind barbed wire, to keep it safe for biofuels.

If this insanity were stopped tomorrow by the equivalent of an executive order, it wouldn't be easy to deal with all the logistics of how to process, ship, store, and deliver the food and livestock feed product. But farmers, processors, relief workers, and others have the know-how to figure it out. There are now hundreds of farm/food activists internationally prepared to deal with these concrete questions of emergency food operations and farming conversions. Humanity wants to feed its people. Tackling the jobs involved gives us the morale for the longer-term tasks of acting to double food production in the shortest time period ahead.