

BRIAN
CHOPTAIN

Food security includes everyone

Things must change if we want all people to have equal access

Food security. Or is it food insecurity? Every year we add 80 million to the list of people who need access to food and water.

The growing challenge we face is finding ways to feed everyone. The specter that is facing us is a dark future, because of climate extremes like droughts in the U.S. Midwest, or heatwaves in Russia the previous summer that result in countries stopping their export of food.

That combined with the high price of oil and a deadly set of conditions is created.

As food prices sky-rocket, needy people cannot afford food. As they protest in the cities, dictators around the world think they can still have their cake and eat it, too. Riots break out and the downfall of governments occurs, or even civil war results.

We in Canada are not immune to these events.

The world is set up in two ways. In the First World, we use technology to farm large tracts of land to produce crops like wheat or corn and then export it to the rest of the world.

Our technology keeps food costs low for us. So does the price of oil which allows us to bring food from around the world to our doorstep. Like the oranges from Mexico, and the garlic grown in China.

In the Third World, many countries instead grow cash crops like coffee, or cotton. Yes, in rural areas people try to grow local food sources, but are often dependant on the seasonal rains to fall.

Governments will dam rivers and divert large amounts of water to irrigate their cash crops. Then the crop is harvested and sent to the factory and finally sent overseas to us here in the Land of Plenty.

The farms built upstream of small communities often result in little to no water reaching downstream, resulting in people there then moving to the cities to find work and food.

The same governments then

spend the money made from the sale of cash crops to import grain and guns.

In other countries, a strange thing occurs. A large multinational company sets up shop to manufacture products. It requires large amounts of water to make its product. It diverts large amounts of water from a local river that provides irrigation for thousands of local people.

Then it dumps the polluted water back into the river, where small villages use the water as their drinking and food source.

With the water polluted and people unable to grow local crops to feed their families and sell at the local market, the villagers are faced with a huge problem. How are they supposed to make ends meet?

The answer? Go work at the multinational factory who pays you a paltry sum of money that you then spend on clean drinking water brought in by trucks out of state.

Sure, the government records the production of goods as revenue, but the cost is thousands of local people forced into food insecurity. Who benefits? Why we do, of course. How else do we get cheap goods made halfway around the world and sold to us at cheap prices?

War, drought, and foreign aid often work together to keep many countries poor. The aid is often spent on big development projects that do little good in the long run for the average person.

Change occurs through top down or bottom up. Can we help others achieve better food security? Yes we can, but big projects are not necessarily the answer.

Local projects that create access to clean water and do not result in the loss of water downstream, or drying up of aquifers, is critical.

Protection of the soil is vital. Often trees are harvested for firewood and light.

Hungry people pose problems for the whole world.

Generating momentum, the conference put on last week by MCIC for mid-

dle years students in the North Eastman region helps show that one person can make a difference.

The conference that students took part in in Beausejour is vitally important. In a global world, we cannot rely on governments making the changes we know that are required. Addicted to growing their economies, politicians and agribusiness do not want the system to change.

If change does occur, it will have to be bottom-up. We must help small rural communities solve their problems by listening to their needs and adapting technology and growing skills to create solutions.

This method does not create big headlines in the paper, but it makes a difference. And in the end, that is what really counts.

We'd Love to Hear From You!

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The
Beausejour Review





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