

GLOBAL FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF OF THE GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE



December 18th – December 23rd, 2010

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the holidays, this week's mini-edition of *Global Food for Thought* arrives one day early. On behalf of the Global Agricultural Development Initiative team, happy holidays and best wishes for the new year!

For more information:

- The [Global Food for Thought Blog](#) provides expert commentary, debate, and updates on key developments in real time.
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KEY ARTICLES AND REPORTS

House Passes Overhaul of Food Laws, *New York Times*, December 21

The House of Representatives gave final approval on Tuesday to a long-awaited modernization of the nation's food safety laws, voting 215 to 144 to grant the Food and Drug Administration greater authority over food production. The bill, which President Obama has indicated he will sign, is meant to change the mission of the F.D.A., focusing it on preventing food-borne illnesses rather than reacting after an outbreak occurs. The overhaul comes after several major outbreaks and food recalls in recent years involving salmonella in eggs and peanuts, and E. coli in spinach and other leafy greens.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/22/business/22food.html?_r=2&emc=tnt&tntemail0=y

SEE ALSO: Food-Safety Measure Passes Senate in Sunday Surprise, *Washington Post*, December 19

After a weekend of negotiations, tense strategy sessions and several premature predictions about

the bill's demise, Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) reached a deal with Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) that the GOP would not filibuster

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/19/AR2010121904032.html>

SEE ALSO: Statement from Agriculture Secretary Vilsack on Passage of the Food Safety Bill, USDA, December 21

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack issued the following statement on House passage of the food safety bill: "The Food Safety bill will provide the Federal Government with improved tools to prevent foodborne illness and address challenges in the food safety system by promoting a prevention-oriented approach. I applaud leaders in Congress for passing this important bill and look forward to President Obama signing this legislation. Protecting consumers from harm is a fundamental function of government and with passage of this landmark food safety legislation USDA remains committed to keeping food safety a top priority.

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/12/0670.xml>

SEE ALSO: Food-Safety Rules Adopted by Congress, San Francisco Chronicle, December 22

The most significant changes to food safety regulation in 70 years were approved by Congress on Tuesday, giving broad new powers to the Food and Drug Administration to step up inspections aimed at preventing outbreaks of disease in the nation's food production system.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/12/22/MNJB1GU113.DTL>

African Farmers Displaced as Investors Move In, New York Times, December 21

The half-dozen strangers who descended on this remote West African village brought its hand-to-mouth farmers alarming news: their humble fields, tilled from one generation to the next, were now controlled by Libya's leader, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, and the farmers would all have to leave.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/22/world/africa/22mali.html? r=1>

Old Problems Resurface with China's Rising Food Prices, Wall Street Journal, December 23

So even as China declares its seventh annual consecutive record harvest this month, the concern over national hunger — manifested as government efforts to defend 95% self-sufficiency in food — has not abated. If anything, a top United Nations official says it's only intensified.

<http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2010/12/23/old-problems-resurface-with-chinas-rising-food-prices/>

SEE ALSO: U.N. Food Official Highlights Food Security Challenges in World's Most Populous Nation, Kaiser Family Foundation, December 23

U.N. Special Rapporteur on the right to food Olivier De Schutter said Thursday that recent food price spikes in China, "in the world's most populous nation," underscore the country's food security challenges resulting from decreasing amounts of arable land, Agence France-Presse reports. Significant land degradation is also hindering China's agricultural output, De Schutter said as he wrapped up a visit to China.

<http://globalhealth.kff.org/Daily-Reports/2010/December/23/GH-122310-China-Food.aspx>

Ag Committees Will Have New Faces, New Flavor, AgriNews, December 23, 2010

In the House Agriculture Committee, where the farm bill is crafted, 15 of 28 Democrats will not be returning, but 17 of 18 Republicans will return. U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas of Oklahoma, whose district includes grass, cattle and wheat, will be the new chairman. Current chairman Collin Peterson of Minnesota will be ranking member. The two have a good working relationship. The committee will consist of 18 Democrats and 28 Republicans. At least 10 of the Republicans and five to six of the Democrats are likely to be freshmen. "A lot of institutional knowledge is leaving the committee," Frerichs said. In the Senate, the only member leaving the agriculture committee is chairwoman Blanche Lincoln. The new chairwoman is Debbie Stabenow of Michigan. Her interests are specialty crops, and she has also weighed in on how climate change will affect agriculture, Frerichs said.

<http://www.agrinenews.com/ag/committees/will/have/new/faces/flavor/story-3174.html>

(MIS)Investment in Agriculture, The Role of the International Finance Corporation in Global Land Grab, Oakland Institute, 2010

The Report concludes that the promotion of investor access into developing country land markets threatens local food security, displaces local populations, and therefore operates in direct violation of International Finance Corporation's own performance standards as well as several UN human Rights conventions. The Oakland Institute calls for an investigation of IFC/ FIAS technical assistance and advisory services as well as its advisory service "products." It is crucial that IFC be held accountable for the land grabs that its technical assistance and advisory services subsequently promote in order to protect the food security and livelihoods of the world's most marginal and vulnerable populations in this precarious global economic landscape.

http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/pdfs/misinvestment_web.pdf

Council Expands Program to Support a Renewed U.S. Focus on Global Agricultural Development; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grant Will Fund the Three-Year Initiative, *The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, December 23*

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs today announced it has received a \$2.25 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The grant enables the Council to expand its Global Agricultural Development Initiative which supports a renewed U.S. focus on agricultural development as a means to increase food security, alleviate global poverty and spur economic development. The Initiative provides support, technical assistance and innovation towards the formulation and implementation of U.S. global agricultural development policies and offers external evaluation and accountability for U.S. progress on its policy commitments.

http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/media_press_room_detail.php?press_release_id=145

RELEVANT U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Chamber of Commerce Swaps Expert to Join House Ag Committee, *Nasdaq, December 22*

Ryan McKee, a senior director focusing on derivatives regulation at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, has been appointed as a professional staffer at the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture under Frank Lucas (R., Okla.), the committee's incoming chairman.

<http://derivative-news.fincad.com/derivatives-regulations/house-agriculture-committee-bolsters-derivatives-expertise-995/>

USDA Offers Conservation Funding to Organic Farmers, *USDA, December 20*

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan today announced USDA will provide funding to help organic producers and those transitioning to organic production implement resource conservation practices on their agricultural operations. "Increasing consumer demand for organically grown foods is providing new opportunities for small and mid-size farmers to prosper and stay competitive in today's economy," Merrigan said. "The 2008 Farm Bill calls for this assistance, and we want to help these farmers protect the natural resources on their land and create conditions that help foster organic production."

<http://www.usda.gov>

White House Issues Scientific Integrity Memo, *MSNBC, December 18*

President Obama's science and technology advisor issued a memo to federal science agencies Friday to guide them in making rules to ensure scientific integrity. The memo, which applies to executive branch departments and agencies such as the Department of Agriculture and the National Science Foundation, is "several steps in the right direction," said Al Teich, the director of science policy at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/40732112/ns/technology_and_science-science/

Obama Says 'Progress' Made in CEO Meeting on Fueling Economy, *Bloomberg, December 15*

President Barack Obama said he and 20 company executives made "good progress" during a four and a half hour meeting toward establishing closer cooperation between government and business to accelerate the U.S. economic recovery. The meeting with business leaders, who included UBS AG Chairman for the Americas Robert Wolf and Honeywell International Inc. Chairman David Cote, was part of the administration's campaign to heal a strained relationship with the business community and to collaborate on ways to boost jobs, with the nation's unemployment rate at 9.8 percent.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-15/obama-says-progress-was-made-in-meeting-on-economy-with-chief-executives.html>

UPCOMING EVENTS

IFAD Conference on New Directions for Smallholder Agriculture

Date: January 24th – 25th, 2011

Location: Rome

IFAD is organising an International Conference on “New Directions for Smallholder Agriculture” on 24-25 January 2011 in Rome, Italy to discuss the future of some 500 million smallholders. In much of Africa and South Asia, small farms still account for the largest share of agricultural output. Smallholders have proved remarkably persistent; the area operated in small farms in the developing world appears to be rising, and the average farm sizes continue to decline in large parts of the developing world. Most of the smallholders and their dependents, some two billion of them, live in poverty, are more fragmented than before, and have limited capacity to link up to market opportunities.

<http://www.ifad.org/events/agriculture/index.htm>

Launch of the UK Global Food and Farming Futures Foresight Project Report

Date: February 9th, 2011

Location: London

The report will look out to 2050 and take a global view of the food system; considering issues of demand, production and supply as well as broader environmental issues. Because of the report’s global perspective, the work will draw heavily on the skills and perspectives of leading experts and stakeholders from around the world. As with all Foresight reports, the Foresight Global Food and Farming Futures report will seek to apply leading edge scientific and other evidence and futures analysis to identify critical issues and their consequences, and to identify and analyse possible policies and interventions for addressing those challenges. Please RSVP to James Birch on birchj@parliament.uk <<mailto:birchj@parliament.uk>>

Leveraging Agriculture for Improving Nutrition and Health

Date: February 10th – 12th, 2011

Location: New Delhi, India

Agriculture impacts poor people’s nutrition and health, and people’s nutrition and health in turn affects their productivity. As a supplier of food, a source of income, and an engine of growth, agriculture has the potential to significantly and sustainably improve poor people’s nutrition and health. This conference will inform, influence, and catalyze action to better use investments in agriculture to achieve nutrition security and good health for the world’s poor people.

<http://www.ifpri.org/2020-agriculture-nutrition-health>

USDA's 2011 Agricultural Outlook Forum: Today's Strategies & Tomorrow's Opportunities

Date: February 24th – 25th, 2011

Location: Arlington, VA

Secretary Tom Vilsack will deliver the Forum's keynote address followed by a distinguished speaker. Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan will deliver the Forum's welcome. Chief Economist Joseph Glauber will discuss the Domestic and Foreign Agricultural Economic Outlooks. Plenary and session speakers will be announced in the near future. Twenty-five breakout sessions will focus on a broad range of topical issues related to risk management, foreign trade and domestic markets, rural communities, conservation and the environment, renewable energy, broadband, nutrition and food safety, dietary guidelines, land tenure issues, and sustainability. The Forum also will feature traditional commodity and supply and demand outlook sessions.

<http://www.usda.gov/oce/forum/>

Getting Down to Business: Building Partnerships to Expand African Agricultural Development

Date: March 1st -2nd, 2011

Location: Washington, DC

The Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa is pleased to announce the third annual US-Africa

Forum.

<http://www.partnership-africa.org/content/getting-down-business-building-partnerships-expand-african-agricultural-development>

COMESA Investment Forum 2011

Date: March 23rd – 24th, 2011

Location: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

The conference will provide an interactive platform to find out first-hand about the opportunities in the region, where investors and business leaders are putting their money, and how they are going about generating high long-term returns. The agenda will focus on 5 key sectors: Trade, Finance, Logistics, Agriculture/Agribusiness and Infrastructure.

<http://www.partnership-africa.org/content/comesa-investment-forum-2011>

Agriculture 2.0

Date: April 11th – 12th, 2011

Location: San Francisco

This event will be the 5th installment in the conference series and for the first time we are adding several tracks to a multi-day format. This expansion will facilitate the creation of a commercial marketplace for the industry—a first of its kind, one-stop shop not only for venture capitalists and early stage companies, but also for senior decision makers in agribusiness and farmland funds, commodities experts, growth stage and institutional investors, key industry insiders, and policy makers. They all come together at Agriculture 2.0 with one intent – to catalyze and capitalize on this rapidly evolving industry.

[https://www.iirusa.com/agriculture20/register.xml?registration=&utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=U2339%252520-%2525201%252520\(1\)&utm_content=&step=start](https://www.iirusa.com/agriculture20/register.xml?registration=&utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=U2339%252520-%2525201%252520(1)&utm_content=&step=start)

CropLife America National Policy Conference: Lost in Translation? Deciphering the Discourse on Modern Agriculture

Date: May 12th, 2011

Location: Washington, DC

The CropLife America National Policy Conference will bring together leading experts in the fields of agriculture, food safety and security, agricultural technology and policy to offer highly diverse perspectives and engage in frank discussions on all issues facing modern agriculture. Our Master of Ceremonies will again be Marc Gunther, contributing editor at FORTUNE magazine and a senior writer at Greenbiz.com who has appeared on NBC, ABC, CNN and NPR.

<http://www.croplifeamerica.org/nationalpolicyconference>

Second World Conference of Humanitarian Studies

Date: June 2nd – June 5th, 2011

Location: Tufts University, Medford, MA

Humanitarian crises and the responses they trigger are evolving rapidly. This conference looks at the opportunities and threats for addressing these crises, as well as at the strengths and weaknesses of the actual responses. The conference provides a unique forum for both scholars and practitioners to present research and debate these issues. In particular, the conference focuses on four broad themes: emerging from protracted crises; new directions in policy; innovations in humanitarian practice; and advances in public health and food security in crises.

<http://www.humanitarianstudies2011.org/>

Leland Hunger Fellows Program – Now Accepting Applications

The Leland International Hunger Fellows Program is now accepting applications for the 6th class (2011-2013). Information on the fellowship and how to apply is accessible here:

<http://www.hungercenter.org/international/international.cfm>. Applications can be submitted online from now through January 7, 2011 at: <http://www.hungercenter.org/international/apply/>.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

Media Articles:

Irrigation Pump Helps Rural Indian Farmers, *UPI, December 23*

For rural farmers in India, an irrigation pump means no longer having to depend on unreliable monsoon showers to sustain livelihoods. But typical diesel-generated irrigation pumps, costing at least \$880, are not affordable for India's subsistence farmers who till less than 5 acres. International Development Enterprises India, a New Delhi-based non-profit organization, offers a low-cost solution: the treadle pump.

http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/12/23/Irrigation-pump-helps-rural-Indian-farmers/UPI-89181293121200/

Urban Farming 2.0: No Soil, No Sun, *CNN, December 23*

Forget the conventional wisdom that says veggies must be grown on vast farms in the Midwest. What if commercial-scale crops took root inside cavernous city warehouses, without sunlight or soil? Call it urban farming 2.0. Over the past decade, city agriculture has largely been the province of non-profit organizations, school groups, renegade gardeners and restaurants sowing seeds on rooftops. But the newest breed of city farmers are businessfolk. In their hands, urban agriculture is scaling up to meet a rising demand in city centers for safe, organic and locally grown food.

http://money.cnn.com/2010/12/23/technology/urban_farming_high_tech/

Farm Equipment Loans Surge as Commodities Rally: Brazil Credit, *Bloomberg, December 22*

Farmers in Brazil, the world's second-biggest crop exporter after the U.S., are increasing borrowing to buy equipment at the fastest pace in at least seven years as prices for coffee, soybeans and sugar advance.

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-12-22/farm-equipment-loans-surge-as-commodities-rally-brazil-credit.html>

Where is the Starting Point to Create a Plan for Feeding Nine Billion People 40 Years from Now?

Biofortified, December 22

The number of people expected in the global community is irrelevant, but what is a serious question is how will food production double in the next 40 years, given the challenges to food production that we have today? You are trying to grow corn for livestock, fuel, and export. It is the same for soybeans, and other grains. The challenge that today's young farmers will have revolves around water, land use, yield increases, environmental regulations, and a myriad of other significant policy issues. Where is the starting point to create a plan for feeding nine billion people 40 years from now?

<http://www.biofortified.org/2010/12/where-is-the-starting-point-to-create-a-plan-for-feeding-nine-billion-people-40-years-from-now/>

USAID Poised to Move Feed the Future Forward in the Coming Year, *ACDI VOCA, December 21*

As 2010 draws to a close, USAID continues to ramp up its focus on global food security and agricultural development, including rebuilding its technical capacity in these areas. Last week, USAID completed a weeklong staff training on agricultural economic enterprise development which, for the first time, addressed food security issues as well. ACDI/VOCA's Ruth Campbell and Paul Guenette led sessions on Working through Value Chains and Agricultural Enterprises.

<http://www.acdivoca.org/site/ID/news-USAID-Poised-to-Move%20Feed-the-Future-Forward-in-Coming-Year>

Outsourced African Farming Threatens to Alienate Locals, *The National, December 20*

African countries need investment. And for commodity consumers such as the Gulf states, who have money to spend but little arable land, it makes sense to outsource food production. But critics warn that in the rush to secure food for themselves, investors and African governments risk alienating large sectors of the populations, for whom land ownership is an ongoing, emotional issue.

<http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/industry-insights/economics/outsourced-african->

[farming-threatens-to-alienate-locals](#)

West African Farmers Cut Toxic Pesticides, *Agence France-Presse, December 20*

West African farmers have managed to cut toxic pesticides use while increasing production as part of an international project promoting sustainable farming practices, the UN food agency FAO said Monday. Around 100,000 farmers in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal are taking part in the Food and Agricultural Organisation's community-driven training programme, the agency said in a statement.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALEqM5jNnZrM2IVxfUB0MpoiRaf0HQtl7A?docId=CNG.35fe9afb5c0253f885080ba82e9784c.9a1>

SEE ALSO: UN Project Helps West African Farmers Cut Pesticide Use, Boost Incomes, *UN News Centre, December 20*

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37126&Cr=fao&Cr1=>

SEE ALSO: Fewer Pesticides and Higher Yields and Incomes, *FAO, December 20*

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/48883/icode/>

Pakistani Farmers Rebuild After Floods, *Financial Times, December 20*

In the age-old battle of man versus nature unfolding on the floodplains of the Indus, Pandi Mala, a rice grower, seems to have suffered a knock-out punch. One of millions of Pakistani farmers who fled when the river burst its banks this summer, he returned home to find the water had stolen his harvest, drowned his fields and damaged the walls of his wattle-and-daub hut. Still haunted by the exodus, Shazia, Mr Mala's six-year-old daughter, keeps asking Rosa, his wife, whether the deluge will strike again. Though Mr Mala may be down, he is not out. Action Against Hunger, which is being supported in this year's Financial Times seasonal appeal, delivered rice, flour and cooking oil last week that will feed his family and thousands of others as they resurrect livelihoods in the southern province of Sindh.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/39df5048-0c5b-11e0-8408-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=rss&ftcamp=crm/email/20101221/nbe/WorldNews/product#axzz18sovx43j>

Keeping Promises and Delivering Hope to Poor Farmers and Their Families, *Sylvia Mathews Burwell, President, Global Development Program of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, December 17*

While some European countries and the European Commission have recognized the importance of agricultural development in the "aid equation," more needs to be done. And it's encouraging that Europe has made agricultural development one of the four pillars in its high-impact anti-poverty strategy -- an approach the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation shares.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sylvia-mathews-burwell/keeping-promises-and-delivering-hope-to-poor-farmers-and-their-families_b_798271.html

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Reports:

From the Ground Up, *IFPRI, December 2010*

The community-driven development approach (CDD) has become increasingly popular among international development organizations due to its potential to develop sustainable projects that are responsive to local priorities, empower communities, and more effectively target poor and vulnerable groups. The new study *From the ground up: Impacts of a pro-poor community-driven development project in Nigeria* assesses the impacts of Fadama II, a CDD project that is currently Nigeria's largest agricultural project.

<http://www.ifpri.org/blog/ground>

Media Articles:

Banks Reach Out to Farmers, *The Africa Report, December 22*

As they learn about farmers' complex value chains and cash-flow problems, financiers are gaining confidence in their ability to influence decisions on what crops will be produced and when they will be sold. Standard Bank's approach is to work with input suppliers so farmers can have access to quality seed, fertiliser and markets. "We want to move away from a product focus when we look at agriculture.

<http://www.theafricareport.com/archives2/business/3580536-banks-reach-out-to-farmers.html>

Transparency Will Make Aid Work Better, *Guardian, December 21*

This month the US Agency for International Development said it expects to publish details of its aid programmes in a form accessible to people in developing countries and US taxpayers. The EU Foreign Affairs Council has also agreed that member states will publish details of their aid in an internationally comparable format. And from next year, the donors who provide at least two-thirds of aid to less developed countries will publish detailed, up-to-date information about aid through the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). The first part of this new global standard was agreed in July. The UK, which, with the UNDP, Sweden and the Netherlands, has played a leading role in this initiative, will have its first data online early next year. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2010/dec/21/aid-transparency-global-standard>

Diplomacy and Development, Working Together in the US, *Guardian, December 20*

Two studies on the US government recommend different branches work in tandem along with other donor nations to make aid more effective and efficient. Many observers believe these studies set Washington on the right course. While I agree, I also believe more clarity is needed with regard to how the US partners with other donor nations to address development needs. This is especially important given that both reviews advocate that programmes be more focused and selective.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2010/dec/20/us-aid-diplomacy-policy>

Ban Urges Developing Countries to Pool Resources to Fight Poverty, *UN News Centre, December 19*

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged developing countries to pool their knowledge and resources to speed up progress towards the internationally agreed poverty reduction targets by 2015.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37115&Cr=south-south&Cr1=>

Does Microfinance Reduce Poverty? An Analysis of India's Crisis, *Brookings Institution, December 17*

In assessing the role of microfinance and its various modes of delivery, it is important to be clear about what it is that these loans are intended to accomplish. The loftiest goal, which the proponents of the instrument claim, is rapid eradication of poverty. Some, especially among those representing fast-expanding for-profit microfinance institutions (MFIs), can even leave you with the impression that only a few microloans stand between the poor and non-poor. Yet, according to serious microfinance scholars, so far there is no compelling evidence that microfinance has led to sustained poverty reduction anywhere.

http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/1217_india_panagariya.aspx

Germany Supports Food Security and Climate-Smart Agriculture, *FAO, December 17*

Germany has committed nearly six million dollars for food and nutrition security, sustainable livelihoods and climate-smart agriculture in agreements signed with FAO, the agency announced today.

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/48884/icode/>

ENVIRONMENT (WATER/CLIMATE)

Reports:

Climate Change Impacts on Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa, *IFPRI, 2010*

For Sub-Saharan Africa, the paper finds that the comprehensive climate change scenario predicts consistently higher temperatures and mixed precipitation changes for the 2050 period. Compared to historic climate scenarios, climate change will lead to changes in yield and area growth, higher food prices and therefore lower affordability of food, reduced calorie availability, and growing childhood malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa.

<http://www.ifpri.org/publication/climate-change-impacts-food-security-sub-saharan-africa>

Media Articles:

The Ultimate Climate Change FAQ, *Guardian, December 22*

A couple of weeks ago we launched the ultimate climate change FAQ and invited readers to submit questions. We had an amazing response and the questions have kept flowing in. We've now started posting answers. Responding to questions by Kate Durbin and Tiresias, we kicked off with the most basic question of all: What exactly is the climate?

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog/2010/dec/22/climate-change-faq-update>

Impact Investing in Sustainable Agriculture for a New Economy, *Forbes, December 22*

According to a recent article from Scientific American, agriculture is responsible for one third of global greenhouse gas emissions from human activity. Agribusiness farming operations are notorious for nitrogen and phosphorus runoff (particularly from poultry and hog farms). In the Chesapeake Bay region, for example, one study estimated the price tag for restoring the bay at \$19 billion, of which \$11 billion would go toward "nutrient reduction." A sustainable alternative to the beef factory-farming model follows in the footsteps of conservationist pioneer Allan Savory.

<http://blogs.forbes.com/csr/2010/12/22/impact-investing-in-sustainable-agriculture-for-a-new-economy/?boxes=Homepagechannels>

UN Climate Official: Do More to Cut Emissions, *Washington Post, December 20*

The agreements reached at a global conference this month to help poor countries cope with climate change exceeded expectations but need to be followed up, the U.N.'s top climate official said Monday. Pledges submitted so far to reduce emissions over the next decade amount to just 60 percent of what scientists say would be required to have a 50 percent chance to keep the Earth from warming more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.8 Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels. Warming by more than 2 degrees, the U.N. scientists have said, could lead to severe changes in climate affecting agriculture, sea levels, water resources, human health and the survival of many species.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/20/AR2010122002110.html>

Cancun: Why Africa's Voice on Global Environmental Issues is Important, *Ambassador Robin Renee Sanders, U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Huffington Post, December 17*

It will be important for Africa to keep the macro elements of population, economic growth, water and land use, food availability, pollution and last, but certainly not least, managing energy resources in a more efficient and effective manner. Africa needs to be one of the leading regions in the world shaping these policy issues -- developing practical, innovative solution that will help the continent better provide for future generations.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amb-robin-renee-sanders/cancun-africas-voice-on-g b_798077.html

WOMEN & GIRLS

Media Articles:

Improving Rural Livelihoods by Empowering African Women Researchers in Agricultural Science, *USAID Blog, December 23*

With sharp minds, inquisitive souls, and iron wills, they are an 11-strong group of top-level women scientists in agricultural research with their eyes set on influencing national and regional policy to improve livelihoods in Mozambique and across Africa. Through their work, they are helping to change the face of a continent where women are seldom heard, but are always called on to give and to nurture. They are Mozambique's scientists in the AWARD program for African Women in Agricultural Research and Development, funded by USAID and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

<http://blog.usaid.gov/2010/12/improving-rural-livelihoods-by-empowering-african-women-researchers-in-agricultural-science/>

Microfinance: Women's Way Out, *Fox Business, December 19*

Imagine being an entrepreneur and trying to start a company without a bank -- no business loan to back you, no way to write or receive checks, no credit card for large purchases. Starting a business without these supports is unfathomable. Yet this is precisely the challenge facing women entrepreneurs in developing

nations. The World Bank reports that only one-third of the world's population has access to any kind of bank account. And the vast majority of those excluded from banking services are women. Women, according to the International Labour Organization, represent an estimated 70 percent of those living on less than \$2 a day.
<http://www.foxbusiness.com/personal-finance/2010/12/19/microfinance-womens-way/>

Mobile Phones for Women: A New Approach for Social Welfare in the Developing World, *Scientific American*, December 17

Many women in the developing world, especially those living in more restrictive cultures, are impoverished, semiliterate or illiterate and may rarely leave home alone to avoid the risk of shaming the family. The mWomen movement aims to improve the social welfare of women and their families via mobile technology—more effectively, perhaps, than if the phones and apps were in men's hands. Women are using phones for activities ranging from calling their husbands who may work far away to obtaining health care for their children to running small businesses to reporting violence.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=mobile-phones-for-women>

MARKET ACCESS AND TRADE ISSUES

Reports:

Tracking Global Commodities Prices, *IFPRI*, December 2010

The Food Security Portal, facilitated by IFPRI, has launched a new series of global food price tools, tracking weekly global prices and daily returns of future prices for five staple agricultural commodities—hard wheat, soft wheat, rice, maize and soybeans. Utilizing data from the FAO, CBOT, and KCBT, the tools provide accurate, up-to-date price information. These tools allow users to visually track changes in global commodities prices dating back to 1998 and changes in returns on future prices dating back to 2001. This information can help explain past food price trends and market policies, which in turn will inform policymakers' response to the current global economic situation and prepare them for changes to the global food system in the future.

<http://www.ifpri.org/blog/tracking-global-commodities-prices>

Media Articles:

Cotton, Sugar Imports by Pakistan to Rise after Floods, Farm Minister Says, *Bloomberg*, December 23

Pakistan may import 700,000 metric tons of sugar and 4 million bales of cotton to ease shortages and cool prices after the country's worst-ever floods damaged standing crops, the country's farm minister said.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-23/cotton-sugar-imports-by-pakistan-to-rise-after-floods-farm-minister-says.html>

Prices in Iran Rise after Lifting of Subsidies, *LA Times*, December 23

The Iranian government's removal of decades-old subsidies for food and energy in an attempt to boost its troubled economy has spurred price increases on everything from fruit and vegetables to gasoline, generated work stoppages and emboldened the political opposition.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran-subsidies-20101223,0,5543095.story>

SEE ALSO: Iran Moves to Cut Food and Fuel Subsidies, *Financial Times*, December 19

Tehran has begun cutting subsidies on basic commodities, including flour and fuel, despite fears that the impact on employment and prices could spark unrest. Iran has spent \$100bn a year on subsidising basic commodities for decades, according to official estimates, and economists and officials have long warned this is unsustainable.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/99dad808-0b90-11e0-a313-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=rss&ftcamp=crm/email/20101220/nbe/WorldNews/product#axzz18sjXmq7P>

Onion Crisis Adds to Indian PM's Woes, *Financial Times*, December 22

Manmohan Singh, India's prime minister, already under fire over a multibillion-dollar telecoms corruption

scandal, suddenly has a more down-to-earth problem on his plate – the skyrocketing price of onions.
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5ae4ddb0-0dca-11e0-8b53-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=rss&ftcamp=crm/email/20101223/nbe/WorldNews/product#axzz18wt4szEN>

Brazil Coffee Crop to Drop 23%, Pushing Up Price, *Bloomberg, December 22*

Coffee production in Brazil, the world's biggest grower, may drop to the lowest in four years in 2011, pushing up prices as trees enter the lower-yielding half of a two-year cycle, Agriculture Minister Wagner Rossi said.
<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-22/brazil-coffee-crop-to-drop-23-pushing-up-price.html>

Sweet Spot for Sugar, *Financial Times, December 21*

The word “commodities” and the expression “all-time high” seem to go together nowadays. Indeed, a large number of raw materials, from crude oil to copper, have hit their highest ever price in nominal terms over the past two years. Sugar is one of the few that is still trading below highs set in the 1970s and 1980s. But some traders believe sugar will soon break new ground.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/90b73424-0ce4-11e0-ace7-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=rss&ftcamp=crm/email/20101221/nbe/USMorningHeadlines/product#axzz18sqA8BTY>

Cotton's Sudden Boom Raises Specter of a Bust, *LA Times, December 20*

San Joaquin Valley fields are white with cotton, and the price has quadrupled as Asian demand grows. But as one farmer asks, will people pay \$2 or \$3 more for a cotton shirt? More than a decade after the state's "white gold" crop started losing its luster, booming commodity prices have farmers cashing in on growing export demands — and have turned great swaths of Central California a snowy white during harvest season.

<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-cotton-boom-20101220,0,3516028,full.story>

SEE ALSO: King Cotton Booms in California. But What about the Water Issue?, *LA Times, December 20*

http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/money_co/2010/12/cotton-california-water-commodities-farming-agriculture-boom.html

AGRIBUSINESS

Media Articles:

China's Agria Offers to Raise Stake in PGG Wrightson, *Bloomberg, December 23*

Agria Corp., a Chinese seed developer and animal breeder, and New Hope Group offered to raise their combined stake to take partial control of PGG Wrightson Ltd. to help it refinance debt. Agria and New Hope, a Chinese agriculture and food group, will buy NZ\$141 million (\$105 million) of new stock, Zhongshan-based Agria said in a statement. The offer of 60 New Zealand cents a share is a 25 percent premium to today's closing price.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-23/china-s-agria-offers-to-raise-stake-in-pgg-wrightson-update1-.html>

Fat's Chance as a Renewable Diesel Fuel, *National Geographic, December 22*

From algae and wood chips to grasses and solid waste, scientists are looking far and wide for the raw material that will yield a new generation of renewable fuel—a source that doesn't divert food into energy, and is abundant enough to make a significant dent in the oil market. The world's largest meat company thinks the answer may have been congealing in its facilities all along: Animal fat. Food-processing giant Tyson Foods, in partnership with the synthetic fuels research firm Syntroleum Corporation, has opened a plant in Geismar, Louisiana (map), that is testing the prospects for converting low-grade, inedible fats and greases into a renewable diesel fuel for transportation.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/news/energy/2010/12/101222/animal-fat-tyson-renewable-fuel/>

Uralkali Seals \$24 Billion Potash Deal, *Financial Times*, December 20

Two Russia fertiliser groups have combined to create the world's largest potash producer by output in a \$23.9bn merger that underlines the growing value of an industry fuelled by rising food consumption in countries like China and India.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8cae837e-0c1b-11e0-b1a3-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=rss&ftcamp=crm/email/20101220/nbe/USMorningHeadlines/product#axzz18skCG3jp>

SEE ALSO: Potash Union Lifts the Stakes for China, *Financial Times*, December 20

The merger of UralKali and Silvinit, approved by the companies' directors on Monday, would not only reshape Russia's fertiliser industry, but also create a great force in potash export markets that will further reduce the influence of China in global pricing.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f0048918-0c6c-11e0-8408-00144feabdc0.html#axzz18srLxix2>

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