

GLOBAL FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF OF THE GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE



December 24th – December 30th, 2010

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the holiday, this week's mini-edition of *Global Food for Thought* arrives one day early. On behalf of the Global Agricultural Development Initiative team, 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

Global Food Prices in 2011 Face Perilous Rise, *New York Times*, December 28

Food prices globally are rising to dangerous levels. There is talk of a coming crisis, like the ones that produced riots around the world in 2008 and 1974. Many of the ingredients of a disaster are present, but governments can stop the problem before it causes too much damage. A warning sign is the price of traded staples like wheat, corn and rice. Prices shot up in 2010, soaring 26 percent from June to November and brushing the peaks of 2008, according to the Food Price Index kept by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. That hits poor countries that import much of their food, including the Philippines, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/29/business/29views.html?_r=1&src=busln

SEE ALSO: Higher Food Prices Loom in 2011, *Voice of America*, December 29

2010 ends with food prices on the rise in many parts of the world and reserve supplies tight. That has some experts nervous that another shock could return food prices to levels that triggered violence in 2008.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/environment/Higher-Food-Prices-Loom-in-2011-112614259.html>

Should Population be Restrained?, *BBC, December 30*

The motion at the Oxford Farming Conference debate 2011 will be that unrestrained population growth and food security are incompatible. The two keynote speakers are environmentalist Jonathon Porritt in favour and businessman Sir Paul Judge who will be speaking against. Mr. Porritt believes "it is dangerous to assume we are just going to have more and more food available us." Sir Paul feels that limiting the global population is unrealistic.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/oxford/hi/people_and_places/newsid_9317000/9317907.stm

Ag Department Uproots Science, *Op-Ed, Wall Street Journal, December 27*

If the Obama Administration is trying to lose its anti-business reputation, you wouldn't know it from the latest shakedown at the Department of Agriculture. In a move that caused jaws to drop in the farm industry, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has invited activists and biotech critics to shape the agency's regulatory decision on a biotech product. If the precedent stands, it could permanently politicize a system that is supposed to be based on science.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703581204576033611631362824.html?KEYWORDS=agriculture>

A Rural Rebound, *The Main Street Economist, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas, 2010*

In 2010, rural America was at the forefront of the economic recovery. As sluggish job growth reined in the U.S. economy, rural firms harnessed stronger global commodity demand and raced ahead of their metro peers. In past recoveries, robust commodity markets and firm manufacturing activity sustained growth in the rural economy for multiple years. Can the rural economy lead the nation's recovery again in 2011? This article reviews developments in the rural economy and discusses prospects for the year ahead. In 2010, rising global food demand and smaller supplies fueled a booming farm economy. Rural firms seized these opportunities to restore economic activity and job growth on Main Street. Together, stronger farmgate and Main Street activity point to further prosperity in 2011. Rural prosperity, however, will depend on the ability of rural firms to compete in emerging global markets.

http://www.kansascityfed.org/publicat/mse/mse_0510.pdf?ealert=MSE1230

The Changing Face of Agricultural Business, *Farm Weekly, December 30*

Institutional agriculture has been given a fair bit of attention in recent years according to Anthony Abraham. As the man in charge of Macquarie's Retail Agribusiness operations, Mr. Abraham sees globalised agricultural production as one of the solutions to the shortage of global food security. Institutional agriculture revolves around capital, the capacity to operate on a broad scale, the implementation of cross-technology from other areas of agriculture and a competitive edge to encourage innovation.

<http://fw.farmonline.com.au/news/state/agribusiness-and-general/general/the-changing-face-of-agricultural-business/2036532.aspx>

Global Warming: Farmers Will Need to Adapt to Changing Climates - But They've Done So in the Past, *Time, December 27*

Of all the projected impacts of climate change, the scariest one in a world is the effect warming could have on our ability to feed ourselves. Scientists have looked at the impact of major heat waves in the past, and have found that such abnormally hot weather tends to hurt agriculture, with maize productivity levels falling by more than 30% in Italy during the blistering summer of 2003. A study from last year predicted that there was more than a 90% chance that average growing-season temperatures by the end of the century would be hotter than the most extreme levels seen in the past—and that such hot weather could wilt out crops. Given that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is projecting that temperatures in major grain-growing regions of North America could increase by 3 to 4 C by the end of the century, that's a scary thought.

<http://ecocentric.blogs.time.com/2010/12/27/global-warming-farmers-will-need-to-adapt-to-changing-climates—but-theyve-already-done-so/>

RELEVANT U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

USDA Holds Stakeholder Meeting on Genetically Engineered Alfalfa and Coexistence, *USDA, December 30*

USDA hopes that key stakeholders will work together to devise a practical way forward in time to inform plans for the alfalfa planting season in 2011. USDA fully supports all sectors of U.S. agriculture—GE, organic, and non-GE. In beginning this effort, USDA is focused on finding reasonable and appropriate approaches for strengthening alfalfa production coexistence and, in doing so, supporting farmers and rural America.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/content/2010/12/stakeholder_meeting_alfalfa.shtml

SEE ALSO: Biotechnology, *Farm Policy, December 28*

DTN Ag Policy Editor Chris Clayton reported yesterday that, “USDA should have been seeking a better balance between biotechnology and organic production before lawsuits locked up the department’s regulatory process over Roundup Ready alfalfa and sugar beets, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said last week. “In an interview with DTN/The Progressive Farmer, Vilsack explained the goal of a recent meeting between stakeholders in both biotechnology crops and non-biotech farming was to serve as the first step toward a path in which both sectors of agriculture can grow and be profitable. Finding some regulatory middle ground for biotechnology crops will be a major initiative for USDA throughout 2011.

<http://www.farmpolicy.com/?p=3710#more-3710>

Nutrition Facts Panels to Appear on Labels of Popular Cuts of Meats and Poultry Products, *USDA, December 29*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) today announced that it will be making important nutritional information readily available to consumers on 40 of the most popular cuts of meat and poultry products. Under a new rule, packages of ground or chopped meat and poultry will feature nutrition facts panels on their labels. Additionally, whole, raw cuts of meat and poultry will also have nutrition facts panels either on their package labels or available for consumers at the point-of-purchase.

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda!/ut/p/c5/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os_gAC9-wMJ8QY0MDpxBDA09nXw9DFxcXQ-cAA_1wkA5kFaGuQBXeASbmnu4uBgbe5hB5AxxA0UDfzyM_N1W_IDs7zdFRUREAZXAypA!/dl3/d3/L2dJQSEvUUt3QS9ZQnZ3LzZfUDhNVIZMVDmXMEJUMTBJQ01IMURERDFDUDA!/?contentidonly=true&contentid=2010%2f12%2f0673.xml

New Website Details U.S. Aid Spending, *IRIN, December 29*

In its bid to become more transparent, the U.S. government has launched a new “Dashboard” website to show foreign aid flows. The U.S. government spends more than US\$58 billion a year in foreign assistance through more than 20 agencies. Total government expenditure is over three trillion (thousand billion) dollars annually. Though the U.S. is the world’s largest aid donor, it devoted only 0.2 percent of its Gross National Income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA), according to 2009 figures released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - far short of the 0.7 percent of GNI commitment made by rich countries in 1970.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=91481>

WikiLeaks Reveals U.S. Pressured Vatican to Promote GM Crops, *All Voices, December 29*

U.S. diplomats pushed the Roman Catholic Church to support biotech food in developing nations, according to secret U.S. diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks. Efforts to push genetically modified (GM) crops globally extended even into the halls of the Vatican. Embassy cables in Spain, Austria and even Pakistan indicate that U.S. diplomats stand with the biotech industry, although issues are still disputed in court and the public at large eyes the biotechnology dubiously, states a Truthout report.

<http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/7746438-wikileaks-reveals-us-pressured-vatican-to-promote-gm-crops>

The Folly of Trading an Updated Budget for a ‘Robo Budget’ (Senator Pat Leahy), *The Hill Congress Blog, December 23*

Last week, Republican members who had pledged to support the fiscal year 2011 Omnibus Appropriations Bill changed their minds and chose instead to walk in lockstep with the House and Senate Republican leaders

who believe that freezing spending at the fiscal year 2010 level is good politics. On the face of it that approach has an appeal – no new spending. What a nice sound bite. It makes everything seem so simple. A Continuing Resolution will cut funding by more than \$700 million for agriculture and food security programs, small business development, clean water, energy, basic education, trade capacity, and other priorities of both Democrats and Republicans, as well as of American businesses, universities, and other organizations that implement these programs.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/economy-a-budget/134975-the-folly-of-trading-an-updated-budget-for-a-robo-budget-sen-pat-leahy>

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 size continues 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 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

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:

'Food Bowl of India Low on Hunger Index', *Times of India, December 30*

The food bowl of the country is critically low on hunger index — a statistical tool to measure the state of countries' hunger situation. Punjab lies below 33 other developing countries ranked by Global Hunger Index. Based on a publication by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC, it was concluded that there is no link between economic progress and hunger. The IFPRI report was presented at the ongoing 93rd annual conference of Indian Economic Association here. As per the report, Haryana, despite its impressive economic performance, also seems to have performed poorly in terms of reduction of hunger.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/Food-bowl-of-India-low-on-hunger-index/articleshow/7188471.cms>

Haitian Rice Farmers Won't Farm, *UPI, December 29*

Haitian rice farmers may lose part of their crop due to fear of working in possibly cholera-contaminated paddy fields, a United Nations organization said. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization said Wednesday it is working with the Haitian ministries of agriculture and health to spread hygiene information to farmers, many of whom in the northwest of the country are reluctant to harvest their rice paddies in fear of contamination by cholera-causing bacteria.

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2010/12/29/Haitian-rice-farmers-wont-farm/UPI-49891293668704/

UN Group Using Obama's Family to Make Claims About Anti-Hunger Algae, *Fox News, December 29*

A little-known United Nations-affiliated organization is using members of President Obama's Kenyan family - as well as Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona - to promote the idea that a type of algae is the solution to world hunger. The grandly-named Intergovernmental Institute for the Use of Micro-Algae Spirulina Against Malnutrition (IIMSAM) proudly advertises that President Obama's Kenyan grandmother, Sarah, and his Uncle Said are "goodwill ambassadors" for the organization, helping to sponsor a feeding and education program in Kenya and raising the organization's profile throughout the region.

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/12/29/affiliated-group-using-obamas-family-promote-anti-hunger-algae/>

Afghanistan: Bleak Outlook for Food Security in 2011, *IRIN, December 29*

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) plans to assist 7.3 million people in Afghanistan in 2011 but only has enough funding to feed the most vulnerable for a few months, and needs US\$400 million to continue its humanitarian activities next year. WFP appealed to donors for urgent funding through a Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) launched on 5 December with the aim of making up a food shortfall of 103,600 tons (costing about \$157 million) until June.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=91473>

New Botanic Database Holds a Million Plant Names, *Agence France-Presse, December 29*

Capping the UN's International Year of Biodiversity, botanists in Britain and the United States on Wednesday unveiled a library of plant names aimed at helping conservationists, drug designers and agriculture researchers. The database, accessible at www.theplantlist.org, identifies 1.25 million names for plants, ranging from essential food crops such as wheat, rice and corn to garden roses and exotic jungle ferns, and provides links to published research. The aim is to clear up a century-old taxonomic jumble in which non-standard names sowed ignorance, rivalry and sometimes damaging confusion about the world's plant wealth.

http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g7E3ezMLFG_Q3R2bsAH3yPVhRP1A?docId=CNG.96369ffae81e5f7c15838d076cfb6ce6.5b1

Discovery Means More Plants in Less Space, *UPI, December 29*

U.S. scientists have uncovered a gene responsible for plants' key growth characteristics, specifically their density, a finding that could improve agriculture. Researchers at the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation in Oklahoma say denser plants have more biomass without increasing the agricultural footprint, meaning farmers and ranchers can produce more plant material from the same sized field, a foundation release said Wednesday.

http://www.upi.com/Science_News/2010/12/29/Discovery-means-more-plants-in-less-space/UPI-41351293669514/

To Reduce Hunger, Put Innovation on the Menu, *Guardian, December 28*

In recent decades, a new generation of innovative approaches to hunger alleviation has emerged from farmers' groups, private voluntary organisations, universities, and agribusiness companies. There is growing evidence that combinations of approaches, including pairing conventional methods with agroecological techniques or input methods that work with the environment, are more effective in terms of productivity, income generation, and resilience.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2010/dec/28/hunger-alleviation-africa-agriculture>

China Mulls GMO Food Law, Grain Law Ready in 2011, *Reuters, December 27*

China's National People's Congress, or parliament, is proposing legislation on the management of genetically modified (GMO) food, the official Xinhua news agency said in a report seen on Monday. The legislation will cover the import and export of GMO food and production, development and research of GMO grains.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6BQ0VV20101227>

New Global Project Seeks Wild Crop Diversity, *Farming First, December 27*

Genetic traits of food crops are being collected in the largest ever global search to help protect global food supplies against the threat of climate change. The initiative is being led by the Global Crop Diversity Trust, working in partnership with national agricultural research institutes, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), who will all seek to find, gather, catalogue and use the wild relatives of wheat, rice, beans, potato, barley, lentils, chickpea and other essential food crops.

http://www.farmingfirst.org/2010/12/new-global-project-seeks-wild-crop-diversity/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FarmingFirst+%28Farming+First%29

Expert Advises Against Solely Depending on Organic Farming, *Times of India, December 27*

Though organic farming has its own advantages, solely depending on it will not help augment huge food requirements of the country, said ICAR director-general S. Ayyappan. Organic manures can augment the microbial activity, prevent environmental deterioration and restore soil health. It can reduce the chemical load in soil and farm produce. But at this juncture, when the quantum of food is close to the deficit, one cannot truly identify with the sole purpose of environmental resurrection alone.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hubli/Expert-advises-against-solely-depending-on-organic-farming/articleshow/7174422.cms>

Has Innovation Hit a Brick Wall?, *Globe and Mail, December 26*

Innovation is literally hitting a wall, of physical and biological limits. Larger and larger investments are netting increasingly modest and incremental gains. We've all been living off the fruits of what our parents and grandparents achieved. In agriculture, for example, Prof. Brander argues that the major leaps came in the third quarter of the 20th century during the so-called green revolution. Improved crop varieties, irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides, improved machinery and education – these all produced remarkable increases in crop yields. But growth rates are now slowing for most major crops since the golden age of the 1950s and 1960s, he says.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/has-innovation-hit-a-brick-wall/article1849830/>

Could Acacia Trees Solve Africa's Hunger Problem?, *Christian Science Monitor*, December 24

Decades of food delivery and 'miracle' seeds haven't addressed underlying causes of hunger. But new efforts to replicate Africa's original ecosystems are generating impressive, sustainable results.

[http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/1224/Could-Acacia-trees-solve-Africa-s-hunger-problems/\(page\)/2](http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/1224/Could-Acacia-trees-solve-Africa-s-hunger-problems/(page)/2)

Genetic Weapon Developed Against Honeybee-Killer, *BBC*, December 22

Researchers have developed a genetic technique which could revitalise the fight against the honeybee's worst enemy - the Varroa mite. The method enables researchers to "switch off" genes in the Varroa mite, a parasite that targets the honeybee.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_9306000/9306572.stm

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Media Articles:

UN Halts Pakistan Food Aid after Suicide Bombing, *The Nation*, December 30

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has stopped food distribution in a tribal district in Pakistan where 45 people died in a suicide attack on Saturday. An official told the BBC the suspension was temporary and that distribution would resume at the earliest.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/27-Dec-2010/UN-halts-Pakistan-food-aid-after-suicide-bombing>

Boosting Aid for Farmers in Afghanistan, *Wall Street Journal*, December 29

To Dana Freyer, economic development is the ultimate solution to a stable Afghanistan. The retired partner of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom is giving a \$60,000 challenge donation to the Global Partnership for Afghanistan, an environmental and economic development organization she helped launch in Afghanistan in 2004. For every dollar the organization raises, she will match the donations up to \$60,000.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203731004576046032375303212.html?KEYWORDS=agriculture>

Food for Thought in India, *Wall Street Journal*, December 29

It is time for India's government to put its money where its mouth is. New Delhi has raised some \$30 billion since March by selling state assets and telecom airwaves. That is about as much as the country will attract in foreign direct investment this fiscal year. There is one area above all else where this money should be directed: food security.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203513204576047541282652696.html?KEYWORDS=agriculture>

South Africa Invited to BRIC Table, *Reuters*, December 29

So South Africa has found a place with the BRICs – although as this story explains that appears to be more about political calculation than any reflection of its relatively puny economic weight. If South Africa is joining the BRICs then it will certainly add to the debate over what the relevance of the group is both as a political club and as a buzzword for a bunch of dynamic emerging giants to which investors might want to shift some money – and there are now a collection of BRIC funds out there to help those who seek to.

<http://blogs.reuters.com/africanews/2010/12/29/south-africa-invited-to-bric-table/>

ENVIRONMENT (WATER/CLIMATE)

Media Articles:

Crops Threatened by Heat in South America, *Wall Street Journal*, December 30

Scorching summer heat in South America is cutting harvest forecasts in one of the world's key farm belts, helping propel crop prices to two-year highs and fueling concerns about tight global supplies. Dry weather caused by the La Niña weather pattern is already damaging fields in Argentina, which will be the world's second-largest corn exporter this crop year and third-largest soybean exporter, according to U.S. data. With temperatures reaching into the 90s, weather is also threatening crops in southern Brazil and Uruguay, which declared a state of emergency last week for farmers in the north of the country. The region's role in world food markets means any production problems there could be felt around the world.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204204004576049932838994642.html?KEYWORDS=agriculture>

Are Humans Definitely Causing Global Warming?, *Guardian*, December 30

Just as the world's most respected scientific bodies have confirmed that world is getting hotter, they have also stated that there is strong evidence that humans are driving the warming. The 2005 joint statement from the national academies of Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the US said: "It is likely that most of the warming in recent decades can be attributed to human activities." Countless more recent statements and reports from the world's leading scientific bodies have said the same thing. For example, a 2010 summary of climate science by the Royal Society stated that: "There is strong evidence that the warming of the Earth over the last half-century has been caused largely by human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels and changes in land use, including agriculture and deforestation."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/dec/30/humans-causing-global-warming>

Wheat Poised to Weather Climate Change, *Discovery*, December 27

Agriculture will need to adapt to new conditions brought by climate change, but it's no worse than what farmers faced in the past. With climate change predicted to alter precipitation and raise temperatures in North American grain-growing regions by 3 to 4 degrees Celsius (about 5 to 7 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, crops in the future will face dramatically different growing conditions than they do today. But a new study shows that over the last century and a half, North American wheat crops spread into regions with even wider temperature and precipitation differences than will arise over the next century. This analysis suggests it will be possible to adapt to new wheat-growing conditions.

<http://news.discovery.com/earth/wheat-climate-change-agriculture-101227.html>

China to Invest \$30 Billion in Water Saving Projects, *Agence France-Presse*, December 25

China plans to invest 30 billion dollars on water conservation projects in 2011 to reduce the impact of natural disasters on grain production, state media said Saturday. The report comes after severe flooding and droughts across the country this year destroyed crops and drove up food prices, pushing inflation to its highest level in more than two years in November.

WOMEN & GIRLS

Media Articles:

Microfinance Faces Hurdles in Empowering Afghan Women, *Reuters*, December 28

Microfinance - developed more than 30 years ago by Bangladeshi economist Muhammad Yunus, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his efforts - traditionally targets women. MISFA said 60 percent of current Afghan clients are women. "Women are ignored, so one of our social missions is to bring them out, so that there will be a kind of dignity of women, they can have a better position in the family," said Hoque, adding that more than 80 percent of BRAC's clients were women. But the independent Afghanistan Research and

Evaluation Unit (AREU) said it would take more than access to microfinance to empower women and build their social status.

<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/microfinance-faces-hurdles-in-empowering-afghan-women/>

Fashionista Nicole Miller Partners with Indego Africa to Empower African Women, *Huffington Post*, December 28

Fashion designer Nicole Miller, who has boutiques across the country and in Chicago, has partnered with the nonprofit Indego Africa to launch a line of fair-trade textile bangles and woven bracelets. Indego Africa empowers African women to lift their families out of poverty through fair trade partnerships.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/27/fashionista-nicole-miller_n_801762.html#s215647

Against Own History: A Tale of Marked Girls in Serengeti, *IPP*, December 27

In a country which is fronting 'Agriculture First' policy to realise the green revolution, these Kurya communities in a Tanzanian remote locale on the environs of the Great Serengeti National Park have defied all odds to go against their own history for a new life and educational freedom; they are now defining a history of their choice by putting education, especially for the girl child, first.

<http://www.ippmedia.com/frontend/index.php?l=24466>

MARKET ACCESS AND TRADE ISSUES

Reports:

Trade Liberalization and Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa, *IFPRI*, December 2010

Agricultural trade liberalization has been resisted by many developing country policymakers, including those in the Middle East and North Africa, for fear it could hurt domestic farmers and exacerbate poverty. The authors of Trade Liberalization and Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa argue, however, that this concern about liberalization might be misplaced. Drawing on case studies from Egypt, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia, the study uses household survey data and computable general equilibrium models to simulate the effects of various liberalization scenarios on different types of households in these countries, especially poor households. The results indicate that agricultural trade barriers are not an effective means of protecting the poor and that the benefits from many forms of agricultural trade liberalization to the region's consumers outweigh the costs to producers.

<http://www.ifpri.org/publication/trade-liberalization-and-poverty-middle-east-and-north-africa>

Media Articles:

China and Africa Trading Relationship Set to Grow, *BBC*, December 30

Commerce between China and Africa is said to be one of the world's most important trading relationships and is set to grow. Ethiopia has one the fastest growing economies in Africa and its economic potential is attracting Chinese investments. China could also be attracted to new areas of trade in African countries as the technology industry grows.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12092019>

SEE ALSO: China Will Further Boost Economic Ties with Africa, *Associated Press*, December 22

China will boost further its already expanding economic ties with Africa, which reached a record two-way volume of more than \$100 billion this year, the government said Thursday. Chinese demand for oil, gas, iron ore and other raw materials for its rapidly growing economy has spurred trade and investments in Africa in recent years.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gJULKQOLGw6z2NqqQS5LtkjpmHMQ?docId=4f0225104f064a7f90a043ea1351436e>

China Weighs a Spat Over U.S. Feed, *Wall Street Journal*, December 29

If ever there were a commodity that needed a bit of publicity to get around its clunky name, distillers dried grains might just be the candidate. But U.S. farm industry proponents of the grain, created when starch and ethanol are extracted from corn, for use as a livestock feed, probably weren't looking for the kind of publicity caused by China's launch Tuesday of an antidumping probe into U.S. exports of the distillers dried grains.

<http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2010/12/29/china-weighs-a-spat-over-us-feed/?KEYWORDS=agriculture>

Wheat Prices Surge To a Two-Year High, *Wall Street Journal*, December 29

Wheat prices soared to the highest point in more than two years on a combination of persistent dry conditions in the U.S. plains states and the disclosure of recent purchases by Egypt, the world's largest wheat buyer.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204467204576048181150421772.html?KEYWORDS=agriculture>

High Hopes for the East African Community, *Voice of America*, December 28

The East African Community, a grouping of 5 countries in and around the Horn, is continuing to work towards its goal of regional economic integration. Members of the EAC are dropping barriers to trade, with the goal of eventually adopting a common currency.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/east/High-Hopes-Abound-for-the-East-African-Community-112560644.html>

Rising Food Prices May Spur Asian Inflation in 2011, Nomura's Khatri Says, *Bloomberg*, December 23

Increased demand for food in Asia will help to boost prices next year, fuelling faster consumer inflation, according to Yougesh Khatri at Nomura Holdings Inc., who flagged rising costs as a "key theme" for 2011. Costlier food was likely to hit Asia hard as edible goods account for "a fairly large chunk" of the baskets that governments use to calculate the pace of price changes, said Khatri, a Singapore-based senior economist.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-24/rising-food-prices-may-spur-asian-inflation-in-2011-nomura-s-khatri-says.html>

A Free Trader's New Years Resolution, *Wall Street Journal*, December 23

Completing the Doha Round of trade talks may be a tall order for a New Year's resolution, but Patrick Thomas, the U.K. Embassy's policy adviser for trade and agriculture, says there are smaller ways to move free trade further.

<http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2010/12/23/guest-contribution-a-free-traders-new-years-resolution/>

Vilsack Projects Big Agricultural Export Surplus, *Des Moines Register*, December 23

The U.S. will post a \$41 billion agricultural export surplus this year, Agricultural Secretary Tom Vilsack said Thursday while projecting that farm commodity prices would remain relatively high for at least a couple of years, making the rural economy one of the country's strengths.

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2010101223017>

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Media Articles:

Bunge Warns on Grain Price Pressures, *Financial Times*, December 28

The pressures driving grain prices to two-year highs will not subside for at least a year, the head of a leading agricultural trader has said in a warning that deepens short-term worries about food price inflation. But Alberto Weisser, chief executive of Bunge, rejected a growing view that high food prices are here to stay. The US-based company is one of the biggest traders of commodities such as soyabeans, giving its executives an inside view into global food markets.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3ee1c152-12b4-11e0-b4c8-00144feabdc0.s01=1.html?ftcamp=rss&ftcamp=crm/email/20101229/nbe/GlobalBusiness/product#axzz19YDiiqkm>

SEE ALSO: Bunge Rides on Volatility of Food Prices, *Financial Times*, December 28

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/89e80c8a-12a8-11e0-b4c8-00144feabdc0.html#axzz19YFdydZ1>

ChemChina Eyes Chemicals Acquisition, *Financial Times*, December 28

ChemChina, a leading Chinese chemicals manufacturer, plans to buy a controlling stake in Israel's Makhteshim Agan Industries for \$1.44bn. The proposed deal to buy a 60 per cent stake in MA Industries, a leading manufacturer of crop protectants such as pesticides, would be one of the largest Chinese acquisitions to date in the agrochemicals sector.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ecceae9c-12af-11e0-b4c8-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=crm/email/20101229/nbe/AsiaPacificBusiness/product#axzz19YD9glxQ>

Green Fields: Ethanol Production Rises 13% this Year over 2009, *Des Moines Register*, December 26

The U.S. Energy Information Agency reports that ethanol production in the United States is running 13 percent ahead of a year ago. The agency said 4.8 billion bushels of this year's 12 billion to 13 billion bushel corn crop will be needed to satisfy ethanol demand.

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=201012260319>

Green Biologics Strikes Deal in China, *Financial Times*, December 23

A small UK company is to roll out advanced biofuel technology in China, where investment in green know-how is increasing rapidly. Green Biologics, an unlisted company, has signed deals with two Chinese biochemical businesses – Guangxi Jinyuan Biochemical and Lianyungang Union of Chemicals.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3c6d9f00-0ed5-11e0-9ec3-00144feabdc0.s01=1.html?ftcamp=crm/email/20101224/nbe/AsiaPacificBusiness/product#axzz19Y07TOaP>

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