

GLOBAL FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The weekly news brief of the Global Agricultural Development Project

February 19 – February 25, 2009

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KEY ARTICLES

Analyst Says Current Economic Crisis Could Impact Future U.S. Assistance to Africa, James Butty, VOA, February 25

Ron Walters, professor in government and politics at the University of Maryland told VOA the current U.S. economic slowdown is likely to have some impact on future U.S. economic assistance to Africa under the Obama administration. Walters said while Africans have every right to expect some help from the Obama administration, it would all depend on the condition of the U.S. economy.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2009-02-25-voa8.cfm>

Should Hunger be High on the G8's agenda?, World Food Programme, February 23

Top economists, ministers, development experts and business leaders converged on WFP's Rome headquarters at the weekend to discuss the global economic crisis and what the G8's response should be. The world's economic woes will dominate the agenda in coming months and will take centre stage at the G8 summit in July. But what of hunger? Live Aid founder Bob Geldof and Barack Obama advisor Martin Feldstein give their views.

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/should-hunger-be-high-g8s-agenda>

Broad-Based Humanitarian Coalition Unveils Roadmap to End Global Hunger, PR Newswire, February 24

Seeking to address a growing economic crisis that threatens to destroy the health and nutrition of millions of families worldwide, the nation's top humanitarian aid agencies joined Representatives Jim McGovern and Jo Ann Emerson in calling for a new plan for the U.S. government to lead the international community in alleviating global hunger. The new legislation incorporates recommendations of the Roadmap to End Global Hunger campaign.

<http://news.prnewswire.com/ViewContent.aspx?ACCT=109&STORY=/www/story/02-24-2009/0004977599&EDATE=>

Food, climate and financial crises threaten sustainable development goals – UN official, *UN News Centre, February 23*

A range of challenges from food and financial crises to climate change are threatening global efforts to achieve development that is sustainable, or that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In addition, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals – the set of globally agreed anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline – is in “jeopardy.”

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29984&Cr=climate+change&Cr1=financial+crisis>

Africa: Sustaining Growth Will Challenge Govts, *Witney Schneidman and Paul Collier, AllAfrica, February 20*

Poverty in Africa is not yet falling, but it has stabilized, according to the World Bank. Improving the competitiveness of Africa's private sector is a priority for greater progress. There needs to be a heightened focus on reducing the costs of doing business by combating corruption, gearing post-secondary education to private sector demand and providing access to credit and investment capital.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200902200088.html>

Crop Scientists Say Biotechnology Seed Companies Are Thwarting Research, *New York Times, February 19*

Biotechnology companies are keeping university scientists from fully researching the effectiveness and environmental impact of the industry's GM crops, according to an unusual complaint issued by a group of those scientists. The statement will probably give support to critics of biotech crops, like environmental groups, who have long complained that the crops have not been studied thoroughly enough and could have unintended health and environmental consequences.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/20/business/20crop.html?em>

UN report aims to solve food crisis, *Meredith Griffiths, ABC News, February 19*

The UN's environmental body has just released a new report outlining how an increased focus on environmental sustainability could help improve food security. The program's spokesman Nick Nuttall says more than half the food produced today is lost, wasted or discarded. The UN's report also suggests micro-financing small scale farms, harvesting extreme rainfall and adopting more diversified and ecologically friendly farming systems.

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2008/s2496250.htm>

No Quick Fix for Malnutrition and Hunger, *Kristin Palitza, IPS News, February 24*

Almost five million children die of malnutrition every year in the developing world. Food aid – which mainly contains nutrient-poor carbohydrates - does little to address the absence of a diverse diet that would prevent the condition. Humanitarian relief organization Médecins Sans Frontières is therefore urging policy makers to boost food security and improve the quality of food aid that feeds the world's hungry. To fight malnutrition in the long-term, however, African governments need to invest in small-scale farming to create food autonomy.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=45872>

World Cocoa Foundation and Leading Chocolate Industry Companies Partner with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Significantly Improve Cocoa Farmer Livelihoods in West Africa, *PR Newswire, February 19*

The World Cocoa Foundation announced a \$40 million program funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and chocolate industry companies for approximately 200,000 cocoa farmers in Cote d'Ivoire,

Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Liberia. The West Africa Cocoa Livelihoods Program will enhance farmer knowledge, improve productivity, and promote crop diversification. These initiatives will help increase farmers' incomes and improve cocoa community well-being.

<http://news.prnewswire.com/DisplayReleaseContent.aspx?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/02-19-2009/0004975006&EDATE=>

Food Crisis Under the Spotlight, *Joyce Mulama, IPS News, February 18*

Worldwide demand for food is expected to grow over the next 40 years, but 25% of food production may be lost to 'environmental breakdowns' by 2050 unless urgent action is taken. It emerges that lack of investment in agricultural development has played a role in reducing yields in Africa, where most farmers still use the hand hoe to till land. Critics contend that for the continent to achieve food security, it needs to embrace a new era of technology-driven agriculture.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=45811>

NEW REPORTS/POLICY BRIEFS

Sowing the Seeds, *The International Women's Media Foundation, February 24*

This report is based on a study of media coverage in the agricultural sectors of Mali, Uganda and Zambia. It concludes that there is "a profound disconnect between African media coverage and people's lives." Some key findings include: 84% of agricultural coverage focuses on breaking news; little coverage takes the form of in-depth features, investigative pieces, or farmer education; agriculture comprises only 4% of media coverage; women are almost invisible in the media.

http://www.iwmf.org/docs/SowingTheSeeds_final.pdf

Thirsty Energy: Water and Energy in the 21st Century, *World Economic Forum, February 2009*

Global consumption of our planet's finite freshwater supply has grown at more than twice the rate of world population growth, leaving an increasing number of regions chronically short of water. By 2025, nearly 2 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity, and two-thirds of the world population could be living under stressed water conditions.

http://www2.cera.com/docs/WEF_Fall2008_CERA.pdf

Nutrition Situation Post Deyr, *Food Security Analysis Unit, February 20*

The findings of the FSAU '08/09 seasonal assessment confirm that there is an ongoing Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia, with 43% of the total population of the country, or around 3.2 million people, in need of emergency livelihood and life-saving assistance at least until June 2009. The humanitarian crisis is unique in that it is widespread; not only are 1.2 million rural people in crisis, nearly two-thirds of those in crisis, are urban poor and internally displaced populations (IDPs).

<http://www.fsasomali.org/fileadmin/uploads/1479.pdf>

Report on the State of Food Insecurity in Rural India, *World Food Programme, February 20*

The last decade has seen stunting among children in rural India fall and access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation improve, according to a new report released by WFP and the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF). But calorie intake and chronic energy deficiency have remained stagnant. The most serious problem has been an increase in the prevalence of anemia.

<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/newsroom/wfp197348.pdf>

From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment, *United Nations Environmental Programme, February 2009*

This report aims to summarize the latest knowledge on the linkages between environment, conflict and peacebuilding, and to demonstrate the need for those linkages to be addressed in a more coherent way by. The research and consolidation of information herein will feed into the development of upcoming guidance notes, training modules, policy papers and other outputs under this EC-UN project.

http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/pcdmb_policy_01.pdf

Implementing Physical and Virtual Food Reserves to Protect the Poor and Prevent Market Failure, *IFPRI, February 2009*

The food crisis highlights the need to modify the architecture of international financial and agricultural markets to address the problem of price spikes, especially their effects on the poor. We propose two global collective actions to meet these goals. First, the establishment of a small physical food reserve to facilitate a response to food emergencies. Second, the creation of a virtual reserve to prevent market spikes and keep prices closer to levels suggested by market fundamentals.

<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/bp/bp010.pdf>

The global food crisis and Fairtrade: Small farmers, big solutions?, *Fairtrade Foundation, February 2009*

We must support small-scale farmers to reduce poverty, increase food production, and protect the environment. To do this, small-scale farmers need a transformation in agricultural trade. Governments should step up their support for smallholders. They should halt the decline in aid for agriculture; ensure that agricultural policy and aid flows focus support on small-scale farming; and increase support to NGO programs supporting the sustainability of small-scale agriculture.

Executive Summary -

http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/f/ft_executive_summary.pdf

Full Report -

http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/f/ft_conference_reportfinal.pdf

“A better future for Africa: Recommendations from the private sector”, *Confederation of Danish Industry, February 2009*

This study concludes that Africa's path to development could be eased if governments improved infrastructure, coordinated regional trade policies, capacitated customs personnel to speed up the regional exchange of goods and services, and facilitated access of small and medium enterprises to financial resources. It also points out that professional education, technology transfer and the empowerment of women can play a key role for steady development in Africa.

http://www.di.dk/NR/rdonlyres/0FAAA0C8-5470-45EB-8CC7-D5A2E3CE9E72/0/AbetterfutureforAfrica_net.pdf

Urban Food Security Assessment, *Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee, February 2009*

The deterioration of the Zimbabwean economy suggests a rapidly deteriorating food security situation in the urban areas of Zimbabwe. For instance, poverty levels have increased, annual inflation officially is estimated at 231million percent, and unemployment is estimated to be above 80%. The report makes a number of suggests as to mitigate and help stem these pernicious developments.

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/RMOI-7PHMKW/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/RMOI-7PHMKW/$File/full_report.pdf)

The Current State of the Macro Economy of Ghana, *Centre for Policy Analysis, February 2009*

Underlying the issue of poverty reduction in Ghana is the choice of two contrasting strategies for the development of its economy: economic growth with macroeconomic stability or macroeconomic

stability with economic growth. Central to resolving the above issues, is the budget deficit and its financing. The key challenge for the new President is how to tackle this deficit problem within the context of the medium-term goal of sustained growth with macroeconomic stability.

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGHANA/Resources/CEPA_2009_Executive_Summary_final_distribution.pdf

UPCOMING EVENTS

Renewing American Leadership in the Fight Against Global Hunger and Poverty: The Chicago Initiative on Global Agricultural Development – Final Report Release Symposium

Date: February 25, 2009

Time: 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Location: The Peterson Institute for International Economics, 1750 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

Speakers: Ms. Catherine Bertini, Mr. Dan Glickman, Senator Richard Lugar, Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Dr. Joachim von Braun, Dr. David Beckmann

The Global Agricultural Development Project's final report provides an objective assessment of the risks posed by rural poverty and food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. It endorses a call to action for the United States Government to work with governments and other institutions in Africa and South Asia to increase agricultural productivity, market access, and incomes for small holders. The report was developed and endorsed by a bipartisan group of national leaders with experience and expertise on food and agriculture, development, foreign policy, and international organizations. A list of those serving on the Global Agricultural Development Leaders Group is below

Trade, Tastes and Nutrition in India (hosted by the Center for Global Development)

Date: February 27, 2009

Location: Center for Global Development 1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Third Floor, Washington, DC

Speaker: David Atkin (Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University)

This paper introduces habit formation into an otherwise standard model of international trade. Household tastes evolve to favor foods consumed as a child. In autarky, households prefer foods that are locally abundant and thus relatively inexpensive. The opening of trade causes a rise in the price of these preferred goods. Neglecting the correlation between tastes and agro-climatic endowments overstates the short-run nutritional gains from agricultural trade liberalization.

<http://www.cgdev.org/content/calendar/detail/1421162>

Article - http://www.cgdev.org/doc/events/2.27.09/David_Atkin_Tastes_and_Nutrition.pdf

A Dialogue: Advancing Agricultural Development and Addressing the Global Food Crisis -- Present and Future (hosted by the Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development)

Date: March 3, 2009

Location: B-338 -339, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington D.C.

This year's Forum is occurring at a critical time. As a result of the world food crisis, coupled with the impacts of the global economic crisis, nearly one billion people are hungry. As you will see from the program, the Forum will include an overview of the issues, as well as interactive discussion with experts representing a think tank, government, international organizations, and private industry

<http://aiard.org/meetings/2009forum/index.htm>

2009 Asia Round Table: Balancing the Agricultural Bottom Line (hosted by the World Agricultural Forum)

Date: March 8-10, 2009

Location: Phuket, Thailand

Speakers: James B. Bolger (Former Prime Minister of New Zealand); Dr. Y.S.Rajasekhara Reddy (Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh in India)

Agriculture is the prominent avenue for sustaining economic growth. Therefore, it is imperative that agriculture be viewed not only as a means to feed people, but also as an investment. today's economic strains are forcing a closer look at agricultural financing and investments. Agricultural investments are the necessary component to stimulating growth in emerging economies. Thus, an agenda has been created to address these issues and advance a collaborative solution(s).

<http://www.worldagforum.org/events.htm>

Hunger is on the March: Building an Anti-Famine Mechanism for the 21st Century (hosted by Chatham House)

Date: March 10, 2009

Location: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, 10 St James's Square, London

Speakers: Josette Sheeran (Executive Director of the World Food Programme); Alex Evans (Non-Resident Fellow at NYU, Center on International Cooperation)

With nearly a billion hungry people, hunger and malnutrition are the world's leargest health challenge. The severe economic downturn, on the heels of last year's food crisis, underscores that yesterday's global food system can no longer dependably feed the world. The speaker will discuss the issues surrounding tackling hunger and malnutrition in an increasingly volatile and unpredictable environment.

<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/events/view/-/id/1080/>

Adaption Potential in Plants

Date: March 19-21, 2009

Location: Vienna, Austria

Speakers: David Baulcombe, Luca Comai, Caroline Dean, Bill Easterling, Ueli Grossniklaus, Andrzej Jerzmanowski, Susan Lolle, Ivan Matic, Thomas Mitchell-Olds, Jean Molinier, Ferenc Nagy, Magnus Nordborg, Eric Richards, Ida Ruberti, Michael Thomashow, Elizabeth Vierling, Eva Zazimalova, Jian-Kang Zhu

Climate and environmental changes severely affect agricultural productivity. In a world whose population is projected to increase by 50% to 9 billion by 2050 and in which the area of arable land is steadily decreasing, understanding the mechanisms by which plants are able to adapt to a changing environment is vital. It is therefore timely to hold a FEBS Workshop on 'Adaptation Potential in Plants'.

<http://www.gmi.oeaw.ac.at/en/other-sites/febs/program/>

African Organic Conference: "Fast tracking sustainable development in Africa through harnessing Organic Agriculture and Bio-technology"

Date: May 19-22, 2009

Location: Sheraton Hotel, Kampala, Uganda

The Conference will focus on clearly bringing out attributes of Organic Agriculture as a science relevant to sustainable development, poverty eradication and assured food security in Africa. Organic Agriculture impacts on all development sectors and elements of sustainability in a characteristic way, which is seriously needed to achieve lasting solutions to factors limiting economic growth on the continent.

<http://www.fiuc.org/umu/index.php/research-and-publications/african-organic>

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

Bumper rice harvests could bring down prices but poor may not benefit, warns UN, *UN News Centre, February 25*

The consumer cost of rice, a staple for much of the world, could fall this year thanks to a bumper harvest in 2008, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported today, but cautioned that the negative impact of the global economic downturn and the resulting loss of jobs and income could outweigh the benefits of lower prices for the poorest consumer.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=30009&Cr=fao&Cr1=rice>

S.Africa maize deliveries, futures rise, *BBC, February 25*

Maize deliveries to South African silos rose to 11.48 million tonnes last week from 11.46 million previously and the main maize futures jumped on expectations of a lower maize crop. White maize deliveries rose to 7.033 million tons from a revised 7.022 million tons, while yellow maize submissions increased to 4.445 million tons from a revised 4.438 million, the South African Grain Information Service (SAGIS) said.

<http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJ0E5100L120090225>

Getting an appetite for biotechnology, *Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, BBC, February 24*

A growing population and climate change is going to make it difficult to meet the demand for food in the coming years, says German MEP Jorgo Chatzimarkakis. In this week's Green Room, he argues that we must embrace the solutions offered by biotechnology if we are going to feed the planet.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7905567.stm>

United Bank Starts Nigerian Agriculture-Loan Fund, *Punch Says, Vincent Nwanma, Bloomberg, February 24*

United Bank for Africa Plc started a 50 billion naira (\$388.1 million) agricultural fund to support development of the industry. Loans will be granted to farmers at an interest rate of 8 percent in an effort to help the government diversify the economy as the oil price falls.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601116&sid=a2T9tvpCR8ps&refer=africa>

Scores of Zimbabwe farms 'seized', *BBC, February 23*

Scores of white-owned farms in Zimbabwe have been invaded since the country's national unity government took office. Commercial Farmers Union President Trevor Gifford said 77 properties had been occupied in the last two weeks. MPs, police, the military and Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe officials had taken part in the invasions.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7906031.stm>

See also - <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4e2a5b10-0203-11de-8199-000077b07658.html>

Senegal: Squeezing more out of sesame, *IRIN, February 23*

The Senegalese government has invested millions of dollars in the past decade to revive sesame production, but the sector has been slow to develop. Yet as profits decline for the country's main cash crops - peanuts and cotton - and Asia's demand for sesame grows, some producers are reconsidering the abandoned crop.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83101>

Stressing the significance of contract farming, *The Times of India*, February 22

Contract farming is a major economic multiplier for small and marginal farmers, NIAM director Anurag Bhatnagar said as he stressed on attending to their specific needs. Indian agriculture is characterized by small and marginal farmers whose landholding is 0.60 hectares and 1.3 hectares respectively. To improve the status of small and marginal farmers, India must adopt high value new crops, lower cost of production, and implement value-addition to agri produce.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Mysore/Stressing-the-significance-of-contract-farming/articleshow/4167026.cms>

Poor farmers in Tanzania to get \$56 million boost from UN rural development arm, *UN News Centre*, February 20

Smallholder farmers in Tanzania will benefit from a \$56 million loan injected into the Government's agricultural sector from the United Nations in an effort to encourage economic growth and reduce poverty. The supplementary loan to Tanzania from the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development will help smallholder farmers by supporting a program aimed at stimulating the significant growth potential in traditional export crops.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29964&Cr=&Cr1=>

see also - <http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJ0E51K04S20090221>

Laos: UN funds \$15 million scheme to bolster agricultural productivity, *UN News Centre*, February 19

Poor farmers in the uplands of Laos are set to receive a \$15 million boost from the United Nations rural development arm to help finance a project aimed at bolstering productivity and improving the sustainable management of natural resources. The loan from IFAD will go towards an initiative aimed at maximizing the productivity of the country's limited arable land and finding solutions to issues such as undeveloped water resources and farmers' lack of access to markets.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29951&Cr=ifad&Cr1=laos>

Togo: Can a second green revolution work?, *IRIN*, February 18

After emerging from years of donor sanctions, plummeting harvests and persistent food shortages, Togo has pledged to invest US\$178 million to revive the agriculture sector, which employs two-thirds of the population. Donors have agreed to give Togo \$57 million for agriculture in 2009, for fertilizers, research, training for farmers, creating producer associations and improving yields - with a focus on rice.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83000>

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS (WATER/CLIMATE)

Cholera Persists In Zimbabwe Because Clean Water Is Scarce – Physician, *Patience Rusere*, *VOA*, February 24

Though the UN humanitarian delegation in Zimbabwe has assured the government it will do all it can to relieve a humanitarian crisis made more acute by a cholera epidemic, fatalities from the disease continue to rise. Dr. Martin told reporter Patience Rusere that the disease is hard to stop because the country's public water infrastructure has collapsed and as a result safe drinking water is not widely available, perpetuating the epidemic.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/Zimbabwe/2009-02-24-voa59.cfm>

Somalia: Child deaths linked to acute water shortage in Galgadud, IRIN, February 24

An acute water shortage has hit central Somalia's Galgadud region, with local leaders linking the deaths of two children to a lack of water and food. The region has had no rains in the past two years and the district's only functioning borehole has broken down. The livestock - the economic mainstay of the area - and the population were equally affected by water shortages.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83119>

Africa: Climate change and conflicts, IRIN, February 23

Karamoja, a semi-arid region in northeast Uganda, is in crisis: a mix of the impact of climate change - 14 droughts in 25 years - border conflicts, armed cattle-raids, and difficult development and sustainability issues. The humanitarian impact has meant that the WFP has an ongoing food aid program in Karamoja for the last 40 years. Shortages of food and water brought on by the impact of climate change could escalate existing conflicts and generate others.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83096>

Africa: Join Climate Neutral Network, continent urged, IRIN, February 20

African countries, despite being among the world's smallest contributors to carbon emissions, as well as businesses and institutions operating on the continent, should join the year-old Climate Neutral Network. According to Roberto Dobles Mora, Costa Rica's minister for environment and energy, "Successful economies of the future will have to be carbon neutral and Africa and other developing countries must not be left behind."

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83036>

Guinea: Record cold snap destroys crops, kills hundreds of animals, IRIN, February 20

Near-freezing temperatures in north-central Guinea in January destroyed crops and livestock on which thousands of people depend for food as well as cash. The cold wiped out crops – mainly potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, onions and bananas – across five districts in Mali. It is not yet known how many hectares were destroyed. The cold also provoked at least 1,115 spontaneous abortions in goats and sheep.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83042>

Experts Recommend Ways of Coping with Increasing Drought, WMO, February 19

Climate projections for the 21st century indicate increased frequency of droughts in the US, southern Africa, Australia and parts of South America. Severe heatwaves are expected to increase in these same areas. The workshop adopted several recommendations to cope with increasing droughts and extreme temperatures on agriculture. One recommendation was to develop a standardized drought index that can be applied to a wide-range of agricultural purposes worldwide.

http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press_releases/pr_837_en.html

Freshwater Rising in Strategic Importance, Joe De Capua, VOA, February 19

A new report warns of growing competition for the world's limited freshwater supplies. The World Economic Forum says water is needed to meet increased energy demands, while climate change is leaving large areas of the world chronically short of the precious resource.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2009-02-19-voa40.cfm>

Somalia: Water shortages drive hundreds of families from their homes, IRIN, February 19

Thousands of people in Somalia's south-western Gedo region could starve after acute shortages of water and food, local officials and elders said, appealing for urgent help. "Thousands of families in the

region are facing a lack of water and food and are on the brink of starvation," Ahmed Mohamed Burkuus, district commissioner of Bulo Hawo, said. "If help does not arrive soon, it may be too late for many."

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83017>

WOMEN

"Profound Disconnect" Between African Media Coverage Of Agriculture And People's Lives: IWMMF Report, Hanna Win, Huffington Post, February 24

There is a "profound disconnect" between how the media covers agricultural issues in Africa and how people actually live, according to a new study by the International Women's Media Foundation. The report finds that, in the media, agriculture gets too little attention given its importance to Africa's economy, and women are "almost invisible." The IWMMF is launching a program to improve media coverage of agriculture, rural development and women in Africa.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/24/profound-disconnect-between_169647.html

HIV rate among women in Swaziland now 42 percent, Associated Press, February 20

A new report says 42 percent of pregnant women in Swaziland are infected with the virus that causes AIDS. The small southern African nation has the highest AIDS rate in the world and average life expectancy is just 37 years as a result.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ipBi3auB-yQ7C9zluA4J2nxqg2QD96F82OG2>

Voices of African Women, Marie-Claire Faray-Kele, The Women's International League for Peace, February 20

Surveying the plethora of problems faced by women in Africa, this paper argues that while women are divided in the diversity of their backgrounds, they are united in their collective voice. Highlighting the detrimental role of assumptions about 'tradition' in preventing women from speaking for themselves, it states that overcoming gender inequality represents the solution for tackling poverty in Africa and allowing the wisdom of Africa's women to be harnessed.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200902200663.html>

Think of Women Farmers, Sabina Zaccaro, IPS News, February 19

The new president of the IFAD takes over at a time when women farmers are becoming a growing force. IFAD has made the issue of women farmers a key challenge, together with price rise and climate change. IFAD says that the past decade has seen women's participation in agricultural labor grow by a third, and in the off-farm labor market by 10%. While there is no official figure for the number of women farmers worldwide, around 30% of African farms are headed by women.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=45819>

FOOD CRISIS

Zimbabwe: More people eating less food, IRIN, February 25

Urban hunger has deepened across Zimbabwe over the past three years, with families cutting back on their quantity and quality of food, according to a joint UN and government assessment. National urban

food insecurity increased from 24% in November 2006 to 33% by January 2009, with the worst affected areas in Matabeleland North. Furthermore, the number of households consuming three meals a day declined from 54% in 2006 to 23% in 2009.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83135>

Malawi: Cheaper recipe for treating hungry children, IRIN, February 24

Project Peanut Butter, a non-profit therapeutic feeding programme in Malawi, has begun clinical trials to test the efficacy of substitute ingredients to help bring production costs down. The food and fuel price crisis in 2008 pushed the costs of ingredients up, adding impetus to the study. The project's studies have shown that 95 percent of malnourished children on this formula recover in six to eight weeks.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83124>

Plague threat looms as Bangladesh rat problem grows, Shafiq Alam, Agence France-Presse, February 24

Bangladesh faces a serious risk of prolonged famine and bubonic plague unless a ballooning rat population is brought under control, experts say. The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) began distributing three million dollars of emergency food supplies to some 120,000 people in the southeastern tribal area bordering India and Myanmar last May, after the rat population exploded. The rats -- some weighing as much as 3.3 pounds -- feed on bamboo forests in the hilly region.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20090224/sc_afp/financeconomybangladeshanimalsfamine_20090224061156

Somalia: Agencies alarmed by child malnutrition, IRIN, February 23

One in six children in Somalia is malnourished because of high food prices and lack of access to staple foods due to ongoing conflict. The emergency is driven by a combination of conflict, hyperinflation and below-normal seasonal rains. The report said nearly 43 percent of the population, or some 3.2 million people, were "in need of emergency livelihood and life-saving assistance". The urban food crisis is growing and affecting some 705,000 people.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83084>

UNICEF receives \$48 million from retail chain IKEA to help India's poor, UN News Centre, February 23

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) initiatives supporting some of the poorest people in India are set to receive a \$48 million boost from Swedish retail giant IKEA, the agency announced today, coinciding with the day of International Corporate Philanthropy. The donation, the latest from the IKEA Social Initiative, will go towards projects aimed at improving the health and survival of tens of millions of women and children in some of India's most deprived areas.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29985&Cr=unicef&Cr1=>

How To Escape the Global Food Crunch, World Food Programme, February 21

The current crisis in the world economy has worsened the global food 'crunch' that erupted last year. A conference organized by Italy's Aspen Institute discussed strategies to reverse the economic downturn and explored ways of achieving food security. The conference was part of a wider initiative by the Aspen Institute to help define the guidelines for the G8 during its Italian presidency. Aspen's objective is to find ways of having the public and private sectors work together towards a new "global deal" built around sustainable capitalism.

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/how-escape-global-food-crunch>

UN humanitarian team visits cholera-hit Zimbabwe, Agence France-Presse, February 21

A UN humanitarian team arrived in Zimbabwe Saturday for a visit aimed at curbing a deadly cholera epidemic and food crisis and which will include a meeting with President Robert Mugabe. The other four members of the team are from the World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Children's Fund UNICEF. Mugabe agreed to allow the top-level UN team to visit Zimbabwe to find ways of curbing the cholera epidemic and food crisis.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gydoAuoJrxzaYaetPh0K6BzQswjw>

see also - <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/world/world/general/un-team-to-tackle-cholera-food-crisis/1440825.aspx>

Kenya: Turkana at risk of further food shortages, IRIN, February 19

Food shortages in the arid Turkana region of north-western Kenya, where an increasing number of people are already unable to find enough to eat, could escalate if rains fail in March, an official warned. The region has been hit by drought, insecurity, poor or no harvests, high malnutrition rates, water scarcity and high food prices. Children and the elderly, in particular, needed relief food to survive.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83003>

New nutrition policy for northern states of Sudan to strengthen child health, reduce mortality, UNICEF, February 19

Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health will unveil a new nutrition policy covering the 15 northern states of the country on 22 February as part of efforts to improve child health and reduce mortality towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The new policy, developed with the support of UNICEF, WFP and WHO, sets out the framework through which a range of activities will be undertaken throughout the 15 states to improve the nutritional status of the population.

http://www.unicef.org/media/media_48131.html

BIOFUELS

Rhetoric Surpasses Reality On Biofuels, Forbes, February 25

Brazil's proposals for developing Africa (in particular, Angola and Mozambique) as a source of biofuel feedstock are unlikely to be matched by concrete investments in light of the recent fall in oil prices, although Petrobras may seek to expand its presence in countries where it also plays a role in the oil sector. However, the biofuels sector could benefit if, as anticipated, the new U.S. administration throws its weight behind the development of low carbon energy supplies.

http://www.forbes.com/2009/02/24/brazil-africa-biofuels-business_oxford.html

Modern Ethanol Plant Has Negligible Impact on Land Use, New Scientific Study Finds, PR Newswire, February 24

A study on ethanol land use impact found that a modern ethanol plant does not meaningfully change farmland use. The study found that a new ethanol plant requiring 20.45 million bushels of corn for fuel production utilizes the yield from 104,284 acres, which is less than 7% of the acres from the "draw area." However, more than 260,000 acres were converted from mostly soybeans to corn indicating that other factors contributed to corn intensification.

<http://sev.prnewswire.com/null/20090224/CG7445124022009-1.html>

Blue Diamond Ventures, Inc. Implements Business Strategy by Expanding on Alternative Energy Projects in the U.S. and Africa, CNN Money, February 19

Blue Diamond Ventures recently announced it has implemented its business strategy by expanding on the alternative energy projects it is currently undertaking in the United States and Africa. One of the Company's main goals for 2009 is to increase its land agreements to 10 million acres in Africa. Blue Diamond Ventures has other business ventures in Africa, including the planting of non-food crops, building its own waste-to-energy facilities and constructing biodiesel facilities
<http://money.cnn.com/news/newsfeeds/articles/marketwire/0474673.htm>

MARKET ACCESS AND TRADE ISSUES

Kenya's horticulture export sales rise 28.8 pct, Reuters, February 25

Kenya's horticulture exports earned 28.8 percent more for the east African nation in 2008, raking in 73.7 billion shillings compared with 57.2 billion in 2007. "The main growth commodities were cut flowers, processed vegetables and fruits," Romano Kiome, a top agriculture ministry official said in a statement, adding export volumes had grown 9.8 percent to 423,000 metric tons in 2008.

<http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJOE5100OW20090225>

Kenya opens up maize imports due to drought crisis, Reuters, February 24

Kenya will let traders freely import and sell maize to ensure there are enough supplies of the staple food in the drought-hit east African nation. Previously, importers had to be vetted by the agriculture ministry before being allowed to bring in maize. Maize millers also had to be registered to be able to buy maize from the national cereals board.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSLO805206>

Cameroon Office Hosts Dialogue On Africa-Europe Trade, World Bank, February 23

On February 23, a three-hour discussion on the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), a trade accord that the EU has proposed to Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) countries was given at a World Bank office in Cameroon. Cameroon signed an interim EPA on January 15, 2009. It is so far the only country in Central Africa to have taken the first step toward a permanent agreement.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:22079453~menuPK:34457~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

Fairtrade Fortnight: smallholders farm a route out of poverty, Guardian, February 23

Times are desperate for smallholders in the developing world. Yet these smallholders, overlooked by companies and policymakers alike, may hold the key to solving the food crisis. Smallholder agriculture has been sidelined, with aid to agriculture falling and African governments spending only 4-5% of their budgets on agriculture. That is why the Fairtrade Foundation is calling for smallholders to be put first in the strategies of governments and in company's sourcing plans.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/feb/23/fairtrade-agriculture-smallholders>

World Bank Awards \$50 Million to Modernize Financial Markets in Central Africa, World Bank, February 18

As part of an initiative aimed at encouraging and expanding a better governed financial market and more transparent, better regulated, and more competitive financial systems, the World Bank and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) signed a US\$50 million financial agreement. The initiative will permit increased access to finance and greater availability of resources, particularly facilitating the re-utilization of surplus oil revenues in Central Africa.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:22074976~menuPK:34457~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

AGRIBUSINESS

Monsanto & NGO ISAP Launch Project Share – Sustainable Yield Initiative To Improve Farmer Lives, *India PR Wire, February 22*

Monsanto announced the launch of Project SHARE (Sustainable Harvest - Agriculture, Resources, Environment) – a sustainable yield initiative to improve farmer lives in India, as part of its global three-point commitment to increase global food production in the face of growing demand, limited natural resources and a changing climate. It has pledged to work in new partnerships with other businesses, citizen groups and Governments to meet this challenge.

<http://www.indiaprwire.com/pressrelease/agriculture/2009022020145.htm>

Cargill donates USD 1 mn for children in India, *Press Trust of India, February 20*

Agribusiness giant Cargill has donated USD one million to anti-hunger group Global FoodBanking Network, which in turn will use the grant to feed children in India, South Africa, Argentina and Colombia. Cargill's donation, in response to food price inflation and global economic crisis, would be used to arrange food supplies for children in the four countries, besides supporting food banks and scaling up network development projects aimed at alleviating hunger and malnutrition.

<http://www.ptinews.com/pti%5Cptisite.nsf/0/A25E9E7039AEFD21652575620068FCAF?OpenDocument>

Who owns our food? Thoughts on a new Green Revolution, *Paula Crossfield, Huffington Post, February 19*

Seed and chemical giant Monsanto and friends have lately been conducting all-out rebranding campaigns, seeking to present themselves as the answer to world hunger and the actualization of sustainability. It is clear, however, that they do not consider the role genetically modified seeds have played in increased farmer debt, farmer suicides worldwide; the increase dependence on international food aid, a stripping of the fertility of the land, and waning GM crop yields.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paula-crossfield/who-owns-our-food-thought_b_168311.html