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**Key Articles**

**Why Global Warming Portends a Food Crisis, Bryan Walsh, *Time*, January 13**

Beyond the fact that people prefer the warmth to the cold, there's a reason the world's population is clustered in the tropics and sub-tropics: warmer climates mean longer and richer growing seasons. It is therefore possible that on a warmer globe, the damage inflicted by more frequent and severe heat waves will be balanced by the agricultural benefits of warmer temperatures. A study recently published in *Science* shows that far from compensating for the other damages of climate change (heavier and more frequent storms, increasing desertification, sea level rise), hotter temperatures will diminish the world's ability to feed itself. Although there is likely to be a temporary, beneficial effect on agriculture as temperatures rise, by the year 2100 temperatures will be so high as to cause much of the world's crops to wither and die.

<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1870766,00.html>

**Kenyan government warns of famine after harvests fail, *International Herald Tribune*, January 9, 2009**

Ten million people risk going hungry in Kenya after harvests failed because of drought, the government said. The government declared a national emergency and will lift the import duty on maize until the next major harvest, which will not be for a year in many areas. The emergency declaration allows the government to divert money from development projects to food aid and to use disaster funds that are held in reserve, said government spokesman Alfred Mutua.

<http://www.ihrt.com/articles/ap/2009/01/09/africa/AF-Kenya-Hunger.php>

**The Advisors Obama Is Missing , By Raymond C. Offenheiser (President, Oxfam America), *Foreign Policy*, January 2009**

The incoming U.S. president has made some impressive appointments, but he needs to start backing his words about fighting poverty and disease around the world with deeds.

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=4629](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4629)

**Sec. Schafer: U.S. Agriculture Can Be Force for Peace, *American Farm Bureau*, January 13, 2009**

In what may be his last public speech before leaving office Jan. 20, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer said one of the lessons he learned during his year in office is how interconnected the world is – and how

agriculture can be a force for peace. Speaking at the American Farm Bureau Federation's 90th annual meeting, Schafer said that although America has long played the lead role in providing emergency food aid to the world's hungry, it's now time to take another step. The greatest challenge, Schafer said, is to feed the 70 million additional people who join the world's population every year.

<http://www.fb.org/index.php?fuseaction=newsroom.newsfocus&year=2009&file=nr0113b.html>

**Indian rice producers sound alert on default**, *James Lamont and Javier Blas, Financial Times, January 13*  
India's rice producers said that buyers in six countries were defaulting on contracts after bargaining for heavy discounts on orders and leaving shipments of high-quality basmati rice stranded at ports. European rice importers, however, played down the significance of the defaults, highlighting that the quantities of rice involved were small and the companies were unlikely to be able to buy rice from other countries as traders would be nervous about the possibility of further defaults.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/0875eb52-e192-11dd-afa0-0000779fd2ac.html>

*See also: Credit crunch may lead to another rice crisis, The Associated Press, January 9*

A drop in oil and fertilizer costs has halved the price of rice - a staple for almost 700 million of Asia's poorest - but it could jump again this year as farmers struggle to secure loans amid the credit crunch.

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/AS\\_ASIA\\_FOOD\\_SECURITY?SITE=MOJOP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/AS_ASIA_FOOD_SECURITY?SITE=MOJOP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT)

**Quest to create a new Sudan bread basket**, *William Wallis, Javier Blas, and Barney Jopson, Financial Times, January 9*

There are few regions in Africa as remote and undeveloped as southern Sudan. But Unity state (an area in southern Sudan) borders the White Nile and its flat, arable land could, with billions of dollars of investment in irrigation and roads, be transformed into a world-class bread basket. As commodity prices spiked last year and food riots erupted across the developing world, Gulf countries poured hundreds of millions of dollars into securing land in the fertile Nile valley farther north to grow food crops for exporting home.

[http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5f0423c6-de86-11dd-9464-000077b07658.html?nclick\\_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5f0423c6-de86-11dd-9464-000077b07658.html?nclick_check=1)

**Exceptional food crisis in Horn of Africa**, *Greg Jack, Reuters, January 9*

The International Federation of Red Cross Societies launched an appeal for £65 million for the Horn of Africa to which the British Red Cross has made a £250,000 donation. Millions of people in Kenya and the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia, are facing a humanitarian crisis that requires urgent food assistance. The effect of high worldwide food prices and drought is jeopardizing the lives of up to 20 million people. The affected populations are those who live on the margins of survival due to conflict, displacement and poverty. This crisis, if not responded to, has the potential to develop into famine.

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/fromthefield/216872/e0c172726eb8c9785867e22f70cb99cd.htm>

**Ashoka Brings Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship to Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa and India**, *PR Newswire, January 9*

Ashoka today announced a \$15 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support social innovation and entrepreneurship in agricultural and sustainable rural development. The foundation's grant will allow Ashoka to elect more than 90 Fellows who will spread promising innovations aimed at helping small farmers living in poor, rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa and India move out of poverty.

<http://sev.prnewswire.com/agriculture/20090107/DC5634407012009-1.html>

## News Reports/Policy Briefs

### ***Presidential Transition Resources: Foreign Assistance Briefing Book***, *InterAction*, December 18, 2008

These documents represent a compendium of resources and links for the Presidential Transition team and the incoming Congress on how U.S. policies and programs can be more responsive to the realities of the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations.

- Full Publication:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6518\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6518_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)
- Sam Worthington's Memo to the President-elect, Hillary Clinton, and Robert Gates:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6518\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6518_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)
- Global Food Crisis Policy Brief:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6522\\_Sec3\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6522_Sec3_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)
- Agriculture Policy Brief:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6523\\_Sec4\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6523_Sec4_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)
- Gender Policy Brief:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6525\\_Sec6\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6525_Sec6_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)
- U.S. Government Development Assistance Funding Trends Policy Brief:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6526\\_Sec7\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6526_Sec7_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)
- Climate Change Policy Brief:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6521\\_Sec2\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6521_Sec2_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)
- Millennium Challenge Corporation Policy Brief:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6529\\_Sec10\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6529_Sec10_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)
- Millennium Development Goals Policy Brief:  
[http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6530\\_Sec11\\_InterAction\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_Briefing\\_Book.pdf](http://interaction.org/files.cgi/6530_Sec11_InterAction_Foreign_Assistance_Briefing_Book.pdf)

### ***Soaring Food Prices: A Threat or Opportunity in Asia?***, *Ganesh Thapa, Raghav Gaiha, Katsushi Imai, and Varsha Kulkarni*, *Brooks World Poverty Institute*, January 2009

The escalating cost of rice and other foodstuffs across Asia could cause the reversal of policy reforms, social unrest and deepening poverty for over 3 billion Asians. Rising food prices played an important role in the acceleration of inflation across Asia and the Pacific during 2007 and 2008. The food crisis may slow down the momentum of growth and poverty reduction in this region. A vicious circle of spiraling food prices has been sustained by policies designed to protect domestic consumers, but likely to deepen the food crisis. Even if food price inflation persists for some time, it is pessimistic to conclude that the threat to the poor is inevitable. Much depends on what the government and development agencies do – especially to strengthen smallholders. It is imperative that the benefits of more remunerative producer prices accrue in equal measure to smallholders. Expansion of marketable surplus may thus dampen foodgrain price inflation, as well as help to reduce rural poverty.

<http://www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/resources/Working-Papers/bwpi-wp-6909.pdf>

See also: <http://manchester.ac/aboutus/news/archive/list/item/?id=4097&year=2008&month=10>

### ***Historical Warnings of Future Food Insecurity with Unprecedented Seasonal Heat***, *David Battisti and Rosamond Naylor*, *Science* 323: 240-244, January 2009

Higher growing season temperatures can have dramatic impacts on agricultural productivity, farm incomes, and food security. We used observational data and output from 23 global climate models to

show a high probability (>90%) that growing season temperatures in the tropics and subtropics by the end of the 21st century will exceed the most extreme seasonal temperatures recorded from 1900 to 2006. In temperate regions, the hottest seasons on record will represent the future norm in many locations. We used historical examples to illustrate the magnitude of damage to food systems caused by extreme seasonal heat and show that these short-run events could become longterm trends without sufficient investments in adaptation.

*Journal article is available upon request.*

**Poverty: Combating the Global Crisis**, *Better World Campaign, December 23, 2008*

The Better World Campaign, who works to strengthen the relationship between the United States and the United Nations, commissioned John W. Sewell, Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, to write this report as part of a series of papers developed for the 2008 Presidential campaign and the new Administration. The report recommends that the new president concentrate on certain key areas, which include: Investing in Open Political and Economic Systems; Promoting Education for All; Improving Health Systems and Disease Prevention; and Opening Space in the Global Marketplace for Poor Countries and Poor People.

[http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/assets/pdf/poverty\\_paper\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/assets/pdf/poverty_paper_pdf.pdf)

**Causes and Implications of the Food Price Surge**, *Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI), January 2009*

This paper analyzes the food price surge of 2005 to 2008 in order to better understand the factors causing higher and more volatile food prices during this period, to ascertain the relative importance and possible persistence of the different factors, and to suggest possible implications for future market behavior and policy reactions.

“Much of the market behavior seen during the past few years is linked to the growing interdependence of energy and agricultural markets. This market behavior and the conditions surrounding it are likely to continue, and the prospects of returning to the patterns of the previous decades are less likely.”

[http://www.fapri.missouri.edu/outreach/publications/2008/FAPRI\\_MU\\_Report\\_12\\_08.pdf](http://www.fapri.missouri.edu/outreach/publications/2008/FAPRI_MU_Report_12_08.pdf)

**The total factor productivity in China and India: new measures and approaches**, *Alejandro Nin Pratt, Bingxin Yu, Shenggen Fan, China Agricultural Economic Review 1 (1), 2009*

Comparing total factor productivity (TFP) growth in China and India it is found that efficiency improvement played a dominant role in promoting TFP growth in China, while technical change has also contributed positively. In India, the major source of productivity improvement came from technical change, as efficiency barely changed over the last three decades, which explains lower TFP growth than in China. Agricultural research has significantly contributed to improve agricultural productivity in both China and India. Even today, returns to agricultural R&D investments are very high, with benefit/cost ratios ranging from 20.7 to 9.6 in China and from 29.6 to 14.8 in India.

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/10.1108/17561370910915339>

**Health in Ruins: A Man-Made Disaster in Zimbabwe**, *Physicians for Human Rights, January 2009*

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has witnessed the utter collapse of Zimbabwe’s health system, once a model in southern Africa. These shocking findings should compel the international community to respond as it should to other human rights emergencies. PHR calls into question the legitimacy of a regime that has abrogated the most basic state functions in protecting the health of the population. Instead of fulfilling its obligation to progressively realize the right to health for the people of Zimbabwe, the Mugabe government has taken the country backwards, which has enabled the destruction of health, water, and sanitation – all with fatal consequences.

<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/documents/reports/2009-health-in-ruins-zim-full.pdf>

**State of the World's Children on maternal and newborn health, UNICEF, January 15**

The State of the World's Children 2009 focuses on maternal and newborn health and identifies the intervention and actions that must be scaled up to save millions of lives. Since 1990, the base year for the Millennium Development Goals, an estimated 10 million women have died from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth and some four million newborns have died each year within the first 28 days of life. Maternal survival and infant survival are inextricably linked as the mother's well-being has a critical bearing on the child's survival. The report details the urgent action needed to accelerate progress worldwide to meet the MDG target to reduce maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015.

[http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_47024.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_47024.html)

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## Upcoming Events

### Food Security for All

*Chairs: Bi-Kan Moon and Rodríguez Zapatero*

*Location: Palacio de Congresos de Madrid, Paseo de la Castellana, 99, 28046 Madrid – Spain, January 26-27*

Under the auspices of the FAO, this meeting is designed to gather governments, private entities and civil society groups and examine progress on improvements in food security, define a road map for the future, and tackle hunger more effectively. The main objectives of this Meeting are: (a) to analyze the progress made since the last Rome Summit, (b) to agree on the next priorities for immediate action, as well as for establishing medium and long term measures and results, (c) a commitment to achieve these objectives to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals aimed at reducing hunger and poverty.

*Bi-Kan Moon is the UN's Secretary-General and Rodríguez Zapatero is the Prime Minister of Spain*

<http://www.ransa2009.org/en/index.htm>

### Special Discussion with David Gergen on Obama's Global Development Policy

*Speakers: Nancy Birdsall and David Gergen*

*Location: Hilton Washington Embassy Row, Ambassador Room, 2015 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036, January 16th*

Join Nancy Birdsall, David Gergen, and CGD senior fellows who are authors of essays in our newest book, [The White House and the World: A Global Development Agenda for the Next U.S. President](#), for a lively discussion of the prospects for improved U.S. development policy under President Barack Obama.

*David Gergen is currently director of the Center for Public Leadership at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, editor-at-large at U.S. News & World Report, and a senior political analyst for CNN*

<http://www.cgdev.org/content/calendar/detail/1420889/>

### Workshop on Drought and Extreme Temperatures: Preparedness and Management for Sustainable Agriculture

*Speakers: Zhai Panmao*

*Location: Beijing, China, February 16-19, 2009*

The objectives of this meeting are to (1) review and assess the increasing frequency and severity of droughts and extreme temperatures around the world, so as to minimize their impacts on agriculture;

(2) assess the current status of monitoring and predicting droughts and recommend ways and means of improving drought monitoring and prediction; and (3) review the strengths and weaknesses of existing national drought policies and recommend ways and means to establish and strengthen policy guidelines including future climate change scenarios.

*Zhai Panmao is the Coordinator of the World Meteorological Organization's Open Programme Area Groups*

[http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/wcp/agm/agmp\\_en.html](http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/wcp/agm/agmp_en.html)

PDF: [http://www.wamis.org/agm/meetings/mg\\_rus08/doc9-3\\_Mohta.pdf](http://www.wamis.org/agm/meetings/mg_rus08/doc9-3_Mohta.pdf)

### **International Workshop on Adaption to Climate Change in West African Agriculture**

*Location: Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, February 1, 2009*

This meeting is meant to: (1) provide a forum to develop an improved understanding and assessment of the climate change impacts on agriculture and the associated vulnerability in West Africa; (2) discuss and develop informed decisions on practical adaptation strategies for the agricultural sector in different agroecosystems of West Africa; (3) discuss and suggest the appropriate ways to promote adaptation planning and implementation and its integration into the sustainable development planning in different countries in West Africa; and (4) to develop an appropriate mechanism for continuous information exchange on climate change impacts and adaptation amongst the different countries in West Africa.

[http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/wcp/agm/meetings/iwacc08/index\\_en.html#TOP](http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/wcp/agm/meetings/iwacc08/index_en.html#TOP)

See also: <http://www.unisdr.org/english/events/v.php?id=4281>

### **5th World Water Forum: Istanbul 2009, “Bridging Divides for Water”**

*Location: Istanbul, Turkey, March 16-22, 2009*

The World Water Forum is the main water-related event in the world, aimed at putting water firmly on the international agenda. A stepping stone towards global collaboration on water problems, the Forum offers the water community and policy-and-decision-makers from all over the world the unique opportunity to come together to create links, debate and attempts to find solutions to achieve water security. The Forum aims to raise the importance, awareness and understanding of water issues and propose concrete solutions to address global challenges.

<http://www.worldwaterforum5.org/>

### **International Conference on Water, Environment and Health Sciences: The Challenges of the Climate Change**

*Speakers: Benito Mariñas, Jose Salas, and Terry Barker*

*Location: Universidad de las Americas – Puebla, Cholula, Mexico, April 13-17, 2009*

The Conference will provide a forum for the interdisciplinary exchange of issues, views, experiences and needs for research in the areas of water, environment and health sciences under the influence of climate change.

*Benito Mariñas is an Ivan Racheff Professor of Environmental Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Jose Salas is Professor at the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering Colorado State University; Terry Barker is Director of the Cambridge Centre for Climate Change Mitigation Research*

<http://www.udlap.mx/ICWEHS/>

### **Global Warming: What’s Happening in Paradise?**

*Speakers: Brian Fitzgerald, Susan Johnson, Ian Io, and Roger Stone*

*Location: Holiday Inn, Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, July 17-19, 2009*

Surfers Paradise, like many other regions in the world, is under stress from drought, intensive development, population increase, effects of sea level change and other factors associated with global warming/climate change. Likeminded professionals are contributing innovative spatial solutions to these and other challenges across Asia, in areas of water resources, agriculture, land development, environmental management, emergency services, infrastructure, transport and marine biology. This conference provides a forum from which these solutions can be refined and developed further.

*Brian Fitzgerald is a Professor of Law at the Queensland University of Technology and Barrister of the Supreme Court of Queensland and High Court of Australia; Susan Johnson is a Business Executive in the City of Charlotte, North*

*Carolina and President of the International Urban and Regional Information Systems Association; Ian Io is Chairman and Founder of the Clean Up Australia and Clean Up the World Organization; and Roger Stone is Director of the Australian Centre for Sustainable Catchments and Professor of Climatology and Water Science at the University of Southern Queensland*

<http://www.qsc2008.com.au/downloads/QSC2008%20Registration%20Brochure.pdf>

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## Agricultural Issues

**Insurance planned to cover farmers from bad weather**, *Steve Mbogo, Business Daily (Kenya), January 13*

Kenya is on the verge of rolling out crop and livestock insurance products that will see farmers compensated for crop failure or animal deaths arising from bad weather. The plan means that even in situation of crop failure, farmers who will have taken the insurance will be compensated, cushioning them from adverse food shortage situation. The organization, Financial Sector Deepening Kenya, is working with the Rockefeller Foundation and other partners including the World Bank and International Livestock Research Institute to come up with the products. Similar insurance products are under trial in India, China and lately in Malawi.

[http://www.bdafrica.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=12239&Itemid=5822](http://www.bdafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12239&Itemid=5822)

**US investor buys Sudanese warlord's land**, *Javier Blas and William Wallis, Financial Times, January 9*

A US businessman says he has secured a vast tract of fertile land in south Sudan from the family of a notorious warlord, in post-colonial Africa's biggest private land deal. Philippe Heilberg, a former Wall Street banker and chairman of New York-based Jarch Capital, said he gained leasehold rights to 400,000 hectares of land. The deal is a striking example of how the recent spike in global commodity food prices has encouraged foreign investors and governments to scramble for control of arable land in Africa, even in its remotest parts.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a4cbe81e-de84-11dd-9464-000077b07658.html>

**AFRICA: Soil scientists join efforts to boost food security**, *IRIN, January 13*

A digital soil-health surveillance system, launched on 13 January in Nairobi, will enable soil scientists to map areas at risk of soil degradation and facilitate appropriate interventions that could help to curb food insecurity across the continent. According to the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, this digital map of the continent's depleted soils will offer insights crucial for boosting food production. It will help provide solutions for poor farmers who suffer from chronically low-yielding crops due to degraded soils.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82341>

**Italy gives €10 million for farm development, *FAO, January 15***

Italy's Directorate of Development Cooperation is to donate €10 million through FAO to finance agricultural and rural development programmes and improve food security in 2009. [Italy has said it intends food security and in particular hunger in Africa to be a central focus of the G8 in 2009, when it hold the Group's rotating presidency.](#)

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/9387/icode/>

**Corn Prices May Enter Decade-Long Slump, Agency Says, *Alan Bjerga, Bloomberg, January 7***

Corn prices that reached a record \$7.9925 a bushel last year are headed for a decade-long slump below \$4 as production in the U.S., the world's top grower, catches up with demand, according to congressional analysts. The average cash price will bottom out at \$3.65 in the 2012-2013 marketing year, then rise no higher than \$3.94 through 2019, according to analysts from the Congressional Budget Office. In addition to this, wheat and soybean prices are also expected to stagnate.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aDgLNXdBgg.4>

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**Biofuels****Tight Profit Margins Expected to Continue for Ethanol in New Year, *Todd Neeley, DTN: The Progressive Farmer, January 7***

Tight credit markets, volatile corn prices, a shrinking ethanol market, questions about ethanol companies' ability to make up for 2008's losses, and doubts as to whether the industry can produce the mandated 10.5 billion gallons of production all point to an industry continuing to change in 2009. What may not change in the near future are the tight profit margins that dogged the industry throughout 2008, brought on by higher corn prices and stagnant ethanol prices. The price of crude oil has fallen from a high of about \$147 a barrel last summer, to less than \$40 in recent weeks. Lower crude oil prices mean lower gas and ethanol prices — good news for consumers, bad news for the ethanol industry.

<http://www.dtnprogressivefarmer.com/dtnag/common/link.do?symbolicName=/ag/news/template1&forceNavUpdate=false&topic=DTN/Ag&vendorReference=0702DA66>

**For Ethanol Plant, Two Roads Diverge, *Kate Galbraith, New York Times, January 13***

The race to make cellulosic ethanol is heating up just as some corn-ethanol plants are shutting down. On January 12 POET, USA's largest ethanol producer, announced details of an \$8 million cellulosic-ethanol plant in South Dakota. Other cellulosic plants - which make ethanol from materials like corn cobs or switchgrass - are also starting construction and operation. The Renewable Fuels Standard set a target for the US to produce 100 mil gallons of cellulosic ethanol next year. Meanwhile, the country's traditional ethanol producers - whose product is made from corn - have fallen on hard times.

<http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/13/for-ethanol-plants-two-roads-diverge/>

**Ethanol good for U.S. agriculture: poll, *Christopher Doering, Reuters, January 13***

U.S. farmers believe overwhelmingly that ethanol has been good for American agriculture, believing the renewable fuel has boosted their bottom line. Nearly 80 percent of the 820 farmers surveyed said ethanol was beneficial for agriculture. Once the cornerstone of the United States' plan to wean itself from foreign energy, ethanol has been sharply criticized by the food industry and aid groups for diverting corn away from livestock and foodmakers, pushing world food prices up.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/vcCandidateFeed2/idUSTRE50C5QO20090113>

## Food Crisis

### **The outcry is muted, but the food crisis is getting worse, Jayati Ghosh, *The Guardian*, January 9**

Despite the volatility of food prices and the recent price decline, the food crisis remains. The basic problem now is not one of absolute shortage so much as the inability to pay for food, and this problem will get worse for many developing countries and their poorer citizens. Three problems now dominate the global food scenario. First, there is a crisis of cultivation, especially in the developing world. Second, this has been associated with a depression in wages in developing countries, which means that mass purchasing power did not increase even when the economies were growing. Third, there has been an increasing concentration of firms operating in global agriculture, with a few large agribusinesses coming to dominate both input and output markets.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jan/09/food-shortages-coverage-jayati-ghosh>

### **Food and water crisis as President convenes emergency meeting, Alphonse Shundo, *Daily Nation (Kenya)*, January 9**

According to Kenyan Water and Irrigation Minister Charity Ngilu, the country will be experiencing an acute water and food shortage in the coming months. The minister said the long drought and the poor short-rains had contributed to the water shortage. Mrs Ngilu said that the water crisis is likely to lead to a food crisis if not dealt with properly. She said urgent measures were already in place to save people in affected areas. An unnamed official said an estimated Sh600 million would be required to handle the water crisis in the country.

<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/512258/-/u18952/-/>

### **“Food should be a national security issue,” interview with M. Chipeta on the food crisis in Eastern Africa, Interview by Anne Delannoy, *FAO*, January 13**

The food security situation in Africa continues to worsen due to crop failures, high food prices and conflict. Mafa Chipeta, Coordinator for Eastern Africa and FAO Representative in Ethiopia, calls for more investment in rural areas with high potential for agricultural production. According to Mr. Chipeta, there are four problems with the way the food crisis has been handled: (1) most resources go into food aid - there is little investment in agriculture and most of it is occurring in highly degraded areas because that is where the poor live; (2) farmers are being asked to bear the full price of inputs like fertilizers; (3) only a small percentage of improved seeds is used; and (4) the market does not reward good production.

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/8967/icode/>

### **“Food graft” row splits Kenyans, *BBC*, January 13**

Kenya's government has launched an investigation into claims of illegal maize trading that have raised fears of a new rift in its fractious coalition. Agriculture Minister William Ruto said post-election violence had helped cause shortages of the staple crop, rejecting claims of corruption in his ministry. Kenya's government warned last week nearly 10 million people were at risk from food shortages and said it would declare a national emergency.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7826034.stm>

### **Supply blamed for food crisis, Oliver Mathenge and Alphonse Shiundup, *Daily Nation (Kenya)*, January 13**

Acting Finance minister John Michuki said that the current maize shortage in Kenya should not be blamed on importation capacity. Instead, he blamed the shortage on “a clear case of failed distribution

mechanisms". This is the first time that a member of the Grand Coalition Government has admitted that there is food in the country and the problem is distribution.

<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/514284/-/u19mtx/-/>

**Zimbabwe food crisis may worsen - aid agency, Reuters, January 15**

More than half Zimbabwe's population is surviving on food handouts, and a lack of funds combined with projections of more food shortages this year could make the crisis worse, the aid agency Oxfam said

<http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-37471620090115>

**Mozambique in food crisis warning, BBC, January 14**

The World Food Programme (WFP) said that seven of Mozambique's 11 provinces face an acute problem because of poor harvests. The WFP's Peter Transburg said the agency needed \$8.5m (£5.8m) to purchase food aid locally for the destitute. He said that convincing donors to give aid has been hard given on-going crises like that in neighboring Zimbabwe.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7827935.stm>

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## Poverty and Hunger Relief

**Helping dryland farmers deal with food and financial crisis, The Hindu (India), January 8**

The global food crisis followed by the current financial crisis has inflicted further hardships to farmers of the semi-arid tropics of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. However, scientific innovations developed by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics are empowering these farmers to cope with the crisis through a variety of ways (i.e., drought-resistant crops, crops diversification, microdosing of fertilizer, etc.).

<http://www.hinduonnet.com/seta/2009/01/08/stories/2009010850291500.htm>

**MALAWI: SMS to fight malnutrition, IRIN, January 13**

Malawi has one of the world's worst under-five mortality rates: up to 120 infants in every 1,000 may die before they turn five, and 46 percent of children younger than five years are stunted - an indicator of the malnutrition level. The SMS (short message service) text message and web-based tool was developed by the Innovations and Development team of UNICEF, the UN children's agency, and allows text messages to be captured via the internet. This tool will help researchers code and collect data on malnutrition much faster than they had in the past via hand-written graphs.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82346>

**Global food security: more European initiatives needed say MEPs, European Parliament, January 13**

The European Parliament calls for "immediate and continuous action" to ensure global food security. It believes the aid of EUR 1 billion that the EU has decided to give to developing countries should be accompanied by fresh investment in agriculture and it calls for mechanisms to be set up to ensure that sufficient global food stocks are available.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdfs/news/expert/infopress/20090112IPR45945/20090112IPR45945\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdfs/news/expert/infopress/20090112IPR45945/20090112IPR45945_en.pdf)

**ZIMBABWE: South Africa goes ahead with urgent aid, IRIN, January 14**

A \$32 million South African aid package to Zimbabwe appears to have been distributed without an agreed monitoring mechanism in place to ensure transparency according to government officials. The

agricultural inputs package was initially envisaged to be released in cash on condition that a power-sharing government, agreed by ZANU-PF leader President Robert Mugabe and both factions of the opposition MDC, would be formed.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82366>

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## Women and Children

### **Protecting orphans and vulnerable children in the DR Congo, UNICEF, January 12**

UNICEF and Caritas negotiate with schools in DR Congo to keep orphans enrolled in school. In return, the project provides the schools with desks, exercise books and other educational materials. Similar negotiations with local clinics ensure that the children receive health care. This combination of financial and social support is helping to reduce the stigma for orphaned children, especially those whose parents' deaths are rumored to be due by AIDS.

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/drcongo\\_47100.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/drcongo_47100.html)

### **Community-based care helps reduce child deaths in Senegal, UNICEF, January 13**

UNICEF has put in place a community health centre for her children's survival, as well as a community nutrition programme that focuses upon local food resources such as squash, eggs and milk. Before this programme, feeding children these products was considered taboo. That the health centre Infants are weighed and measured regularly to detect early malnutrition, mothers are given micronutrient supplements and encouraged to exclusively breastfeed, and they are also given insecticide-treated bed nets to ward off malaria.

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/senegal\\_47113.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/senegal_47113.html)

### **Extreme Risks for Pregnant Women and Newborn Babies in Developing Countries, UNICEF, January 15**

Women in the world's least developed countries are 300 times more likely to die in childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications than women in developed countries, according to UNICEF's latest State of the World's Children report, released here today. At the same time, a child born in a developing country is almost 14 times more likely to die during the first month of life than a child born in a developed one. The report finds that health services are most effective in an environment supportive of women's empowerment, protection, and education.

[http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_47145.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_47145.html)

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## Health Concerns

### **Zimbabwe economic collapse challenges aid workers, Donna Bryson, The Associated Press, January 9**

Aid agencies fighting cholera in Zimbabwe say they are working well with a government that once viewed them with suspicion, but they still face challenges because of the country's economic collapse. The logistical challenges are likely to mount, with signs cholera is spreading to remote rural areas. Medecins Sans Frontieres will have to find a way to get in water, mobile clinics and workers, and food and other necessities.

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jd\\_JZmhdw6XWClfpenWt9g-dqNNAD95JOM6G0](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jd_JZmhdw6XWClfpenWt9g-dqNNAD95JOM6G0)

**CONGO: Where water is bad for your health, IRIN, January 9**

Insufficient water of an adequate hygienic standard means people in the Congo, even those in the capital, run a constant risk of diarrhea. For the residents of many Brazzaville neighborhoods, the water is simply unfit to drink, which makes the provision of water, a task usually undertaken by women, a time-consuming chore. The problem is aggravated by the struggle to make ends meet due to rampant price increases.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82248>

**Eskom shuts SAfrica power project on cholera scare, Reuters, January 9**

South African utility Eskom shut down the construction of its Medupi power station in the country's Limpopo province after a cholera scare. If confirmed as cholera, it would be the first sign that the disease which has killed more than 1,800 people in neighboring Zimbabwe was having an impact on South Africa's industry and economy.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKL917715620090109>

**Zimbabwe's health crisis is 'a crime', BBC, January 13**

The health crisis in Zimbabwe should be the subject of an investigation by the International Criminal Court, campaign group Physicians for Human Rights says. They say that President Mugabe's government is responsible for the collapse of the health, water and sanitation systems - violating human rights. New figures from the UN World Health Organization on Tuesday put the death toll from the cholera epidemic at 2,024. The British Red Cross has warned that with the onset of the rainy season, flooding could seriously exacerbate the rate of infection as sewage may contaminate water sources further.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7826304.stm>

**CONGO: Backstreet remedies hinder anti-malaria fight, IRIN, January 14**

As poor people in Congo shun costly malaria remedies, deaths are being caused by erroneous self-medication and poor diagnosis by unauthorised medical practitioners. Even when the diagnosis is correct, malaria sufferers run the risk of being prescribed outdated remedies by non-licensed practitioners. Up to 21,000 under-fives die of malaria each year. Life expectancy is 54 for men and 57 for women in a population of 3.8 million.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82353>

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## Economic and Development Issues

**US says no cotton trade deal yet but possible, Reuters, January 7**

The US is committed to a deal on cotton in the long-running Doha trade talks, but has not yet reached an agreement. Four African cotton producers -- Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali -- have made a proposal that would see U.S. subsidies fall 82.2% over about two years against a 60% cut over five years for U.S. farm support generally. Developing country cotton producers want the US to cut its subsidies, which have become a symbol of what they see as unfair international trade practices that squeeze their farmers out of markets.

<http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOF5060GU20090107?sp=true>

**Unique Milk Cooler to Boost Ugandan Dairy Farmers, Darren Taylor, Voice of America, January 13**

The World Bank is to fund a project it thinks can significantly improve the lives of Uganda's many small-scale dairy farmers. Most of them don't have electricity, so they can't cool their milk. Much of it goes bad, resulting in huge losses for the farmers. But an engineer from the East African country, William Kisaalita, has developed a unique system, using renewable energy, that allows the farmers to keep their milk cold. Then they can transport it to sell it in distant markets – and boost their profits.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/Unique-Milk-Cooler-to-Boost-Ugandan-Dairy-Farmers-PART-2-of-5.cfm>

**Pumping water for life in Zimbabwe, Dan Nixon, Rotary International, January 13**

Amid famine, water scarcity, disease outbreaks, and rampant inflation in Zimbabwe, six Rotary clubs in as many countries are bringing hope to people there. The project is establishing water wells and vegetable and tree gardens at seven schools in the country. A US\$6,650 Rotary Foundation Matching Grant, combined with sponsor contributions, has provided a total of \$16,950 in funding for the effort. Pump Aid, a nongovernmental organization, is managing installation and maintenance of the wells.

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/RMOI-7NA2R7?OpenDocument>

**Senegal Project Bringing Safe Water to 13,500 People in 63 Villages Is Completed, PR Newswire, January 14**

JM Eagle, the world's largest plastic pipe manufacturer, and the Earth Institute at Columbia University announced the official completion of a new water infrastructure system that is bringing safe drinking water to more than 13,500 people in the poorest and most remote areas of Senegal. as part of the Millennium Villages Project, the new water supply network consists of almost 70 miles of plastic pipe that connects to 63 villages. Additionally, more than 99 percent of the region now has easy access to water via 81 new public taps as well as 11 animal troughs. It is said that the benefits have already begun to be felt, especially by women.

<http://news.prnewswire.com/DisplayReleaseContent.aspx?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/01-14-2009/0004954666&EDATE=>

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## Genetically Modified Crops

**Smart Seeds, Smart Crops, Nikhil Hutheesing, Forbes, January 7**

(An interview with Mike Mack, CEO of Syngenta)

This dialogue hits on such topics as how new GMO technology has the capacity to help alleviate global hunger (i.e., increased yields, drought-resistant crops, etc.), the health questions surrounding GMO crops (i.e., health benefits of organic crops v. GMO crops), and the potential use of corn as a source of fuel.

[http://www.forbes.com/claytonchristensen/2009/01/07/syngenta-monsanto-rohmandhass-leadership-clayton-in\\_nh\\_0108claytonchristensen\\_inl.html](http://www.forbes.com/claytonchristensen/2009/01/07/syngenta-monsanto-rohmandhass-leadership-clayton-in_nh_0108claytonchristensen_inl.html)

**Montsanto says drought-tolerant corn ready for 2010, ABC News, January 8**

Agrichemical giant Monsanto has hailed a significant step in creating a drought-tolerant corn to be available as early as 2010. The genetically modified (GM) corn, which Monsanto says will "reset the bar" in farming productivity, has moved to the fourth and final stage of development and could reach commercial usage within two years, the company said. Monsanto said trials of its corn conducted last year in the drought-prone American midwest "met or exceeded the six per cent to 10 per cent target yield enhancement."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/08/2461490.htm?site=science&topic=latest>

**GM crops 'reduce toxic pesticide use', *Sydney Morning Herald (Australia), January 8***

The New South Wales' (NSW) government says the move to genetically modified (GM) crops has greatly reduced the need for toxic pesticides such as endosulfan. Mr. MacDonald, the NSW Food Minister, says that the move to GM crops in recent years has already reduced farmer's reliance on this pesticide and others like it.

<http://news.smh.com.au/national/gm-crops-reduce-toxic-pesticide-use-20090108-7ckg.html>

**India Soybean Output May Miss Forecast on Lower Yield, *Thomas Abraham, Bloomberg, January 13***

Soybean production in India, Asia's biggest supplier of soybean meal used in animal feed, may miss a November forecast because of lower yields in some key growing regions. India, which grows non-genetically modified soybeans, sells more than 70 percent of its animal feed production abroad. The use of GM crops would have made the target yield easier to attain.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601091&sid=aZBOHhwmV1Bg&refer=india>