

# Global Food for Thought



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October 27-November 2, 2017

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## KEY ARTICLES

### **One Week Left to Apply: The 2018 Next Generation Student Delegation**

Do you know of a student who is interested in shaping new ideas for food security and agricultural development? Encourage them to apply now to join the 2018 Next Generation Student Delegation. Selected students' travel to and accommodations in Washington, DC are covered, and they enjoy the opportunity to engage in symposium discussions and interact with global leaders working on agriculture, food, and nutrition issues. **Applications are due on or before Sunday, November 5.**

### **Insect Armageddon**, *New York Times*, October 29

There is alarming new evidence that insect populations worldwide are in rapid decline. If insects continue to be lost, researchers suspect we will be on the course for an ecological Armageddon. There are proven steps that could be taken now to help stem this decline. Buffer zones of wildflowers and native plants around single-crop fields can help and reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides.

### **Global Warming Threatens Nutrition Levels in Staple Crops**, *PRI*, October 29

New research suggests that declining levels of iron, zinc, and protein resulting from high levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are putting human health at risk, especially in the developing world. Nutrient deficiencies are going to be most severe in South Asia and in Africa, and India appears to be particularly vulnerable.

**SEE REPORT: [Increasing CO<sub>2</sub> Threatens Human Nutrition](#), *Nature*, June 5**

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**Want to Know When Ebola Will Strike Next? Look to the Forest**, *Reuters*, October 30

Researchers are suggesting that Ebola outbreaks tend to occur two years after forests have been cut down or cleared in West and Central Africa. Africa's tropical forests are being lost to industrial agriculture, logging, urbanization, and more. Ebola outbreaks may increase in the coming decades as humans continue to penetrate deeper into Africa's remaining forests.

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## GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

**A Make or Break Moment for the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil**, *Opinion, Gemma Tillack, Devex, November 2*

The palm oil industry has become notorious for its negative impacts on tropical rainforests, indigenous peoples, local communities, workers, and the global climate. Global brands and palm oil companies, have invested their time, money, and reputations to develop the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. Yet, consumers are demanding more as unsustainable practices are still being certified.

**World Food Programme Renews Pledge to Support Farmers in Liberia**, *Front Page Africa, October 31*

In 2017, the World Food Programme (WFP) has supported over 6,000 local farmers in ten counties and is committed to lobbying with other partners for additional support, especially to women and youth farmers. The WFP lauded the effort of Magarma, a group of female farmers engaged in agriculture across four of Liberia's counties, and noted that if their initiative is replicated across Liberia, there would be sufficient food in the country.

**Four Things You Should Know about Food Security in Africa**, *Washington Post, October 30*

First, many Africans are food insecure, despite marked improvements in nutrition over the past two decades. In addition, there is a large gap between global initiatives governments sign onto and the reality on the ground. Third, environmental shocks and other vulnerabilities threaten progress. Lastly, dependence on foreign aid and budget inefficiencies threaten sustainability of food-security interventions.

**International Development Policy Can Only Succeed If We Tackle Climate Change, Equality and Poverty**, *Opinion, Kate Osamor, Huffington Post, October 27*

When disaster strikes, small island states find that the global trade, aid, and economic rules of the game are rigged against them. That leaves them unable to recover and vulnerable to predatory investors. The United Kingdom must do more to help independent Caribbean countries like Dominica, Antigua, and Barbuda, and to make the rules of the global game fairer.

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## US GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

### **Uzbekistan, US to Cooperate Closely in Agriculture**, *Azer News*, November 2

Uzbekistan is interested in intensive resource saving technologies of the United States in agriculture, as well as in development of bilateral cooperation in the field of selection of new crops and protection of plants and animals from dangerous diseases, a source in the Uzbek Embassy to the United States said in a statement.

### **\$100,000 Grans Set to Change Rural Women's Lives**, *Chronicle*, November 2

The lives of women and girls in rural arid Lupance District in Zimbabwe is set to significantly improve following the United States' availing of a \$100,000 grant to the Lupane Women's Development Trust for the setting up of a solar driven irrigation scheme. The grant will also be used to fund capacity building in governance and marketing.

### **The Case for Food Aid Reform**, *The Hill*, October 27

More people face food shortages and famine than at any time in the past 40 years because of man-made tragedies and severe drought. A bipartisan group of US representatives is seeking new ways to use aid dollars efficiently to address these humanitarian concerns. These concerns include the need to reduce the influence of terrorist organizations, and the challenges that an increased flow of refugees create.

### **Time of Uncertainty for US Agriculture**, *Opinion*, Decker Walker and Jonathan Van Wyck, *Investors*, October 27

The Trump administration is exploring a range of policy changes—involving taxes, trade, the environment, and immigration—that could have a profound impact on US agriculture. Unfortunately, the possible changes come at a time when the industry already is treading water. With most commodity prices at historic lows, many farmers are continuing to experience net operating losses and mounting debt.

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## BIG IDEAS AND EMERGING INNOVATIONS

### **Africa: Impending Drought? There's an App for That—or Should Be**, *All Africa*, October 30

According to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, adopting smart tech strategies would help Africa to address the drought challenges in many ways from analyzing drought risk to monitoring and predicting the intensity of an upcoming drought, depending on the action strategy and the technology and its application.

### **Organic or Starve: Can Cuba's New Farming Model Provide Food Security?**, *The Guardian*, October 28

There is a new organic farming movement in Cuba that seeks to provide a model solving food scarcity. Rather than a reaction to a crisis, the current push into organics is planned and promoted on the ruins of the industrial sugar economy. Much of the push towards small scale organic farming stems from a 2002 program that provided new farmers with resources and education.

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### **On the Farm, Investors Get Their Hands Dirty**, *New York Times*, October 27

There is a new trend of investing in sustainable farming practices like debt and equity ventures that require smaller contributions to farms and land that cost millions of dollars. Amazon's recent purchase of Whole Foods, which is likely to drive up organic food purchases, could draw more interest from investors. Clean sustainable agriculture has shown to be a top area for people to increase their investments year to year.

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## FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

### **How Wood Got in Our Food, Then Out of It, Then Back into It Again**,

*Marketplace*, November 1

The story of edible (or less-than-edible) wood is the story of food regulation in a nutshell. In the 1700s, millers started adding sawdust to flour for a cheaper product. Eventually, increasing government inspections and consumer demand gave rise to companies that promoted unadulterated food. But today, manufacturers can add cellulose, a wood sourced fiber, to various food products.

### **Sahel Herders Facing Harshest Dry Season in Years, Aid Agency Warns**,

*Reuters*, October 31

Cattle herders in West Africa are facing a severe lean season this year due to poor rains and insufficient plant growth. This year the rain was intermittent with long dry spells in between. The FAO is still collecting data on the situation and will publish its own assessment next month. If herders begin to lose these animals, their food supply and income will begin to dwindle.

### **Whites Own 73 Percent of South Africa's Farming Land, City Press Says**,

*Bloomberg*, October 29

White farmers own almost three-quarters of South Africa's agricultural land, even after 23 years of government efforts to redistribute land to the black majority. Though total acreage available for farming fell 4 percent over the 23 years reviewed, as mining and expanding municipalities took over agricultural land.

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## NUTRITION AND HEALTH

### **Monsanto Pulls NemaStrike for Skin Irritation Issues**, *AgPro*, November 1

After finding cases of skin irritation, Monsanto is pulling its new seed treatment—a chemical seed treatment that attacks nematodes—for 2018 to review the product. Monsanto recently received EPA approval for NemaStrike. The company says proper use of protective equipment is a key factor in the safe use of the product.

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**Despite Trump, the World is Turning a Corner on Climate Change**, *Washington Post*, November 1

Despite the White House decision, climate action is continuing around the world as other nations keep to their pledges and subnational entities double theirs. Progress toward decarbonization is being driven by the real economy, which is decisively turning away from fossil fuels. A clear example of this can be found here in Vietnam, where leaders of the Asia Pacific will soon meet at the APEC summit in Danang.

**Record Number of Chemicals Reviewed by UN Chemical Expert Committees**, *FAO*, October 31

More than 250 experts and observers gathered at the headquarters of the FAO to discuss scientific information on toxic chemicals. Some of the chemicals examined were found in common pesticides and herbicides. These chemicals were deemed harmful to the long-term health of an ecosystem.

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## ENVIRONMENT, WATER, AND CLIMATE

**Can Religions Help in the Fight against Climate Change?**, *Reuters*, October 31

Many of the world's religions consider nature sacred, and religious leaders have increasingly come out in favor of protecting it. Experts say religions can fill in the gaps where facts and politics have failed. Faith groups are increasingly looking to actively invest in projects that protect the planet, such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, or forest protection.

**Carbon Dioxide in the Atmosphere Spiked in 2016, Setting a New, 800,000-Year Record**, *Quartz*, October 30

Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere increased a record amount from 2015 to 2016, leaving the air laden with a concentration of the potent greenhouse gas not seen for at least the last 800,000 years. The increase essentially guarantees that in the absence of rapid and dramatic cuts to emissions, catastrophic temperature increases will be well above those the Paris agreement sought to avoid.

**SEE REPORT: WMO Greenhouse Gas Bulletin**, *World Meteorological Organization*, October 30

**The Waterkeeper of Iraq**, *Al Jazeera*, October 27

Water scarcity is becoming an increasingly pressing issue in the Middle East. If Turkey, Iran, and Syria move forward with plans to repair existing dams or build new ones, water flow to Kurdish land in Iraq will be in jeopardy. Regional conflicts in both Syria and Iraq have been heavily reliant on water domination. Control of water supplies in a region gives strategic control over both cities and countryside.

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## GENDER AND GENERATIONAL INCLUSION

**Breaking the Grass Ceiling: FFA Draws Women to Ag Careers**, *AgriNews*, October 30

Of the 653,359 students now enrolled in FFA, 52 percent are female. As a whole, the group believes it is women's contributions not only in agriculture, but society that's helped defeat the stereotype that farming is a man's industry and that it is a dirty, masculine job that shouldn't involve females.

**Canada's Development Minister Sounds New Call for a 'Feminist' Agenda**, *Devex*, October 27

Canada launched its Feminist International Assistance Policy, aiming to increase the percentage of gender-specific targeted funding from 2.4 percent to 15 percent by 2021-2022. The new policy will support local woman-led agricultural businesses, including local women's cooperatives and associations, which are best placed to support food security and economic sustainability at the local level.

**South Africa: Minister Senzeni Zokwana—Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Female Entrepreneur Award 2017**, *All Africa*, October 27

The struggle for the emancipation of women remains urgent and faces immense challenges. According to the UN Development Programme, women produce more than 80 percent of Africa's agricultural production, yet they only own roughly 1 percent of productive land and have no access to productive resources.

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## MARKET ACCESS, TRADE, AND AGRIBUSINESS

**World Food Prices Fall 1.3 Percent in October: FAO**, *Reuters*, November 2

Prices remain 2.5 percent higher than they were last October but are now 27 percent below the record high hit in February 2011. Agricultural commodities have emerged from a highly volatile period. The FAO has said it expects them to remain stable over the next decade.

**Bunge Cuts Profit Forecasts for Second Time in Three Months**, *Financial Times*, November 1

Bunge, one of the world's biggest agricultural traders, further reduced its profit outlook for the year as difficult market conditions weighed on its grain and sugar businesses. Bunge buys crops from farmers for processing into basic foodstuffs or distribution to food makers. The sector has struggled as large grain supplies dampen trading activity and price swings.

**KLM and Costa Rica Sign Biofuels Deal**, *Innovators*, November 1

Airline KLM and the Costa Rican Government are partnering to progress the use of bio-based jet fuel. The pair have signed an agreement to look at using the fuel to fly from San Jose, in what is a first of its kind deal between an airline and a national government. The move is vitally important in the quest to tackle climate change, as biofuels can reduce emissions by up to 80 percent.

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## **Kenya's Largest Supermarket Has Gone Bankrupt and Rivals are Set to Snap Up its Empty Stores**, *Quartz Africa, October 31*

Nakumatt supermarket had seemed to be a homegrown retail icon of the “Africa rising” narrative of a fast-growing middle class in urban areas. The brand also represented the eventual shift from an informal economy of open air markets to a more Western style formal economy of supply chains, credit cards, and 24-hour stores.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Bending the Arc Towards Global Health Equity**

Date: November 8

Location: Chicago, IL

### **CIAT 50th Anniversary Celebration**

Date: November 8-9

Location: Cali, Colombia

### **Beyond the Plough: The New Faces of Food**

Date : November 28

Location : Chicago, IL

### **BCFN 8<sup>th</sup> International Forum on Food and Nutrition**

Date: December 4-5

Milano, Italy

### **Women in Agriculture Conference**

Date: December 9

Location: Abingdon, VA

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