

Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition Submission Template

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Summary:

The causes of the food and energy crises are various and complex, therefore the solutions to them are likely to be similar. The essay hence focuses first on analyzing the origins of the problems, basing the constructive suggestions upon them. In the case of food crisis, it is down to sustainable agricultural practices, but issues such as fair trade agreements and peace resolution to conflicts appear equally important. Regarding the energy crisis, the way to sustainability will encompass switching to renewable energies, which will require creating jobs in this sector, technological advancements and pressure on economies to adopt such policies.

Essay:

On the topic of global food crisis, one may firstly ask whether there actually is one. Despite the Earth having to face with 6.7 billion inhabitants, who pose a high strain on it, it certainly offers more than enough food for everyone at this very moment. How come, then, that over 1 billion of those people are still going hungry? The fact that we are facing an energy crisis is perhaps more startling, yet we know that energy use results in improved living standards. Does the crisis mean that the Earth is unable to support us? Definitely not. The cause goes down to human mismanagement, and it is humans again who will find their way out of it – they just need to take it seriously and use the right tools.

To be able to find an answer on how to alleviate the food crisis, it is a good idea to look at its causes first – taking for example the case of Africa, where some countries have experienced food crises very heavily.

Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa often suffer from droughts, floods and the resulting crop failures, which is not an unusual situation anywhere in the world. However, droughts not only tend to be severe and frequent due to intensive land use and subsequent loss of topsoil, which worsens in areas of high population growth, but they also hit local people most as they have little alternatives of generating income; rural areas tend to be underdeveloped. In regions such as Somalia, undernourishment is a result of the country suffering from past years of conflict; Zimbabwe, the fertile bread basket, is struggling with an economic crisis and soaring food prices, making food unaffordable. Sub-Saharan Africa is greatly weakened by the spread of HIV/AIDS; and corrupted governments, mismanagement of aid and unwillingness to invest in rural areas are a problem of many. On top of that, western countries often aggravate the food insecurity by making countries dependent on imports and practicing unfair trade policies.

The answer to the essay question is hence uneasy, since the causes of food crises are various and complex. One essential part of the solution lies in a peaceful resolution of conflicts; another is scrapping unfair trading practices and lifting levies and embargos on exports to make growing own food feasible. Next, investments in the social infrastructures of famine-susceptible countries are needed; the provision of basic

education, health care and development of rural areas are all important for fostering food security.

The key also lies in sustainability, channeled both by governments and individuals. Adopting sustainable agricultural practices and limiting ecosystem depletion is vital to prevent food crises at a large scale. Moreover, we can all relieve our environment by going vegetarian or at least having one meat-free day a week, since it saves much land, grain and water needed to rear cattle; other actions can include buying organic products, composting organic leftovers and limiting the amount of litter we send to the landfill.

The energy crisis is something we are now well acquainted with, since it is an inevitable fact that world's fossil energy resources, especially oil, are drying up and we know that our thirst after them is unquenchable. Yet, the crisis stems exactly from these two things: our dependency on fossil resources, and our addiction on energy in general.

The aforementioned issue certainly requires significant transformations in the society, which will go further than just switching to renewable energies, even though this of course lies at the core. Some cutting-edge ideas can be found in the current U.S.' energy policy, as Americans now seem eager to get to the lead on the issue. Barack Obama reckons that the road to sustainability will require both a 'technology overhaul' as well as a good 'public-private partnership', and he intends to make great science-based investments, get more hybrid cars on the roads as well as increase the renewable energy share and eliminate oil imports. He further aims to make such investments in order to create jobs in the sustainable energy field, which should subsequently fuel private efforts towards this goal. Seeing the U.S.' zeal to live up to the ideals, it can certainly be of great inspiration to the world.

Creating a 'market with carbon' is another great incentive for the reduction of usage of 'unclean' energy. Despite there exist issues linked with the trading of carbon credits, schemes such as the European Emissions Trading Scheme or the U.S.' cap-and-trade plans appear to be an effective measure and should attain worldwide approval.

Concerning the amount of energy use in general, it does not seem feasible that we will be able to dramatically lower our energy consumption in a short time scale, especially when the demands from rapidly industrializing countries like China are soaring steadily. However, we can undoubtedly do better in this field too. It is incumbent on the large economies of the world to aim to economize with oil and make quotas on energy efficiency, but it is also down to us consumers, since we are central to national economies. Buying energy-efficient devices, limiting driving our cars, adopting electricity- and heat-saving measures, as well as opting for greener energies for our homes are all things we individuals can do – painlessly.

To conclude, it must be said that the essay poses a question to which there is no straight-forward answer; there are thousands of experts working on these issues worldwide and yet it is a hard task. Nevertheless, the solution seems to lie in several aspects: firstly, it is peace, fairness and transparency; next, it is technological change and caring for the environment, paving our way to a sustainable future.

As the food and energy crisis goes down to humans, it is certainly us again who can find a solution to it. Hence, in order to 'be the change', I recommend: pressure your politicians. Volunteer for a good cause. And do your bit for the planet.

