

The Food and Energy Crisis

By Busiku Michelo

Today's food and energy crisis has threatened sustainable development for human life and the environment. While human needs are met in the present, it is not with comfortable ease because of rising costs of energy resources such as oil and rising food prices. This situation paints a bleak future for sustainable development. High oil and food prices mean a higher cost of living. With a higher cost of living comes a reduction on leisure spending like holidays abroad, spending on clothing is also reduced such that major retailers are at risk of experiencing losses, and will therefore have to make redundant some of their employees to meet rising costs of stock.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Third world countries, especially developing countries in Africa bare the brunt of rising food prices. The production of bio-diesel and ethanol under bio-fuel policies by using food crops like maize (corn) has increased the demand of food crops such that the demand is higher than supply. Food crops like maize (corn), which is the staple food for most of Africa are in higher demand than supply. Drought stricken areas have low yields, or less quality produce or both. This affects also the nutrition of the general population leading to malnutrition, and thus increasing the mortality rate especially for children.

Because energy is a most important commodity for daily life, the demand for energy resources (fossil fuels) such as oil, gas, and coal have far outpaced the supply. Energy resources are needed for heating, to generate electricity, and fuel for vehicles to mention but a few. There is an increase in their purchase price from countries which have these natural resources. This leads to conflicts between trading countries because of the frustration over high oil and gas prices for example. Governments are forced to spend more money, and will therefore have to cut corners by cutting spending on improving and running public services and increasing taxes.

Change is possible. It will not happen overnight, but the food and energy crisis can be minimized and eventually and hopefully be defeated. Sometimes we look at the government for the solutions and blame them if nothing seems to be working to alleviate the situation. Instead of doing that, a change must come about from one person to the other, from one household to the other, and eventually from one nation to the other in order to heal the global community from such a crisis.

Because there is less food production than the number of mouths to feed, one practical way is to reduce the population, by employing birth control methods, and education on birth control. This is to show the people that with fewer mouths to feed at least all will be getting a fair share and proper meal, otherwise the innocent children being brought into this world will just have to suffer in such a crisis and eventually die, especially in developing countries. Why bring a child into this world if one is not able to take care of it?

The increased need for livestock in Asia has led to the consumption of grainy crops by the livestock, reducing that which can be consumed by the general population and nations which import such food crops (like corn). Reducing the number of livestock being reared means a reduction in the consumption of food crops, making them more available to humans. Yes there will be livestock remaining but an alternative to meat products is the vegetarian diet. The key here is to balance livestock produce with the encouragement of switching to a vegetarian diet. This is a healthy choice of diet as proven by scientific research and will reduce the need to rear an increased number of animals, resulting in less livestock being reared and less food crops being fed to livestock making them more available to humans.

Food wastage must be avoided especially in these times as we face the food crisis. Again here, education on practical methods of saving food in the households must be employed. After a meal, that which is left over must not be discarded, but instead preserved for the following meal. This means that the next meal, less food will be cooked because of an addition from the preserved meal, and therefore food will not run out quickly and electricity will be used less. With just such a simple step, some money and energy is saved. It may seem small, but it is just a building block to overcoming the food and energy crisis.

One must be sensible with the fuel they use in their vehicles. When the place of work is near enough to walk, I see no need for one to drive to work. When the shopping outlet is within walking distance, one should not drive their car, unless there are large quantities of goods being bought. By so doing, some fuel (petrol or diesel) is spared, and the environment is spared of what could have been another addition of carbon to the atmosphere, plus the added bonus of exercise through walking is gained.

To increase yields of food crops, better methods of agriculture should be put to use, with the use of better seeds and fertilisers. Crop rotation should be encouraged to prevent soil nutrients from being depleted. The use of organic fertilisers is also beneficial to the soil because healthy soil brings forth good quality produce, for it is not only the quantity of food produce that is important, but also the quality of produce. What good will abundant poor quality produce do, but only make malnutrition worse? Research into new and innovative ways of producing and using energy should be embarked on. Advertising about the food crisis and energy crisis in especially in the first world countries will give us an awareness of people in third world countries who are worse off and are suffering the most because of the food and energy crisis.

We should wake up from our slumber, and realise we are a global family, a global community, and be aware of the crisis that is upon us. Let each man, woman, and child do what they can to add to the building block of combating the energy and food crisis. From one person to the other, from one household to the other, and from one nation to the other. We can make a change in our daily lives, and be sensible on how we use the resources we still have available to us. With a simple change

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form each person, comes the contribution to fighting this big problem facing us, the food and energy crisis.