

Faced with today's food and energy crisis, how can society improve its well-being?

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Summary:

This is a time of concern that human activities and mistaken view of nature and earth resources as infinite, are now affecting society and entire ecosystem in the form of food and energy crisis. The current food and energy crisis is an indication that earth and its resources are not finite. We therefore need to retrace our steps and embrace act of sustainability. We must be able to strike a balance between nature and culture, society and environment, economy and consumption, supply and demand and different scales of technologies. It is also a time to act and improve society's well-being.

Essay:

Food, a universal experience common to all nations, is the stronghold of life and energy is the driver of development, just as heart is the soul of the body and brain is the driver. A society cannot achieve worthy wellbeing without adequate food and energy security through equity and sustainable development. We have been using indiscriminately large amount of natural resources for the production of food and energy supplies, consequently depleting finite natural resources. Although, society needs access to food and energy to sustain its well being, but we need to make decisions as to the finite earth resources, plan our infrastructure and take decisions that will support renewability for sustainability rather than un-guided and unregulated utilization of earth resources.

Food crisis, being a state of food scarcity initially known within developing countries because of poverty and under development; it is now spreading as a communicable disease to developed countries. On the contrary, in developed countries, food is available in the markets and shops, but people cannot afford to buy it. However, if prices keep rising, more and more people around the globe would be unable to afford the food they need to stay alive, and without help, they will become desperate, riots will results and eventually many will die. The world is currently experiencing a threat to human survival and continuation of existence, if this trend continues; it could lead to extinction of human beings from this planet.

There is more than before, shortage in the global oil, electricity and natural resources. The overdependence on oil for energy production is not helping the situation, but rather making it worse. Oil crisis started several decades ago from 1973 oil crisis caused by OPEC oil export embargo on major oil producing states to 1979 energy crisis by Iranian revolution, the 1990 spike in oil price because of Gulf war and 2001 California electricity crisis. In recent times, the UK fuel protest of 2000 because of high price of crude oil combined with high taxation on road fuel, North American natural gas crisis and Argentina energy crisis of 2004. Crisis erupted in the oil rich region of Nigeria with the return of democracy, while North Korea has had energy shortages for many years.

Food crisis on the other hand, has array of interconnected causes which include current disparity in world's food systems, diversions of food crops to biofuel, high oil prices, and climate change. Increasing poverty and inequality in the world food systems continue to fuel corruption, falling commodity prices and forcing farmers out of business and into city slums. Many farmers are discouraged from farming, with poverty increase, while food prices continue to grow higher.

Bio-fuel earlier touted as a solution to climate change, has been shown to be doing more harm than good. The global demand for bio-fuel is forcing food crops out of production. The green fuel production requires vast expanse of land cleared, often leading to the destruction of wetlands and rainforest that naturally absorb carbon. Rather than reducing emissions, it releases massive amounts of carbon monoxide, CO, to the atmosphere causing climate change. The world climate is changing; the levels of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrogen oxide in the atmosphere are higher than at any time in the history, with implications of droughts, food scarcity and diseases.

Society needs food and energy to fulfill health, social and cultural functions for survival. Nature produces food and energy for the society. Society abuses nature by disturbing the ecosystems and biodiversity. Nature needs ecosystem and biodiversity to produce food and energy for the society. Therefore, nature, society and economy need to be engage in effective processes to make good decisions about food and energy provision. Society should use wisdom and environmental responsibility into the utilization of earth resources. The approach of sustainable development that utilizes nature (environment), society (culture) and economy (consumption) together to solve complex large scale problems in an objective, logical, complete and thoroughly natural way should be embraced.

Moreover, solution to global food and energy prices must ensure sustainability and address inequalities and rights of marginalized groups in tackling the current global crisis. Rich nations should stop giving developing countries fish but teach them how to fish, by giving them fertilizer and introduce them to mechanized farming through adequate and modern farming equipment. After all, they have good agricultural lands to support farming. Give them assurance of market for their produce, they will double their capacities and produce in higher quantities. Idleness and hunger make these people riot and engage in various forms of illicit activities. Having sense of commitment will improve their wellbeing and encourage them to sustainable development.

The choices we make about our food and energy will have impacts not only on our own personal health but on the entire ecosystem; as sustainable development means achieving social progress that recognizes the needs of everyone, with effective protection of the environment, prudent use of natural resources, and maintenance of high stable levels of economic growth and employment (*A better Quality of Life*, May 1999 in UK and the world as a whole). With sustainable development as a guide, we need to protect the available farmland and invest in improving agricultural productivity. While no one can dispute the need to develop alternatives for fossil fuels, rapid substitution of farmland to crops suitable for bio-fuels needs to be approached with caution.

In addition, other alternative sustainable and renewable energies can be harnessed such as hydro-electricity, hydrogen fuel, solar, geothermal, tidal, wave, fusion and wind energy to minimize overdependence on oil for energy production and to achieve sustainable energy efficiency and sufficiency across the world. Also, we must take society, environment and economy into consideration in view of development, because we cannot care about ourselves alone without making recourse to the environment. Every nation needs to work together, embrace sustainable development to achieve crisis-free and improve society well-being.