

Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition Submission Template

ID number: (667)

Summary:

In the last few years we have seen the most impressive increases of oil and food prices--implying a combinative hit to our human lives. However, the challenge of energy and food crisis is not a new phenomenon; they are always there and now burst out as an unprecedented speed and strength, which drives a great question to men: can we survive in this gravest crisis and find a way to improve our well-beings? Is it an opportunity for us to change, to consider our future generations, to choose a different model to develop instead of "growth".

Essay:

The trends of food and energy crisis

Food prices have sharply risen in 2008; there are some structural factors which lead to the food prices including "high energy and fertilizer prices, the continuing depreciation of the US dollar, sharply increased use of both cereals and vegetable oils in bio-fuel production, and declining global stocks of food".¹ While behind of these, the large gap between food demand and supply should be the main driver of food crisis, which also leads some fundamentals and policies decisions to raise the food prices. As global population increases, while the capability of guaranteeing the food safety is decreasing for the reasons of climate change, soil degradation, water shortage and so on. Although technology has improved production, it still can not compensate the larger demand.

The same situation also happens to energy. Prices for almost major fuels experienced rising in 2007 into 2008, especially for oil and coal---non renewable resources. The "traditional economic growth" is considered as the ultimate driver of energy demand. Some developed countries try to develop substitute energy and improve energy efficiency to tackle the problems, which seems difficult, as their total demands still increase. Developing countries that blindly seek for economic growth are depleting their resources, at the same time bringing about environmental problems.

Victims and vulnerable groups to food and energy crisis

We should recognize that everyone would be or already be the victims of this disaster as we are in the open economy system and experiencing globalization. As a whole, our human activities exert great effect to environment; at the same time are influenced by it. The high level of throughput includes input (which absorbs natural resources) and output (which emits waste to environment). Obviously, this kind of developing model which

¹ Word Bank, G8 Hokkaido-Toyako Summit, "Double Jeopardy: Responding to High Food and Fuel Prices", July 2, 2008.

features high economic growth or GDP would bring us to the end. It is urgent to change for a sustainable way and consider green GDP as an indicator.

Further more, it is necessary to target the more vulnerable groups in order to make prioritization of our plan or strategy including short-term, medium-term and long-term. It is said that “developing countries are facing the recent surges in food and oil prices in an increasingly fragile macroeconomic context, especially in the poorest countries. What is more, the crisis has led to a substantial redistribution of incomes from consumers to producers and is having significant negative impacts on many individual households, economies, and on global stability”².

Food crisis seems to have a directly influence on human well-beings, including poverty (A recent world Bank report in eight countries estimates that the rise in food prices from 2005 to 2007 caused 3 percentage higher poverty on average, the results of poor countries are even concerned), starvation, malnutrition, inequality as well as unsustainability. Energy crisis which could affect transportation, warming, more importantly, threaten the state safety, even suffering more people from conflicting or wars.

What are our lessons and how do we tackle these problems

As the food crisis and energy crisis have their different characters and their contributing factors and effects may be also different, however, one of the essential drivers of them is the same---gap between demand and supply. Sharply increasing population and desperately seeking for GDP has made large amount of depletion of natural resources and pollution of the environment. It is time to change our way to develop, going to a lower print foot as we only have one earth.

Institution and policy decisions take significant roles in the current situation. However, what we need is an integrated global reaction and pre-action to these global problems.

1. Short-term strategies: strengthen the communication and cooperation between developed countries and developing countries; international communities and organizations should take actions to aid the most vulnerable people and poor areas; rapid financial support is also important, such as micro-credit.
2. Medium-term strategies: increasing agricultural investment as well as technology and education investment; energy diversification and efficiency; investment for tackling climate change.
3. Long-term strategies: reform the system and infrastructure such as trading system, policies towards the food and energy security for the favor of human sustainable improvement and environmental sustainability.

What should be emphasized is that 1) no matter what kind of plans we are making and implementing, we should always keep in mind the “sustainable development”-----that is the only way which could lead us to face the challenge and towards a more favorable future for human beings. For achieving this sustainable development, countries should stop complaining and accusing, as everyone is stakeholder and all of us are responsible for it; 2) we should also aware that to go forward the sustainable development, it is far away to only use policies or laws, at the same time the prioritization of the social group---that is the most powerful ones should also be considered. For instance, companies no matter multi-national ones or medium ones, they are both play significant roles to achieve our goals.

Conclusion

² Ibid.

From above, we can conclude that food and energy crisis have many complicated reasons, one of the major drivers is the large gap between demand and supply, which is mainly caused by population increase and economic growth related to many other factors. These crises exert great challenge to human well-beings and sustainability. It is time for us to find a different model to develop.

Preference:

Word Bank, G8 Hokkaido-Toyako Summit, “Double Jeopardy: Responding to High Food and Fuel Prices”, July 2, 2008

(insert your summary here – maximum 1000 words)