

## Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition Submission Template

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### **Summary:**

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Food and energy problems are in many ways inter-related therefore the world cannot solve its food problem without first solving its energy problem. The only option left is to seek and find synergistic solutions to both crises. But in doing so, mankind cannot afford to compromise the environment and the future of those generations coming after us. The way forward therefore lies in a myriad of solutions which include majorly applying the timeless principles of sustainable agriculture while also cutting the demand for unsustainable fuels and finding alternative and more reliable energy sources, among other things. Herein lies the challenge.

### **Essay:**

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That we are in the middle of yet another food and energy crisis in our world today is no longer news, what remains to be seen is how we can come together to effectively solve these twin problems and by so doing secure the future and wellbeing of our world once and for all. It has often been said that with every crisis, there is an opportunity. The current food and energy crisis appears to present mankind with this kind of opportunity, an opportunity which we cannot afford to miss or misuse because the future of the world and generations unborn is dependent upon it.

Food and energy insecurities currently rank top on the world's list of problems threatening the future of humanity, and at the moment according to the United Nations, an estimated 850 million people are living in hunger and extreme poverty, while 18,000 children daily, die of malnutrition and other related diseases. As world population increases, these numbers would definitely keep rising if we don't do anything to stop the current crises.

The energy scene cannot be said to be any better. In the last few years, the world has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the prices of petroleum products, amidst fears and concerns about the effects of these unsustainable fuel sources on our environment. As it appears now, it is becoming clear to us all that utilizing fossil fuels is having harmful impacts on our environment and that in a very short while, we might not even be able to meet our energy needs anymore, as scientists are already predicting an eventual end to world oil.

Many developed countries of the world in response to this have already begun looking elsewhere to satisfy their energy needs. Every year millions of tons of maize, soybean and other food commodities are being converted to biofuel, an action which in itself is said to be contributing greatly to the global food shortage currently being experienced.

There is therefore an absolute need to put an end to both crises now, and while doing so, put structures in place to prevent future reoccurrences. The time to rise to the occasion and end the crises once and for all is now, failure to do so would mean disastrous consequences. The question then is: What can we do in these circumstances, here and now?

Frankly speaking, the answer to this question is not far-fetched. Crisis demands change and change we must! This time of crisis calls for serious measures, but most of all it calls for a paradigm shift, from an era of unsustainable living to a period of sustainable development. The great scientist and philosopher, Albert Einstein, recognized this need for a paradigm shift when he stated that: “the problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking at which they were created”.

If anything, the way forward cannot be one smooth sail, and it most certainly is not going to come in a quick fix. A fire brigade approach would not solve the crisis, and so it is out of the question. To put an end to the crisis, there would have to be both short and long term solutions, and real progress will only happen after a significant period of doing the right things.

What then are the right things to do? First, in the short term, we would have to treat as an emergency the millions of people that are starving in the disadvantaged regions of the world. The world cannot afford to let them starve to death. We must come to their aid by distributing food to them in their villages and cities, but food aid alone cannot solve the problem.

The people would have to be taught how to help themselves by using sustainable farming techniques to improve their farm yields. Young and energetic people in cities and villages must be encouraged to go back to the farm, and improved seeds and fertilizers must be provided for these farmers to help improve yields. From now on, the focus must be to increase productivity, but to do so without compromising the environment.

On the global scale, farmers across the world must return to the time tested principles of organic agriculture, as it represents the only hope to end the food crisis. Governments must invest in fully functional food systems devoid of the excessive use of chemicals and heavy dependence on unsustainable fuel sources which has characterized many decades of food production.

Addressing the crisis in the energy sector would require tackling decisively the demand side of the problem. Here, the emphasis must be on gradually reducing dependence on fossil fuels while also exploring the potential for alternative and more sustainable energy sources. In the mean time, the issue of biofuel production using food crops is also one that must be quickly addressed. The truth remains that the diversion of food crops for this purpose is taking food away from the reach of the poor man. If we are to make significant progress on immediately ending the food shortage, there would have to be a pause or better still a gradual reduction in biofuel production from food crops, at least for the moment.

With increased agricultural productivity in majority of the regions of the world, the cost of transporting food items from place to place is expected to reduce drastically, energy consumption would be less, and so also the prices of foodstuffs would eventually drop.

As a final word, ending the food and energy crisis would require that all hands be on deck. Science and technology must play its part by once again showing us which way to go in solving the problems it helped create. Individuals, governments, corporate bodies and the United Nations must also play their various parts.

The options open to us so far are clear and whatever choices we make, let us be reminded that, our generation, and generations after us, would have to live with the consequences of our actions.