

Vocation for Justice



Editorial

Summer 2010 Volume 24 No 2

Our Daily Bread

Pax Christi's Spring Sale leaflet has arrived in the post and it prompts fond memories, for it includes the booklet *A Taste for Peace*. I remember well the enjoyable planning sessions putting together these recipes and reflections, celebrating 50 years of Pax Christi peacemaking. All those meetings were conducted around a table, sharing a simple meal. At first I was roped into the project, being an unenthusiastic cook myself! But, as I tucked into the homemade bread and we discussed the issues peace groups were addressing, I soon realised that food and food ways are inseparable from an understanding of the mission to bring about God's kingdom of justice and peace here on Earth.



The Catholic Workers in the US, for example, provided a recipe for Catholic Worker Soup with the byline 'Make too much, Invite too many'. They have a commitment to hospitality as well as to peace, particularly reaching out to marginalised people. Catholic Worker houses in England grow as much of their own food as possible to retain contact with the land and to provide therapeutic work for traumatised asylum seekers.

The Columbans too have a commitment to hospitality and sensitivity to the wider context of food systems and justice. When I visited the Philippines in 2007 I was fascinated to see the food waste from the house in Manila recycled

to the compost heap or to the pigs waiting outside the kitchen. I visited the Columban-run experimental permaculture farm outside the city, growing all kinds of fruit trees - mangoes, bananas, coconuts - and rows of organically-grown food crops. I even met the composting worms! And the Columban Missionary Society internationally has worked to raise appreciation of biodiversity and awareness about the issue of Patenting of Life, warning about 'Terminator' technology in relation to food crops. By the way, have you heard it mentioned in your church that 2010 is the UN year for Biodiversity? Over 800 million people go hungry every day and this issue is crucial for food security.

Most justice and peace gatherings are food events, where offerings are shared.

The breaking of bread with others celebrates love, mutuality and the gifts of the natural world. Of course we break bread at the Eucharist, and, for people in the justice and peace movement, this sharing is the summit of our on-going work to bring daily bread to the hungry and address other injustices.

This special issue focuses entirely on Food and it is timely that this year's National Justice and Peace Conference will explore the food system and exciting new initiatives to help us reconnect to sustainable agriculture and food. All three of us on the Columban Justice and Peace team are involved in the conference

Our Daily Bread: Food Security, People and Planet 16-18 July 2010 Derbyshire

A conference organised by the
National Justice & Peace Network

Speakers include: Vandana Shiva, Shay Cullen, Alastair McIntosh, Elizabeth Dowler, Patrick Mulvany, Sean McDonagh, Mary Colwell, David Howlett, Deborah Jones, Tim Gorringe, Edward and Barbara Echlin.

www.justice-and-peace.org.uk
020 7901 4864

and among the exciting lineup of speakers is Columban Shay Cullen, whose Preda Project in the Philippines has a thriving Fair Trade dimension and organic project. A debate on food security in the coming decades will be chaired by John Vidal, *The Guardian's* Environment Editor. Do come - all are welcome, and note that a young people's and children's programme runs alongside the adult programme.

The nutritional dimension of the food issue is crucial for our young people. You will see from our centrespread that children in UK spend half their pocket money on snacks and fizzy drinks. What lies behind the growth in consumption of junk food?

Back in March, an issue of *Engineering and Technology* magazine arrived in our family post. The Banksy artwork on the cover of canned tomato spray caught my eye, and then the title: 'The Future of Food - How engineering will transform the way you eat'. One of the articles was: 'Researchers make fatty food fitter'. Isn't it about time people of faith looked into what is happening to 'our daily bread'?

Ellen Teague

COLUMBAN MISSION

Collaborating with the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales & Justice and Peace Scotland

Solidarity and the Banquet

The following is an extract from the book Stations of the Banquet by Cathy C. Campbell.

Solidarity is all about seeing the world from the vantage point of our interconnectedness with each other and with all of creation. With the eyes of solidarity we see through our particular interests to our common interests. Solidarity also moves away from the false notion of disinterest, or doing for others in an altruistic fashion. Instead it is grounded in common responsibilities and interests.

Solidarity is not, however, about self-sacrifice or loss of self. Rather it is about an enlargement of the self to include community with others. To work with others is not to lose oneself, but to find a larger self. We find we belong to the web of life, to the earth. We are not alone, but are related with others all around the globe. The dichotomy between love of self and love of others is a dangerous one created by alienation and sustained by structures of alienation.

In the work of solidarity we begin to understand that we all eat at the same table and that all the tables we gather around in our daily lives are connected. For people of faith these connections are rooted in the Holy. It is God's table around which we gather, whether it is a food table, a board table, a desk or an altar. It is the love of God for all of God's creation that binds us together. That is the shared food of the table.

Today, the realities of globalisation heighten the challenge of a Christ-shaped understanding of solidarity. The prevalence and persistence of hunger in our world is a sign of the scale of the challenge we face. Clearly, with plenty of food for everyone in the world, the people without food have been excluded in various ways from the common table. It is only from a place of solidarity, of kinship, and of deep appreciation of our interconnectedness that we can constructively engage all that tears apart the community of life.

There are two fundamental ways that solidarity is challenged: firstly, by breaking the bonds that connect us and claiming independence rather than

interdependence; and, secondly, by erasing the separateness or distinctiveness of each entity by domination or more insidiously through assimilation.

In the first case we distance ourselves from others. The distanced "other" becomes a threat, an enemy, a nonentity, an abandoned or disregarded one. We reject or exclude the "other". In the second case we erase the differences between us. We see the "other" as an inferior who must somehow be made like us or be in a relationship to us that is defined by us. In both cases the "other" remains a stranger to us. Yet, it is this stranger whom Christ invites to the banquet table and welcomes as is.

There are the "others" within our community and "others" outside our community. If we define community as our nation, "others" become immigrants, refugees, allies, or opponents of "our" way of life, "our" policies, "our" understandings of what is good and right. If we define community as our faith community, "others" become those with different beliefs or practices, those of a different congregation, denomination, or religious tradition. If we define community as those who share a common experience of either suffering or privilege, "others" become those who do not, and perhaps cannot, understand us. Differences among people become sharply defined in an insecure world where fear is real and often justified, where resources are scarce and where a sense of belonging is uncommon. In this environment, bridges and places of connection, trust, or openness between people become harder to find and negotiate.

The challenge for Christians, as for the Pharisees and well-to-do, is that Jesus ate with "them". He befriended the tax-collectors and sinners of his day. The hospitality of the table is more than a metaphor. Our table practices enact a different basis for human community. They are places of connection where the love that casts out fear can grow (*1 John 4:18a*).

There is, however, another category of "otherness" which is central to the full life of the table. Over centuries, we have learned to define ourselves as over against and separate from the rest of creation. We have emphasised our distinctiveness from rather than our relationship to nature. The alienation from creation allows us to destroy the very air, water, oil and other life forms upon which we depend for life. It leaves us restless, homeless, without a sense of belonging, divorced from our relations. What would it mean to consider ourselves part of the whole community of life? What would the full inclusion of creation mean to the table etiquette of the banquet?

American theologian Sallie McFague has outlined a whole theology based on an ecological paradigm. In such a theology, "the God whose glory is each creature fully alive revels in differences, not in sameness. The God that fits with the ecological paradigm is the God for whom oneness is only achieved through the infinitely complex interrelationships and inter-dependencies of billions of different constituents, beings and events. A deep understanding of ecology is a better starting place for appreciating the possibilities and structure of a fully inclusive table etiquette than one based on mechanistic principles. It is a critical complement to the solely human paradigms elaborated in philosophy, history, political or the human sciences. By stretching solidarity to include creation, a new intellectual basis for understanding complex inter-relationships becomes available to us and a door to a different theology is opened.

Christ's table etiquette is about the way past all humanly created barriers to the banquet that God intends for all. Jesus knows the banquet as a reality, he lives out of it, and invites all he meets to join him. There is no need to protect one's place at this table, or for anyone, rich or poor, to fear exclusion. The "all", "anyone", "everyone" in the invitation to Christ's table is serious. The challenge of solidarity is to make this real for real people in real space and time. ■

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Columban Mission

Campaigning on Genetically-modified Food

Columban campaigning work has produced the following resources:
An Open Letter to the Vatican on Genetically-engineered Food
Sean McDonagh's response to the 2004 Conference in Rome organised by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences: 'Feeding the World: The Moral Imperative of Biotechnology'.

Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in Agriculture - For Beginners

A booklet originally produced by the Masipag organic farmers of the Philippines. It explains the science and issues, such as agribusiness control of the food system, food containing non-food genes and bioprospecting.

£2.00 for both booklets - from Hendon office on 020 8202 2555

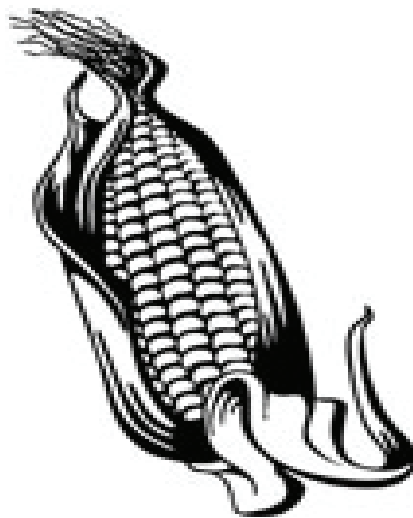
Unless the grain of wheat shall die: The moral and theological case against Terminator seeds

Progressio Comment written by Sean McDonagh and Donal Dorr
£2.00 from www.progressio.org.uk or 020 8354 0883

Organic Farming in the Philippines

Preda is a non-profit foundation near Olongapo City, founded by Columban Shay Cullen to uphold human and environmental rights. Its Preda Fair Trade aspect was set up to support fair and just livelihoods for the poor. Preda works closely with mango farmers whose produce can be found on supermarket shelves in the UK. Two-metre-tall mango saplings are given to farmers free of charge, and interest-free loans are granted that alleviate a family's hardship between planting and harvest time. Preda also promises to buy each entire crop, and pays a premium price for it. There is a commitment to plant 1,000 new trees every year.

Columbans in the Philippines also have two demonstration farms, focusing on organic methods and the use of indigenous varieties of rice and corn. The whole island of Negros has been declared an organic island, and legislation has been enacted to make the use of genetically modified organisms illegal. The Columban farm on Negros is involved in studies to show that organically grown corn can be as productive as genetically-engineered corn.



Boosting Nutrition in Peru

Fr Ed O'Connell's parish in the city of Lima recently undertook a Health Education and Nutrition Project for under five-year-olds. A survey showed that 15% of children were chronically malnourished and 25% were at risk of malnutrition. The results were explained to parents with malnourished children, and those children at risk were invited to receive specialised care at the parish centre in San Benito.

A nutrition programme has been implemented.

A powerpoint can be accessed on the Columban website www.columbans.co.uk. Click on 'The San Benito project'.

Mining or Food?

Frank Nally

The British-based Working Group on Mining in the Philippines, which includes Columban Justice and Peace, has written a letter of complaint about the presentation of a major environmental award to the out-going President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. She was given the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Award in Washington on 14 April 2010. It was conveyed by the International Conservation Caucus Foundation with the complicity of the United Nations Global Environment Fund.

The letter from the Working Group was signed by Anglican Bishop Michael Doe, the Columban Justice and Peace Office, the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility, Philippine Indigenous Peoples Links and the United Society for Propagation of the Gospel.

It said, "the scale of her promotion of mining and the associated corruption have placed large areas of critical ecosystems under severe threat, depriving indigenous and other poor communities of their subsistence and subjecting them to militarisation". The signatories felt President Magapagal Arroyo's active support for exploration and mining should have excluded her as a nominee for any environmental award. Robert Goodland, one of the authors of the group's 2008 Field Trip Report, ***Philippines – Mining or Food?*** said, "I cannot think of anyone less worthy!"

One asks why the awarding organisations could undermine the protection of the environment and food production so much? And in a country where a third of the population lives on \$1 a day.

It is a question we all need to ask. Indeed I'm doing that at the very moment at a United Nations Session on Sustainable Development in New York. Here, we have heard stories from Peru, Indonesia and the Philippines about the destruction of communities and their food sustainability by corporate mining. The Church sector - including Columban Justice and Peace - is very involved in the UN process. ■

ZAMBIA'S Basic Needs Basket

In 1991 Zambia's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission raised concern about the low wages the Catholic Church was paying its employees. In response, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Lusaka took up the challenge of assessing a basic cost of living and 'living wage'.

This monitoring of the rising cost of living has continued to the present time and each month the Centre publishes a simple monthly price survey of a 'basket' of essential food and non-food items for a family of six. The 'basket' demonstrates the dramatic story of how living conditions have rapidly deteriorated in Zambia in relation to the deteriorating economic situation. It is the most cited statistical tool for food prices in Zambia. Some trade unions have brought the monthly food basket into their wage negotiations in arguing for increases to meet basic needs.

According to the April 2010 'basket' reductions were recorded in items such as dry kapenta, meat, tomatoes, bread and milk, but these were offset by increases recorded in breakfast mealie meal, dry fish, eggs, onion and cooking oil. Furthermore, an increase in non-food items such as charcoal had an effect on the total 'basket'.

High food prices are a perpetual challenge to many Zambian households, says the Jesuit Centre. Considering how basic the food items in the 'basket' list are, any slight increase in the cost of food has the potential of increasing levels of poverty and under-nutrition, especially among the poor.

The latest press release from the Centre calls for investment in high productive and labour intensive sectors such as agricultural, which is often the principal source of incomes for the poor. Other labour intensive sectors that the country should further invest in include textiles, construction, and tourism.

www.jctr.org.zm

Food Security to Food Sovereignty

On 17 April 1996 1,500 members of Brazil's Landless Peasants Movement, having been evicted from their farms two years earlier, marched to the state capitol in Para to demand a return of their land so they could again feed their families. Instead of meeting with government officials they were surrounded by police, who, using machine guns, killed 19 and seriously wounded 69. La



Via Campesina, the international movement of the small farmer, celebrates 17 April as the International day of Peasants' Struggles.

Columbians were represented at the recent La Via Campesina gathering in Bolivia, which drew 35,000 people from around the world. The 17 April anniversary was marked, highlighting food sovereignty and peasants' right to control their food.

In Argentina, on 17 April, Radio El Arka prepared a special programme on the struggles of La Via Campesina and the issue of food sovereignty. Costa Rica saw a seminar at the University of Social Sciences organised by the Network of Rural Women in Costa Rica. There was a public screening of the film 'Food Inc' in Puerto Rica, followed by a debate on the suitability of the US food system for Latin America.

In Africa, an independent radio station in DR Congo broadcast for the day on the theme of peasant struggles in the country. The seizure of land by miners and loggers was a particular grievance.

In Indonesia, 14-20 April was a 'Week of Action of the Indonesian Peasant Union against Corporate Control in Agriculture and Food in Indonesia'. There was direct action in the countryside to reclaim fields for planting. The All Nepal Peasants' Federation organised a talk programme among the leaders of peasant movements in Nepal.

Turning to Europe, on 17 April in Belgium, a group changed the name of a park on Avenue Tervuren in Brussels, previously named *Parc Monsanto* - after the US-based agricultural biotechnology corporation - to *Parc Eldorado dos Carajás 17 avril*. It also changed the names on signs leading to the park, and posted information about the action inside the park. Participants planted organic strawberry and tomato plants as well as other vegetable seeds. One of the group members complained that it was, "unacceptable that a publicly managed park in a city such as Brussels be named after a corporation which has brought only chemical destruction through glyphosphates, growth hormones and dioxins, not to mention an aggressive destruction of biodiversity through an obsessive promotion of genetically modified crops worldwide".

The small organic farmers association of the Verona mountains in Italy met in a village called Gorgusello to keep alive and pass on the peasant knowledge of gnocci preparation. It is made with hot water, salt, wheat flour and flavored with cheese and butter. After cooking and before sharing this food together, they read the story of the 17 April massacre in Brazil.

Canada saw citizens send alfalfa seeds to their members of parliament, asking that the government stop the introduction of Monsanto's genetically-engineered alfalfa. The action on 17 April was organised by the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network and the National Farmers Union of Canada. ■

Hunger and Indigenous Peoples

Diana Mills

The writer campaigns on environmental and social justice issues, with particular focus on mining in Latin America and its impact on indigenous and peasant women.

Neida Yepes Rodriguez is a soft-spoken woman with a shy smile and dark, intelligent eyes. A member of the Sikuani indigenous people of Colombia, last month she visited the UK as a delegate of the National Colombian Authority for Indigenous Government and met with a range of groups including Amnesty International and Survival International. She was highlighting the desperate situation of that country's 102 groups of indigenous peoples, approximately 1,400,000 individuals.

Neida lives on a reservation watered by the Meta river. There are eight different indigenous peoples on the reservation, each group with its own language. They are boxed in by the cattlemen and landowners, who not only occupy land where the indigenous communities used to hunt and grow their food, but make it difficult them to be able to carry on with their traditional way of getting food. Oil companies are also beginning to move in. Another threat is the proposed canalization of the Meta Riva, which will take away half of the reservation's land surface. "We are boxed in," explains Neida; "we have no way of hunting or growing our own food". A feeling of despair, a sense that indigenous peoples are deliberately being left to die out pervades the community. No health visitors come to see them, malnutrition is an increasing problem. To make matters worse, some 5,000,000 hectares of palm oil and rubber plantations have been earmarked for the River Meta area as part of a macro-economic project targeting the whole of South America.

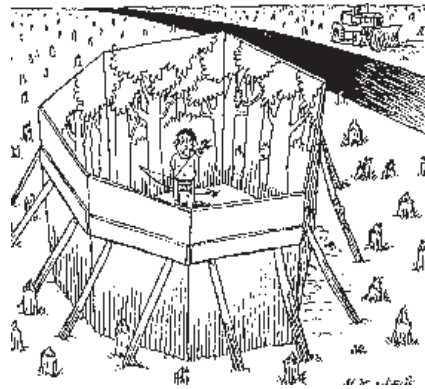
For indigenous peoples throughout the continent the future looks increasingly bleak as they see their lands disappearing under the relentless advance of bulldozers across their ancestral territories. Yet it is women like Neida – the first one to leave her community – who are taking an active stand against this systematic violation of indigenous rights. As a member of the National Council of Women, she

is fully aware of the risks involved. Many women who have spoken out in defence of those rights have disappeared, but Neida will not be deterred. "We women are the transmitters of our culture," she says. "In the communities there is no longer any peace and so we women are fighting for our rights at the national level. We have been victims for a long time."

Colombia's Supreme Court is currently considering the agreements between the country's indigenous peoples and the government. Although these agreements are known as 'Safeguarding Plans', they are in fact non-binding for the government. The Court says the plans must be tailored to the needs of each indigenous people, but the government's response is lukewarm and so the odds are stacked against them. For example, if an indigenous individual is murdered by a non-indigenous one, the latter stands a 90% chance of escaping prosecution. According to Luis Fernández Arias of the National Colombian Authority for Indigenous Government, the organisation is constantly being threatened by paramilitary groups. So far they have killed 400 of its members, including his uncle and grandfather.

For South America's indigenous peoples food insecurity follows a depressing pattern. Large corporations – mostly engaged in oil, mining, biofuels or transgenic crops – target an area and move in with the national government's blessing. Indigenous communities are rarely consulted, despite international conventions that require *a priori* consultation. Even in cases where such consultation is

enshrined in a country's constitution, the rights of indigenous people are deliberately ignored. As ancestral homelands shrink and water sources dwindle, dry up or become polluted, indigenous communities are forced into increasingly smaller areas with increasingly less food and water to sustain them. As these meagre resources contract even further their only recourse is to leave and search for food elsewhere. Frequently they will end up in an urban slum, without the education or skills to cope in an environment that is totally alien to their customary way of life. In this new world – so far removed from their own tightly-knit communities organised around ancestral laws and traditions in a land where food and water were once plentiful – they struggle to eke out an existence largely by begging or selling handicrafts and cheap trinkets. In the squalid slums hunger is a constant, while drink, depression and disease are never far away.



The desperate plight of South America's indigenous peoples never appears on the well-fed balance sheets of those powerful corporations trafficking in the

continent's vast natural resources. Bulldozers continue to advance like juggernauts across the length and breadth of indigenous ancestral lands, clearing the way for more oil, more mines, more soya bean and palm oil.

Benno Glauser of the Iniciativa Amotocodie Paraguayan Chaco, writing on the World Rainforest Movement's website about Paraguay's Ayoreo Indigenous People, says: "The Ayoreo do not look at their surroundings through eyes that only see what is useful, or define everything on the basis of scarcity. To them the forests of the Chaco are not poor, but rather full of riches."

The final word belongs to Neida, the brave Sikuani woman crusading for her peoples' survival. "We can no longer grow food. We will be exterminated." The sorrow in her voice should shame us all. ■

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE NEED A FUNDAMENTAL RETHINK

Oil and energy

We have an oil-based food economy, and yet oil is running out. Some 95 per cent of our food products are oil-dependent, and gains in agricultural productivity rely on fertilisers and mechanisation. Yet, if land goes to biofuels, there is less land for food. Food reaching our plates in UK is a logistical feat since less than 2% of people grow it and many ingredients come thousands of miles. Food accounts for 25% of the distance travelled by lorries in the UK, and 12 billion miles driven a year by consumers.

Climate change

The Stern Report on Climate Change found agriculture responsible for 14% of greenhouse gas emissions globally. Of agriculture's emissions, fertilisers were responsible for 38% and livestock 31%. Altering food systems therefore has to be at the front of action on climate change. Climate change – and the severe weather it brings about – is estimated to have increased the number of undernourished people by between 40 and 170 million. Drought in Australia has cut grain production there by 60%.

Water scarcity and embedded water

Globally, of all drinkable fresh water, households use 10 per cent, industry 20 per cent and agriculture 70 per cent. The notion of how much water it takes to produce an item is likely to become as important as the amount of greenhouse gas emissions it causes. To produce one kilo of grain-fed beef requires 15 cubic metres of water and one kilo of cereals needs between 0.4 and 3 cubic metres. Food supply chains might in the future be audited for their 'embedded water' and a key area is reducing profligate water use, since all forecasts see big water crises ahead. 50% of the UK's vegetables are imported, many from water-stressed nations.

Biodiversity

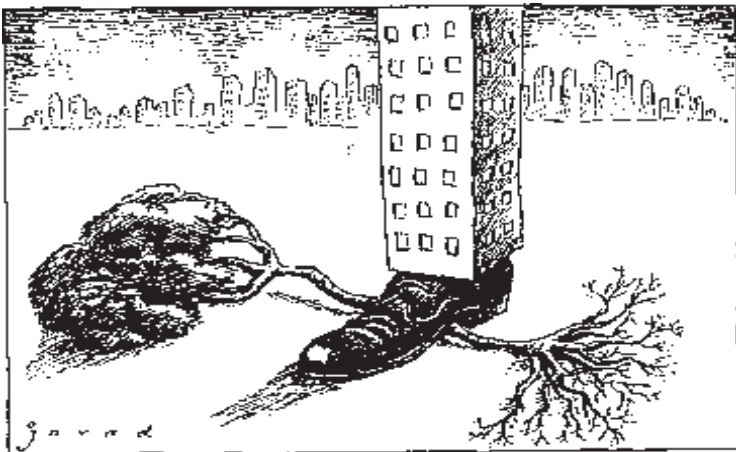
Our food systems and biodiversity are intimately connected. Without diverse ecosystems food production could not occur, including pollination by insects, nutrient cycling, regulation of the water cycle and pest control. Pollinators, especially bees, are what pioneering environmentalist Rachel Carson called a keystone species, at the very centre of the entire food web, but they are diminishing in numbers. Biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate, due to the scale and methods of modern agriculture, diminishing of tropical rainforests and poor marine conservation. All five species of commercially fished species of tuna, for example, are under pressure.

Soil

Soil is often overlooked as a strategic resource, but human society has long been using up the supply of topsoil we rely on to grow our food. Global agricultural soil loss of about a millimetre per year outpaces soil formation by at least tenfold. While fertilisers can temporarily offset the effects of soil erosion, the long-term productivity of the land cannot be maintained in the face of the reduced organic matter and thinning of soil that characterise industrial agriculture.

World population and urbanisation

Human numbers are rising rapidly, reaching 6.6 billion in 2007 and expected to reach 9.1 billion by 2050. Urbanisation appears unstoppable with more people now living in towns than in the countryside. In which case, where do they get their food? Over the last 15 to 20 years, the number of urban poor and undernourished people has increased at an extremely rapid rate. Increased poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition is likely to accompany this process of urbanisation.



Labour

If urbanisation is inexorable, who will be the rural labour force? Public policy tends to centre on the big farmers as the route to produce the massive surpluses needed, yet the reality is that most farmers are smallholders, and they need to be part of the solution. If oil is no longer able to substitute for labour – which is what mechanisation meant – does this mean in an oil-depleted world that we will have to go back to centring on human labour on the land?

Food Power

Farmers and landowners have seen their power go. Land is no longer the sole source of food power. Corporations wield massive power and are taking more through Intellectual Property Rights and power over seeds. In addition, regional trading blocks such as NAFTA, ASEAN and the EU have brought a push to globalise and move away from old forms of power.

Land

A recent UK study showed that consumers use food as though they have six times as much land and sea available to them as they in fact do. Our “efficient” food system is actually using other people’s land. It’s our wealth which allows that, in a kind of market-based neo-colonialism. Land is also being increasingly taken up by extractive industries. In the Philippines around 30% of the country’s land area is covered by mining claims and food security is undermined. Once self-sufficient in rice, the Philippines is now the world’s biggest importer.

Nutrition transition

Consumers are changing their diets, eating more sugars, soft drinks, meat and dairy. This, in turn, is associated with a shift in disease patterns. The World Health Organisation is alarmed about the evidence of a rise in diet-related ill-health from chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity. And there is increased demand for a more meat-centred Western diet from the growing middle classes of India and China. In the UK, children are buying more junk food. In 2001, the UK average annual income of 5-16 year-olds was £345 and over half of this was spent on snacks and fizzy drinks.

Hunger

Meanwhile, we continue to have a very serious problem of malnutrition in the global south. 2.6 billion people around the world live on \$2 a day or less and spend 60-80% of their income on food. The United Nations estimates that the increase in food prices in 2007/08 meant 100 million more people could not afford food. Today, 70% of poor countries are food importers and 80% of the estimated 845 million hungry people are small farmers. And while children starve, international military spending tops US\$1000 billion. In the UK, consumers waste about a quarter of all food they purchase.



Animal Welfare

A 2007 report by Compassion in World Farming pointed out that the vast majority of the sixty billion animals farmed for food worldwide every year are intensively reared. Industrial animal production’s main concern is maximising productivity and profit. Selective breeding and genetic engineering, along with poor conditions and mistreatment (including confinement, overcrowding and over-feeding), causes great suffering to animals throughout their short life span.

*Credits:
Professor Tim Lang’s
speech to the Garden
Organic AGM 2008; ‘Crisis!
Crisis!’ - New
Internationalist Dec 2008;
Food Ethics Council,*

Faith in Food

Patrick Holden

The writer is Director of the Soil Association and runs the longest-established organic dairy farm in Wales.

I recently attended an international conference hosted by the Alliance for Conservation and Religions, which brought together all the world's major faith groups at Windsor Castle to share seven year pledges to address climate change and sustainable development. I was deeply moved at the level of commitments made. However what struck me, with a few exceptions, was how relatively little food seemed to feature in the pledges.

For anyone involved with a faith community or committed to a path of spiritual refinement, there is surely a strong case that food should feature in daily spiritual practice. Until relatively recently this used to be the case. For instance, the observance of grace before meals is a recognition of the need to quieten oneself before taking food into one's body.

It also matters how the food was produced, and that its production did not involve violence to nature. But for most of us during the 20th Century we have forgotten the deeper significance of the story which lies behind our food. For instance, even if we are vegetarian it is an 'inconvenient truth' that modern farming methods routinely involve a form of violence against nature through the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides which destroy soil life, wild flowers, insects and all the millions of life forms which coexist with truly sustainable farming.

In the case of livestock the connection is more obvious, at least in relation to the consumption of meat, which of necessity will involve the death of an animal. One way to avoid this violence to animals is to become a vegetarian or a vegan. But for millions of people, myself included, there is a wish to take responsibility for minimising violent actions associated with food production without giving up livestock products all together.

More and more people now believe, as I do, that changes in the way in which our food is produced are not only affecting its physical components

- the proteins, fats, carbohydrates, minerals, trace elements and antioxidants - but have also compromised the qualities and that this moral, ethical and spiritual dimension is of crucial importance .

From this perspective, the progressive industrialisation of our farming and food systems which has taken place over the last 60 years is of huge concern, not least because there is a high degree of public ignorance about the consequences of this intensification and concentration of power on the integrity and quality of our food. Most of our staple foods now come from an increasingly small number of producers, processors and retailers who have a worrying degree of control over what we eat.

Moreover, the hidden 'story' behind the profusion of brands and supermarket own label products



which gives the illusion of choice often involves violence to animals, destruction of soil fertility, pollution, and a frightening degree of dependence on non-renewable external inputs such as fossil fuels, phosphate fertilisers, seeds and more. The key is not to feel disempowered but to find a way of taking personal action to improve our relationship with our food. As Wendell Berry, poet, philosopher and farmer pointed out, "Eating is an Agricultural Act".

Thus the question arises, what does 'doing the right thing' mean in this context? I suggest it means going on the outer equivalent of the inner journey and making personal changes in ones food purchasing choices. We

can make an effort to eat sustainably produced, local and seasonal food, preferably produced by someone we know as often as is practically possible. There is no success or failure when undertaking this transition – every small step counts. Living in this world of industrial agriculture and anonymous food we need to acknowledge that it is the journey which counts just as much as the ultimate destination.

To make a start, have a look in your fridge and larder and do a quick audit on what you eat. How much do you know about the 'story' behind your food? Can you name the producer, the farm, the county, the country, the method of production, the level of welfare and sustainability of the farming? If the answer is 'no' then you have an opportunity to make a personal commitment to buy 'food with a better story' in future. Your personal action would, if scaled up, enable the radical transformation of our 21st century food systems.

My advice would be to start with fresh in season vegetables, fresh meat and dairy products (if you are not a vegetarian/vegan) then grains and cereals. Try to find foods that are organic, produced at least in the UK and preferably much closer to where you live. If you buy from a supermarket that's fine, but if you can't get what you want, go to the customer service desk and ask them why they don't stock whatever it is you are looking for. If you don't get any satisfaction, then email their head office – you would be amazed how few customer complaints it takes to deliver a change of policy!

You will find that taking these small steps can profoundly change your relationship with your food. On a physical level it will increase the pleasure of eating – because the food will be of better quality. But it will also enhance your intimate connection with the earth, because at each meal you will be participating directly in an act of stewardship of nature. In this way changing our physical relationship with our food can also open the possibility of making a deeper inner connection to the stewardship of our planet and our spiritual development. ■

www.soilassociation.org

L.O.A.F. Principles

Edward P. Echlin

*Edward P. Echlin is a member of Garden Organic, the Soil Association, and Christian Ecology Link; and author of the just published, *Climate and Christ, A Prophetic Alternative*.*

Food is not merely another economic commodity governed in its production and distribution by the laws of the market. Since it is essential to life, it is both a sacred entity and a global common good.

For sustainable food, use the Christian Ecology Link L.O.A.F. principles, which stands for:

**Locally produced,
Organically grown,
Animal friendly,
Fairly traded.**

Locally produced

We praise God best, through our food, when we know the growers, the farms, plants, animals, markets, and retailers in our locality. Living sustainably locally, with both wild and cultivated nature, especially in buying, growing, preparing, sharing, and consuming local food, is the best, most holistic way to serve God and neighbour. We're sometimes told, by big business and their politicians, to permit transnational corporations to tinker with genes, seeds, soil, plants, and animals, in order to 'feed the world'. We best feed the world, however, by encouraging local food production and consumption grown everywhere according to local wisdom.

Local food eliminates the climate damage of air, ship and lorry food miles. Local food exposes two lethal fallacies of current globalisation: 1) that industrial, 'out of the bag' agribusiness can continue indefinitely. In fact it cannot; and 2) there will always be abundant food to import, through fossil fuelled air, ship and lorry freight. In fact there will not.

But how in practice do we support, purchase, and eat local food? As a general rule, follow 'the proximity principle', sourcing as close to home as possible before going further afield, as I explain in *Climate and Christ, A Prophetic Alternative*. As an example of import folly, I have seen Egyptian

potatoes on sale in Dublin - in the heartland of the spud! Buy potatoes, sprouts, carrots, cabbage, strawberries, apples, pears, and other vegetables and fruit that thrive here, from our own bio-region. Encourage people in other countries to do the same. Find local greengrocers, butchers, cheese and fish shops. Some still exist!

Attend Farmers' Markets, buy food and drink from local growers. Encourage veggie boxes. Even supermarkets now supply some British apples, beef, fowl, and Scottish organic salmon. Read the labels and - follow the proximity principle. During the spring 'food gap', when freshness is scarce and expensive, you may have to source from southern Europe - but 'thus far shall you go and no farther'. We're proximity principle people.

Finally grow some of your own. Many people might be able to prepare, or borrow, a 3 by 20ft sunny raised bed, where you can recycle compost, and intensively grow and rotate a surprising amount of supplementary fruit and vegetables. Transporting one kilo of apples from New Zealand adds one kilo of CO₂ emissions to the atmosphere. Fruit from local trees emits none, indeed the leaves absorb some. Growing fruit and vegetables teaches children - and their teachers - the restraints and tenderness demanded if human life is to endure much longer on this planet.

Organically Grown

Once we get the 'locally produced' right, the rest of the L.O.A.F. becomes easier. Organic growing works with and not against nature, and organic growers resonate with the rest of the soil community, supplying humus, leaf mould, other organic residues, and harvested rain to the soil. Organic growers feed, nourish, cultivate, protect, and encourage the soil - for soil is a teeming bio-diverse community.

But again the practical question - how to purchase, and encourage, organic food? If near farms, buy from farm shops. Some supermarkets have received commendations from the Soil Association. Sainsburys tries not to take extra profit from organics. When sourcing supermarket organics, follow the proximity principle. Better to buy British apples than airfreight organics from Australia or Israel. But tell your customer relations representative that you want more British organic apples. And plant some of your own.

Animal Friendly

Our fellow sensate creatures are so interdependent with us, so vulnerable, that we owe them special care. Some people who use the L.O.A.F. principles are vegetarian. Others are vegan. Most eat local, humanely reared and culled meat and fish.

Industrial fishing plunders the seas, destroying whatever gets in the way, scrapes sea-beds, demolishes reefs, and, in brief, destroys marine life and habitats now and for the future. Some fish farms pollute the sea, decimate small fish as food, and contaminate wild fish stocks. Local fish merchants often know the ethics of their suppliers, some supermarkets sell organically farmed fish.

Fairly Traded

There will always be food that cannot be produced in northwestern Europe, including bananas, citrus, dates, cocoa, olives, pineapples, cranberries, tea, and coffee. Here too the L.O.A.F. principles apply. Following the proximity principle, source only sustainably grown imports with just wages. Processing should be done by the exporting people, and be paid for by importers. There remain differences about how much trade is really necessary, but there is agreement that food be fairly traded.

Jesus celebrated communal meals often with his followers. There is special praise of God in sharing sustainably produced meals, complementary to the praise of mountains, rivers, fields, and animals. Living sustainably symbolises our future when living water flows from the Lamb's throne, with monthly fruiting trees on each bank, and leaves for the healing of nations. ■

Fishing ban at Sea of Galilee

St Luke tells us that, following a fruitless night fishing on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples put to sea again on Jesus' instruction and hauled a catch so large that it almost broke their nets. These days, fishermen on the Sea of Galilee are hauling in



very few fish. In fact, chronic over-fishing has so devastated fish stocks that the Israeli government has banned fishing on the Sea of Galilee. It will last at least two

years in the hope the fishery can recover. The Sea of Galilee is in fact a large freshwater lake, used today by more than 200 fishermen and which the mainstay catch is a tilapia type known locally as 'St Peter Fish'. The authorities say there are too many fishermen, with nets that catch too many small fish.

Back to the land

Britain's dwindling farm workforce is driving the UK towards monoculture farming and destroying our biodiversity, say organisers of the Oxford Real Farming Conference. It was set up earlier this year to challenge conventional thinking on farming. "The current thinking is that farming needs to be cheap and monocultured" said conference co-organiser Colin Tudge. "We now have a situation where fewer than one per cent of the population works on the land: that's a precarious position" he added. Tudge said the new supply of farmers was likely to come from city dwellers and hobby allotment farmers who could gradually move on to becoming smallholders.

Challenging supermarket power

Tesco now controls over 30% of the grocery market in the UK. Growing evidence indicates that Tesco's success is partly based on trading practices that are having serious consequences for suppliers, farmers and workers, local shops and the environment. For a campaign calling for stronger planning policies to protect local shops and High Streets see:

www.tescopoly.org

Future of Food and Agriculture in Europe

The Columbans have signed the following European Food Declaration. Other groups and individuals can sign up by visiting the following web site: www.europeanfooddeclaration.org

European Food declaration

We, the undersigned, believe the European Union needs to meet the urgent challenges Europe is facing regarding food and agriculture. After more than a half-century of industrialisation of agriculture and food production, sustainable family farming and local food cultures have been substantially reduced in Europe. Today, our food system is dependent on under-priced fossil fuels, does not recognise the limitations of water and land resources, and supports unhealthy diets high in calories, fat and salt, and low in fruit, vegetables and grains..... We will only be able to address these challenges successfully with a completely different approach to food and agriculture policies and practices. The European Union must recognise and support the crucial role of sustainable family farming in the food supply of the population. All people should have access to healthy, safe, and nutritious food....

The present Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) is currently being debated and is due for change in 2013. After decades of the domination by transnational corporations and the World Trade Organisation in determining food and agriculture policy, it is time for people in Europe to re-appropriate agriculture and food policy: it is time for food sovereignty. We believe a new Common Food and Agriculture Policy should guarantee and protect citizens' space in the EU and candidate countries and their ability and right to define their own models of production, distribution and consumption following the principles outlined below.

The new Common Food and Agriculture Policy:

1. considers food as a universal human right, not merely a commodity.
2. gives priority to growing food and feed for Europe and changes international trade in agricultural products according to principles of equity, social justice and ecological sustainability. The CAP should not harm other countries' food and agriculture systems.
3. promotes healthy eating patterns, moving towards plant-based diets and towards a reduced consumption of meat, energy-dense and highly processed foods, and saturated fats, while respecting the regional cultural dietary habits and traditions.
4. gives priority to maintaining an agriculture all over Europe that involves numerous farmers producing food and caring for the countryside. That is not achievable without fair and secure farm prices, which should allow a fair income for farmers and agricultural workers, and fair prices for consumers.
5. ensures fair, non-discriminatory conditions for farmers and agricultural workers in Central and Eastern Europe, and promotes a fair and equitable access to land.
6. respects the local and global environment, protects the finite resources of soil and water, increases biodiversity and respects animal welfare.
7. guarantees that agriculture and food production remain free from GMOs and fosters farmers' seeds and the diversity of domestic livestock species, building on local knowledge.
8. stops promoting the use and the production of industrial agrofuels and gives priority to the reduction of transport in general.
9. ensures transparency along the food chain so that citizens know how their food is produced, where it comes from, what it contains and what is included in the price paid by consumers.
10. reduces the concentration of power in the agricultural, food processing and retail sectors and their influence on what is produced and consumed, and promotes food systems that shorten the distance between farmers and consumers.
11. encourages the production and consumption of local, seasonal, high quality products reconnecting citizens with their food and food producers.
12. devotes resources to teaching children the skills and knowledge required to produce, prepare, and enjoy healthy, nutritious food.

Action Ideas

USEFUL WEBSITES

FIND LOCAL FOOD SUPPLIERS

makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk
freerangereview.com
localfoodweb.co.uk
bigbarn.co.uk
thelfd.com

GET INVOLVED IN GROWING

sustainedmagazine.com
landshare.net

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

slowfood.org.uk
thinkfoodandfarming.org.uk
foodforlife.org.uk

REAL BREAD

Industrial bakers account for about 95% of the bread market in the UK, but the less petroleum-dependent society of the future may be one where the production of our daily bread takes place closer to home, or even at home. The Real Bread Campaign promotes bread made with simple ingredients, no additives or 'processing aids' (the undeclared enzymes widely used in industrial baking) and appropriately fermented for flavour, digestibility and nutritional quality.

To find a Real Bread provider near you, enter your postcode on the Real Bread Campaign website: www.realbreadcampaign.org

Eating during the Recession

Food poverty can be defined as the inability to obtain healthy affordable food. Factors includes income, transport, and fear of crime. People on low incomes have the lowest intakes of fruit and vegetables and are far more likely to suffer from diet-related diseases such as diabetes, obesity and coronary heart disease. Food poverty can also be about an overabundance of junk food.

A useful publication has been produced by Church Action on Poverty, Housing Justice and Scottish Churches Housing Action which provides information on ways to share and help each other through the Recession. '12 Baskets' contains an excellent section on Food with information about such things as food coops, foodbanks and community cafes.

Can be downloaded free at www.actionwek.org.uk or £2 plus £1 p&p from any of the three organisations which published it.



Studying Food Policy

See websites: UK Food Group - www.ukfg.org.uk
Food Ethics Council - www.foodethicscouncil.org

International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)

A 2008 study initiated by the World Bank and FAO called for a paradigm shift in agriculture towards more sustainable and ecologically friendly practices benefiting the world's 900 million small farmers.
http://www.ukfg.org.uk/agriculture_at_crossroads.php

Food 2030

A government document, produced in January 2010.
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/pdf/food2030strategy.pdf>

Food Futures: Rethinking UK Strategy

February 2010 Chatham House report on *UK Food Supply in the 21st Century: the New Dynamic*. It said Britain faces a major food crisis unless urgent steps are taken to revive its flagging agricultural sector.
<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/695/>

SCHOOLS



All schools in England can join the Food for Life Partnership. It offers an action framework and award scheme to help schools and their communities transform their food culture.

Using practical food education, young people in schools can learn about food, and help is given to caterers to serve up fresh, local, organic and seasonal school meals. Led by the Soil Association, it aims to reach out through schools to give communities access to seasonal, local and organic food, and to the skills they need to cook and grow fresh food for themselves.
www.foodforlife.org

■ A study in January found that only 1% of primary schoolchildren's packed lunches met the nutritional standards set for school meals.

For information about visits to farms, advice on cooking in schools and help for growing food in schools, see <http://www.thinkfoodandfarming.org.uk>

Duchy Originals Garden Organic for Schools is a nationwide campaign that helps children to grow fruit and vegetables at school and learn more about their food. Members receive: personal practical gardening advice, curriculum based resources, telephone helpline and Heritage seeds. For more information visit <http://www.schoolsorganic.net/>

Consider starting up a school garden to grow vegetables. See http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools_organic_network/t_zone.htm

Resources

Stations of the Banquet

by Cathy C. Campbell

Cathy Campbell focuses on a little-explored dimension of our faith - the story of salvation as a food narrative. She provides guidance for those engaged in living out the food and justice challenges of the Gospel. £14.10 from *Eden books* at www.eden.co.uk or 0845 222 3336

Theology of Food: Eating and the Eucharist

by Angel Mendez Montoya

The author, a Dominican, traces the links between theology and food. He suggests that the many aspects of food - table fellowship, culinary traditions, the aesthetic, ethical and political dimensions of food - throw light on both religion and our relationship to food.

£50 from www.wiley.com. Extracts can be downloaded from [here](#).

The Eucharist and Social Justice

by Margaret Scott

A book that situates the Eucharist within the world. It draws out the potential of Eucharist, as a critique of the methods and results of economic globalisation and as a dynamic force that both motivates and enables a commitment to social justice and the alleviation of poverty. £12.50 from 01865 791438

Climate and Christ: A Prophetic Alternative

by Edward P. Echlin

A final chapter makes suggestions for prophetic lifestyles inspired by the simple living of Christ and according to principles of local sustainability.

£9.99 from www.amazon.co.uk

Seeds of hope: facing the challenge of climate justice

by Celia Deane-Drummond

This book offers a theological response to the global challenges of climate justice and food insecurity. What is the responsibility of Christians as we face them?

£5.00 from www.cafod.org.uk or 020 7733 7900.

Soil Not Oil: Climate Change, Peak Oil and Food Insecurity

By Vandana Shiva

The author connects the food crisis, peak oil, and climate change to show that a world beyond a dependence on fossil fuel and globalisation is both possible and necessary.

£7.64 from www.amazon.co.uk

Stuffed and Starved

by Raj Patel

Patel's book tracks the global food industry from grower to exporter, retailer to consumer, highlighting the points at which the system is unsustainable and exploitative.

£6.49 from www.amazon.co.uk

Eat Your Heart Out: Why the Food Business is Bad for the Planet and Your Health

by Felicity Lawrence

A book for those who feel a growing unease about where our over-processed, convenience-led food supply is taking us.

£5.48 from www.amazon.co.uk

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal

by Eric Schlosser

On any given day, one out of four Americans opts for a quick and cheap meal at a fast-food restaurant. Britons are similarly attached to fast food. This book introduces the men who first applied the principles of a factory assembly line to a commercial kitchen. Then he moves to examine the exploited teenage workers, the factory farms, and the slaughterhouses run by giant meatpacking corporations.

£5.99 from www.amazon.co.uk

Local Food. How to make it happen in your Community.

by Tamzin Pinkerton & Rob Hopkins.

A guide aimed at empowering local people to work collaboratively towards self-sufficiency and sustainability in our food systems.

£7.69 from www.amazon.co.uk

Just Food?

Christians Aware

At a time when food prices in Britain and food scarcity worldwide are hitting the headlines, this pack offers background information around the causes. It explores contributions which everyone, including faith communities, can make to alleviating the crisis. £5.00 from 0116 254 0770

Fertile Ground: Why urgent funding and support for small-scale farmers in poor countries will help prevent global food crises

Progressio

This report argues that - with the right support - small-scale farmers can play a key role in helping to avert future global food crises.

Free download from www.progressio.org.uk

Food sovereignty: The people's alternative

by Ernest Cañada

In this Progressio Comment, Ernest Cañada outlines how small family farmers in Nicaragua are opposing the dominant agribusiness model with an alternative approach based on the concept of food sovereignty. £2.00 from 020 7354 0883

Food Inc

This film - currently the best-selling DVD in the US - gives a vivid account of the human and environmental costs of 'industrial farming' and the extent of corporate control of food. See:

www.foodincmovie.co.uk also dogwoof@mail.vresp.com.

Our Earth, Our Home Green Assemblies

for Key Stage 1-2

by Ellen Teague

These assemblies, for primary age children, have sections on food and water.

£15.99 from *Kevin Mayhew Publishers* 01449 737978 or www.kevinmayhew.com

VOCATION FOR JUSTICE

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