



THE RAM'S HORN

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FOOD SYSTEM ANALYSIS

No. 259, October 2008

ISSN 0827-4053

Troubles and Turmoil

Perhaps the most surprising and disturbing aspect of the current financial situation is that we were all carrying on as if the system was rational and stable. In reality, it is irrationality and volatility that bankers and investors, finance ministers and hedge fund managers bank on, literally – they play, and prey, on the rising and falling of the market. They would all be out of business if prices were stable and actually reflective of real costs. The important question is why the prices – of stock, whether that be livestock or mining company shares – rise and fall. The manipulators would prefer we not identify them, and indeed that is a challenge, though not an insurmountable one.

A more important challenge is drawing the line between the financial sector and the economy. Confusing the two is the essence of capitalism, which rests on

the practice of extracting wealth out of the real economy and playing with it in the financial sector. The rich get richer not through interminable toil, but through gains in the financial market of stocks and bonds, with the result that “in all recent years, the pay increases for top executives far exceed the rate of inflation or the gains posted by most workers in Canada.” (*G&M*, 6/10/08) This remark accompanies a table showing the total ‘compensation’ paid to the CEOs of the 100 largest companies in 2007, including salaries, bonuses, shares and share options, running from \$235,000 to \$79.2 million.

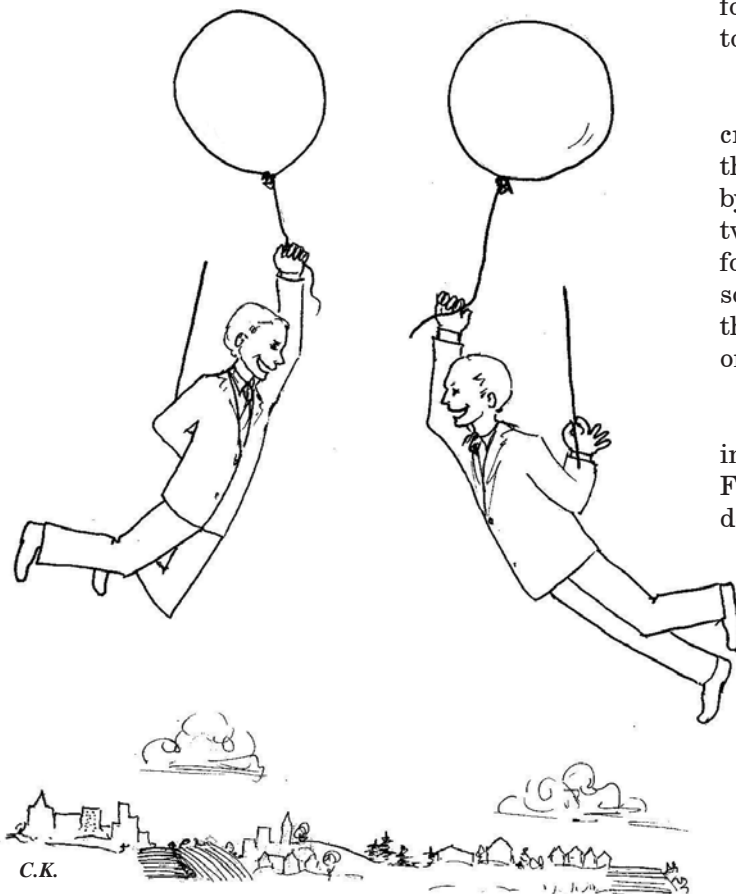
‘Financial sector’ does not equal economy. A financial ‘product’ is not only inedible, it actually has no real existence. It’s a figment of the brokers’ and investors’ imagination. A real economy (‘oikos’ is the Greek word for house) is about how a household organizes its life together, including what it eats.

It is, therefore, a sign of hope that with the ‘food crisis’, the public has become increasingly interested in the real economy of food and how it is grown, where, and by whom, to the point of beginning to distinguish between the financial sector’s grasp of food and the real food economy. This is really the driver behind food sovereignty. It’s about feeding the family and trading the leftovers, not trading the staples and hoping to live on the profits – or, more likely, the losses.

We are looking forward to gaining more insights into the real food economy at the National Assembly of Food Secure Canada in Ottawa November 7-10th. Under the title *Reclaiming Our Food System: A Call to Action*, it will showcase the ways in which Canadians are implementing food sovereignty in many different areas, from seeds to food banks. (More information at www.foodsecurecanada.org.)

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So as we watch the 'financial sector' spin out of control at the hands of men [sic] appropriating tens of millions of dollars as the companies they head – or headed – collapse under a burden of debt, we need to remember that the financial sector is a pyramid game built on confidence. The financial sector neither feeds nor clothes anyone anywhere.

“Since the credit crisis began more than a year ago, investors have been exposed to a murky world of synthetic securities, credit default swaps and structured investment vehicles, convoluted financial tools that even the savviest bankers don't fully understand. . . With the help of swaps, risk is bought and sold like a commodity by often invisible actors, in a global market with scant regulatory oversight. A decade ago credit default swaps didn't even exist. Today the market is colossal, worth roughly \$50 trillion. . . Risk has been shuffled around like the pea in a shell game so that no one knows where it ends up.”
 –Barrie McKenna, GM 20/9/08

Round and round it goes: AIG (American International Group) was “once among the most stable financial institutions in the US, turning out a steady stream of profitable quarters.” It is now a ward of the US Government (a taxpayer liability, in other words) after losing \$13.16 billion in the first six months of this year stemming from its credit default swaps investments. It had a profit of \$8.41 billion in the same period last year.

The one big player that the US Government has not bailed out is Lehman Brothers Holdings, which has rented a 30-floor tower in London's Canary Wharf development from Canary Wharf Group. If Lehman defaults on its rent, Canary Wharf Group is protected by an insurance policy with AIG. However, it is Songbird Estates, a publicly traded company that owns 60% of Canary Wharf Group, that would be the beneficiary. So round and round it goes.

– Source: GM, 17/9/08

The turmoil of the financial sector has been hard on some of the 400 wealthiest residents of the USA, whose average net worth is, or was, \$3.9 billion. Collectively, that means that the 400 richest Americans have a net worth of \$1.57 trillion, exceeding Canada's gross domestic product.

– GM, 18/9/08

Wall Street's five largest banks awarded a record \$39 billion in bonuses last year.

– GM, 15/10/08

Why, then, not let these guys bail out the banks and 'investment houses' that have diverted all that money to them rather than sending the bill to the general public, i.e., US taxpayers?

To put this mess into perspective, we noticed that at the end of September, the US House of Representatives passed, and sent on to the Senate, a \$612-billion (US) defense authorization bill while at the same time it was debating the financial crisis and the proposed \$700-billion bailout of Wall Street.

Which is the more impressive – or depressing – figure? \$700 billion (and a lot more by now) in an effort to save capitalism from itself, or \$612 billion to defend it from whom?

Warning: more parasites on the loose

Globe Investor, a glossy magazine distributed occasionally with the *Globe & Mail* newspaper, contained a short article titled “**Prairie Gold** – Money may not grow on trees, but it's thriving just fine in grain fields.”

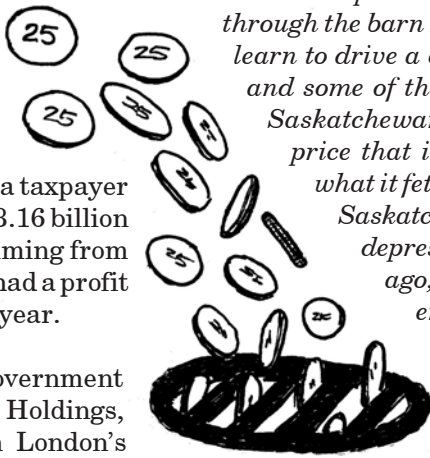
“The price of wheat and other grains has gone through the barn roof. . . Don't worry. You don't have to learn to drive a combine. You can invest in farmland, and some of the best investments are in Canada. In Saskatchewan farmland sells for two-thirds of the price that it does in Manitoba, and one-third of what it fetches in Alberta. Why? Since 1970, only Saskatchewan residents could own large tracts, depressing values for a generation. Five years ago, however, the province quietly loosened the rules. This led to the creation of the Agricultural Development Corporation, based in Regina, which began packaging land into limited partnerships for investors. . . Units are being sold through investment dealers. . . All in, the first partnership returns are approaching an annualized 12%. . .”

We wonder how the percentage return compares to the percentage loss of farmers, and rural businesses, and communities. Real estate speculation may bubble profits for a while but they're all leached away by the 'investors'.

Obesity

“Although much has been written about obesity in our population, all comments have missed the real problem: corporate obesity. Corporate obesity demands more profit, more access to national resources, more market power, induces excessive consumption and demands significant control over public policy while externalizing costs. It is a real threat that needs to be weeded from the public garden we call Canada.”

– Fred Tait, National Farmers Union, Manitoba.



PROFITABLE QUARTERS

Who gets what: farm prices and costs

“At the end of August, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released its updated forecast of what American farmers and ranchers will earn for laboring in their fields and pastures this year. Net farm income in 2008 will be a record-shattering \$95.7 billion, 10 percent higher than last year’s \$86 billion and 57 percent greater than the 10-year average of \$61 billion. Even at this never-before-seen level, however, America’s early rising farmers and ranchers won’t get 2008’s biggest worm. That prize will go to the agbiz boys.

“According to the USDA’s Aug. 28 numbers, farm and ranch production expenses will hit a record \$295 billion this year, up an incredible \$40.4 billion, or 16%, in just 12 months. Equally incredible, since 2002, input prices have climbed an over-the-moon 53%, or \$101.7 billion. . . Huge price increases do not occur in vacuum. Somebody somewhere did the legwork, then the math, to position these firms to clean people’s clocks when the good times struck. . . These somebodies have names, titles and profit-sharing plans. For example, James T. Prokopanko is president and CEO of Mosaic, Inc., the stepchild born of the 2004 marriage between fertilizer giants IMC Global and Cargill Crop Nutrition. In fiscal 2008 (that ended May 31), Mosaic, the world’s largest phosphate and potash producer, netted \$2.1 billion, or five times its 2007 profit of \$420 million, while enjoying a 37% gross profit margin. Personally, Prokopanko did even better: his 2007 salary of \$2.9 million in cash, stock, stock options and other benefits soared 41% to \$5 million in 2008.

“Hugh Grant, chairman, CEO and president of Monsanto, pocketed \$10.9 million in salary and other compensation in 2007, 32% more than the previous year, while Deere & Co.’s CEO, president and chairman Robert Lane accepted \$14.3 million in total compensation last year.”
—Alan Guebert, *THOnline*, 7/9/08

And effects . . .

There is a dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico that covers 21,000 sq. km. The cause is hypoxia, very low levels of oxygen. This is caused by industrial agriculture: fertilizer runoff, primarily nitrogen, flushed down the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico. The nitrogen feeds algae which are eaten by zooplankton which in turn excrete tiny pellets that sink to the bottom and decay, depleting the water of oxygen. If the downstream effects are not bad enough, look upstream. About half the streams and rivers in the Mississippi watershed are unfit for swimming or drinking. The major cause: industrial corn production for livestock feed, ethanol, and HFCS (High Fructose Corn Syrup).

—Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, *GW* 8/8/08

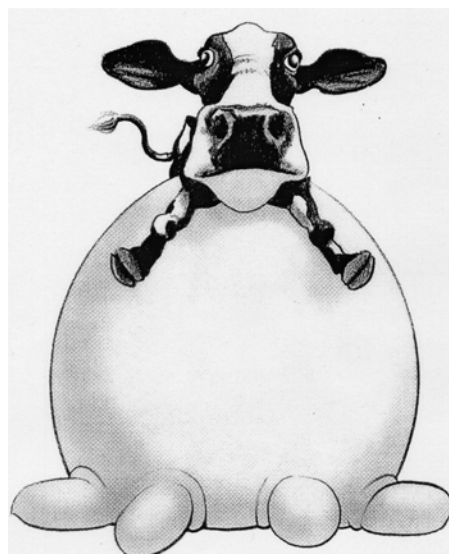
Selling Monsanto

“Governments should try to help the public appreciate how much the high price of food affects the poor in developing countries. . . By denying them this [genetic engineering] technology, you are keeping them hungry. They are dying.” — Thomas Lumpkin, *Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre in Mexico, WP*, 11/9/08

The following week, the Western Producer weekly farm paper carried an editorial extolling the virtues of GM crops in the following words: “GM crops have potential . . . yet this vital cog in the machinery working toward a food security solution is being shunned because of unsubstantiated fears. . . GM gives the world the most bang for the buck – it can feed more people on less land. . . ability of GM crops to increase yields . . . GM crops’ tendency to use fewer pesticides . . the world cannot afford to turn its back on science.”

Monsanto has long trumpeted the claim that its GE seeds can “feed more people on less land.” It is distressing to find the major western Canadian farm paper repeating such statements, which are not merely ‘unsubstantiated’ but outright lies. The word “potential” should sound the alarm that the rest is pure promotional hype. Now, how about some science?

Well, not the ‘science’ Monsanto produces. According to a new study from Cornell University, if US farmers injected their dairy cows with recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH), it would take just 843,000 cows to produce the same amount of milk as one million untreated animals, potentially saving 2.3 million metric tons of feed—and therefore 219,000 hectares of cropland—as well as reducing the global warming



— GRAPHIC FROM ADBUSTERS —



impact by the equivalent of 400,000 cars. The lead scientist for the study that came up with these figures was Dale Bauman of Cornell University, who has been a paid consultant for Monsanto since the 1980s, though he declined to disclose how much the company has paid him over the years. With Bauman on the study team was Roger Cady, who is also the rBGH technical project manager for Monsanto.

In 1993 the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ruled that rBGH was not harmful and could be injected into cows to improve their milk production. The human and environmental safety of rBGH has been severely questioned even since; Canada has never approved it. (See chapter 6 in *Farmageddon*, available online at www.ramshorn.ca, for a full discussion of rBGH and the dubious integrity of the studies on which approval was based. It appears that Cornell and Monsanto continue their very intimate relationship.)

In addition to conflict-of-interest concerns, critics of the study charge that it was based on a faulty premise. "It all hinges on one notion: that there is an increase in feed efficiency," says biologist Michael Hansen of the Consumers Union. He notes that the FDA analyzed the environmental impact of POSILAC some 15 years ago (as it assessed its safety) and at that time concluded that it might actually increase greenhouse emissions slightly because of, among other factors, the diesel expended to transport the feed to farms. But any increase or reduction, the agency said, would be "extremely small and insignificant compared to total worldwide emissions of carbon dioxide and methane."

Dairy farmers have, however, already done a pretty good job of reducing greenhouse gas emissions without resorting to rBGH: such emissions from the U.S.'s roughly nine million cows are 70% lower than those from a dairy herd of 25 million in the 1940s, thanks to improvements in breeding and nutrition, according to U.S. government statistics. And researchers at the University of Melbourne in Australia say they can be cut by another 50 percent simply by changing cow feed to include more digestible grasses, thereby reducing the methane output. — *Scientific American*, 2/7/08

Seeing bigger profits elsewhere, as US dairy processors and retailers increasingly shun rBGH dairy products, Monsanto has sold its Posilac brand rBGH to drug maker Eli Lilly & Co. for \$300 million.

Monsanto's flagship product, Roundup, is the No. 1 herbicide around the globe. Monsanto estimates that more than 70% of the world's insect- and herbicide-resistant crops bear its stamp. — *Barrons*, 23/6/08

Monsanto had record net sales of \$11.4 billion in the company's fiscal year 2008 (year end 31 August). Net sales in 2007 were \$8.3 billion. Key contributors to the company's growth included increased sales of Roundup and other glyphosate-based herbicides globally, higher worldwide corn seed and traits revenue (revenue from royalties on patented genetic traits incorporated in the seeds of other companies), and increased revenue from the company's US soybean and cotton seeds and traits businesses.

Monsanto annual report, Fiscal Year 2008 (year end 31 August) (\$ in millions)	
Net Sales by Segment	
Corn seed and traits	\$ 3,542
Soybean seed and traits	1,174
Cotton seed and traits	450
Vegetable seeds	744
All other crops seeds and traits	459
TOTAL Seeds and Genomics	\$6,369
Roundup and other glyphosate-based herbicides	\$4,094
All other agricultural productivity products	902
TOTAL Agricultural Productivity	\$4,996
TOTAL Net Sales	\$11,365



Small-Scale Organic Seed Production

Patrick Steiner, operator of Stellar Seeds in Sorrento, BC, has done us all a big favour with his clear, well-written introduction to organic seed production. By 'us', we mean organic farmers, seed savers and breeders, and anyone concerned about the future of food. Patrick lays out what's involved in seed saving with stories from its practitioners (including himself) about everything from what and how many seeds to save to storage, cleaning and marketing, including cooperative efforts. Even if you don't grow anything to eat, you'll still get a lot out of this good read. Available at <www.bcseeds.org>.

Meeting the Millennium Goals

Partial text of remarks of Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the UN General Assembly at the United Nations High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, 25/9/08:

"In September 2000, the 189 States Members of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, in which they pledged to "free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty" by 2015. . . Among other commitments, we agreed to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty. . .

"While all donor countries undertook to allocate 0.7% of their gross domestic product to development cooperation, very few have lived up to this commitment. For every dollar that the developed countries spend on international assistance, they invest \$10 in military budgets. It is calculated that the amount spent so far on the Iraq war could have paid for a full course of primary schooling for all of the world's children and youth who are not in school. The price of a single missile is enough to build about 100 schools in any country in Africa, Asia or Latin America.

". . . It is clear that the world food crisis is increasing social tensions and bringing about a significant rise in extreme poverty. World hunger has its roots in the inequitable distribution of purchasing power both between and within countries. . . The World Bank has concluded that 75% of the increase in food prices stems from the production of biofuels and factors related to rapidly growing demand for biofuels.

". . . Food shortages are a consequence of . . . misguided policies, which have forced poor countries to import agricultural products at the prices imposed on them and have undermined their ability to compete by heavily subsidizing the production and export of these products. Together these factors have shaped a food production system that puts private economic interests ahead of people's basic dietary needs. The essential purpose of food, which is to nourish people, has been subordinated to the economic aims of a handful of multinational corporations that monopolize all aspects of food production, from seeds to major distribution chains, and they have been the prime beneficiaries of the world crisis. . . At the same time . . . major hedge funds have shifted millions of dollars into agricultural products. These funds control 60% of the supply of wheat and other basic grains. Most of these crops are purchased as "futures". In other words, speculators have been increasingly active in food-related financial markets.

". . . The top 10% of the world's people possess 84% of the world's wealth, while the rest are left with the

remaining 16 per cent. . . Neoliberal economic restructuring worldwide has affected the supply and access to three of life's basic necessities: food, water and fuel. In recent years, the prices of these three variables have risen at the global level, with devastating economic and social consequences. Today these three basic necessities are controlled by a small group of global corporations and financial institutions.

"[Now] . . . the failures or, more accurately, the lack of a viable international economic system, has plunged the developed countries of the West, and the world economy as a whole, into a severe crisis. We must all ensure that the current crisis, which was caused in large part by a preference for protectionist policies or special interests at the expense of the common good, is not used as a pretext for failing to honour the commitments undertaken.

"If we are to achieve the Millennium Goals, which remain modest, we must demonstrate the resolve and take the necessary steps to incorporate fully into this international endeavor our indigenous brothers and sisters as a yardstick for monitoring progress on the Millennium Goals. Their effective inclusion will require a redefinition of development goals to reflect the particular worldviews, perspectives and concepts of development of indigenous peoples. Each and all of us together have much to learn from our indigenous brothers and sisters about respect for and the care of our Mother Earth, water and nature, which are the source and the sustenance of life for all species."

The issue is, unfortunately, not just that the policies "at the expense of the common good" are a pretext for failing to honour the Millennium Goals, but that they are being touted as the way to achieve them. For example, the charitable arms of two major US capitalists are planning, in the words of the Wall Street Journal, to "help solve global hunger by exporting the key to capitalism: the market."

"The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the charitable group of Warren Buffett's son, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, this month will start a program to use food bought for humanitarian aid to try to boost the output and earnings of small farmers in Africa and Latin America. . . Small African farmers, who provide most of the continent's agricultural output, have never had a reliable market to sell their food. Many of them are in remote areas with little access to transportation and rely on archaic networks of small traders who set prices. Often farmers receive as little as one-third of the final retail price of a commodity. The answer is to use the [United Nations] World Food Program buying power – it expects to spend about \$1 billion on food this year – to make a market by purchasing directly from small farmers." – WSJ, 25/09/2008



In fact, it's not just the market that is being brought to Africa but the whole ball of capitalist wax:

"Bill Gates and Howard Buffett (Warren's oldest son) announced at the United Nations in late September that their private foundations will plow more than \$75 million into helping small farmers in Africa and Latin America to sell their crops as food aid. Under a five-year pilot project called Purchase for Progress, the foundations will help 350,000 or so small farmers in 21 countries, most of them in Africa, to grow food for the World Food Program, the biggest food aid distributor in Africa.

"Rather than simply buying the farmers' crops outright, much of the money will go to teaching better farming methods, and to helping them store their crops in warehouses, plant higher-yield seeds, and transport their produce to customers. . . With WFP as a guaranteed client, many poor farmers will be eligible for credit with which to buy seeds and fertilizer, and perhaps employ people to help harvest the crops."

— *The Times, UK, 25/09/08*

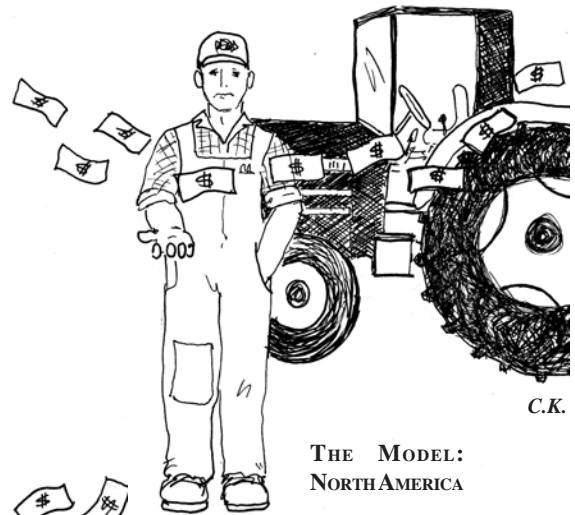
GM sorghum test approved

Biotechnologists and scientists are celebrating the decision to license the Council for Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR) to develop 'Super Sorghum' under the "African Biofortified Sorghum" (ABS) project which received a \$16.9 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The aim of the ABS Project is to "develop sorghum with improved food quality by enriching it for essential amino acids (part of the protein component of the diet), and later by increasing its content in essential vitamins (vitamin A and E)."

The pro-GM lobby argues that while sorghum is one of the few crops that grows well in arid parts of Africa, it lacks many essential nutrients and has poor protein digestibility - qualities that biotechnology will improve. The anti-GM lobby strongly dismisses this, saying African farmers have traditionally been fermenting sorghum to make essential nutrients available to the human digestive system. In addition, farmers have developed their own sorghum varieties, high in lysine, which they grow when needed. They fear that these varieties would be threatened by contamination by GM sorghum.

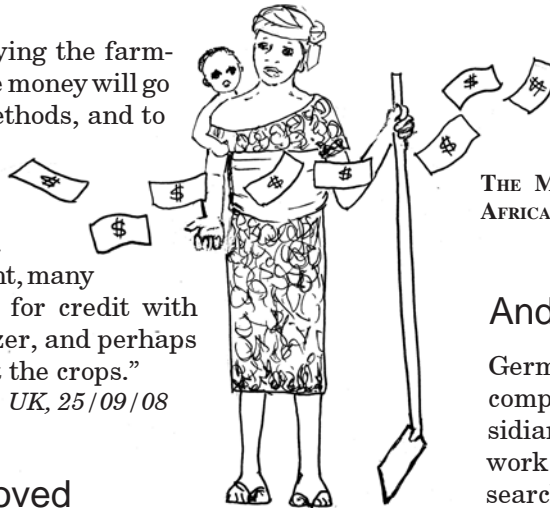
Sorghum is the main food source for more than 100 million farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

— *Inter Press Service 3/10/08*



C.K.

THE MODEL:
NORTH AMERICA



THE MODEL:
AFRICA

And Not Just Africa

German biotechnology and agrochemical company Bayer CropScience AG, a subsidiary of drug maker Bayer AG, intends to work directly with Indian farmers to research, innovate and introduce new varieties of hybrid seeds in the local market.

The firm's Indian arm, Bayer CropScience Ltd, will facilitate retailers to buy produce from more than 1,000 farmers enrolled with its project called food-chain partnership. These farmers, who cultivate some 20ha each, will also receive training in new crop technologies, and hybrid seeds and crop protection products. Bayer CropScience will then vouch for the quality of the crop. In return, the company will use these farms for on-field research and development.

Bayer CropScience's newly acquired firm Nunhems—which produces vegetable seeds—will also use the programme as a launch pad for its hybrid vegetable seeds in the Indian market.

— *Livemint.com, India, 2/10/08*

Borneo's 'miracle'

Six years ago the area around Samboja in Borneo was like much of the world's tropical rainforest: denuded. The trees had been cut for timber, the land burnt, and in place of what should be some of the richest biodiversity on the planet were thousands of hectares of grass. But from this ruined landscape a fresh forest has been grown, teeming with insects, birds and animals, and

cooled by the return of moist clouds and rain. It is a feat that has been hailed by scientists and offers hope for rainforests around the world. The secret was to use more than 1,300 species of local tree and a fertiliser made with cow urine, says Dr Willie Smits, the Indonesian forestry expert who led the replanting.

The UN estimates that 14,000 hectares are cut down daily for timber or to make way for crops such as palm oil in south east Asia and soya in South America. The area around the small town of Samboja was like a "moonscape" when Smits first visited it nearly a decade ago. The rainforest had been cut and burnt and was covered with grasses. Without the forest, the rains disappeared and temperatures rose: streams dried up, harvests failed, fires broke out, jobs disappeared and ill health soared.

Smits raised money to buy 2,000 hectares and six years ago set about planting seeds collected from more than 1,300 species of tree, more even than would have lived in the original forest. These were planted with a special "micro-biological agent" made from sugar, excrement, food waste, sawdust and cow urine.

The project has cost more than £4m.

Planting finishes this year, but already Smits and his team claim the forest is mature, with trees up to 35 metres high. Cloud cover has increased by 12%, rainfall by a quarter, and temperatures have dropped 3-5C. "If you walk there now, 116 bird species have found a place to live; there are more than 30 types of mammal, insects are there. It can be done anywhere. The principles are that you must have scientifically sound approaches, work with local trees, and you have to have the respect of local people."

— *Guardian Weekly*, 25/5/08

Bees

On July 15, six German apiarists moved their 30,000 bees into Munich city, some 500 km south of Berlin. They were trying to save their bees from genetically modified maize crops near their village of Kaisheim, about 80 km from Munich.

"If our bees were to come in touch with the genetically modified maize, and the honey was contaminated with it, we would not be allowed to sell it," said Karl Heinz Bablock, one of the six apiarists who resettled their beehives. In Germany, genetically modified crops are legal, but their harvests are forbidden for human consumption.

Earlier this year, Bablock and several of his colleagues filed a protest against the GM crops before a tribunal in Augsburg, but the court ruled that because the crops were legal, it was the apiarists who should move their beehives somewhere else.

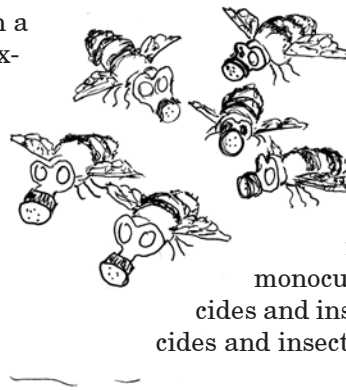
"It is well known that bees live 90 percent of their lives in a perimeter of three kilometres," Bablock said. "But bees can fly up to 10 kilometres without any problem. Now we are really happy that the city of Munich has granted our bees asylum." The bees will remain in Munich until the end of the summer. By mid-August the maize bloom period is over, and the bees can go back home.

But it is not just genetically modified crops that threaten bees. Changes in agriculture, such as the introduction of monocultures and the intensive use of pesticides, are forcing bees to search for refuge in the cities. Peter Rozenkranz, entomologist at the University of Stuttgart, said that

monocultures are depriving bees of their natural habitat. "After some good weeks in spring, bees are threatened by famine, because later in the year, there are almost no more blooming flowers." Besides, he said, monocultures are saturated with pesticides and insecticides. "Practically all pesticides and insecticides are deadly for bees."

For the bees, life in the cities has become attractive. "Today, it is easier for bees to live in the cities, because the recreational green areas and courtyards have exuberant, varied vegetation, which blossoms over several months, from early in the spring to the end of the summer," Rosenkranz said. "In the cities, bees have only a couple of hundred metres to fly, from a public garden to a balcony to a courtyard to find luscious flowers, and mostly free of insecticides."

— *Inter Press Service*, 14/8/08



C.K.

Argentine bees had it easy when cattle roamed freely across the flower-filled meadows of Argentina's Pampas, but the expansion of soy farming has turned the legendary prairies into one of the world's most extensive areas of monoculture, leaving little room for wild flowers and bees. "They say that wherever the cow goes, the bee follows ... They live in harmony and both benefit from flowers. But things have changed," said Patricio Crespo, a vet and beekeeper from the town of Chivilcoy, a typical Pampas town some 100 miles from Buenos Aires. Fields of soybeans, corn and wheat have spread across the fertile plains and some ranchers and



dairy farmers have moved their herds to distant provinces where soybeans do not flourish, and more and more animals are being reared in feedlots. The average beehive used to produce up to 130 pounds of honey per year, but yields have fallen to a third of that in many places, meaning beekeepers need more colonies to maintain production. The soy-takeover is the biggest problem but actually any crop that is planted uniformly across large areas with the use of herbicides deprives bees of the flowers they need. *— Reuters, 7/10/08*

EU countries only produce a minimal amount of soybeans in terms of overall EU consumption, so imports (eg. from Argentina) are crucial. Soybean meal is the primary source of protein for the EU animal feed market, representing more than 60% of vegetable protein. Rapeseed meal is the second source of raw material for feedmakers but its protein content is much lower, between 30 and 35%. However, it has the advantage of mainly being produced in Europe.

Paraguay's campesinos fight GM soy

Campesinos in the Paraguay department of San Pedro occupied Brazilian-owned farms on Oct. 1 to block the entry of transgenic soy, and began planting other crops such as sesame and yucca on the plots. Some 120 campesinos occupied two 600-hectare (1,480 acre) farms, according to local media reports. Cristino Peralta, the San Pedro correspondent of the daily ABC Color, said

that the farmers immediately began planting the sesame and yucca after occupying the plantations. "There was no law enforcement intervention," he said. "The group's leader Florencio Martínez said that the occupation marked the start of the recovery of Paraguayan territorial sovereignty."

Land is concentrated in fewer hands in Paraguay than in any other Latin American country. Only 351 landowners hold 9.7 million hectares (24 million acres), while, according to civil society organizations, there are more than 350,000 families with insufficient quantities of land or no land at all. San Pedro is considered Paraguay's best farmland, but it is also the country's poorest department.

The demonstrators said that they took over the Brazilian-owned plantations in protest of what they called the government's failure to implement land reform. Paraguay has also seen other campesino protests against transgenic soy plantations and the indiscriminate use of farming chemicals. According to campesino leader Elvio Benítez, the government "continues without finding a solution to the lack of land of thousands of our compatriots, while the Brazilians' presence is getting bigger and bigger. We can't do anything else but occupy the Brazilian-owned haciendas because the soy crops are causing deforestation, eliminating natural forests and contaminating people with its pesticides."

—Latinamerica Press, Peru 09/10/08



Published by **Brewster and Cathleen Kneen**
phone/fax: (613) 828-6047
email: brewster@ramshorn.ca
www.ramshorn.ca

cheques payable to The Ram's Horn

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40044236
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to
2746 Cassels Street
Ottawa ON, K2B 6N7, Canada

Subscriptions:

Canada, \$24(regular), \$50 (patron)
United States: US\$25
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