



# THE RAM'S HORN

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FOOD SYSTEM ANALYSIS

No. 256, June 2008

ISSN 0827-4053

## Resurgent Neocolonialism

It seems that the world – globalization – is pressing in on us as never before. Or maybe this is what the native peoples of the Americas have felt like for the past five centuries. All of a sudden, it seems, energy supply and prices (Peak Oil), food supply and prices, speculative profit taking and both short and long term climate change have all converged.

Just as suddenly there appears to be a very widespread public awakening to the precariousness of the global industrial food system with its alarming dependency on familiar and predictable weather conditions and fossil fuels. There is also a rising awareness of the destructive ecological impacts of every aspect of this corporate-industrial food system.

More than 3 million acres of farmland are believed to be under water [in the midwest US and] another 2 million did not even get planted. About 57% of the corn crop is considered to be in good condition. Some of the fields in Iowa have received 36 centimetres (14") of rain in the past two weeks alone. — G&M, 17,18/6/08

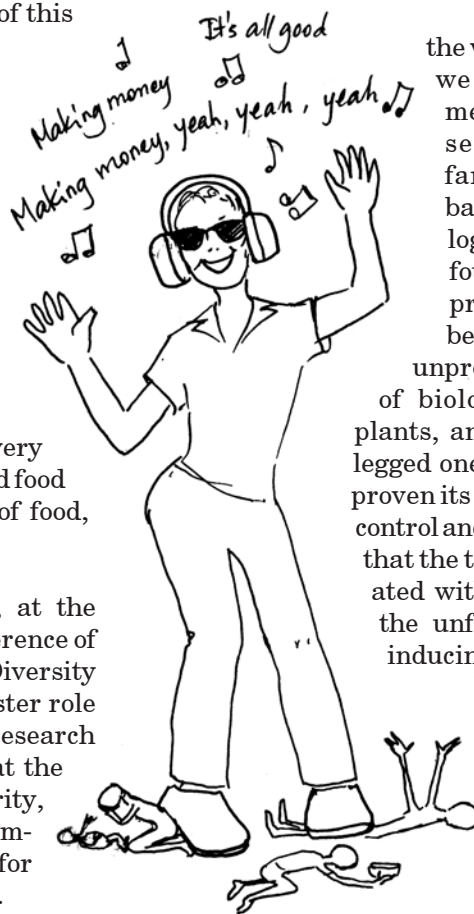
The logical sequel to this awakening has very naturally led to a global interest in local food and food sovereignty – bringing food, and the control of food, down to earth, or back home, so to speak.

There are few signs of hope, however, at the meetings of convergent forces such as the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Bonn, Germany) where Canada played a sinister role of sabotaging any meaningful limitation on research and trials of genetically engineered trees, or at the High Level Conference on World Food Security, Climate Change and Bio-Energy (the FAO Summit, June 2008) which did little more than call for more 'improved' seeds and fertilizer for Africa.

The neo-colonial assault on Africa currently being carried out in the name of philanthropy and feeding the

hungry is an obscene attack on the very existence of African societies and cultures. The advance forces of this assault are seeds and fertilizer, and these two words can be found over and over again in every self-serving statement about what will save Africa from starvation, from Monsanto to the FAO.

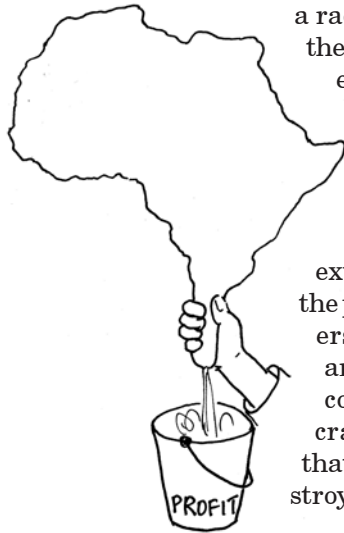
The rhetoric is that of the old Green Revolution, with one word missing: pesticides, or as we would prefer to identify them, agrottoxins; but of course their use is implied – indeed, structured into – genetically engineered seeds.



Thus when we encounter the word 'seeds' in this context, we can be assured that it means G.E. seeds, not the seeds produced through farmer-led plant breeding based on the immense biological diversity still to be found outside the corporate precincts. We must remember, as well, that G.E. is an unproven experiment in terms of biological consequences (for plants, animals, including the two-legged ones, and fish), though it has proven its merit in terms of corporate control and domination. We also know that the technological hubris associated with genetic engineering has the unfortunate consequences of inducing blindness, deafness and loss of feeling among its proponents, inuring them to the consequences of their investments.

June 2008 # 256

Global capital will not, cannot, feed the world. The contradiction between food and profits is far too fundamental. Food is about sustenance. Profit derives from excess – draining the ‘natural resources’ and squeezing the economic system, from the bottom like a tube of toothpaste, to provide unearned wealth for investors. With quarterly reports to ‘the market,’ it is a race to the top of excess profit on the one hand, and



a race to the bottom of costs on the other, both requiring the exploitation of the cheapest labour and ‘natural resources’ available anywhere in the world. The costs of resulting pollution and climate change are externalized, i.e., dumped on the public, while the shareholders seem to think they inhabit another world in their gated communities and private aircraft, apparently convinced that their excesses will not destroy their children’s future.

## The party Line Lie

US Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer told the U.N. summit on Food Security and Climate Change in Rome that the world’s leaders have a responsibility to allow markets to provide food efficiently, without obstructing access to it or limiting safe technologies to produce it. “Longstanding issues of improving agriculture productivity, alleviating market bottlenecks and promoting market-based principles remain and therefore require immediate attention. Third, we ask all countries to allow the free flow of food and the safe technologies that produce that food.”

The lie is obvious in Schafer’s defense of the use of genetically modified foods. “Certainly we think that GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are safe. We’ve been using them for 10 years in the United States and they have a proven effectiveness in increasing yields, in lowering the use of fertilizer, in providing better water and soil management and also increasing taste and appearance. *So, you know, those are all good things.*” Schafer reiterated, “Certainly, we have proven the safety environmentally from a human standpoint food safety issue that GMOs are fine to use.”  
 – *Voice of America, 3/6/08*

## AGRA: Green Revolution Part 2

by Galés Gabirondo

In September 2006, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation teamed up to launch “AGRA” a \$150 million Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. . . . Elegantly simple in its proposal and presentation, AGRA is the global face of a renewed international effort to revive Africa’s sagging agricultural research institutions and introduce new Green Revolution products across the sub-Saharan. . . .

This new Green Revolution differs fundamentally from the first one introduced in the 1970-90s in that this time the private sector, rather than government, is taking the lead. This Green Revolution is concentrating on Africa’s food crops like tubers and plantains, rather than global commodities like corn, rice and wheat. This time around, the conventional crop breeding programs being built in Africa will lay the genetic and industrial groundwork for the expansion of genetically modified crops. And more importantly, the seed and chemical companies that stand to gain from the Green Revolution are fewer, and because of biotechnology, much bigger and vertically integrated, selling both seed and inputs. . . .

Indeed, with AGRA, Gates is picking up where lesser philanthropists (Rockefeller, Sasakawa 2000) and politicians (Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton) ran out of steam.

At his special appearance at this year’s World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Bill Gates gave us his answer: creative capitalism. This, he explained to the world’s financial masters, was “[An] approach where governments, businesses, and nonprofits work together to stretch the reach of market forces so that more people can make a profit, or gain recognition, doing work that eases the world’s inequities.” Gates acknowledged that capitalism does not work well for the poor. His explanation is that this is because there are no international market incentives to fight poverty or hunger. . . .

To understand AGRA—and Gates’ creative capitalism—it is helpful to distinguish AGRA’s mission from its job. AGRA’s mission is “To [work in partnership] across the African continent to help millions of small-scale farmers and their families lift themselves out of poverty and hunger.” AGRA’s job—as so eloquently stated by Bill Gates in Davos—is to bring Africa’s poor into the international market. Here, they will consume both hybrid and genetically-modified seeds, fertilizers and agrochemicals. They will also consume the products of these seeds, making their diet dependent on the companies driving the Green Revolution. Whoever can establish these seed markets in Africa will control not only the markets, but the food, and ultimately the ground of the vast continent. . . .

–*Pambazuka News, South Africa, 31/3/08*  
 (abbreviated by BK— full article on request)

## Fertilizer Prices

While philanthro-capitalism is pushing fertilizer usage to save African agriculture, we must wonder who is going to be able to pay for the stuff. Certainly not your small-scale subsistence farmers anywhere!

The outlook for potash “has more to do with strong demand for palm oil production in Malaysia and Indonesia and sugar cane in Brazil” than it does with growing corn in Iowa, according to one commodity market specialist. “It goes without saying that palm oil producers [which includes Cargill and ADM] in Malaysia/ Indonesia can afford \$1000 [per tonne] potash prices, given record prices for biodiesel.” But she admitted that escalating fertilizer prices could cause hardship for some farmers in developing countries.

– GM, 20/6/08

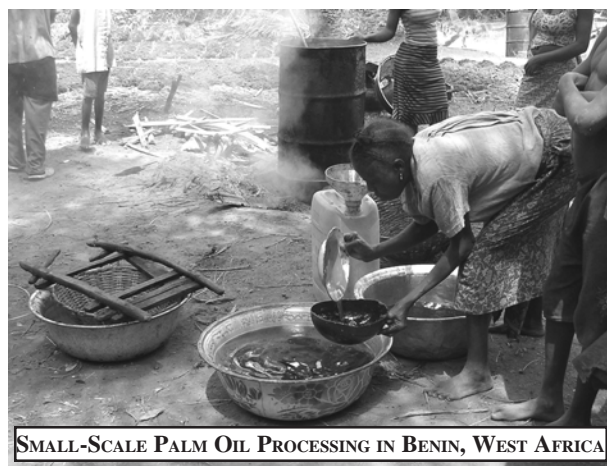
## From the Horse’s Mouth

Wanting to hear how the Gates Foundation is presenting itself to those its assumes are potential admirers, I attended a lecture by David Bergvinson at the University of Ottawa in mid-June. It was a well crafted powerpoint presentation, as one would expect, but the message it conveyed to me was one of paternalism and colonialism, framed in their ‘shared vision’: “Improving the lives of the poor in the developing world.”

Bergvinson began with an identification of the usual causes with an emphasis on the decline of investment in agriculture by developing countries since the Green Revolution, which he said might be reversed by the current rise in prices. He emphasized that 3/4 of the world’s poorest – 1.2 billion people – live on less than \$1 a day. His presentation made it very clear that subsistence was not a concept that the Gates Foundation could recognize: they have to think in monetary terms because they are dedicated to a market economy. Never mind how many people survive outside the market economy, or even live better than their cousins in the slums of Mexico City, Los Angeles, Mumbai or Nairobi.

Then Bergvinson came to those two key terms: fertilizer and seeds – “improved crop varieties” and “enhanced soil fertility” were his actual words. Success, he said, would be measured with “stress tolerant varieties” (pest and drought resistant, i.e. G.E.) with “increased productivity”. Rather quietly he mentioned working with the private sector as much as possible. When I raised a question about respect for and working with traditional farmers and their seeds, the response was, “of course *we* would use *their* traditional varieties”. As I said, paternalistic and colonial. Oh, yes, he also said that “our funding is only a small part of the overall cost of transforming African agriculture.”

– B.K.



SMALL-SCALE PALM OIL PROCESSING IN BENIN, WEST AFRICA

Certainly, the Gates Foundation is not working alone. The FAO states: “The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP) have agreed to work together to significantly boost food production in Africa’s ‘breadbasket regions.’ “This collaborative initiative is part of AGRA’s strategic vision to build partnerships that pool the strengths and resources of the public and private sectors, civil society, farmers organizations, donors, scientists and entrepreneurs across the agricultural value chain,” said Mr. Kofi Annan, Chairman of the Board of AGRA. ...

“To turn things around, there is need for urgent focus on raising agricultural productivity. More investment is needed to improve soil and water management of rainfed and irrigation agriculture, more adaptable new crop varieties, *improved access to seeds and fertilizers [emphasis added]*, environmentally sustainable integrated pest management practices, reduction in post-harvest losses, and improvement of rural infrastructure, especially roads and communication infrastructure. AGRA will develop and promote higher yielding, locally adapted seeds, soil fertility options, water management systems, and market development to aid small-holder farmers and pro-poor policies that will catalyze farm productivity growth in the breadbasket zones.”

– FAO, 4/6/08

Nor is the Bush regime in the USA holding back. It has created the Millennium Challenge Corp. which is expected to sign an agreement with AGRA, committing the two organizations to build roads, irrigation systems and other infrastructure to help agriculture in Africa. The agreement will also “push for more agricultural research and provide seed, fertilizers and technology to small-scale farmers; increase access to financing for farmers; improve storage, food processing and other





such systems; and work toward development of policies to promote domestic agriculture, investment and trade. The Millennium Challenge Corp. was created by the Bush regime to work with poor countries that guarantee good governance and open economic systems.”

– AP, 11/6/08

## La Via Campesina call for mobilization against the G-8 in Hokkaido, Japan



The representatives of the 8 richest countries of the world will meet on the 7th-9th of July 2008 in Hokkaido in Japan. These governments have imposed policies that are the root cause of the crisis in food and agriculture. This worldwide crisis started to emerge in the seventies and kept 852 million people in extreme poverty, people mainly living in rural areas. The recent food price crisis has brought the crisis to the cities

where people cannot buy enough food. The climate crisis, caused by the extensive use of fossil energy in industrialized countries and the massive deforestation by TNCs, will hit especially the poor in the South.

The reaction of the WTO, World bank, as well as the G8 governments has been disastrous: they only push more of the same policies that are at the root of the current crisis: more liberalisation, more support for fertilizers and industrial seeds, a green revolution in Africa, more food aid, and a rapid expansion of agro-fuels. Mainly due to the attitude of the G8 countries, no advance at all was made at the High level Conference organized by FAO, and the TNCs were not prevented from pushing through their disastrous initiative on agro-fuels.

**Enough is enough!** It is irresponsible that you together with multilateral institutions continue to destroy our food production and hand us over to the mercy of a handful of TNCs and the international markets, which are incapable of and not interested in feeding the world!

We have to stop the corporate takeover of the agricultural and fisheries sector. The answer to the climate crisis and the food price crisis is peasant, small-producer-based food production based on local resources and for domestic consumption.

**The time for food sovereignty has come!**

– 13/6/08

## Indigenous Food Sovereignty

*from a report prepared by coordinator Dawn Morrison for the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Working Group, BC Food Systems Network*

### What is an Indigenous food system?

West from the Falls of Kettle River to the Salt Chucks of T'souke Harbour, and east from the Sacred Headwaters of Tahltan Territory to the Taiga Plains of the Peace River region, the vast myriad of rivers, watersheds, landforms, vegetation and climatic zones west of the Rocky Mountains have worked together for thousands of years to shape and form Indigenous land and food systems. Consisting of a multitude of natural communities, Indigenous food systems include all of the: land, soil, water, air and culturally important plant, fungi and animal species that have sustained Indigenous peoples over thousands of years of participating in the natural world. All parts of Indigenous food systems are inseparable and ideally function in healthy interdependent relationships to transfer energy through Indigenous ecosystems and economies. In addition, Indigenous food systems also support, both directly and indirectly, the transfer of energy through the present

day agriculture-based economy that has been developed and industrialized by settlers through the process of colonization.

*Philanthro-capitalism is capital's counter to food sovereignty.*

In a place where biological diversity lends itself well to tremendous localized abundance of traditional foods, Indigenous peoples throughout what is now known as the province of British Columbia have developed distinct cultures (27 in total) based on traditional harvesting strategies and practices including: hunting, fishing, gathering and cultivating culturally important plants, animals and fungi in their respective traditional territories.

In contrast to the highly mechanistic, linear food production, distribution, and consumption model applied in the industrialized food system, Indigenous food systems are best described in ecological rather than neoclassical economic terms. In this context, an Indigenous food is one that has been primarily harvested, cultivated, taken care of, prepared, preserved, shared, or traded within the boundaries of their respective territories based on values of interdependency, respect, reciprocity, and ecological sustainability. As the most intimate way in which Indigenous peoples interact with their environment, Indigenous food systems are in turn maintained through the active participation in traditional land and food systems.

## What is Indigenous Food Sovereignty?

Food sovereignty is the newest and most innovative approach to addressing the complex issues impacting the ability of individuals, families and communities to respond to their own needs for healthy culturally adapted Indigenous foods. It has grown out of a social network of Non Government Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), social movements and many conferences, meetings and discussions that have taken place both within our region and around the world. The concept was developed by the global farmers' movement Via Campesina and was launched to the general public at the World Food Summit in 1996.

The food sovereignty approach provides a framework to explore, analyze and describe key principles of protecting, conserving and restoring Indigenous food systems as it relates to the unique cultures and circumstances in the province of B.C. Based on discussions that took place at the 1st Annual Interior of B.C. Indigenous Food Sovereignty Conference in 2006, some key principles of Indigenous food sovereignty have been identified below.



- *Sacredness* – Food is a gift from the Creator; we have a sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food.

- *Self-determination* – The ability to respond to our own needs for safe, healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods—the ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food we hunt, fish, gather, grow and eat. Freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production and distribution in market economies.

- *Participatory* – An action that is ultimately based on the day-to-day practice of maintaining our

traditional food harvesting strategies and practices for the benefit of present and future generations. A cultural strategy that must be practiced at all of the individual, family and community levels.

- *Policy* – A strategy for influencing provincial, national and international policies that are negatively impacting traditional land and food systems. – 3/08



*Traditional Indigenous foods:*  
above: **INDIAN CORN AND SQUASH;**  
left: **HERRING ROE ON KELP;**  
below left: **WILD SUNFLOWERS**

## Food Sovereignty in Gujarat, India

by Lalji Desai, MARAG, Ahmedabad

In Gujarat, communities practicing animal rearing traditionally are referred to as Maldharis (pastoralists). Maldhari does not connote a caste or a community but it signifies association with an occupation. Maldhari is derived from *Mal* (livestock) + *dhari* (owner), i.e. those who own livestock. In Gujarat Maldhari are known as “Ter Tansalia” which comprises of 13 different castes including Rabari, Bharwad, Ayar, Charan, Gadhvi Mer, Chaudhari, Jat and Mutva. The origin of Maldharis cannot be said with certainty. Some people associate the origins of Rabaris to the Dravidians who came from Afghanistan. Some people also say that Rabaris and Ahirs came to Gujarat with Lord Krishna from Mathura in Utttar Pradesh.

In Gujarat the main concentration of Maldharis is found in Ahmedabad, Mehsana, Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Bhavnagar, Junagarh, Jamnagar, Surendranagar, Rajkot and Kutch districts. It has been stated in some records that at one time there were 103 chariyans in Gujarat; and in and around these chariyans Maldharis were settled. Most of these chariyans are either encroached or degraded resulting in forced migration of Maldharis for as much as 9-10 months in a year.



The Maldharis and their cattle thrived on the grasslands. They sold milk and milk products such as butter, ghee and condensed milk (mava) to the nearby towns and villages. The shepherds, among the Maldharis, also sold wool and woollens that their women folk made with their deft hands, carrying out fine embellishment through intricate embroidery work. However the main source of income was through bullock trading and Maldharis are known to have produced some of the best breeds of cattle.

Their life came in for a rude shock when, beginning with the last decade of the 19th century, the plough of the 'civilized' world started encroaching on the grasslands to produce grain and cash crops like cotton and groundnut. Agriculture for subsistence was replaced by commercial farming. The rich eco-system of the region, which sustained them for centuries, was ravaged.

Since the pastoral communities and their cattle depended on common property resources such as grasslands, forest, ponds and rivers and did not own land, they were neither counted nor consulted by the policy makers enacting laws aimed at regulating the use and ownership of land. Like the tribals, who lived in and survived on the forest, and were deprived of ownership rights over the forest land, the pastoral communities too were deprived of their right over grasslands, ponds and rivers. Natural resources that fell into the category of common property steadily became private property, the farmers, builders, contractors and industrial houses having grabbed these resources through legal or illegal means.

The Maldharis became the victims of the 'development' process unleashed by market-driven economy. With the market pressure increasing on local resources, the Maldharis and their cattle were forced into seasonal distressed migration in search of fodder. The partition of India in 1947 further added to the problem, as it placed the lush green pasturelands of the Sindh province out of bounds for the Maldharis in the newly created Pakistan.

Uprooted from their homeland, the Maldharis today lead a nomadic life, wandering hither and thither along with their herds of cattle through the length and breadth of India. Though constituting more than one-fifth of the population of Gujarat, these pastoral communities do not figure either in the electoral rolls or in the development plans of the government. They have become non-entities, left to fend for themselves.

Low literacy level among the Maldharis is the main reason why very few members from the pastoral communities are found in any significant positions in the government, political parties, industry, educational institutions, or for that matter in any of the organized sector. It is a travesty of fate that the Maldharis, whose traditional occupation has been animal husbandry, have virtually no representation in the cooperative dairy sector.

In fact, the pastoral communities have been pushed to the brink of destitution as a result of the privatization of common property such as grassland, forest, water resources in the wake of the much-publicized 'green revolution' and 'white revolution'.

<http://maragindia.org/maldhari.htm>

---



---

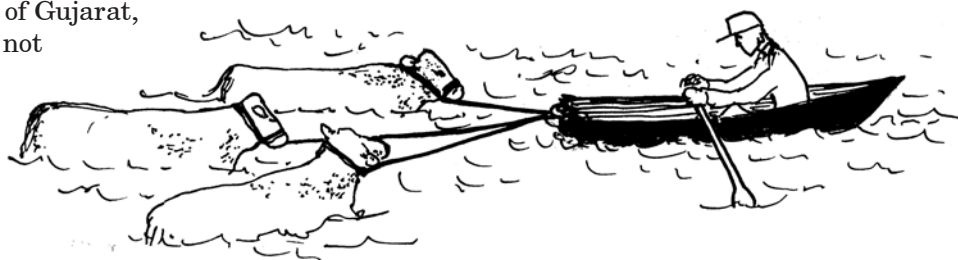
## Farming and Climate Change

*A letter from a friend in Wisconsin explaining the cancellation of their annual BBQ:*

All the heavy rain we received on June 7 and 8 had some rather severe effects on our farm. The worst damage resulted from heavy the rains that saturated the ground and collapsed our concrete manure storage pit. It is sort of overwhelming thinking about the large and very expensive construction project we have facing us in addition to the usual summer work schedule. ...

Yes it is somewhat of a blow, financially and emotionally. When I look at the hole, the upended 10 foot slabs of concrete I get this feeling that it is terribly out of place, sort of like walking into the living room and finding a dead cat lying on the couch.

We are pretty well set as to the reconstruction process, the county conservation folks have decided we can build a new pit on top of the old floor and within the old walls (which will still act as retaining walls for the dirt and barnyard) and comply with the regulations if we can pour the entire pit seamlessly in one day. Close to 300 yards of concrete will be a big project, but we have a contractor that can do it. Now I just need to find some money, emergency grants would be great, but even a low interest loan would be OK. As long as we can get going on it, there is some need for moving on as dry summer weather is much better for projects like this than waiting on into fall.





## Back to Basics: Guano

Surging prices for synthetic fertilizers and organic foods are shifting attention to guano, an organic fertilizer once found in abundance on Isla De Asia and more than 20 other islands off the coast of Peru, where an exceptionally dry climate preserves the droppings of seabirds like the guanay cormorant and the Peruvian booby.

Where thousands of convicts, army deserters and Chinese indentured servants died collecting guano a century and a half ago, now teams of Quechua-speaking laborers from the highlands scrape the dung off the hard soil and place it on barges destined for the mainland.

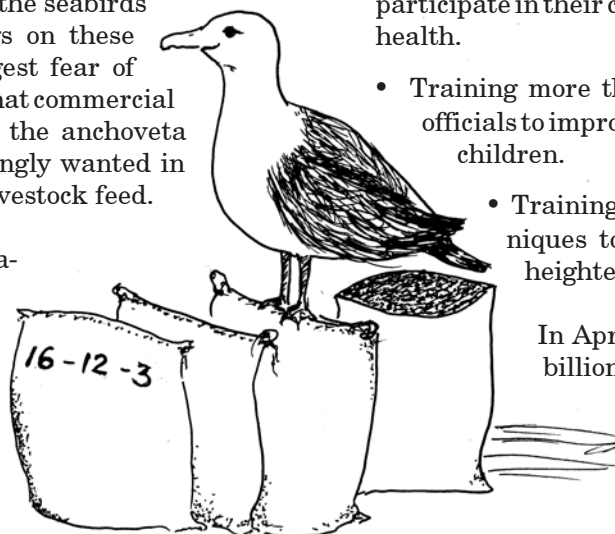
In the 19th century deposits were 150 feet high. Today, the guano on most islands reaches less than a foot or so, but guano in Peru sells for about \$250 a ton while fetching \$500 a ton when exported to France, Israel and the United States. While guano is less efficient than urea at releasing nitrates into the soil, its status as an organic fertilizer has increased demand.

That explains why Peru is so vigilant about preserving the remaining guano, an effort dating back a century to the creation of the Guano Administration Company, when Peru nationalized the islands, some of which were British-controlled, to stave off the industry's extinction. Since then, Peru's government has restricted guano collection to about two islands a year, enabling the droppings to accumulate. Workers smooth slopes and build walls that retain the guano. Scientists even introduced lizards to hunt down ticks that infested the seabirds. The guano administrators station armed guards at each of the islands to ward off threats to birds, which produce 12,000 to 15,000 tons of guano a year.

The anchoveta, a six-inch fish in the anchovy family, is the main food of the seabirds who leave their droppings on these rainless islands. The biggest fear of Peru's guano collectors is that commercial fishing fleets will deplete the anchoveta stocks, which are increasingly wanted in the form of fish meal for livestock feed.

While the bird population has climbed to 4 million from 3.2 million in the past two years, that figure still pales in comparison with the 60 million birds at the height of the first guano rush.

— *NY Times*, 30/5/08



## Playing Lobbyist

Here's a new summer pastime while you're sitting around on the deck this summer: invite your friends to play lobbyist for Monsanto, and come up with a basic line for Monsanto on topics such as: US farm bill provisions, biotechnology, organic standards, patent reform, theft of agricultural seeds, endangered species, timber, greenhouse gas emissions legislation, international trade and ethanol production.

After all, Monsanto spent nearly \$1.3 million in the first quarter of this year to lobby the US federal government on the above topics, according to a disclosure report. The company lobbied Congress, White House, U.S. Trade Representative's office, Federal Trade Commission, Agriculture Department and other agencies.

— *AP*, 28/5/08

Have fun!

---



---

## Cargill donates \$10M to CARE

Cargill has given CARE a \$10 million grant, the largest in the company's history, to help the group battle poverty in some of the world's poorest communities. CARE said it will use the grant to pay for projects designed to help 100,000 men, women and children in rural areas of India, Brazil, Ghana, Honduras, Guatemala and Cote d'Ivoire fight poverty over the next five years. CARE will provide training, skills-development and market access for farmers and education for their children. Goals include:

- Graduating from primary school at least 40,000 at-risk children as a strategy to fight child labor.
- Improving the nutritional status of 28,000 children in areas with high rates of malnutrition.
- Engaging more than 33,000 parents to support and participate in their children's education and nutritional health.
- Training more than 2,000 teachers and education officials to improve the quality of education for rural children.
- Training more than 35,000 farmers in techniques to improve agricultural yields and heighten market access.

In April Cargill reported it earned \$1.03 billion for the fiscal third quarter, up from \$553 million a year earlier.

— [www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/2008/06/16/daily47.html](http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/2008/06/16/daily47.html), 18/6/08

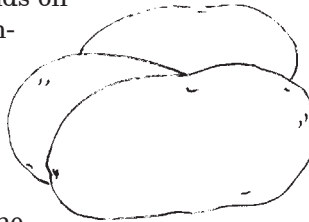
## Potatoes

Funny thing how the most obvious remains obscure. The potato is the world's third most important food crop after wheat and rice. (Corn is primarily planted for animal feed.) So why aren't potatoes traded in the global market like wheat and rice? Because they are heavy and perishable. They will readily rot in transit.

About 17% of the global wheat crop of about 600 million tonnes is traded annually. By contrast (Canada's Prince Edward Island, which depends on potatoes as its major crop and export commodity, notwithstanding), only about 5% of the global potato crop is traded internationally, which does not necessarily mean that it actually has to travel very far. This has been the case for a long time. During the Irish Potato Famine, the Irish people starved because a disease called blight destroyed their potatoes – while the grain they grew were exported to their colonial masters in England.

Now the new colonial masters are coming to the rescue with genetically engineered potatoes that resist 'late blight' being developed by BASF. Late blight is a scourge of potato growers, though some say that this is due to the inferior quality of industrial potatoes. Since potatoes are grown primarily for processing – potatoes

are the major vegetable consumed by North Americans, but in the form of chips or fries – farmers grow the varieties which are most suitable for that purpose. These varieties are weak compared to the varieties available to organic farmers who are not bound by the commands of the processors. We saw this years ago in New Brunswick when an organic farmer showed us his potatoes, then those of a neighbour. The neighbour's industrial potatoes were seeping out under the storage shed door in the form of a black goo.



**Factoid:** The citizens of Belarus are the world's biggest potato eaters at 171 kg per year. That's about a pound per day. China is the biggest producer of potatoes at 72 million tonnes, with the Russian Federation following at 35.7 and India at 26.3, Ukraine at 19.1 and the US at 11.6 tonnes per annum.

– FAO/G&M, 16/4/08

**Factoid:** ConAgra claims its subsidiary Lamb Weston is the largest potato company in North America, with annual sales of around \$2 billion. Now ConAgra has added privately-held vegetable processor Watts Brothers, based in Kenewick, Washington state, to its portfolio. Watts Brothers brings with it a vegetable processing facility, an organic dairy, a refrigerated warehouse, a packaging facility, and a farming operation covering some 20,000 acres.

– foodproductiondaily.com, 27/2/08

### THE RAM'S HORN

Published 10 times a year by  
**Brewster and Cathleen Kneen**  
 2746 Cassels Street  
 Ottawa ON, K2B 6N7, Canada  
 phone: (613) 828-6047

#### **Subscriptions:**

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

outside North America: €30 (airmail)  
*cheques payable to The Ram's Horn*

**If you would like a paper copy of *The Ram's Horn*, please subscribe (see rates and address above). You are also invited to support our work through a donation to help cover costs of research, writing, and circulation of the print version for free to people who cannot afford it, especially those in the 'global south'.**

---

The publishers of *The Ram's Horn* do not claim copyright 'protection' for this material. It is in the public domain to be freely used and built upon. We appreciate mention of the source. Line drawings not otherwise identified are the work of Cathleen Kneen.

---