

Every Person a Well Fed Person

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Malnutrition

Obesity



www.sustainablefood.com

WHO – Double Burden – Food & Nutrition Programme

Double Burden

- Within US : Highest obesity rates while [40m on food stamps](#)
- UK: Fastest increase in childhood obesity, yet still “nutrition insecurity” among poor (NDNS)



Trying to ensure that 'Every person is a well fed person' has been **my road to socialism**

Age of 12 wanted to "Feed the World"
Got into Science Grade
Looked for University courses in
agriculture
3 degrees – now impossible to do
Thinking that producing more food will
reduce hunger and malnutrition
Despite massive improvements in
"productivity"
Same number go hungry now as 20 years
ago, despite the MDG 1 target to reduce
hunger
Not about producing "More Food"..BUT
ABOUT PRODUCING CHEAP FOOD..



Cheap Food – old idea

For manufacturers these – “more” & “cheap”, are very much the same..

WHY? Because they all believe in ‘the markets’

Q: What is the iron law of the markets?

A: When harvests are good prices plummet.

When they are not good, prices rise. “Wheat prices up with news of bad Russian harvest”

So all the inducement to produce ‘more’ makes for cheaper food -not feed the poor.



This has been going on long time – in UK – since Repeal of the Corn Laws. Along came the Empire and used other people’s land to grow our food. By WW1 we produced only ¼ of own food. Now we produce only 1/2 veg and 1/10 fruit – so much for linking health & agric!

This country – more than any other relies on cheap (labour) food from other lands and increasingly do so, to the ruination of our agriculture (no skills nor science left). Our food deficit now runs at £15b/yr (all of food we could produce ourselves)

Cheap Food – new god

As years gone on there has been a shift in power from manufacturers to retailers. But plot is the same..

Last year major [retailers went to government](#) to argue that unless consumers accept GM, then the prices of food will rise by 10-20%. Probably true, as much food is maize & soya based – increasingly from Brazil.

[Sir Terry Leahy, CEO of Tesco,](#) [said](#) about GM "Maybe there is an opportunity to discuss again these issues and a growing appreciation by people that GM could play a vital role in *feeding the world's growing population.*"

Just like I had been conned many years before, the retailers are keeping it going..what he was really saying was "*feeding the rich cheaply*".



Cheap Food costs the Earth

Food/Farming accounts for about 1/5th
all GHGs (gases that cause Global Warming *)

This due to:

1. Change from Forest to Farm 35-40%
2. Use of N fertiliser 36/37%
(now 3rd on UNEP list)
3. Growing Meat 30%

The UK Ecological Footprint is 5X
its own area.

Then there is all loss of
biodiversity, pollution...

* NB Global Warming – NOT Climate Change



Cheap Food costs our Health

The drive to make profits when the market is saturated (we can only eat so much) leads to:

V. efficient production – wages low throughout chain – so that many in chain go hungry.

More processing – industry calls it “adding value”, but in terms of nutrition it is “devaluing” the raw material. And it is processing that is the main culprit of dietary ill-health.

1. eg calories counted with no account of the energy required to access them. So processing food by its nature puts on weight – instead of us working to get at calories, they are emulsified, mangled, crushed and nearly digested for you.

2. Put carbohydrates, particularly refined flour and sugar, in the dock – rather than saturated fats. Don't



And we cant go on..

40 years ago, we spent about 40% of our income on food

20 years ago we spent 20%

Now we spend about 10% (rich 9% poor 15%)

Clearly we cant go much further...

Just as cheap food benefited industrialists 150 yrs , now we have wrecked our manufacturing, it benefits mainly the financiers.



Instead of financing the Gherkin in the City, we should be investing in real long term green assets - peas, beans, asparagus, leeks, cabbage, broccoli, apples, pears, raspberries. Instead we are closing the last public Vegetable Research Station !

Alternatives to Cheap Food?

Many of you will be saying: “But more expensive food will hit the poor”

I want to open this debate as we need to have it....

For too long we have gone along with “cheap food helps the poor”.

As socialists is this what we should argue? Am reminded on the Corn Law Repeal debate among socialists – some said it was a con by industrialists, others welcomed cheaper bread (and promise of less working hours)

We don't talk about cheap electricity, although we do talk about cheap transport.



Surely as socialists we should

1. Argue that everybody has enough money to buy decent food,
2. Find ways to subsidise good food