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Hunger: A Global Survey

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A Research Paper

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October 1985

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by 25X1
the 25X1
Office of Global Issues. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Geography Division, OGI, 25X1

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Hunger: A Global Survey

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Overview

Information available as of 10 October 1985 was used in this report.

Worldwide attention is currently focused on the famine in Africa, but hunger is a global problem, and hundreds of millions of people throughout the Third World suffer from some degree of malnutrition and associated diseases. Hunger has important implications for the United States. Food shortages can increase popular dissatisfaction with governments important to the United States, reduce economic vigor, and perpetuate the need for large-scale food and technical assistance from the United States.

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Our regional assessments suggest that:

- In Africa, the prospects for recovery are dim through the end of the century. Food shortages are the result of adverse climatic conditions that may not improve in the short term, traditional agricultural practices that destroy fragile environments, high population growth rates that are not likely to peak until the mid-1990s, and policy decisions that range from the unwise use of development capital to the callous exploitation of hunger to achieve political ends.

- In Latin America, serious malnutrition is likely to persist through the 1990s. Although more than a dozen countries are affected, conditions in Bolivia and northeastern Brazil are the worst. Recovery from food shortages caused by El Nino (see appendix A) and other weather problems in the early 1980s is being hampered by rapid population growth, inadequacies in infrastructure, foreign debt burdens, and ill-advised government policies.

- In South Asia, food production has increased rapidly during the past two decades; however, per capita caloric supply generally remains well below the Food and Agriculture Organization's minimum requirements. The region probably will not achieve foodgrain self-sufficiency or nutritionally adequate diets in the next 10 years as population growth rates remain high.

- In East Asia, severe hunger is limited to areas of adverse weather, war, or political unrest. The margin of success in food production is slim, however, and there is considerable uncertainty about the future. Although rice production has increased by 75 percent during the past two decades—exceeding population growth and improving diets—large segments of the population still live close to the absolute poverty line, and sharp price increases could create a major food crisis.

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Contents

	Page
Overview	iii
Introduction	1
Africa	1
Sub-Saharan Africa	1
Ethiopia, Sudan, and Chad: The Current Crisis	4
North Africa	5
Latin America	8
South America	9
South Asia	10
India	10
Bangladesh	10
Afghanistan	11
East Asia	11
China	13
Southeast Asia	13
The Philippines	13
Indochina	14
Outlook	14
Implications for the United States	15

Appendixes

A.	Glossary	17

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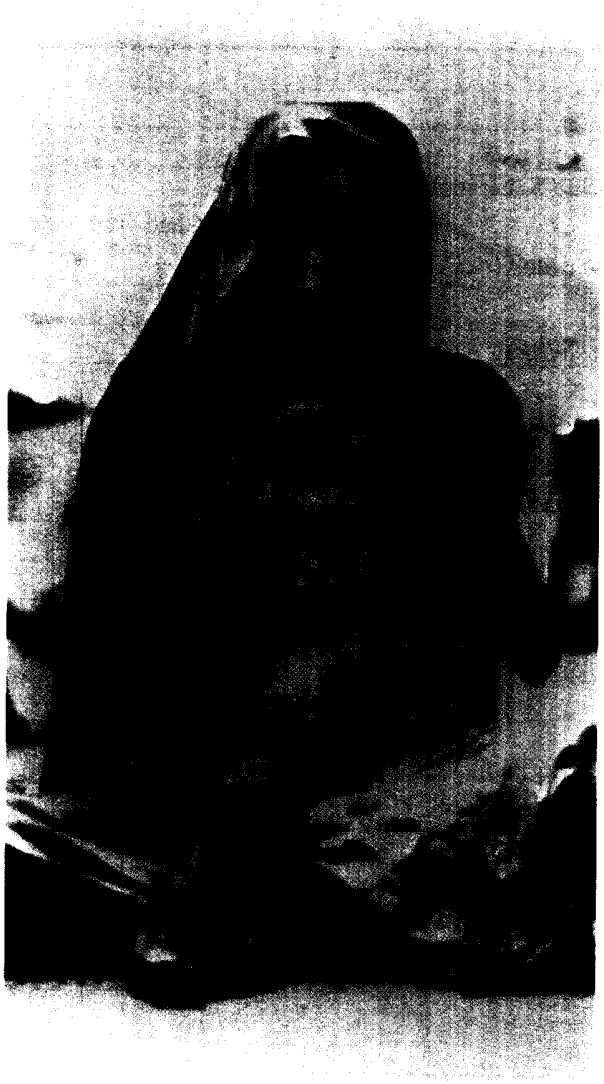

A mother and child wait for food in a Sudanese refugee camp, December 1984. The child later died.

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Hunger: A Global Survey

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Introduction

Despite the Green Revolution and several successful national efforts to raise food production, hunger remains a crucial problem for the Third World as a whole. Moreover, the situation is likely to get worse before it gets better. Hunger kills 35,000 people each day, and some 800 million—17 percent of the world's population—do not get enough food to sustain active and healthy lives. Although at present most of the acute malnutrition (see appendix A) is concentrated in Africa, the World Bank cites studies indicating that the gap between domestic food supply and demand will widen in all major areas of the Third World.

Two decades ago, the situation seemed more hopeful. Food production was growing by more than 3 percent a year, well above the rate of population growth. Unfortunately, the growth of food production has slowed since the early 1970s—it is now less than 2 percent a year—and population growth in many LDCs has jumped. During 1984, for example, per capita food production declined in 63 percent of the developing countries for which data are available. As the margin between food supply and minimum nutritional requirements narrows, any natural or manmade disaster can send millions over the brink into acute malnutrition. Meanwhile, the international grain reserve and world food security net recommended by the 1974 World Food Conference have hardly gotten off the ground.

World hunger is a complicated problem. Its causes and effects vary from country to country, region to region, and year to year. This study presents a global survey of hunger by region, with specific country examples to illustrate some main issues for US policymakers.

Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimates that 150 million Africans—nearly half the population—suffer some degree of hunger. While difficult to verify, this figure indicates the magnitude of the problem in Africa. Food emergencies have hit often during the past 15 years, but the pervasiveness of the current situation is unprecedented. Although the most severe conditions are found in Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Chad, at least 20 of the 41 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing serious food shortages. During 1985, the total emergency food aid required for the region will exceed 6 million metric tons, and world health experts speculate that the famine could cause 20 million deaths.

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Chronic food problems in Sub-Saharan Africa are the product of a complex set of interrelated manmade and natural factors, which include state policy and official malfeasance, drought, and rapid population growth. Official actions have been major contributors to the region's food problems. In some cases, governments and officials have been ruthless:

- Governments have delayed recovery from natural disasters by using their control over food aid as a weapon against insurgencies in *Ethiopia, Uganda, Chad, Angola,* and *Mozambique,* according to Embassy reporting.

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- Corrupt officials have diverted food imports and relief assistance supplies for illegal resale—for example, in West and Central Africa—according to a former World Food Program (WFP) director.

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Figure 1
Famine in Africa

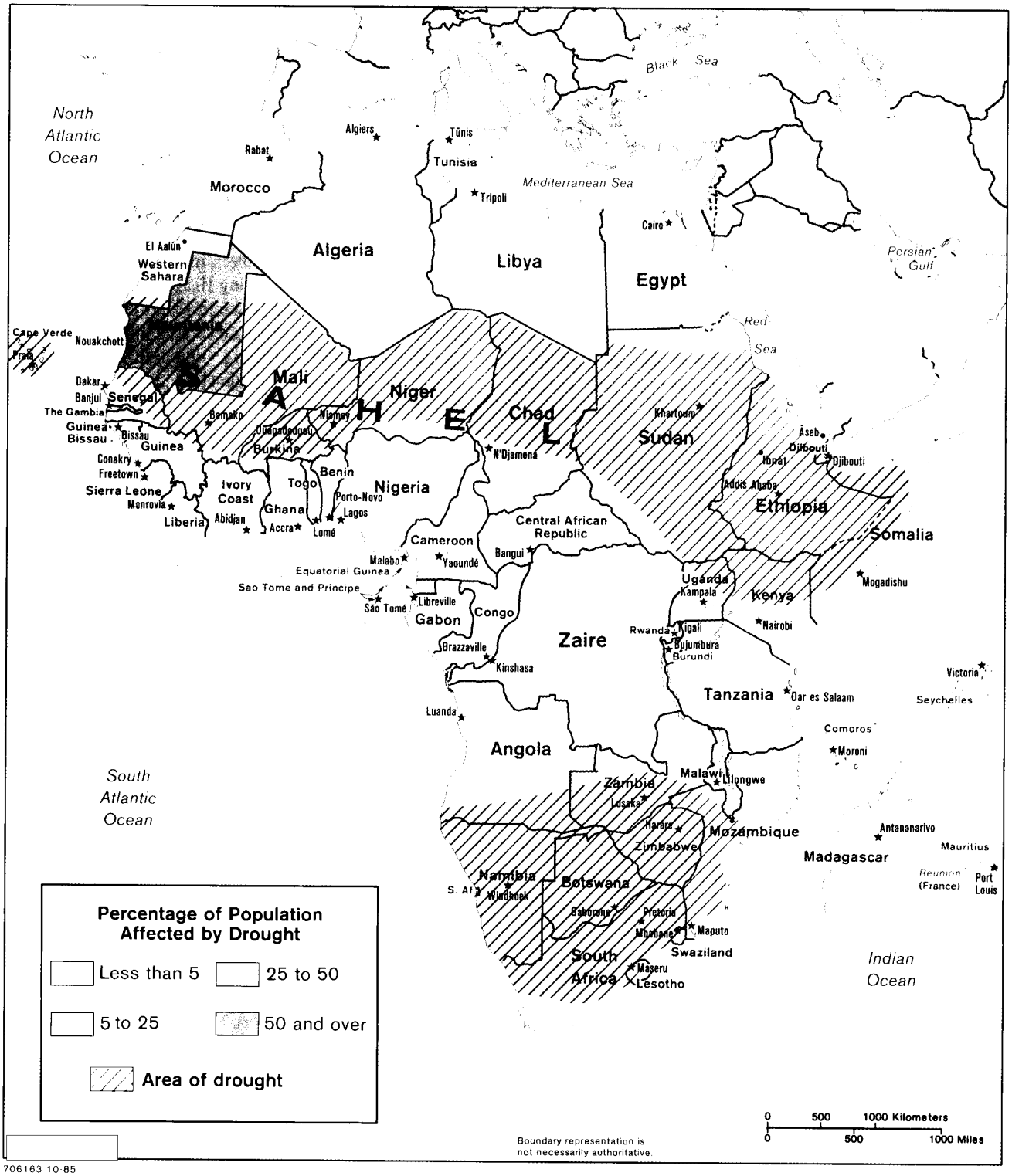

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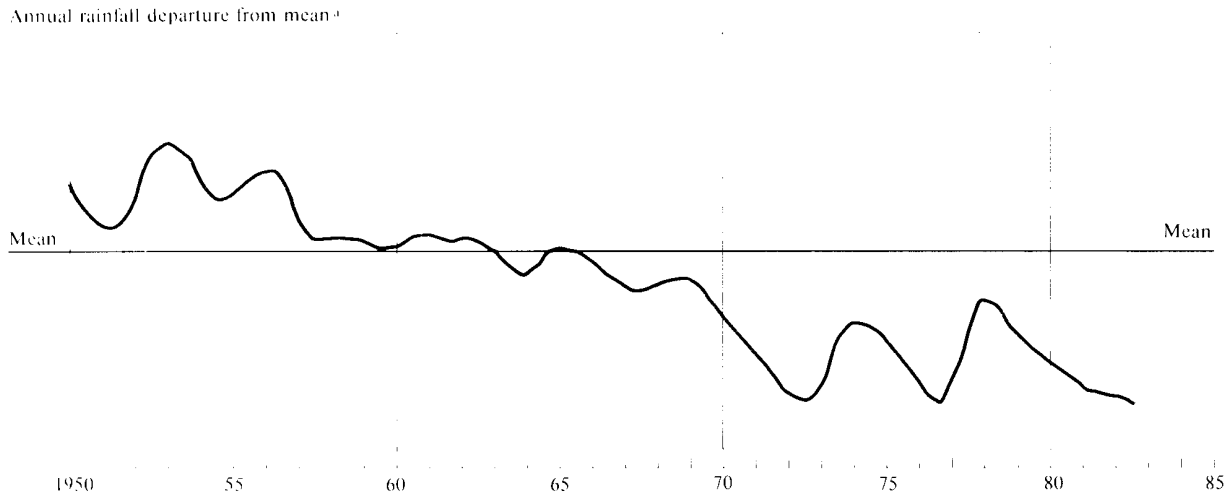
Figure 2
Africa: Precipitation Trend in Sahel, 1950-83



[a] The mean is calculated from 1900-83.

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In other cases, governments have taken poorly conceived actions to satisfy competing goals, or have merely been neglectful:

- In *Ethiopia,* mismanagement by military personnel lacking agricultural skills has resulted in generally lower productivity on state farms than on peasant holdings.
- In *Nigeria,* successive governments have not funded or supported the agricultural sector, despite years of paying lipservice to a Green Revolution.
- In *Senegal* and *Tanzania,* postindependence governments have tended to promote export crops for national income rather than food for domestic consumption, according to World Bank reports.
- In *Sierra Leone,* low-cost rice imports used by the government to subsidize urban consumers keep the market price well below domestic production costs and thereby discourage local production.
- In *Ghana,* food production for domestic consumption has declined steadily because profits from cash crops have been channeled into large-scale development projects rather than to individual farmers.

Throughout the region, recent attempts to stimulate production by raising food prices have been offset by the rising cost of agricultural inputs—mainly petroleum-based fertilizers and pesticides—and by shortages of farm implements, transportation, and storage facilities. 25X1

The root of the present crisis and most serious long-term threat to Africa's fragile food supply are the adverse climatic trends and associated desertification, which affect almost half of the continent and may continue for decades, according to some climatologists. Declines in annual rainfall—ranging from 15 to 40 percent during the past 15 years—have substantially reduced stream levels; limited ground water recharge; and, combined with overgrazing and overcultivation, have accelerated the pace of topsoil erosion. This process can render the land unproductive, even if the rains do return. Pest infestations and disease, moreover, have devastated crops, natural vegetation, and livestock in the region. 25X1

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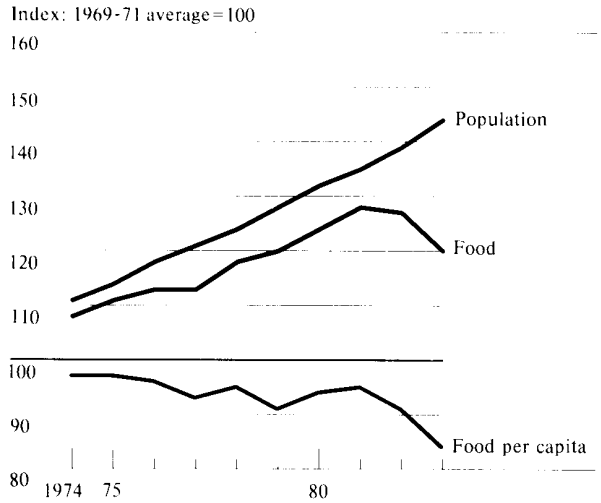
Figure 3
Africa: Trends in Food and Population, 1974-83



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Population growth in Africa, the highest worldwide, is rapidly outstripping food supply. Since the mid-1960s, the populations of 22 countries have grown between 2 and 3 percent a year (4 percent in Kenya), while annual increases in food production have slipped below the 2-percent level common before 1970. As a result, per capita food production in some countries is 20 percent less than it was during the 1960s. Demographers project that total population growth rates will continue to rise before peaking above 3 percent in the 1990s. Rapidly expanding urban populations, which according to the United Nations could double by 2000, will compound the problem because they produce little food and demand more food per capita than do rural populations.

During the past 20 years, these factors—policy, climate, and population—have contributed to a growing dependence on food imports, and African governments have borrowed heavily to finance food purchases—$5 billion in 1982 compared with $274 million in 1963. Servicing the massive debt created by this borrowing consumes a large share of the export earnings of many countries, often forcing them to rely increasingly on international food assistance. This year's crop estimates again indicate harvests well below normal, and Africa's principal food aid donors—North America, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan—can expect food aid requests to continue. The US contribution to African famine relief and recovery is expected to reach $550 million during 1985. In contrast, Soviet Bloc contributions to African relief during the period 1983-85 amounted to only $9.6 million, most of which went to client states such as Mozambique and Ethiopia. 25X1

Ethiopia, Sudan, and Chad: The Current Crisis. The drought in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Chad has intensified sharply during the past four years and now threatens an estimated 17 million people. The most seriously affected areas are in northern Ethiopia and in western and northeastern Sudan, where some 1.5 million displaced Sudanese have been joined by up to 1 million Ethiopian refugees searching for food and water. Measles, fever, and pneumonia cases are on the rise, and a serious cholera epidemic that began last January in Ethiopia has spread to Somalia and Djibouti. Complicating the natural disaster, Addis Ababa is using food assistance and massive relocation as a weapon against the Eritrean insurgents. In Chad, civil war, Libyan intervention, and the relentless press of drought may be creating the "next Ethiopia." According to the World Food Program, 1985 food deficits in the three-country region range from 2.4 million to 2.9 million tons—25 to 30 percent of estimated world food aid contributions for fiscal year 1985. Since none of the affected governments can afford to offset the deficit with commercial imports, all must seek concessionary food aid. For Sudan, the US pledge of 1.2 million tons fills less than two-thirds of the need. 25X1

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Inadequate transportation networks, underdeveloped logistic systems, security concerns, and international tensions are placing major constraints on the timely and efficient movement of food aid to famine victims in all three countries. For example, landlocked Chad

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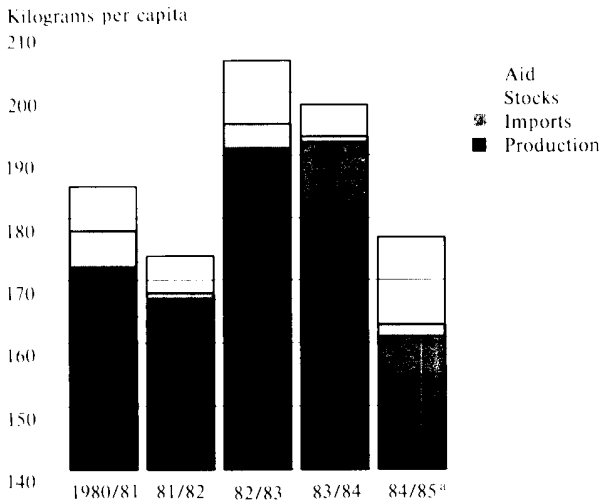
Figure 4
Principal Sources of Food in Ethiopia, 1980/81-1984/85



[a] USDA estimate.

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receives all of its imports, including food aid, through the ports of neighboring Cameroon and Nigeria. [redacted] shipping time can be as little as six days through Nigeria, but poor relations between Lagos and N'Djamena cause frequent delays. Shipment through Cameroon takes 25 days or more. Sudan, on the other hand, has relatively good port facilities, but movement inland is slowed by poor roads and a decrepit railroad. [redacted]

In Ethiopia and Chad, the governments have misused the drought and famine as weapons in their wars against insurgents. For example, the US Embassy reports that the Mengistu regime has given Soviet arms shipments priority over deliveries of food aid, resulting in a 200,000-ton backlog at the port of Aseb. Recently, bilateral relations between Ethiopia and donors, especially the United States, were damaged when Addis Ababa abruptly closed and burned the Ibnat feeding camp—the largest in Ethiopia—in an attempt to speed up the resettlement of 1.5 million northerners, who preferred to remain at the feeding center rather than relocate to southern provinces. Although international outrage eventually forced the government to reopen the center, it has not slowed the resettlement program, which is designed to reduce popular support for the insurgency. As another example, the US refugee coordinator in Addis Ababa has learned that the current Ethiopian military offensive has halted the Eritrean Relief Association's cross-border feeding operations from Sudan and that the Army overran and destroyed a rebel-sponsored, 4,000-hectare agricultural project in early September. [redacted] 25X1

In Chad, WFP representatives confirm refugee reports to a US Embassy factfinding mission that government reprisals against farmers suspected of supporting the rebels have included the destruction of crops and the confiscation of food supplies and livestock. Moreover, government officials have used food aid to compensate for a recent 50-percent salary reduction and to secure the loyalty of the military. [redacted] 25X1

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We do not believe that the food situation in these three countries will improve in the near term. Severe drought, soil erosion, desertification, civil strife, political maneuvering, and a shortage of agricultural inputs will continue to prevent agricultural recovery. In addition, the affected countries do not appear to have either the financial ability or the political will to boost food production by expanding agricultural investments, improving technology, increasing farm credits, and raising prices. All three countries will therefore continue to depend on assistance from abroad to avert total catastrophe. [redacted] 25X1

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North Africa

Food shortages in most North African countries are not nearly as severe as elsewhere on the continent, but massive food imports are still required. Egypt, for example, produces only about 2 million tons of the 8 million tons of wheat that it consumes annually, according to the US agricultural attache. Although North African production is on the rise, reliance on

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Famine in Africa

Photo 1. *Zui Hamussit refugee camp in Gonder Province, Ethiopia, showing effects of drought and desertification.* 25X1

Photo 2. *A nearly dry stream in Chad.* 25X1

Photo 3. *Malnourished infant in a refugee camp (Ethiopia).* 25X1

Photo 4. *A child who has collapsed from hunger in an Ethiopian refugee camp.* 25X1

Photo 5. *Man carrying malnourished child to an Ethiopian refugee camp in hope of finding food.* 25X1

Photo 6. *A child in a refugee camp, October 1984 (northern Ethiopia).* 25X1

Photo 7. *Last moments of life for a famine victim (Ethiopia).* 25X1

Photo 8. *Malnourished infant in a refugee camp (Ethiopia).* 25X1

Photo 9. *Three-year-old famine victim of half normal weight being examined by a Dutch doctor, December 1984.* 25X1

Photo 10. *Ethiopian famine refugees being relocated.* 25X1

Photo 11. *Ethiopians opening bags of grain sent by relief organizations, 1983.* 25X1

Photo 12. *Relief supplies from the United States arrive in Sudan.* 25X1

Photo 13. *Malnourished children receiving food aid that will probably save their lives (Ethiopia).* 25X1

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Famine in Africa

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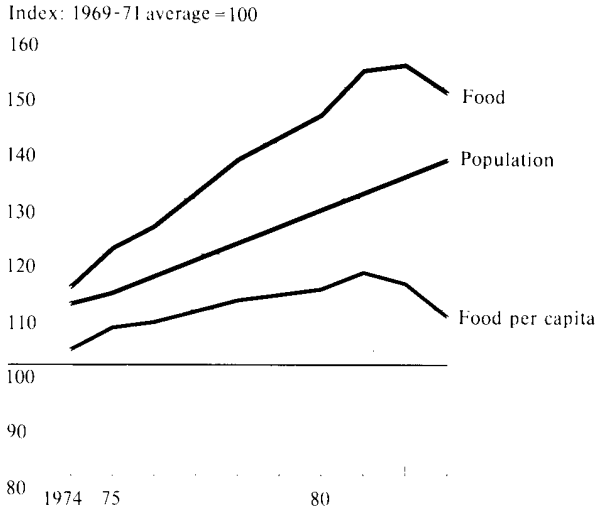
imports financed by expanded commodity exports—principally oil, gas, phosphates, and cotton—will continue, according to a recent US Government report. Only Tunisia, which now produces approximately 60 percent of what it consumes, has much chance of producing enough food for its own needs.

The most serious hunger problem in North Africa is found in Mauritania, where rainfall totals have fallen to as low as 20 percent of normal during the past three years, and the country now produces only 6 percent of its food needs. The US Embassy reports that livestock herds have been reduced by more than half, and the amount of arable land has shrunk from 20 percent of the total area to only 2 percent since the 1960s. At the beginning of the 1980s, Mauritania's per capita caloric supply was less than three-fourths of the average for the rest of the region. Foreign aid pledges of grain for 1985 cover only 83 percent of the calculated need, and actual deliveries through May met barely one-fourth of the requirement. One Mauritanian official predicted early this year that two-thirds of the nation's 1.7 million people would "experience severe famine" by the end of 1985.

Figure 5
Latin America: Trends in Food and Population, 1974-83



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Latin America

A traditional food-exporting region, Latin America became a net cereals importer in the late 1970s, and, according to the FAO, some 15 percent of the 400 million inhabitants are malnourished. Food supplies in such countries as Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and Peru are limited by financial constraints brought on by declining export revenues and large debt payments, according to USDA reports; and DIA medical studies indicate that inadequate food storage, refrigeration, transportation, and marketing facilities add to food supply problems throughout the region. Elsewhere, food supply problems are linked to political and social turmoil. A USDA assessment indicates that political instability contributed to agricultural production declines in El Salvador during the early 1980s, and serious malnutrition was reported among Miskito Indians displaced by the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. We believe that continued civil unrest in Central America will draw resources away from agriculture and disrupt already fragile food distribution networks.

FAO projections of a 3-percent annual increase in food production through 2000 are questionable, in our view, given shortages of land, technology, and investment capital in most Latin American countries. Even if the projections are accurate, the per capita caloric supply will increase only marginally because of a projected 2.6-percent population growth rate. According to another UN study, cities in many Latin American countries will grow even faster—more than 4 percent annually in Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Paraguay. We believe that this urban growth will place even greater demands on the agricultural sector and on food imports, raising the possibility of urban instability if food supplies fall short. Although per capita food production in Latin America did increase 2 percent in 1984, according to the USDA, this jump largely represents a one-time recovery from the sharp declines caused by adverse weather in 1982 and 1983.

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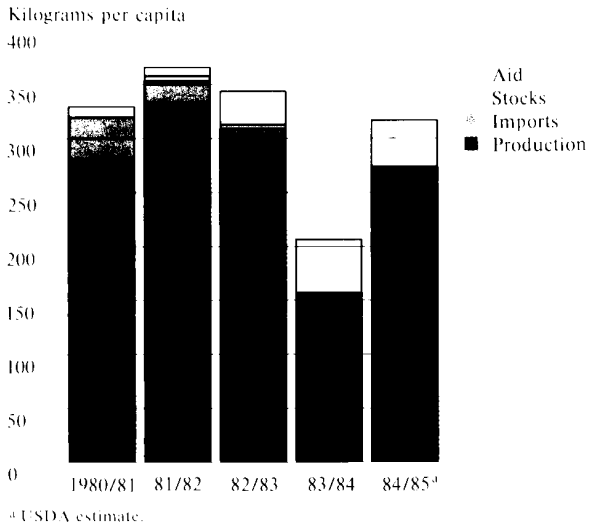
Figure 6
Principal Sources of Food in Bolivia, 1980/81-1984/85



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Malnutrition is scattered throughout Latin America. The most recent FAO data indicate a shortfall in per capita caloric supply ranging from 3 percent in Nicaragua to 14 percent in Haiti. Fifteen countries—including Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru—fail to meet FAO minimum requirements, which range from 2,190 calories per day in Guatemala to 2,390 in Bolivia. These average data, however, mask considerable variation within individual countries. For example, according to Mexico's National Nutrition Institute, despite a national per capita supply of 2,900 calories a day, at least 40 percent of the population is malnourished, 5 percent of the children born each year die from diseases caused by hunger, and half of those that survive suffer physical and mental defects from poor diets.

South America

USDA data indicate that hunger is worst in South America between the equator and 20 degrees south latitude, the region most affected by weather problems in the early 1980s, including the unusually severe 1982-83 El Nino. According to the FAO, the caloric supply in Bolivia was 13 percent below minimum requirements, even before El Nino's floods and droughts reduced agricultural production by 30 percent. In northeastern Brazil—the largest area of poverty in the Western Hemisphere—press reports claim the severe drought of 1979-84 affected the livelihoods of 10 million people and caused up to 250,000 hunger-related deaths. Some 2 million *flagelados* (scourged ones) fled to cities in search of food. Assistance programs have had little effect, in part because Brasilia has refused most international aid in an attempt to motivate its own people toward relief efforts. Although the drought broke in late 1984, extensive flooding in early 1985 increased the threat of disease, left more than 500,000 people homeless, and continues to impede recovery because of damage to the infrastructure. In our view, frequent prolonged droughts—coupled with Brazil's financial problems, inefficient transportation system, and unequal landholding practices—make elimination of chronic hunger in this region unlikely any time soon.

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Food Taboos

All human groups use food taboos to maintain group distinctiveness and help provide members with a sense of identity. Food taboos can also play critical roles in food crises. During and after World War II, for example, many Indians refused to accept Western wheat. Riots broke out, and many died rather than eat the unacceptable food. Assistance organizations often find it difficult to persuade mothers to give their malnourished children cow's milk in societies that perceive it as unclean. In the Dominican Republic, infants, young girls, pregnant, postpartum, and lactating women—who are often the most needy in food-deficit countries—are particularly affected by beliefs that certain foods can be harmful. For example, many pregnant women will not eat hardened rice because they believe it prevents the placenta from detaching.

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Food that is donated or imported at concessionary prices plays an important role in many Latin American countries, although in most cases it is not enough to raise per capita caloric supplies to FAO minimum requirements. USDA estimates that 1.8 million tons of food aid will be needed to meet nutritional requirements across the region in crop year 1985/86. Peru will require nearly half of this aid, some 700,000 tons of grain valued at about $130 million. The Dominican Republic will need 220,000 tons of milk, costing more than $300 million, and Haiti, Guatemala, and Bolivia will each require more than 100,000 tons of grain. The USDA predicts that most of these countries could not absorb all the necessary food aid—even if it were made available—because of inadequate port, transportation, or storage facilities.

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South Asia

During the past two decades, food production in South Asia has increased rapidly—keeping pace with a population growth rate near 2.5 percent—and average grain imports have fallen by more than one-fourth to about 3 percent of consumption. Nevertheless, per capita caloric supply, except in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, remains below FAO minimum requirements, and the region probably will not achieve grain self-sufficiency or adequate diets in the next 10 years.

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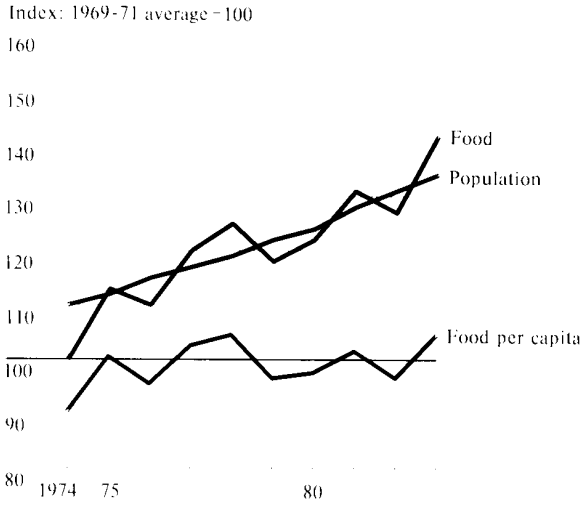
India

Despite the impact of localized drought on agriculture, the increased use of better seed and more fertilizer has doubled wheat production in India since 1970. The production of rice, India's main foodgrain, also increased during this period but at a much slower rate, partly because the precise irrigation required by high-yielding varieties is difficult to achieve in a monsoon climate. As a result, India has large stocks of foodgrains, which can be transported to food-deficit areas when the need arises. Malnutrition persists in India, however, because overall economic growth is slow, and, according to US Government economists, roughly one-third of the population lack the purchasing power to maintain an adequate diet.

Figure 7
South Asia: Trends in Food and Population, 1974-83



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Bangladesh

Bangladesh has not yet fully met its food production targets, but the government policy of building grain stocks paid off handsomely during and after the disastrous 1984 floods. Despite the destruction of more than 1 million tons of crops, a widely predicted famine was averted because of the ready availability of grain stockpiled throughout the country. Because little concessionary food aid was available, however, the depleted stocks had to be replenished at commercial prices, putting the economy under greater strain than normal. The dramatic storm of May 1985, which killed thousands on islands off the Bangladesh coast, affected only a tiny portion of the country and caused relatively little damage to agriculture. Despite the recent success of Bangladesh's food policy, rapid population growth continues to hamper government efforts to achieve a stable food supply and improve nutrition.

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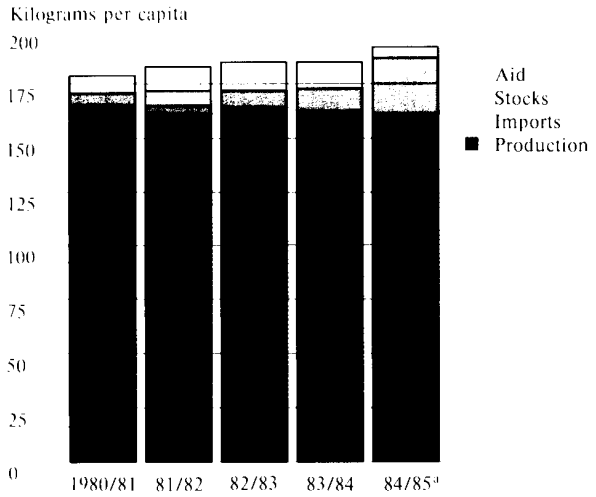
Figure 8
Principal Sources of Food in Bangladesh, 1980/81-1984/85



[a] USDA estimate.

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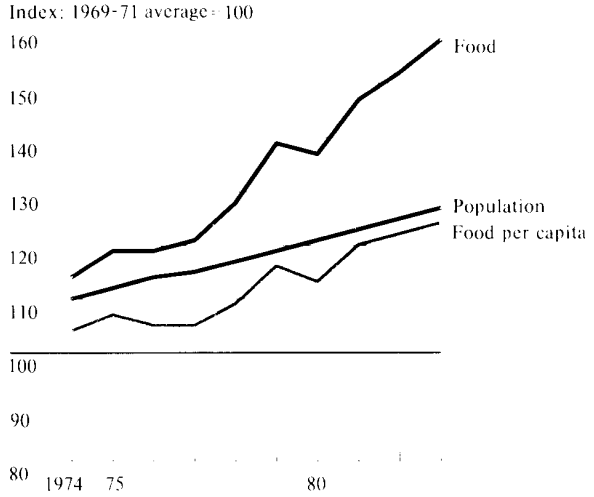
Figure 9
East Asia: Trends in Food and Population, 1974-83



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Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the food supply situation is precarious in many local areas because of drought and the disruption of distribution systems by military operations. These shortages are scattered throughout the country, with most occurring in the east and northeast. Farmers along the Pakistani and Iranian borders continue to abandon fields in response to Soviet military pressure. the Soviets are not following a deliberate scorched-earth policy, crops along some roads and in areas of heavy fighting have been seriously damaged. Because of relatively good harvests elsewhere, however, the overall food supply will not be in serious imbalance. Another factor alleviating pressure on the food supply system is the flight of some 3 million Afghan refugees during the past five years, which has significantly reduced food demands. Over the long term, poor-quality seed, unavailable or overly expensive fertilizer, and the shortage of agricultural manpower—particularly to maintain irrigation systems—are likely to reduce production.

East Asia

In East Asia, serious hunger is limited to areas of adverse weather, war, or political unrest. Rice production has increased by 75 percent since 1965, and the Asian share of world rice imports has declined from 66 percent to 30 percent. Currently, rice prices are at a 10-year low, and stocks are at record highs. The world rice market is very thin, however, and prices are extremely vulnerable to changes in supply or demand. A year of bad weather—almost half of the rice-growing areas are dependent on monsoon rains—could deplete stocks and drive up prices. Because large segments of the Asian population live close to the margin of absolute poverty, small decreases in income or rises in food prices could reduce nutritional levels for millions. Despite East Asia's generally good food production record, we believe the margin of success is slim, and there is still considerable uncertainty about the future.

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Famine in Bangladesh

Photo 1. *Crowd scene at Chittagong, Bangladesh, one of the most densely populated areas in the world.* [redacted]

Photo 2. *Hunger in Bangladesh during mid-1970s' famine.* [redacted]

Photo 3. *Bangladesh child with dead brother, mid-1970s.* [redacted]

Photo 4. *A famine-stricken Bangladesh family seeking food in Dhaka, 1974.* [redacted]

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China

Led by a series of agricultural policy changes and a period of favorable weather, food production in China has increased substantially in recent years. Regional crop specialization, increased agricultural inputs, and new incentives for farmers have meant bumper grain crops since 1979, according to a US Government report. Coupled with record grain imports—we estimate 14.2 million net tons in 1982—China's improving agricultural performance has pushed per capita grain availability to a new high, a major policy goal of the Chinese Government since the late 1970s.

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In spite of these gains, the threat of food shortages has not disappeared in China. FAO data show that per capita caloric supply, only 3 percent above the recommended minimum, did not improve between 1977 and 1981, and we believe large absolute population increases and a lack of additional cultivable land will make further growth in per capita food production increasingly costly. Moreover, Beijing's ability to supplement domestic production with additional food purchases is limited by its food import capacity, which we estimate at only 16 million tons a year. Management errors, unfavorable weather conditions, increased population growth, or a retreat from present agricultural policies could reverse the gains made in recent years and cause a serious food shortage.

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Southeast Asia

In Southeast Asia, the food situation is also improving. As a result of expanded cultivation, improved irrigation, and greater use of chemical fertilizers, per capita food production rose by an average 16 percent during the 1970s, according to the World Bank, and caloric supplies have increased in all the non-Communist countries—most hover just above the FAO-recommended minimum. Although they appear encouraging, these statistical data often mask gross inequities in income distribution, which affect all Southeast Asian countries and prevent households throughout the region from receiving an adequate diet.

The Philippines. In the Philippines, where the production of major cereals is up 12 percent since crop year 1980/81, food imports reached an alltime high in 1984/85, and the daily per capita caloric supply is above the FAO-recommended minimum; hunger, nonetheless, is still a problem. Inequitable income distribution prevents many people from receiving an adequate diet in spite of production gains. The bottom 40 percent of the population earns only 10 percent of the total income, 39 percent of all families live below the World Bank's poverty line, and the USDA expects per capita cereal consumption to fall as the current financial crisis weakens the consumers' ability to buy food. Government efforts since the early 1970s to reduce the disparities in income distribution and regional economic development have had minimal results. Unless the government pursues aggressive policies to reduce inequities in regional development and to raise incomes among the poor, we believe more Filipinos will become increasingly vulnerable to the

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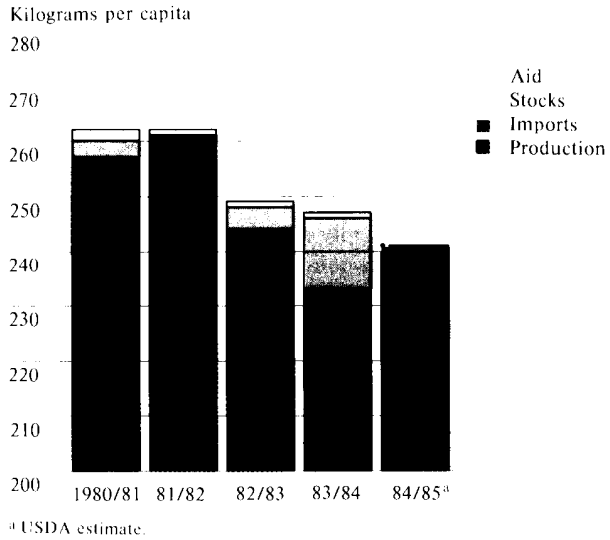
Figure 10
Principal Sources of Food in the Philippines, 1980/81-1984/85



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threat of malnutrition. Inflation or poor harvests could further undermine the ability of the poor to purchase sufficient food.

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Indochina. In the Communist countries—Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia—conditions are worse. The most recent World Bank data show that the caloric supply in all three countries is below the FAO-recommended minimums. Although evidence indicates that per capita food production is rising in Laos and Vietnam, during 1984 Vietnamese food production fell. In both countries, the food supply remains vulnerable, and poor weather, slow economic growth, or ill-advised policy decisions could reduce nutritional levels further.

Cambodia, mired in conflict and still recovering from the devastation of the Pol Pot years, may be the most hunger-vulnerable country in East Asia. Despite limited information on the food situation and estimates of rice production that vary by as much as 30 percent, we believe the level of nutrition in Cambodia is poor at best. World Bank figures for 1982 show that per capita food production is only slightly more than one-half what it was in 1970. the 1984/85 rice harvest will be the smallest since 1979/80—the year hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled to the Thai border to escape famine. Although we do not expect similar mass migrations this year, a recent UN in-country assessment indicates that the food situation in Cambodia is not improving and that major health problems are the result of food shortages. Conditions in Cambodia will probably not improve until the political-military situation is resolved and agricultural development assumes precedence. In the meantime, Cambodian agriculture will remain heavily dependent on favorable weather to sustain even marginal levels of nutrition.

UN border relief operations deliver rice to Khmer refugees along the Thai-Cambodian border, 1984.

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Outlook

The prospects for satisfying future food needs in the Third World, while good in some parts of Asia, are quite poor in much of Africa and parts of South America. In the absence of effective government agricultural policies, political stability, good weather, favorable world markets, and controlled population growth, we believe that food-deficit countries throughout the Third World will continue to struggle with the problems of food security well into the next century:

- Government policies that favor industry over agriculture or place controls on farm prices will limit food production or reduce purchasing power in such countries as Egypt, Mozambique, the Philippines, and Ghana.

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- Household poverty, in countries where income distribution is highly skewed, will continue to restrict most Third World residents' access to available national food supplies.

- Insurgencies and government counterinsurgent activities will limit food production and disrupt fragile distribution networks in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Lebanon, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Cambodia, El Salvador, and elsewhere.

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- Recurring droughts will continue to hamper agricultural recovery in much of Sub-Saharan Africa if the present climatic trend continues. Monsoon Asia will also experience occasional harvest failures because of unreliable summer rains, and El Nino will pose a periodic threat to food production throughout the world.

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- Overgrazing, overcropping, and deforestation will remain a threat to productive farmland in arid regions. Under current conditions, Sub-Saharan Africa, especially the Sahelian countries, will suffer the greatest damage.

- Massive foreign debts, low market prices for export commodities, and unfavorable exchange rates will limit the food-importing capabilities of such countries as Somalia, Sudan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, and Honduras.

- Inadequate port and storage facilities, poor or nonexistent road and rail networks, or management failures will place major constraints on food distribution and the delivery of agricultural support services in many countries, including Kenya, Burundi, Sudan, Chad, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Brazil.

- Rapid population growth and the demands of expanding urban areas will outpace increased food production in much of Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. The most severe problems will occur in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe.

While short-term government policies cannot effectively address some of these challenges (climate, foreign debt, population growth, or insurgency), a number are amenable to policy intervention by affected governments and concerned donor countries. Small-scale projects to improve agricultural practices could slow the process of desertification, reclaim eroded hillsides, and restore valuable watersheds lost to deforestation. A commitment to free trade and market-determined prices would revive the incentive of small farmers and increase food production. Programs to improve storage and transportation infrastructure would open markets, reduce the cost of agricultural inputs, and help stabilize the price of food for farmer and consumer alike.

Implications for the United States

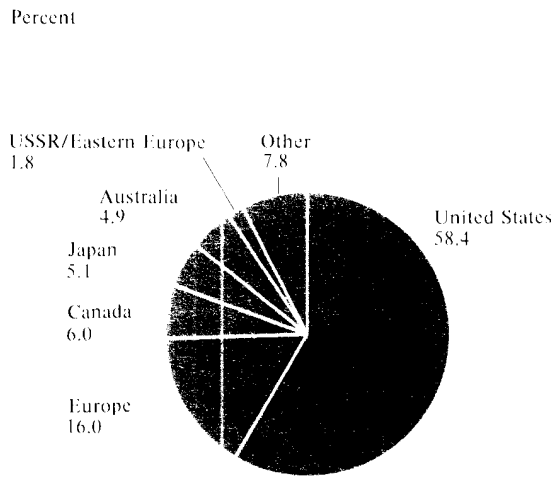
Hunger in the Third World will directly affect a number of US interests:

- Food shortages contribute to political disaffection throughout the world and fuel insurgencies in countries strategically important to the United States. For example, we believe that Sudan's participation in the Rapid Deployment Force program could be jeopardized if hunger problems worsen and pose a threat to the Transitional Military Council. In the Philippines, the government's weak response to poverty and malnutrition will strengthen the Communist insurgency.

- Food shortages inevitably limit the productive capacity of affected nations and reduce their potential as trading partners for US businesses.

- Hunger perpetuates the need for humanitarian assistance. Unless food-deficit countries increase agricultural production, the demand for US food aid and technical assistance will remain heavy.

Figure 11
Principal Food Aid Donors, July 1981-June 1982



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Appendix A

Glossary

Malnutrition. Any nutritional disorder. 25X1

Chronic undernutrition. The consumption of an inadequate amount of calories over a long period. Chronic undernutrition can lead to severe weight loss, high mortality rates among infants of affected mothers, blindness, endemic cretinism, and anemia, which increases susceptibility to life-threatening infections and the risk of mortality during pregnancy. 25X1

Acute malnutrition. The dramatic reduction of all or specific nutrients. Acute malnutrition can be life threatening in the short term and opens the door to endemic diseases that would not be significant public health threats under conditions of adequate nutrition. 25X1

FAO-recommended minimum caloric supply. The number of calories necessary to sustain a person at normal levels of activity and health, given the age and sex distributions of the population, average body weights, and environmental temperatures. The level of nutrition of a population is estimated by dividing the available per capita caloric supply, derived from food balance sheets, by the FAO-established minimum per capita requirement. When calories available exceed the requirement, the population is assumed to be adequately nourished. The FAO suggests that 110 percent of the minimum requirement is necessary to compensate for distributional inequities. 25X1

El Nino. An abnormal heating of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, so named—The Child—because its warm current is often felt in western South America at Christmas time. Occurring every two to 10 years, its cause is unknown but may be linked to an eastward dislocation of the usual low-pressure cell over Indonesia and a weakening of the high-pressure cell east of Tahiti. Severe or prolonged El Ninos can disrupt weather patterns around the world. 25X1

Desertification. The spread or intensification of desert conditions caused by increasing aridity and destructive agricultural practices. It is characterized by the reduction of biomass, accelerated soil deterioration, and increased hazards for human occupancy. 25X1

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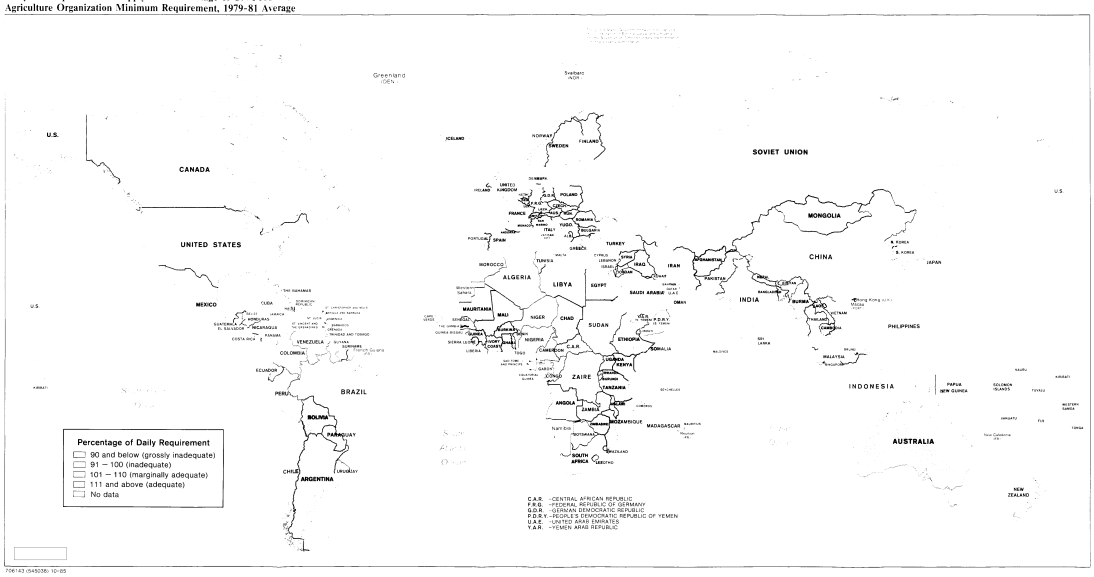
Figure 12
Daily Per Capita Caloric Supply as a Percentage of UN Food and Agriculture Organization Minimum Requirement, 1979-81 Average



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