Lecture 3: The world food problem

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify regions currently affected by food shortages

2. To discuss global trends and regional variations in hunger and malnutrition

3. To summarize ideas about causes of world food problem

4. To identify possible solutions to world food problem
What is the world food problem?

- Famine?
- Hunger

- Food Security
  - “All people, at all times, have the physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1999)
  - Amartya Sen - food entitlement and access to enough food for a healthy lifestyle
Food crisis looms in East Africa

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa

More than 14 million people in the Horn of Africa need food aid because of drought and rocketing food and fuel prices, the United Nations has warned.

The UN World Food Programme says it urgently needs $400m (£200m) to prevent starvation in the east African region.

**Ethiopia:** 4.6m need emergency food support. Another 5.7m need extra food or cash.

**Somalia:** 2.6m facing acute food shortages - could rise to 3.5m by end of 2008.

**Kenya:** 1.2m need urgent food supplies.

**Uganda:** 707,000 in dire need of food.

**Djibouti:** 80,000 facing acute food shortages.
How to find regions currently affected by chronic food shortages

1. INTERNET WEB SITES
   www.worldhunger.org
   www.bread.org
   www.alertnet.org
   www.alertnet.org
   www.fao.org

2. TV NEWS AND DOCUMENTARIES
   www.bbc.co.uk

3. TEXT BOOKS, MAGAZINES, ETC
Burma (Myanmar)

Cyclone Nargis
May 2008

Satellite images show area flooded
Haiti 2008

Food riots in April bring down the Government

Multiple impacts of hurricanes and tropical storms
Gustav, Hannah, Ike
Hunger and malnutrition

- **Malnutrition – bad nourishment**
  - protein-energy malnutrition (PEM)
  - micro-nutrient deficiency (vitamin and mineral)
  - obesity?

- **PEM**
  - Most lethal form of hunger/malnutrition
  - Lack of calories and protein
The Dimensions of World Hunger

- What is the magnitude of the problem?
  - FAO estimates
  - Vulnerable groups

- Geographical patterns of hunger and malnutrition
Undernourished population by region, 2001-03

Source: FAO “State of Food and Agriculture, 2006”
Percentage of undernourished population, by region, 2001-2003

Source: FAO “The State of Food and Agriculture, 2006”
World hunger: increasing or decreasing?

- 852 million = numbers decreased by 10 million since 1990-2
  - But regional variations in these changes

- On-line data and analysis
  - FAO’s annual “State of Food Insecurity reports”
Regional variations in hunger can be depicted by maps.

FAO Reports

The existence of hunger in a world of plenty is unacceptable. Taking action to eradicate hunger is the responsibility of all. It can be done.
Trends in World Food Production

Since 1950
- world food production has increased by 100%
- world population has increased by 75%

But regional disparities and imbalance
The causes of hunger?

- Overpopulation theories
  - Rev. Thomas Malthus
  - Neo-Malthusian
Global Carrying Capacity?

Defining carrying capacity

Is there an absolute limit to the number of people the world can support?
Traditional Factors contributing to world hunger

- War
- Environmental disasters – drought, hurricanes
- Overpopulation
- Poor crop yields in developing countries

- Poverty
  - Key to achieving food security is eradicating poverty
Recent Factors contributing to world hunger

- High food prices
- High oil prices
- Food used for biofuel
- Climate change
- World economic crisis
Solutions to world food problem

- Solutions depend on what the problem is:
  - Too many people in world?
  - Not enough food produced?
Solutions to world food problem?

- Increasing world food production
  - Increase amount of agricultural land
  - Increase crop yields
  - Increase frequency of cropping
  - Reduce post-harvest losses
  - New/alternative food sources

- Controlling world population growth

- Changing food consumption patterns
Some more websites

www.wfp.org
www.globalissues.org
www.bread.org
www.foodfirst.org
www.dieoff.org
www.reliefweb
References

