

- FrontPage Magazine - <http://frontpagemag.com> -

## The Egyptian Crisis' Green Roots

Posted By [Rich Trzupek](#) On February 2, 2011 @ 12:25 am In [Daily Mailer](#), [FrontPage](#) | [3 Comments](#)

Whenever people rise up in mass to try to oust their rulers, there is often a predictable set of circumstances at the source of the rebellion. One of the most common causes of societal discontent, the very factor that led to the ongoing Egyptian protests, is hunger. Unfortunately, worldwide global warming fanaticism has only contributed to this plight. By consuming ever-expansive portions of the world food supply for the production of green bio-fuels, the left has increased the cost of food for those who can least afford it. This has caused much undue suffering for the world's poor and significantly exacerbated Third World instability — and Egypt is no exception.

The left has never understood the idea that always putting a little aside in the expectation of a rainy day might be a good thing to do. That fact is obvious when it comes to money, but perhaps less so when it comes to necessities like food. As the world's food crisis has grown over the past decade, it occurred to me that leftist policy makers would have been exceedingly easy to beat in the 1980s computer game entitled "Santa Paravia and Fiumaccio." For those readers too young to remember it, the game was a simple economic/political simulation set in Renaissance times. As the leader of a city-state, one of your primary responsibilities was to ensure that the people always had enough grain to feed the masses. So, if you intended to win, you always put enough grain aside in storage to hedge against a bad harvest or excessive spoilage. Because, once the people started getting hungry, revolt was sure to follow.

Today, we're seeing that effect in Egypt and we're going to see more of it throughout the world unless we can fix the growing worldwide food crisis. We've been skating on thin ice, in terms of food supply, for more than a decade now. Between 2000 and 2010, the [World Food Price Index](#), the inflation-adjusted measure of how expensive food is across the globe, almost doubled. In 2000 the index sat at a value of 90. By 2010, the index had risen to a value of 172. That's a 91% increase in the cost of food over the course of a decade. Even before a devastating earthquake rocked their capital, poor Haitians were reduced to eating mud pies – literally – because they could not afford real food. A heartbreaking [2008 story that appeared in National Geographic](#) documents the situation in Haiti.

Sad as it is to say, the poor of Haiti are so used to living in conditions of extreme poverty that they don't have the spirit or energy to rebel against the ruling class of their nation. Not so in Egypt, which – by Middle Eastern standards anyway – has been a relatively well-to-do country. Last year, droughts in Russia and the Ukraine, combined with reduced harvests in the United States, Canada and Australia, sent already unnaturally high food prices soaring. If there was simmering discontent over the Mubarak regime, then this particular straw – one that hits so close to home for so many people – was more than enough to break the rebellious camel's back. It's one thing to be led by an octogenarian who has been in power for thirty years and who is too closely associated with the "Great Satan" for Islamic comfort. It's quite another thing to endure such humiliations while one's own stomach is growling and one's children are going hungry as well.

So, how did we get here? Why isn't there enough food to go around any longer? Part of the answer is that [Norman Borlaug's](#) "green revolution" has lost a great deal of momentum over the last ten years. Crop yields continue to increase, but not by nearly so dramatic a rate as we have seen previously. The larger answer involves what crops we have been growing and why we have been growing them.

---

---

Between 1999 and 2009, the amount of cropland used to grow wheat in America dropped by over 3 million acres, or almost 5 per cent. That's the good news, for it gets worse as we drill down. The amount of land used to grow rice dropped over 15 per cent; for oats, over 30 per cent; for rye, over 20 per cent; for peanuts and edible beets, over 25 per cent; and for sugarbeets, a shade under 25 per cent. These are some of the commodities that are used, directly and indirectly, to produce the food that once fed the world. And, those statistics are just a few highlights, or lowlights if you will, of the overall trend. Farmers are growing less and less crops used to produce food, in deference to government-subsidized energy crop production, chiefly corn and soybeans. Overall, the amount of United States cropland used to grow basic food commodities — crops other than corn and soybeans — has decreased by over 22 million acres since 1999.

Do some of the corn and soybeans produced enter the food chain? Sure they do. But the reason that more and more American farmers are switching to growing these crops has nothing to do with feeding the world, it's all about making more money, courtesy of the American taxpayer, who ultimately pays the bill for the bio-fuel incentive programs that make growing energy crops more profitable than providing nutrition to the globe.

But don't take my word for it, consider instead the viewpoint of the organization that has been pushing global warming hysteria harder than anyone this side of Al Gore: the United Nations. [According to the UN](#), almost 10 per cent of world grain production — that's about 100 million metric tons per year — goes for bi-fuel production. They expect that number to double by 2018. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization says that "competition between the three Fs (food, feed and fuel) is expected to intensify," which is probably about as close in tone to criticism that one branch of the UN is going to use about another branch: the International Panel on Climate Change. Lord Christopher Monckton told me, quite privately, that one UN official associated with the former agency called the bio-fuel craze an abomination, because of the effects that it has had on the poor.

It's amusing to note that the left roundly criticized Glenn Beck for predicting that food shortages would lead to rationing and civil unrest. Yet, if anything, Beck was behind the curve. We're only beginning to pay the piper of the left's pursuit of green energy fancies. The Egyptian crises — however it turns out — could have been and should have been avoided, if only our leaders could have been troubled to think a little bit ahead of the game. Instead, both parties have bet the farm on the proposition that nothing would ever go wrong and thus there was no need to insure the national interest against the possibility of disaster. Thanks to foolish policies and amazing hubris, the world is slowly starting to crumble around us. The question that remains is a simple one: will we — can we — wake up in time to deal with the crisis?

---

Article printed from FrontPage Magazine: <http://frontpagemag.com>

URL to article: <http://frontpagemag.com/2011/02/02/the-egyptian-crisis-green-roots/>