

billions of US dollars are spent on the international space station, very little money is available for the control of diseases, especially those that affect the poor in the Third World. Pharmaceutical companies that put profit over philanthropy are not interested in developing drugs for diseases that affect mainly the poor. But all this may change with global warming if malaria were to spread into parts of Europe and USA and strike the rich!

Andrew Spielman and Michael d'Antonio have produced a truly fascinating, highly informative and immensely readable book aimed at a much wider audience, about a tiny insect that more than any other animal on earth has so adversely and profoundly affected the lives of so many human beings for so long. You may not love the mosquito, but by the time you finished reading the book, you will not fail to develop a deep appreciation for the female of the species.

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The State of Food and Agriculture – 2002: Agriculture and Global Public Goods: Ten Years After the Earth Summit. FAO. Rome. 227 pp.

FAO's annual reports on the State of Food and Agriculture have usually three sections covering the current agricultural situation, regional reviews and some special topics of contemporary relevance. The 2002 report follows this pattern. Since 2002 marks the 10th anniversary of the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, two special topics have been chosen for detailed analysis. The first topic relates to the role of agriculture and land in the provision of global public goods, and the second, to carbon sequestration through land use change and its impact on rural poverty.

Globally, there were 815 million undernourished people in the world in 1997–99, of whom 61% live in Asia and 24% in sub-Saharan Africa. To achieve the goal set at the World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996, the number of under-

nourished people would have to decrease by an annual rate of 22 million. Progress in achieving this target has been very poor, with only about 8 million coming out of the hunger trap each year. Also, millions of people still need emergency food assistance as a result of natural and human-caused disasters. Other than parts of Africa, the countries facing serious food shortages are, Afghanistan, Iraq, Mongolia and North Korea. But for the emergency food provided through the World Food Programme, the death toll due to famine would have been high.

On the production front, the world cereal output in 2001 was about 1880 million tonnes, which represents an increase of 1.2% over the 2000 level. World cereal trade in 2001–02 is likely to be of the order of 236 million tonnes. World cereal stocks at the end of 2002 are likely to reach 587 million tonnes, about 8% less than the previous season's level.

The total world commercial fish production in 2000 was 130.25 million tonnes, an increase of 11.9% since 1995, reflecting enormous gains in aquaculture production, particularly in China. The Report provides regionally disaggregated data. Also, a CD ROM containing the Time Series data for SOFA 2002 is appended with the Report.

The Report also deals with issues relating to the renegotiation of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) based on the agreement arrived at the Ministerial meeting held at Doha in November 2001. If trade is to become not only free but also fair, it is essential that the discussions on the revised AOA take into consideration the following issue: It is well known that OECD countries provide subsidies to the extent of one billion dollars per day to their farmers. The USA has further increased farm subsidies in its Farm Bill of 2002. Obviously, these subsidies are being adjusted against Blue box payments and Green box measures. Their subsidies do not seem to fall within the purview of Amber box measures, which alone are considered to be trade distorting.

In the current Geneva round of negotiations, it may be useful to propose the following two alternatives: First, all boxes may be abolished and the do's and don'ts with reference to trade distortion and unfair trade practices may be spelt out in clear and unambiguous terms. Second, if the above is not acceptable, a fourth box relating to Sustainable Livelihoods (Livelihood Security Box) may be introduced, which will empower deve-

loping nations facing the challenge of providing livelihoods to the rural population to place restrictions on imports, where there is convincing evidence that such imports will erode job/livelihood opportunities in their countries. Since over 66% of the population of many developing countries including India depend upon agriculture (crop and animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and agro-forestry and agro-processing) for their livelihoods, trade which leads to the destruction of rural jobs/livelihoods will further enhance poverty and hunger and will make the achievement of the UN Millennium goals in the areas of poverty reduction and hunger elimination, impossible. The result will be social disintegration because of a further increase in rich-poor divide. Globally, the continuation of the present situation where a few million farm families in industrialized countries, supported by heavy inputs of technology, capital and subsidy, compete with over a billion small farmers, having little access to technology, credit and adequate post-harvest infrastructure, will not help to make free trade an instrument of poverty eradication. Trade should not only be free but also fair to the primary producers in predominantly agricultural developing countries. The percentage of population dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods should be the major criterion for eligibility for using the provisions of the proposed Livelihood Security Box. The minimum could be 50% of the population.

On the whole, the main message of this Report is that the necessary political will and action to end hunger are still to emerge. Poverty and inequity are increasing. The goals set by Governments in inter-governmental conferences are not being achieved. If governments of developing countries continue to neglect their fundamental obligation to provide opportunities for a healthy and productive life to all their citizens, social disintegration and violence will grow. In this context, it will be useful to remember what the Roman Philosopher Seneca said 2000 years ago, 'A hungry person listens neither to religion nor reason, nor is bent by any prayers' Where hunger rules, peace cannot prevail.

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