

There are a number of groups that work on programmes to deliver plant-based food and agriculture to relieve hunger in countries around the globe: please give them your support.

VEGFAM promotes the benefits of a vegan diet and lifestyle for feeding the world in an environmentally-friendly way. VEGFAM provides relief to people suffering hunger due to drought, flood, war and other emergencies. VEGFAM can be contacted on 01811 820203 or see their website at www.veganvillage.co.uk/vv/vegfam

HIPPO (Help International Plant Protein Organisation) works to encourage and facilitate the use of plant protein foods instead of animal foods. It helps poor communities to produce their own food and to be self-sufficient. HIPPO has developed strong links with organisations and individuals in several African countries and through them works to provide advice and assistance in the production and supply of plant foods, especially soya (not GM) for some of the poorest people in the world. HIPPO is also contributing funds to an orphanage in Kenya where the children are being raised as vegan. HIPPO can be contacted on 01267 241547 or by e-mail at HIPPOCHARITY@ukgateway.net

- 🌱 Join MCL and receive our quarterly journal *New Leaves* to keep in touch with other members and share ideas for a more compassionate way of life.
- 🌱 Adopt a vegan diet and use MCL's *Food Target* (on our *Food & Agriculture* leaflet and website) to review what you eat to see how you can challenge your own dietary habits.
- 🌱 Try to grow at least some of your own food, at home, on an allotment or on a shared plot and try some of MCL's recipes based on home-grown ingredients.

Further information from MCL (all prices include p&p to UK)

Food for Everyone - booklet, £1.20

Recipes from New Leaves - booklet, £1.20

More recipes from New Leaves (including quinoa and acorns) - booklet, £1.20

Recipes for a Sustainable Future - booklet, £1.20

PLEASE SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR OTHER TITLES AND ORDER DETAILS

For further information please contact:

www.mclveganway.org.uk

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Feeding the World

At the World Food Summit in 1996, world leaders pledged that, by 2015, the number of people in the world who do not have enough to eat would be reduced by half. Some progress has been made, but still every 3 seconds a child dies of malnutrition, and 24 million people starve to death every year. Globally, more than 1 billion people living in mostly rural areas exist on less than a US dollar a day. If everyone in the world ate a plant-based diet and food economies were organised more fairly, there would be no need for anyone to be hungry. Two-thirds of the British cereal crop is fed to livestock annually: this could be used to feed 250 million people each year. Livestock consume half of the grain produced on the planet.

Meeting food needs - or profit and greed?

Much of the food now sold in the UK comes from parts of the world where the people who grow the crops once depended upon them to meet their own nutritional needs. Now these people are likely to be exploited as workers in cash crop industries - driven off the land they have traditionally worked, they are often paid a pittance whilst exposed to dangerous conditions: working with unsafe machinery and suffering unregulated exposure to deadly chemicals.

Cash crop industries are ripping the heart out of thousands of traditional rural agrarian communities, using agricultural methods which are not sustainable and lead to soil erosion and degradation. They are heavily dependent on chemical herbicides and pesticides and other undesirable biotechnologies, and are increasingly including GM crops. Misleading claims have been made that GM foods will help with food shortages in developing countries. What is actually happening is that international biotech companies are seizing control of much of the world's food supply. Using strategies such as patenting seeds that need branded chemicals to grow (marketed by those self-same companies) and developing crops that are grown from what are known as 'terminator seeds' that prevent farmers from saving their own seed each year, has shifted control of the local food supply out of the hands of ordinary people and into the hands of big business.

The nutrition transition and exporting bad habits

People in developing countries have come to see meat and animal product consumption as something to aspire to. For example, in China consumption of cereals such as millet and sorghum fell by one fifth in the 1990s, whilst consumption of animal products and

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sugar rose sharply. This trend, often termed the 'nutrition transition' is encouraged by trans-national fast food companies who have become expert at gearing their marketing to new potential customers by developing products which are supposedly 'culturally sensitive'. As a result, the typical Western patterns of disease relating to over-consumption of animal products are being exported to developing countries. Now, the new manifestation of malnutrition is over-nutrition rather than under-nutrition and diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes and obesity are growing at faster rates in developing nations than developed countries.

The massive supermarket companies which dominate the food supply chain in the West have now saturated our markets and are looking for new territories in which to expand their pernicious empires. In Latin America and South Africa, supermarket chains now control between 50 and 60% of food marketing. This has knock-on effects with loss of business to small local producers and street food vendors, and closure of small local shops and markets, thereby removing autonomy and the scope for generating income and employment within local communities, further undermining food sovereignty and security.

The effects of globalisation

Since 1994, trade in food and agricultural products has come under the jurisdiction of the GATT - the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs - governed by the World Trade Organisation. For years, the WTO, World Bank and International Monetary Fund have used a variety of tactics, including conditions attached to loans and aid, to force developing countries to open their markets to external competition and to stop them assisting their own farmers. The livelihoods of billions of people in developing countries depend on agriculture: 97% of the world's farmers live in developing countries and they make up a large majority of the world's poorest people. Poorer countries have been forced to lift import barriers on the most staple crops and their markets have been flooded with cheap imports that originate from heavily subsidised producers in the United States and the European Union. There is no doubt that an overhaul of the world's trade system is needed in order to give small farmers in developing countries a better chance to get income from a fair price paid for cash crops, unimpeded by restrictive trade sanctions and internal subsidies from developed countries.

Many governments and land-owners in developing countries are being seduced into exploiting the export potential of cash crops, such as soya from Brazil. This sort of agricultural production can only be achieved through large-scale industrialised methods of agricultural production which devastate the livelihoods of small-scale farmers, forcing them to become consumers instead of producers. Each community should have a say in how they want to

produce and consume food. Some local food movements have been emerging which are fighting these trends. In Andhra Pradesh in India, projects are helping farmers take action for themselves, creating self-sustaining farm systems and improving rates of food production. Schemes such as community seed banks and grain funds, often run by committees of women, have transformed local food production and storage. So successful have these schemes been that even in times of drought when other parts of the same state were having to import food, these communities have been replenishing their food stores.

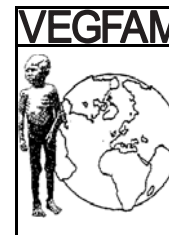
Climate change and global food supplies

The effects of global climate change to a deteriorating situation in world food supply needs to be highlighted. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is dealing with an increasing number of people affected by natural disasters, as compared to the victims of wars and conflicts. In their 1998 annual report it was noted that "the floods in China were made deadlier by the loss of 85% of the forests in the Yangtse river basin" and "Hurricane Mitch found increased grounds for destruction because of large scale deforestation". Despite the fact that the WFP acknowledges the importance of trees, its own food aid programmes continue to depend heavily on grain and soya crops, often grown in vast arable monocultures and dependent on the use of artificial herbicides and pesticides which damage human, environmental and soil health. In Brazil, large areas of tropical rain forest have been cleared to plant soya crops. These short-term solutions fail to acknowledge the need for sustainable, long-term alternatives.

Each country, region and locality needs to be able to control what patterns of agricultural production, food supply and consumption should be put in place to best ensure that the nutritional needs of its population are met.

So what can you do?

Transform your diet: eat vegan, plant-based foods that are grown as near to your home as possible. Where this is not possible consider purchasing fairly-traded goods. Fair trade shows how the world food economy could work. Produce comes from small-scale producers who work within a co-operative or worker-run organisation. These organisations ensure reasonable standards of working environment and secure much fairer levels of income for their produce through companies who are willing to pay a premium for goods which are guaranteed to be fairly-traded. About 500,000 farmers are working in 36 of the world's poorest countries in fair trade related schemes.



Support campaigns that call for a reform of unjust world trade systems.