

# Today's U.S. farm/food policy opposes national sovereignty, food sufficiency

by Marcia Merry Baker

The latest official formulation of U.S. food policy is the July 1996 paper, "U.S. Contribution to World Food Security; the U.S. Position Paper Prepared for the World Food Summit." The document is a rationalization for the denial of the sovereign right of a nation to run its economy and develop its agricultural sector, and to produce food to feed its population. If this policy had been applied 200 years ago to the new United States—as London tried and failed to do at the time—we would not be here today to discuss it.

The U.S. food document was prepared by an Interagency Working Group from the Departments of Agriculture and State, and is described in its "executive summary" as a means "to spur a comprehensive review of its policies and actions—past and present—as they relate to global and domestic food security."

In fact, such a comprehensive review is a straightforward matter, because today's U.S. government farm and food policies are almost all uniformly bad; they should be changed. The U.S. government practices, defended in the Food Summit position paper, are the very ones now undermining food supplies, and agriculture output potential, both in the United States, and around the world. To continue these policies, is to commit murder.

See *Documentation*, below, for the eight essential points of the U.S. food position paper. Point by point, when translated out of official doublespeak, the position paper rationalizes how the U.S. government—the Executive branch and Congress both—is backing the looting and monopoly practices of the cartels that control foodstuffs, farm chemicals, seeds, animal seedstock, and fuels, giving the cartels sweeping powers, all in the name of various euphemistic excuses and lies—for example, that "free" trade is beneficial for the citizenry, or that markets are governed by "supply and demand." Meantime, ratios of necessary inputs for national agricultural sector productivity (infrastructure, machinery, transport) are degenerating.

U.S. farm policy has shifted radically over the past 50 years, from policies based on the premise of national economic sovereignty, and the desirability of national food self-sufficiency, to policies based on the supremacy of "market-based economics," namely commodities networks, mostly centered in London. In effect, the U.S. agriculture and food sectors function as parts of a neo-British Empire of food control.

The result of this process is evident in the 800 million people suffering from lack of food. The U.S. food policy paper denounces this suffering, saying, it is "a staggering number of people." And, "This is simply unacceptable." But the prevailing policies are the cause.

We here provide the context for understanding the stated U.S. food policy positions, in terms of key shifts in U.S. food policy, and underlying premises of the economy, from the 1940s to the 1990s.

## 1940s: parity price-based farm policy

Freedom from hunger was one of the "four freedoms" promulgated by Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he was the first President to implement parity-based agriculture policy, premised on the concept that building up the national farm sector was the best food security.

During the wartime years of the 1940s, U.S. agricultural output soared, under federal policies that mandated farmers would receive a parity-based price for lists of specified commodities. "Parity" was defined as the price for a commodity that would give the farmer a fair return—enough to cover his costs of production, household needs, and capitalization to ensure future production. The base period for what would be a parity price was selected as 1909-14 (and could be set to other benchmarks), to reflect a desired ratio between prices farmers received for their output, and prices they paid for inputs, investments, and living expenses.

Between 1939 and 1944, there was an unparalleled increase in output per farm worker of 42% in gross farm production in the Plains states, producing enough food to feed an additional 50 million people (over the 1935-39 average). Increased volumes of food went to civilian, military, and Lend Lease foreign aid use. The wartime parity policy (at about 90% of parity) continued until Dec. 31, 1948.

In 1949, the Agricultural Adjustment Act set a sliding scale of between 75-90% and 60-90% of parity, depending on the commodity, and depending on its supply volume each year; and other updates were made, including adding in the cost of farm labor to the calculations. The 1949 Agriculture Act also provided the first authority for donating surplus agricultural commodities abroad through U.S. voluntary relief organizations, for humanitarian purposes.

By contrast, the 1996 U.S. position paper makes no refer-



*Architects of the policy of using food as a weapon: David Rockefeller (left) and Henry Kissinger. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund financed the creation of Lester Brown's Worldwatch Institute, among other Malthusian think-tanks.*

ence to parity; the U.S. government now opposes parity as “outmoded.” (Technically, in the 1996 U.S. farm law, it is specified that should the farm law expire with no replacement, in the year 2003, then U.S. law will revert to the 1949 standing law of parity scales. USDA statisticians still make parity price calculations for commodities.)

The U.S. government also opposes the parity-concept for nation-building in foreign policy. Points 1, 4, and 7 in the position paper refer, in practice, to U.S. support for nations making their food supplies dependent on imports and exports by cartel companies.

### **1950s: Parity phased out**

During the 1950s, parity-based farm policy was phased out in the United States itself, under pressure from private financial interests, then building up commodity cartel bases of operations. Cargill executives fanned out from Minnesota, setting up sister companies, such as Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), created by Dwayne Andreas, from Cargill. The public supported this, though there was still popular sympathy for supporting a national family farm sector, national food self-sufficiency, and humanitarian food aid for emergencies.

In 1954, the Public Law “Food for Peace” was enacted, sponsored by Minnesota Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D), and instigated by Minnesota cartel interests. Cargill, ADM, Pillsbury, and other private companies, which, under PL 480 mechanisms, came to receive steady contracts, paid by the federal government, to deliver food aid abroad, up to the present time.

The passage of PL 480—the “Agricultural and Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954,” reflected the still-prevalent view that U.S. food productivity should be used for good purposes abroad. PL 480 legislation continues to the present day. ADM and other companies have been repeatedly convicted of over-charging and short-weighting government food aid; but still they are paid to handle all PL 480 aid.

U.S. 1996 position paper policy statement 3, links food aid to “good-faith willingness of nations to adopt necessary policy reforms.” The term *reforms* means that a nation should give way on any policy matter of food, agriculture, and trade, to submit to the interests of the international food cartel companies. U.S. food aid is in use as an enforcement weapon, on target nations, as described further below.

### **1960s: a transition period**

By the 1960s, the U.S. parity-based farm policy came to be replaced by mechanisms that met the needs of the growing commodity cartel interests. No longer required to pay parity prices to farmers, commodity traders and processors began to underpay farmers for commodities, and new government programs—so-called farm price supports, deficiency payments, etc.—were implemented to make up some of the underpayment to farmers. Thus, farmers became a “pass through” for turning government outlays to cartel advantage. The principal figure in this policy shift was Orville Freeman, from the Minnesota cartel circles (he was mayor of Minneapolis), who served in Washington as secretary of agriculture during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

The output potential of the U.S. agricultural sector remained impressive in the 1960s, because of the combined impact of prior years of parity-price policies, veterans agro-science education, the agricultural extension services, and similar policies. This began to wane by the 1970s.

The 1996 U.S. position paper on food policy opposes many of these practices characteristic of the 1960s U.S. farm sector. In particular, all forms of the 1960s-style U.S. farm "price support" and "price-deficiency" mechanisms, limited as they were, are now regarded by the U.S. government as wrong, and termed "distortions" of free trade, which stance is reflected in the position paper points 1 and 6. A "one world farmers market" is the term used in the U.S. position paper to oppose national government support for farmers.

### **1970s: Kissinger's food weapon policy**

The 1970s was the turning point in the postwar shift of U.S. food policy from any national interest purpose, to use of food as a weapon. The murderous goal was elimination of "excess population."

A Dec. 10, 1974 secret U.S. document, National Security Study Memorandum 200, commissioned by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, listed 13 nations in geopolitically strategic locations around the world, against which U.S. food power would be deployed. As always, Kissinger was acting on behalf of British interests. NSSM-200 stated: "Since population growth is a major determinant of increases in food demand, allocation of scarce PL 480 resources should take account of what steps a country is taking in population control as well as food production. . . . Mandatory programs may be needed and we should be considering these possibilities now. Would food be considered an instrument of national power? . . . Is the U.S. prepared to accept food rationing to help people who can't/won't control their population growth?"

Kissinger represented the United States at the November 1974 Rome World Food Conference, to publicize the view that the way to prevent hunger is to selectively limit population. To continue this propaganda drive, major Anglo-American foundations (the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and others) financed the creation, also in 1974, of the Worldwatch Institute, headed to the present time by Lester Brown, a protégé of Orville Freeman and cartel interests.

The U.S. 1970s foreign policy of food control and geopolitics, was accompanied by domestic policies of "post-industrialism," in which the infrastructure base and inputs cycles for manufacturing and agriculture went into decline. U.S. farmers were hit by price shocks from high interest rates and the oil hoax. More of the farm belt declined into monoculture, under pressure from the food cartel companies.

The 1996 U.S. position paper lists "population growth" as a root cause of hunger. Authority for this analysis is attributed to Lester Brown in "Annex I. Projections: World Food Security in the Years Ahead," in such works as *Full House*:

*Reassessing the Earth's Population Carrying Capacity* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994).

### **1980s: Cartels force 'free trade' swindle**

The 1980s continued the "post-industrial" shift in the U.S. economy, with drastic consequences. Lack of parity prices and debt burdens on the farmer led to record rates of U.S. farm bankruptcies. The farm state rail network was cut down; Iowa lost one-third of its track in a decade. Farmers staged tractorcades and national protest actions against the crisis in 1979-80, then lost steam.

Food commodity cartels tightened their control over the U.S. food chain and federal policy, and launched new international campaigns to force "free" market trading rights on nations. Cargill executive Daniel Amstutz was undersecretary for agriculture (1983-87).

In 1985, the Trilateral Commission published a report, "Agricultural Policy and Trade: Adjusting Domestic Programs in an International Framework," a blueprint for how to dismantle food production that is based on the independent family farmer and the nation-state.

In 1987, a new, specialized think-tank was created by the same circle, called the International Policy Council on Agriculture and Trade, headquartered in the Washington, D.C. offices of Resources for the Future. The council's backers include many of the famous cartel companies, including Central Soya/Ferruzzi and Archer Daniels Midland, several foundations, including the Rockefeller Foundation and the German Marshall Fund, and even the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Economic Research Service. The council's roster of "experts" include Michael Andreas, group vice-president of Archer Daniels Midland (now awaiting indictment for criminal price-fixing of processed corn commodities).

In 1986, the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was started, culminating in the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1992. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement and U.S.-Canada Free Trade Accord, food cartel operations were repositioned on the continent, for maximum profiteering.

At the 1988 Montreal meeting of the GATT Uruguay Round (the Midterm Review, on the theme "One World; One Market"), a U.S. position paper officially dismissed national food self-sufficiency as a permissible goal or sovereign right. The U.S. document stated, "Food security and self-sufficiency are not one and the same objective or goal. Food security is the ability to acquire the food you need, when you need it. Food self-sufficiency means producing some portion of one's own food supply from domestic resources, regardless of market forces, with deliberate intent of displacing imports or reducing import dependence. . . . In some cases, in fact, self-sufficiency can actually work against food security goals. . . ."

"Throughout human history, up until the technical ad-

vances of the Green Revolution, a global food shortage due to crop failures was a conceivable and often real threat. Today . . . it is highly improbable.”

The 1996 U.S. food position paper (points 4 and 7) is even more adamantly against national food self-sufficiency and sovereignty than the 1988 U.S. position, despite acknowledging there are 800 million people going hungry today. In the argot of free trade, food “security” for a person or nation, is equated with *access* to free markets, and *not* with the right to have or produce food. In the face of food shortages, the paper states, “Stabilizing population reduced the risks of food insecurity by reducing the number of people who need food” (“Annex II: What Factors Influence Food Security?”).

### 1990s: Globalism opposes nation-states

As of the 1990s, overall world food output volumes, and U.S. food production levels, are in decline. The food commodities cartels—posting record profits by controlling scarce food stocks, are expecting even more rights to control food,

enforced, for example, through the World Trade Organization, whose first world ministerial conference is Dec. 9-14 in Singapore.

In the United States, the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act (“Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996”) is phasing out all vestiges of support for farmers, and exposing them to food cartel “free market” rule. The United States’ own food supply is now heavily dependent on imports; America can no longer feed itself.

The U.S. 1996 food position paper praises imports, saying needs are being met “through a combination of domestic production and global sourcing” (“Annex III: The U.S. Record in Domestic Food Security”). The particular defense of “global sourcing” for U.S. food, is that it keeps food inexpensive for poor Americans; and it gives poor countries dollars in exchange.

The rationalization is, “The United States is a major importer of food from developing countries, providing them with valuable foreign exchange. . . . For fiscal year 1996, U.S.

## Chinese spokesmen reject Lester Brown’s scenario

The Rome World Food Summit, and several other recent events, have been the occasion for leading officials and scientists of China to refute the charges made by Lester R. Brown, the U.S. environmentalist head of the Washington, D.C.-based Worldwatch Institute, that China has poor prospects for future food supplies, and is “guilty” of using up scarce food and resources. These charges were most fully stated in Brown’s book *Who Will Feed China? Wake-Up Call for a Small Planet* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

According to Brown, China is set to face a deep agricultural crisis, because its more prosperous people want more and better food; because the country has a shrinking land base on which to grow food, due to rapid urbanization and economic development; and because of an impending water scarcity and a slowdown in farm productivity. China’s food crisis will translate into a national security issue for industrialized countries such as the United States, Brown claims.

Spokesmen for China have dismissed the Brown scare, in the following instances:

- On Nov. 15, at the World Food Summit, China officially dismissed fears that agricultural problems could mean it would have trouble feeding people in the world’s most populous nation. Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng

told the summit that with increasing grain yields and exploiting more land, China can maintain its self-sufficiency.

“It is entirely possible for China to meet its food needs in the future,” Li Peng said, adding that “people can rest assured that, in the coming years, not only will the Chinese people maintain food sufficiency, they will also make contributions to food security in the world.”

- In October, at a forum in Beijing, Chinese economists took on Lester Brown by name, repudiating Brown’s principal premise, which is that industrialization at a rapid pace will lead to shortages of cropland and water, resulting in declining grain output. “What he has failed to do is to fully consider China’s potential agricultural resources and technical resources,” said Gu Haibing, professor at the national economic management department, China People’s University.

Chen Xiwen, director and researcher at the rural department, State Council Center for Development Studies, believes that, even given China’s existing domestic production capacity, consumption levels, and degree of dependency on the international market, China still does not constitute a grain security issue at the moment. “*Those who make projections should interpret the general trend accurately,*” he said (emphasis in original).

- In October, to further assure the world that China can achieve food independence, Beijing issued a “white paper” on food. The document declared, “China can achieve its desired total grain output target, if the annual average rate of increase in per-unit-area yield is 1% from 1996 to 2010 and 0.7% from 2011 to 2030.” The document added that much bigger increases are expected.

agricultural imports are forecast at \$30.5 billion. Taken as a group, developing countries have historically supplied just over half of total U.S. agricultural imports. In fiscal 1996, imports from developing countries are forecast at \$16.4 billion or 54% of the total. . . . Many of the products the United States imports from developing countries are generally not grown domestically, such as coffee, cocoa, tea, rubber, bananas, and tropical oils. However, the United States also imports large quantities of products identical or similar to those produced domestically. These include a wide assortment of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, nursery products, sweeteners, live animals, and tobacco.”

Despite this scale of import flow, providing the U.S. “cheap” food through looting, still millions of Americans have no food security, even in the warped way food security is defined in the U.S. position paper (“Annex III: The U.S. Record in Domestic food Security”). As of 1996, approximately 27 million Americans, one in ten, were reliant on food stamps. And as of late November, 1 million of these souls were informed they would be denied food stamps in 90 days, as punishment for not finding jobs, which do not exist in the numbers and functions required, as the U.S. economy deteriorates.

---

## Documentation

---

### U.S. on ‘food security’

*The U.S. position paper for the World Food Summit, titled “The U.S. Contribution to World Food Security,” was issued in July 1996, and was prepared by an Interagency Working Group, co-chaired by Eugene Moos (Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, Department of Agriculture); Timothy E. Wirth (Undersecretary for Global Affairs, State Department); and J. Brian Atwood (administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development). The paper is 34 pages long, including appended sections. The following are excerpts from the “U.S. Country Paper, Executive Summary.”*

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life. Many interrelated factors influence the availability, access, and utilization of food, and thereby food security of individuals and countries. Apart from natural disasters, the following are root causes of food insecurity: war and civil strife; inappropriate national policies; inadequate development, transfer, and adaptation of agricultural and other research and technology; barriers to trade; environmental degradation; poverty; population

growth; gender inequality; and poor health.

The root causes of food insecurity listed above must be addressed by both individual countries and the international community as a whole. The current budget environment means that developing countries will have to take primary responsibility for improving their own food security with limited external assistance. Nevertheless, the United States intends to continue to play a major role in promoting food security around the world. To this end, the United States intends to:

1. Share its expertise with selected countries wishing to review and change their national policies to improve food security.

[“Stabilizing population reduces the risks of food insecurity by reducing the number of people who need food.” p. II-2]

2. Enhance U.S. Government support for research and technology development in agriculture and related sectors, both at home and abroad.

3. Continue support for food security through the use of agricultural programs, development assistance, and food aid. Employ an integrated approach to sustainable development, with a strong emphasis on those countries that show a good-faith willingness to adopt necessary policy reforms.

4. Work with all countries to achieve freer trade and to assure that the benefits are equitably realized. Urge all countries to open their markets in the interest of achieving greater stability and participation in the world market.

[“Imports are a major source of food in many countries and they are becoming increasingly important as agricultural trade has grown more rapidly than production in almost every year of this era. World agricultural trade is approaching \$250 billion and continues to grow. The U.S. share of this total is estimated at about 23%, up more than one-third since 1986.” IV-1]

5. Continue support for international efforts to respond to and prevent humanitarian crises that create emergency food aid needs.

[“There is a looming mismatch between food aid resources and needs. In the past, food aid availability has averaged about 70-80% of needs. This is not projected to be true in the future. If global food aid budgets are maintained at 1995 levels, the gap between needs and resources will grow rapidly. Factors limiting food aid resources are budget restrictions in donor countries, coupled with the adoption of more market-oriented agricultural policies, which will reduce surpluses of traditional food aid donors such as the United States and the European Union (EU).” p. I-4]

6. Continue efforts to encourage and facilitate implementation of food security-related actions adopted at recent international conferences or reestablished in recently agreed-to conventions.

7. Work within the multilateral system to enhance global approaches to food security.

8. Continue to work toward food security for all Americans.