

Australia's CEC Issues Call on Food Crisis

The Citizens Electoral Council (CEC), Lyndon LaRouche's co-thinkers in Australia, issued this statement on May 19, titled "Australia Must Act Now To Address Global Food Crisis." It is being circulated as a petition throughout the country, with contact information for all the Federal and state agriculture, fisheries, water, and related ministers.

The world is in the midst of an horrific global food crisis. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) lists 82 nations as in "food deficit," 37 of which it classifies as "in crisis," while 850 million people are in dire need and over 2 billion suffer daily hunger. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has issued an urgent appeal for aid, warning that, "Without these funds, we risk the specter of famine, malnutrition, and unprecedented social uprising." Food riots have already broken out in over 40 countries.

Australia can and must play a big role in addressing this crisis. We are amongst the world's largest exporters of dairy, barley, wheat, beef, and lamb, and, up until recently, rice. A few years ago, we produced enough rice to feed almost 40 million people a meal a day for 365 days, and Australian rice was exported to 72 countries. We are the world's second-largest wheat exporter, with 14% of the global export market, and we export about 20% of the global feed barley trade. We are also the world's second-largest exporter of both beef, and lamb and mutton. Our dairy exports make up 12% of world dairy trade.

Within the next four weeks, almost all broadacre farmers in Australia will make decisions on how much acreage they will sow, and thus, how much food will be harvested not long after. Leaving aside intermediate and longer-term measures, we must commit to the following immediately:

1. The Government must move to purchase existing wheat and other food reserves, to provide immediate food aid to the FAO and the World Food Program.
2. The Government must cease all subsidies for biofuel production, and instead send the equivalent quantity of food/grain overseas to countries in distress.
3. The Government must immediately regulate domes-

tically manufactured fertilizer prices, and subsidise imported fertilizers (relative to world prices), so that farmers pay no more than what they did in January 2006, when the current hyperinflationary spiral really took off.

4. The Government must slash the cost of all petroleum products for the agricultural sector, by suspending the hyperinflated international pricing for domestically produced oil, and by eliminating the fuel excise.

5. The Government must immediately regulate domestically manufactured agricultural chemicals, especially weedicides and herbicides, and subsidise imported agricultural chemicals, to January 2006 prices. These chemical costs have soared, just like the cost of fertilizer and petrol. The hyperinflated costs of these three items, together with the slashing of water allocations in the Murray-Darling Basin, form the immediate chokehold stopping Australian farmers from making a dramatic contribution to the world food crisis.

6. The Government must guarantee a minimum floor price for the resulting harvests.

7. The Government and quasi-governmental agencies must immediately cease all "environmental flows" of water in the Murray-Darling Basin, and cease government purchases of water, which is driving the cost of it to \$1,000 per megalitre or more, this in one of the richest agricultural areas in the entire world, which provides more than 40% of our agricultural production, and over \$20 billion per annum in agricultural exports.

8. The Government must take immediate steps to keep our pig, sheep, and dairy industries alive and producing, by imposing a significant tariff on pork imports, by subsidising hay and other feed grain for our diminishing sheep flock, and by reinstating water allocations to dairy farmers in the Murray-Darling Basin.

There is no excuse for inaction on any of these points. Given that the budget surplus estimate for 2008-09 is \$21.7 billion, the Government has more than adequate funds to implement all of the above. And, if it can create a \$20 billion investment fund largely for the benefit of British mineral cartel giants Rio Tinto and BHP, as it has just done, it can certainly find the resources to feed starving human beings.

We, the undersigned, endorse the above measures and call on the Federal and State Governments to respond immediately.