

G8 document on world hunger warns of global instability

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10 April 2009

A document prepared by the Group of Eight, or G8, countries for its inaugural summit of agricultural ministers entitled “The Global Challenge: To Reduce Food Emergency” was leaked to the press this week, revealing the G8's concerns of global instability arising from a worldwide food crisis.

According to a report in the *Financial Times*, the document states, “Without immediate interventions in agriculture and agri-marketing systems the 2007 crisis will become structural in only a few decades.” The report also stresses that global food production must be doubled by the year 2050 in order to meet the needs of a growing world population.

Should the present food crisis continue to gain momentum, the report goes on to say, it will have “serious consequences not merely on business relations but equally on social and international relations, which in turn will impact directly on the security and stability of world politics.”

The G8 document and agricultural summit come on the heels of a report delivered to a United Nations Food Policy conference in Thailand by Jacques Diouf, the director general of the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), in which Diouf declared more than one billion people would go hungry this year as a result of the economic crisis and its impact on both food production and prices.

Like the UN's conference, the G8 agricultural summit to be held in Italy April 18-20 has been initiated as a response to an intense crisis in high food prices beginning in 2007 and its eruption into riots in no less than 30 countries in 2008. It marks the first time the agricultural ministers of the G8 countries have met in their own summit, independent of the regular G8 summit of world leaders.

While global food prices have fallen from their 2008 peaks, they are still at elevated levels. World food production now faces the added impact of the massive economic and credit crisis.

The G8 countries of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Germany, Russia and Japan will be joined at the summit by the G5—China, India, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa—as well as Australia, Egypt and Argentina.

The aim of the meeting, as stated on its official web site is to “identify a common strategy to tackle the world food emergency and the problem of soaring prices of agricultural raw materials.” The ministers attending the agricultural summit are expected to make recommendation to the G8 world leaders when they meet in July.

With the food crisis reaching a level at which it presents a threat to the very security of governments throughout the world, capitalist leaders are finding it necessary to make at least a show of support for the world's hungry.

Last week, during the G20 summit in London, President Obama announced his intentions to request \$1 billion in aid from the US Congress in order to provide assistance to the agricultural programs of developing countries. The number is a pittance. The FAO has estimated that at least \$30 billion per year would be necessary to draw international agricultural production out of its state of crisis. This is a fraction of the amount handed over by the American government to the banks and financial institutions.

The half-hearted nature of Obama's request was further revealed by the president's actions this week. While Obama was only prepared to make the gesture of \$1 billion for the food crisis that has resigned one billion people around the world to starvation, the

president requested Thursday from Congress an additional \$83.4 billion with which to continue the ongoing wars of aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan. The new request would bring to \$150 billion the amount of funds allocated to the wars thus far for 2009.

Ultimately, neither Barack Obama nor any of the other world leaders comprising the G8 or G20 countries are willing or capable of resolving the world's food crisis. While presently forced by unfavorable circumstances to present a level of concern to the world's hungry, the leaders of the G8 countries and the agricultural ministers whom they employ represent the interests of the ruling elite of their own countries.

Whatever conclusions reached by the G8 agricultural summit, they will not address the root problem of the crisis. At no time will it be permissible to question or challenge the domination of private property, profit and the personal accumulation of wealth through rampant speculation in agricultural commodities over the world's food supplies and distribution.

It is significant that the agricultural ministers of the leading capitalist countries present the question of world hunger not as an issue of basic human rights, but as a matter of security. What is expressed in the G8 document and its upcoming agricultural summit, far more than a concern for the state of starvation into which at least a billion of the world's population has been plunged, is the fear that further disruption in agricultural production and food prices will contribute to mass social upheaval and revolution as the world economy enters the greatest economic crisis in generations.



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