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Hunger to devastate Earth in 21st century?

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Who would have thought that in the 21st century the problem of hunger will be paramount on our planet? However, this is our reality. According to the UN, 1.2 billion people in the world are experiencing food shortages, and the scale of the tragedy is getting larger. The UN is trying to combat it by taking various measures, but so far with little success. Could someone be benefiting from global hunger?

Assessment of the scale of global hunger is a complex and lengthy process. Often, many officials do not have the latest information. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is going to change that with its new project "Voices of the hungry." UN wants people speak about hunger, rather than provide dry numbers, reports and studies prepared by different companies.

According to Carlo Cafiero, FAO Senior Statistician, while the grading system for hunger is of great importance, it provides information with significant delays. Carlo Cafiero said that collection, verification, processing and distribution of the information may take two to three years. Add to this the fact that such surveys, even in developed countries, are not conducted every year (about once every five years), and it turns out that we do not have the actual data and do not understand the real current situation. This became evident during the crisis with food prices.

In 2007, experts predicted a global economic recession, and food prices went up. As a consequence, the expectations of drastically reduced food consumption have increased. The statistician said that only a few years later it became clear that, for example, in India, China and some other developing countries, economic growth has not slowed down. The worst-case scenario is not always realized, and the forecast based on the model came out wrong.

The new project "Voices of the hungry" will yield more accurate and timely information. The scale of hunger will be evaluated based on annual surveys. In the coming months the project will be tested in Angola, Ethiopia, Niger and Malawi. People will be polled by phone or in personal conversations. This way we will be able to get a representative sample and understand how serious the problem of hunger is in the families of the informants, said Carlo Cafiero.

Respondents will be asked, for example, whether they worry about getting food, whether they miss a meal or do not eat all day. There are eight such questions covering the situation in the last year. The FAO statistician said that the poll would not be subjective because the information collected would be evaluated by highly qualified experts. The period between the survey and provision of information to FAO will not exceed three months.

It is expected that the polls by the "Voices of the hungry" should reach approximately 160,000 people in 150 countries. The project is designed for five years, and after its completion, FAO will develop new standards for food security. Jomo Sundaram, FAO Assistant Director-General for Economic and Social Development, said that the innovative method has become an important tool for governments, civil society, international and national institutions in the fight against food insecurity. FAO is currently in talks with potential partners to secure funding for the project implementation.

Nearly every day all kinds of media mention the hunger issue. Many countries and international organizations are trying to solve it by spending exorbitant sums of money. But significant results are yet to be seen. The number of hungry people is increasing. Perhaps we should look at the problem from another angle?

In theory, there is enough food in the world for everybody. The fact that one in six people on the planet goes hungry or is malnourished should be blamed on politicians, Ute Schaeffer, chief editor of Deutsche Welle, believes. The Earth could easily feed seven billion people. Our planet produces enough food. Hunger is not caused only by crises and natural disasters, it is a political problem that people put up with.

Politicians are not interested in the problems of the hungry, they only value the voices of European consumers and support of the farmers. Voices of hunger are not considered by them

because they do not have their own lobby. Who profits from hunger? There should be a clear understanding that some influential forces benefit from the system creating conditions for the emergence of hunger.

It is beneficial for European farmers, who produce far more food than the market demands. They are guaranteed political support and stable income through high government subsidies. Large agricultural holdings also benefit from hunger, filling the market with their own seeds and chemicals required to produce harvest. Speculators in food markets also make money on hunger. Basic food products have been the subject of speculation, because prices are constantly rising. Food markets became very profitable for investors and speculators. Residents of Port-au-Prince, Agadez or Dhaka, who cannot buy food at the increased prices, suffer.

The U.S. annually allocates huge amounts of money to charity for famine relief in different parts of the world. For example, last year Washington sent \$565 million dollars to the Horn of Africa. It seems like a good deed. Yet, it is not that simple. The schemes of providing humanitarian assistance have many nuances. Nikolai Starikov wrote about U.S. charity in his book.

First funds are raised to help starving children. Then products are purchased and imported into the country where famine is rampant, and distributed to the hungry. This is what people normally think of the charity concept. But U.S. politicians think quite differently. First, they allocate large sums of money with great publicity for food aid to the starving Africans, arranging shows featuring photos and movies of horrific content where malnourished children in Africa barely move their legs. Tens of millions of dollars are spent to purchase American products.

Under U.S. law, all food aid must be American. Then humanitarian aid is transported exclusively with U.S. vessels. This way the Americans help their agricultural sector, their sailors and dockworkers. But there is more to it. Few people know that humanitarian organizations do not distribute food to the hungry. They sell it at dumping prices. The cynicism is simply astonishing.

The proceeds from the sale of food are spent on the development of agriculture of the affected countries. However, there is nothing left to develop in Mozambique or Ethiopia as cheap food from across the ocean destroys local producers. The African farmers simply cannot compete with the giants of the American agricultural industry subsidized by Washington. As a result, the former farmers and peasants are forced into being poor and hungry, and have to get in line for American aid. This is how the U.S. government earns huge profits on the problem of hunger. A reasonable question is why would the most powerful power nation in the world fight it? That's why the number of the hungry in the world is growing every year.