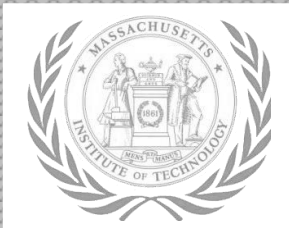


2013

WFP 2013 BACKGROUND GUIDE

MIT MODEL UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE V



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LETTER FROM THE DAIS

Hello delegates,

Welcome to the World Food Program at MITMUNC 2013! Our names are Katherine(Katy) Kem and Xavier Hubbard and we are very excited to co-chair the United Nations World Food Program Committee and MITMUNC 2013. We are a freshman studying chemical engineering and a sophomore studying physics here at MIT, respectively.

This will be my, Xavier's, first time participating in MUN and I am very excited to participate! I have had many friends in the program throughout high school and college and I finally decided to get involved this year. I have experience in debate and foreign policy and I hope to all I can to foster a great discussion at this conference.

I, Katy, began participating in MUN in Virginia 8th grade, and then continued to participate in MUN throughout my years of high school in Germany, where I attended international conferences such as The Hague International Model United Nations (THIMUN). I also participated in Model US Senate throughout high school. I look forward to chairing the World Food Program for MITMUNC and facilitating the debate over such important international topics.

See you soon!

Xavier Hubbard

Katy Kem

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Topic 1:**CREATION OF
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
IMPOVERISHED
FARMERS****Introduction**

As a result of growing world hunger the role of the farmer is becoming increasingly important. One in six people is undernourished. Many local farmers lack the funds or land necessary to expand their crop production to sustainably increase food availability in impoverished regions. For example, the earthquake in Haiti destroyed over 30% of the arable land, which vastly strained the recovery process. This committee will discuss methods of providing assistance and education to impoverished farmers that will hopefully serve to ameliorate problems with poverty around the world.

Despite great progress over the last twenty years in reducing poverty in some parts of the world – notably East Asia – there are still about 1.4 billion people living on less than US\$1.25 a day, and close to 1 billion people suffering from hunger. At least 70 per cent of the world's very poor people are rural, and a large proportion of the poor and hungry are children and young people. South Asia, with the greatest number of poor rural people, and sub-Saharan Africa, with the highest incidence of rural poverty, are the regions worst affected by poverty and hunger.

The livelihoods of poor rural households are diverse across regions and countries, and within countries. The main sources of

livelihood come from smallholder farming – including livestock production and artisanal fisheries – agricultural wage labour, wage or self-employment in the rural nonfarm economy and migration. While some households rely primarily on one type of activity, most seek to diversify their livelihood base as a way to reduce risk.

Agriculture plays a vital role in most countries, and typically it is the poorest households that rely most on farming and agricultural labour. Many farmers in third world countries are faced with the same main problems: they don't have the land, resources or education in order to optimize production and they are detached from the market in such a way that inhibits them from making as much money as they can. As a result of this many families are forced into subsistence farming that could be improved with some assistance. It is the goal of this committee to determine what the most efficacious form of assistance would be.

Regional Blocs*Sub-Saharan Africa*

Sub-Saharan Africa, with the highest incidence of rural poverty anywhere in the world, is the region worst affected by poverty and hunger. It is the only region in the world where the numbers of rural people living in extreme poverty is still increasing, although the percentage of all rural people who are extremely poor has actually fallen over the last decade. The region also has the least diversification away from agriculture – something that is normally identified with overall economic advancement. Because agriculture is by far

the primary source of their welfare, it is increasingly important to focus on this area as a main location for the problems involving impoverished farmers.

Asia & the Pacific

Despite a rapid decline in the number of rural poor in East Asia, especially China, more than 680 million people in the Asia and the Pacific region continue to live on less than US\$1.25 a day. More than 70 percent of them are in South Asia, which has the largest number of rural poor people – 500 million – of any region or sub-region. 80% of all extremely poor people in South Asia live in rural areas, and poverty is predominantly rural in many other countries in the region, as well.

Despite high growth rates and urbanization as witnessed in recent years, poverty is likely to remain high in rural areas.

Latin America & the Caribbean

Rural poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean has declined considerably over the past two decades – both in terms of the numbers of people who live in poverty and the rate of poverty among rural populations – with many countries in the region also showing positive trends both in poverty reduction and in a better distribution of income. Yet many rural people in the region continue to live on less than US\$2 per day and have poor access to financial services, markets, training, and other opportunities. There is a strong concentration of extreme poverty among landless farmers, indigenous peoples, women and children. And it

remains to be seen what effect the global economic crisis will have on the region's recent successes in combining market, social and civil society development policies to overcome longstanding social exclusion.

Middle East & North Africa

The largest percentage increases in the numbers of hungry people from 2008 to 2009 were in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The 14 percent average increase was due not only to the 2008 food price hikes, which added about 100 million to the global number of hungry people, but also to broader underlying problems.

The crisis occurred within an environment characterized by a rising demand for food products and long-term growing food insecurity, a declining farming population, and a deteriorating base of natural resources. With a growing dependence on food imports, severe water scarcity, and demographic pressures, the region is facing daunting challenges, not least the demand to develop the right policies and new approaches to rural development that would help the agricultural sector become an effective driver in the eradication of rural poverty.

Detachment from the Market

Enabling farmers to sell their crops provides significant benefits: when constraints are removed, farmers can earn more by specializing in crops for which they have a comparative advantage and purchase commodities that are relatively costly for them to grow. Indeed, those who produce mainly for their own

consumption are the poorest, while those who are well integrated into markets and specialize in a smaller number of crops are better off.

Cases where commercialization coincides with the loss of farmer income certainly exist—as in the Philippines, where expanded sugarcane production meant that tenant farmers lost access to land for maize production—but in most cases markets provide opportunities for smallholders to improve their incomes and livelihoods. Higher income and/or nutritional status has been associated with the adoption of commercial farming in Guatemala (vegetables), Malawi (tobacco), India (dairy), and Kenya (sugarcane).

Farmers face numerous marketing constraints that can be categorized, roughly, as those that raise marketing costs and those that increase the risk associated with commercialization. High marketing costs often stem from poor transportation networks, lack of market information, and—sometimes—lack of competitiveness of markets. Poor government policy can also contribute to high marketing costs through over regulation or sporadic intervention, which creates uncertainty and discourages marketing investments.

Production risk is another factor constraining market participation. Regardless of whether commercial crops are inherently more vulnerable to weather and pests, growing an unfamiliar crop or variety involves more uncertainty than growing a staple food crop. Commercial tree crops, such as coffee, cocoa, and fruit, involve additional risk and financial resources because they do not produce a harvest for several years after planting. In

addition, producing for markets sometimes requires intensive and costly input use, which results in substantial risk for small farmers when yields are uncertain.

A third factor preventing farmers from selling crops at market is marketing risk. A farmer's food security will be threatened if the price of the cash crop at harvest is lower than expected or the retail price of food is higher than expected. Perishable crops imply additional risk because their prices are more volatile, so the sale prices are more uncertain; the crops may spoil before sale; and, in the absence of competition, farmers don't have the option of returning to the market for better prices another day, so they may be forced to accept very low prices.

In all it appears that the situation of those living in poverty in rural areas is working against them. It is the major goal of this committee to discuss options to alleviate some of the more pressing issues faced by impoverished farmers as discuss whether or not current methods are effective. Some places to focus would be:

1. How can we provide better education to the impoverished farmers?
2. How can we assist in creating or increasing access to arable land?
3. How can we increase the ease of access to the market for farmers?
4. What can we do to ensure long-term stability of any solution?

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Topic 2:

USING GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD RESOURCES TO SUPPLEMENT INTERNATIONAL FOOD AID

Introduction

The World Food Program was created in 1961 after the Food and Agricultural Organization Conference in 1960 to alleviate hunger around the world. It was formally established by the United Nations in 1963, and has since operated as the United Nations' international food aid organization. Since its birth, the World Food Program has grown and now helps over 90 million malnourished people worldwide each year. Aside from simply supplying food to regions of malnourishment, the WFP has striven to educate and provide means for such areas to eventually become self-sufficient. One promising method of increasing self-sufficiency and success of local farmers is through controversial Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

According to the WFP's definition of GMOs, they are "organisms in which the genetic material has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally." This use of genetic engineering allows selected genes to be strategically transferred from one organism or species to another in order to optimize the new GMO. Food is genetically altered for several reasons, including the following: to increase crop

production at lower costs, increase size, improve flavor, increase nutritional value, to discourage weeds, and to discourage pests.

Some controversy has arisen with regards to the use of GMOs as humanitarian food aid in emergency situations in Africa. The governments of many countries have restricted the use of GM crops as humanitarian aid despite many citizens lacking proper nutrition.

In a 1998 meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, every African country excluding South Africa rejected GM crop offers from the United States. In 2002, much of southern Africa was struck by famine. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 14 million people were at risk of starvation. Over a million tons of grain were necessary to begin to alleviate the crisis, but many African governments rejected the United States' offer of 540,000 tons of genetically modified grain.

Governmental officials in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe insisted that all GM grains be milled before distribution in order to prevent the seeds cross-breeding with local plantlife. Although 2.5 million Zambians faced starvation, Zambia's President Levy Mwanawasa blocked this food aid and called the GM crops "poison." He eventually agreed to send a team of scientists to study the safety of GM foods.

The safety of GM foods for consumption is not the only concern for the leaders of these African countries. About half of the agricultural exports in southern Africa are

to the European Union, where GM foods are often opposed and must be labeled as being GM. Many African farmers fear that if GM crops are introduced to the area there may be contamination and cross-breeding in the local flora, which would lead to the GM-free label to be removed from the food and demand in the European Union to plummet.

The European markets are a huge venue for southern Africa's agricultural exports and an important income source for Africa's cash-starved economies. Zambia exported over \$62.6 million worth of produce to the EU from 1999-2000. Zimbabwean exports account for about 12% of peas consumed in Europe. If the products from such cash-starved countries were not certified as GM-free, the dramatic drop in demand would be detrimental to the countries' economies as well as the self sufficiency of the farmers.

Some African agricultural experts fear that in order to protect their markets, biotech companies may introduce "terminator genes" to their seeds which would prevent farmers from replanting them after harvest. This would make small local farmers dependent on the large biotech companies who control the prices of these seeds.

Officials from Mozambique eventually accepted the GM food aid provided that it was milled before distribution so that farmers did not use or mistake the GM maize as seeds. The Prime Minister Pascoal Mocumbi said, "we don't want to create a habit of using genetically modified maize that the country cannot maintain." Zimbabwe was the country hit worst by the famine, and it did accept the GM food

donations from the US. However, officials stated that they would quarantine and monitor the transport, milling, and distribution of the maize to prevent contamination of the local flora and agricultural market.

In recent years, some of Africa's opposition to GM crops has begun to lift. If Ghana's GM crop applications are approved, it will become the seventh African country to allow the cultivation of GM crops. Only three of these countries, however, actually grow these GM crops commercially: Burkina Faso, Egypt, and South Africa. Nearly twenty African countries have fully fledged biosafety regulations, even if they don't allow cultivation of GM crops. Very few countries are now outright opposed to GM crops. Benin has an actual moratorium against GM crops, and Angola says it is "not interested." Despite increase support, there is still widespread opposition to GM crops in Africa."

Greenpeace, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with a goal of helping the environment, has shown strong opposition towards field trials of genetically modified "golden rice" in the Philippines, claiming that the crop carries environmental and health risks. Golden rice is GM enriched rice which was created in order to attempt to alleviate vitamin A deficiency in children in impoverished areas. Greenpeace protests the open field trials of the new GM crop, claiming that it exposes conventional rice crops in the area to danger of contamination and cross-breeding. Daniel Ocampo of Greenpeace Southeast Asia vocally opposed the genetically engineered crop. "There are already safe and proven

solutions to vitamin A deficiency which do not rely on the genetic modification of food,” he said, also claiming that golden rice was a “myth.”

Greenpeace has also stated that golden rice is a “dangerous way” to address Vitamin A deficiency, as it is, so to speak, attacking the symptom instead of the disease. Golden rice may partially solve the Vitamin A deficiency which would cover up the real problems of poverty and lack of access to a diverse diet. Greenpeace claims that organizations funding golden rice development should instead be redirected toward alleviating poverty and empowering and diversifying the diets of the undernourished.

However, not everyone has taken Greenpeace’s stance on genetically modified crops such as golden rice. Dr. Patrick Moore, a co-founder of Greenpeace himself, recently left the organization in opposition of several of Greenpeace’s stances, including its stance on genetically modified crops such as golden rice. Moore describes the development of GM crops as one of society’s most important recent scientific advancements. He was particularly concerned about Greenpeace’s vehement opposition of golden rice. Moore stated, “Other GM rice varieties are able to eliminate micronutrient deficiency in the rice eating countries, which afflicts hundreds of million people, and actually causes between a quarter and half a million children to go blind and die young each year because of vitamin A deficiency because there is no beta carotene in rice. We can put beta carotene in rice through genetic modification, but Greenpeace has blocked this.” According to Moore,

Greenpeace is committing a “crime against humanity” by preventing the curing of hundreds of thousands of people dying each year due to vitamin A deficiency.

Professor Calestous Juma of Harvard University was born and raised in Kenya, and is now head of the Agricultural Innovation in Africa Project. He is a strong supporter of a shift towards GM crops in Africa. He believes that climate changes and population growth will put stress on agriculture and foods supply, and GM foods are important to meet these changing needs. When GM crops were first introduced 15 years ago, many critics believed they would be detrimental to the environment and would serve to benefit only big agricultural businesses. However, 90 percent of GM crops are actually grown by “small resource-poor farmers,” and there is even evidence of helping the environment.

Herbicide-tolerant and pesticide-tolerant GM crops allow farmers to use fewer chemicals to deter unwanted weeds and insects. Lack of weeds due to herbicide-tolerant plants allows farmers to use “no-till agriculture,” in which less trapped carbon dioxide from the ground is released into the atmosphere, which may decrease the greenhouse effect. GM plants introduced to increasingly arid areas may help alleviate desertification in areas of once-arable land. Lack of weeds due to herbicide-tolerant crops also benefits farmers in Africa. The typical farmer in Africa is a woman, and she spends an average of 200 hours per hectare per year weeding. These herbicide-resistant GM plants would drastically decrease the labor required for farming and boost

productivity.

The goal of this body will be to investigate the role of the WFP and the benefits and feasibility of the introduction of GM crops to Africa in order to alleviate hunger.

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