

Between Obesity & Hunger: The Capitalist Food Industry

By Robert Albritton

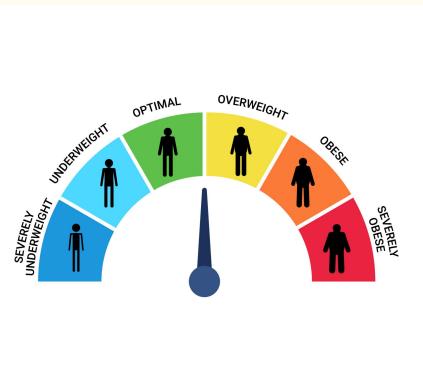


By: Autumn Sample & Rosalie Rutten

Overall Ideas

Albritton looks at the differences in the global food system:

- Obesity & hunger coexist because of capitalist production
- Industry wants maximized profits
- Expense of public health
- Reduced environmental sustainability



Dietary Inequality



- $\frac{1}{4}$ of population suffers from hunger and malnutrition
- $\frac{1}{4}$ of population faces obesity and related health issues
- High rates of diabetes around the world
- U.S. estimates $\frac{1}{3}$ of children born in 2000 will develop diabetes
- Fat and sugar contribute 50% of calorie intake of the average American
- $\frac{2}{3}$ of Americans are overweight -> obesity group is growing the quickest

Corporate Influence & Consumer Manipulation

- Corporation dominates food market → Coca-Cola's success powered by government support during WWII, symbol of American culture
- Americans consume large amounts of sugar (soft drinks) → increasing obesity rates and diabetes
- Food industry prioritizes cheap, addictive ingredients like sugar and fats



Capitalism



- Ingredients in junk food are profitable due to low cost and high consumer demand
- Cheap food important to capitalism → low wages with enough money to buy other commodities
- Family farms replaced by capitalist farms dependent on cheap oil and government subsidies
- Portion size increased → boosts profits for restaurants and fast food chains

Infant Nutrition



- U.S. sugar industry benefits from high tariffs
- U.S. government gives soy formula to mothers on welfare, despite potential health risk from estrogen contents
- Efforts to reduce sugar in baby food from 30% to 10% blocked by industry
- $\frac{1}{3}$ of babies born in the US are likely to get diabetes due to their high intake of sugar at a young age → leading to early on addiction to sugar

Junk food producer tactics

- McDonalds → creates toy sets to make children keep coming back to complete the set → more profit
- Hungry and exploited children in China make the toys for overfed children in other countries
- Fast food tries to make its way into school cafeterias to get kids addicted at a young age



Global Spread

- Poorer countries already burdened with infectious diseases face rising chronic illnesses due to spread of junk food and tobacco
- Increases rates of diabetes, heart disease, and cancer in all countries
- Food industry heavily influences international food norms
- Promotes production and consumption of nutrient-poor, high-calorie food → higher demand causes lower quality foods



Hunger



- Number of hungry people has grown to about 1 billion
- Debt crisis → developing countries had to start paying off their loans → started producing crops that can be sold for a lot when exported (tobacco, tea, coffee, sugar, cotton, cocoa, flowers, peanuts)
- Selling prices of these “cash crops” decreasing ruined their plans → led to poverty and hunger
- Developing countries cannot compete with US and Europe where these crops are highly subsidized (can sell their crops at very low prices)

The rise of food prices



- The prices of food are going up in the US and Europe because:
 - Fertile land is being used for tobacco, agro-fuels, illegal drugs, trees
 - Fertile land is being used for suburban areas, golf courses, roads, malls
 - Land is being degraded by industrial farming techniques
 - Global warming → rising temperatures makes growing crops harder
 - Increasing meat-based diet causes grains to be fed to animals → grain producers increase the price of grain



Summary



- Capitalists attempt to maximize profits no matter the costs
- Corporations and markets both lack the rationality to respond to the crises that the world faces now (hunger and obesity)
- Sugar companies oppose the norm to lower the limits of sugar in baby food-> causing an early on addiction to sugar in humans
- USA has serious obesity problem
- Developing countries have serious hunger problems due to poverty
- Pollution of the earth, air, and water make more land infertile
- Highly subsidized products are being sold at higher prices