Posted by Emily Rauhala Wednesday, June 1, 2011 at 10:31 am Julian Cribb's The Coming Famine opens in Hokkaido, Japan, at a meeting of the G8. It's 2008, the financial crisis is underway and food prices are soaring. Nonetheless, the attendees tuck into an eighteen course feast of caviar, sea urchin roe, Kyoto beef, conger eels, truffles and champagne, prepared by some sixty chefs. They also release a statement: "We are deeply concerned that the steep rise in global food prices coupled with availability problems in a number of developing countries is threatening global food security."
Of course, the G8 is not alone in its excess • or uniquely worthy of a critique. But I like the anecdote; It captures both the obscene inequality of the global food system and the ham-handed hypocrisy of the establishment response. "With eloquent symbolism, this Petronian banquet made clear that the well-off part of humanity has largely forgotten what it is to go hungry and is awakening to an unpleasant shock,"• Cribb wrote. "Starvation and the wars, refugee crises, and collapse of nation-states that often accompany hunger have not been permanently banished after all."
It would be easy, and, indeed, quite reassuring, to dismiss his claims. I certainly bristled at the apocalyptic tone. But at least one new study, a 76-page report by Oxfam International, supports his assertion that a full-blown food crisis is underway • and that the world's rich minority is, in no small part, to blame.
Here, via The Source, is a summary of their findings: ...Prices of staple foods will more than double in the next 20 years unless world leaders act now to avert climate change and reform the global food system.
Importantly, the cost of key grains such as maize•an essential dietary component in the world's least-developed continent, Africa•could rise by as much as 180%, with more than half of this rise due to the degrading effects of climate change.
Other factors, including rising oil prices, the increasing diversion of crops for biofuels and scarcity of water are also expected to make the forecast 70% rise in production needed by 2050 to feed the world's population even harder to meet.
Oxfam says meeting these needs is impossible without "overhauling" the global food system. They're calling, among other things, for limits on trading in agricultural futures (which they link to price jumps), ending the disproportionate influence of agro-businesses, and curbing subsidies for biofuels (which they credit with a move toward growing fuel over food) • all things that food experts, rights groups and the International Peasant Movement have been saying for years.
Though radical change seems unlikely at present, the Oxfam report comes at a good time. Food factored heavily in this winter's revolutions and prices are rising in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Those unmoved by the plain fact of hunger, may well see the wisdom of heeding the Spanish proverb of which Cribb is fond: Lo que separa la civilizaci• de la anarqu• son solo siete comidas. 'Civilization and anarchy are only seven meals apart.'
Source: http://globalspin.blogs.time.com/2011/06/01/the-looming-global-food-crisis-are-the-worlds-elites-to-blame/#ixzz1O6jL3QaX •