

Kingdom Report

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Week of 2 April 2022

The Come World Famine...and the Church Response

By the time the vastly decreased northern hemisphere grain harvests are reaped in September/October it will become evident to everyone that the world is facing a food catastrophe. I predict this is a structural long term problem and as a Church we need to be involved in solutions...especially here in Southern Africa.

Famine is a common problem in scripture that had caused Abraham to move from a declining Ur of the Chaldee's as well as Isaac and Jacob to move out of the Promised Land to Egypt until conditions changed.

And yet part of the gospel of Luke 4:18 is the Lord's command to "feed the hungry". Hunger and food supply is a Kingdom of God issue. It means we need to understand what is going on and plan for the long term future.

There is a lot of news media reports about the Ukraine war and its impact on world food supply. And that is certainly a major contributing factor. But even before the war started for the last several years the World Food Program was warning that world food supply was declining and there is a catastrophe ahead. That timeline to world famine has now been accelerated by the events in the Ukraine.

Let me say upfront what my emphasis is going to be in this blog. First you need to have an idea the extent of the crisis the world is facing. But I want to conclude the bad news with a plan of action for the church.

The contributing factors to the coming world famine is as follows:

- the current war in Ukraine including the sanctions on Russia effects
- The natural gas shortage and high prices and the effect this has on fertilizer and pesticide availability.
- The incredible weather changes that are affecting key agricultural producers.
- The diesel shortage
- And then the long term trends of soil degradation, water shortages and population pressures.

The Ukraine-Russia Conflict

The war in Ukraine has created an immense "supply shock", and this is going to have ripple effects that are felt all across the planet.

Ukraine is normally one of the key "breadbaskets" of the world, but now the invasion **has changed everything!**.

Ukraine's top agricultural export products are corn, wheat and oil seeds. Before the invasion, Ukraine was the second-largest supplier of grains for the European Union and one of the largest suppliers for emerging markets in Asia and Africa. Breaking down the numbers, Ukraine produced 49.6% of global sunflower oil, 10% of global wheat, 12.6% of global barley, and 15.3% of global maize.

Collectively, Russia and Ukraine typically account for a very large chunk of all global agricultural exports...

For the global food market, there are few worse countries to be in conflict than Russia and Ukraine. Over the past five years, they have together accounted for nearly 30 percent of the exports of the world's wheat, 17 percent of corn, 32 percent of barley, a crucial source of animal feed, and 75 percent of sunflower seed oil, an important cooking oil in most parts of the world.

So what are we going to do now? On top of that the destruction of Ukraine means that not only is supply halted out of Ukraine but this coming month is the crucial planting time for Ukraine of all their grains and oil seeds. There will be little or no planting as millions are displaced and there is no supply of fertilizer or diesel. It will take years before Ukraine will be able to recover from this war and restore their agriculture. In fact the 40 million people of Ukraine will need to import food.

Fertilizer

Farmers need 3 critical fertilizers for crop production:

Potash, Phosphate, Nitrates (Urea or Ammonium Nitrate). Between Russia, Belarus and China they produce most of the world's Potash. All three have months ago stopped all exports of Potash.

Russia is the world's largest producer and exporter of Nitrate fertilizer. The key feedstock for making nitrate fertilizers is natural gas. Russia had the largest and mostly cheapest supply of gas and therefore the largest and cheapest source of Nitrates. Russia stopped exporting nitrate fertilizer months ago.

Brazil is one of the world's largest food producers. They import 85% of their nitrates mostly from Russia. America although they have large gas production are a large importer of Russian nitrates as are Canada and Australian and the European Union. None of them will be getting any nitrates from Russia for the critical Spring planting season starting in March/April. News coming from the American farm heartland is that fertilizer prices are so high that a lot of farmers will be cutting back drastically on their plantings. American grain exports will be greatly reduced.

It takes 3 years to construct a new nitrate production factory. For at least the next 3 years the critical shortages of nitrate and potash will drastically cut food production in the major growing nations of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, America and Australia. The EU used to produce nitrates from cheap Russian gas. All German and other nitrate manufacturers in Europe have stopped production due to gas shortages and high gas prices.

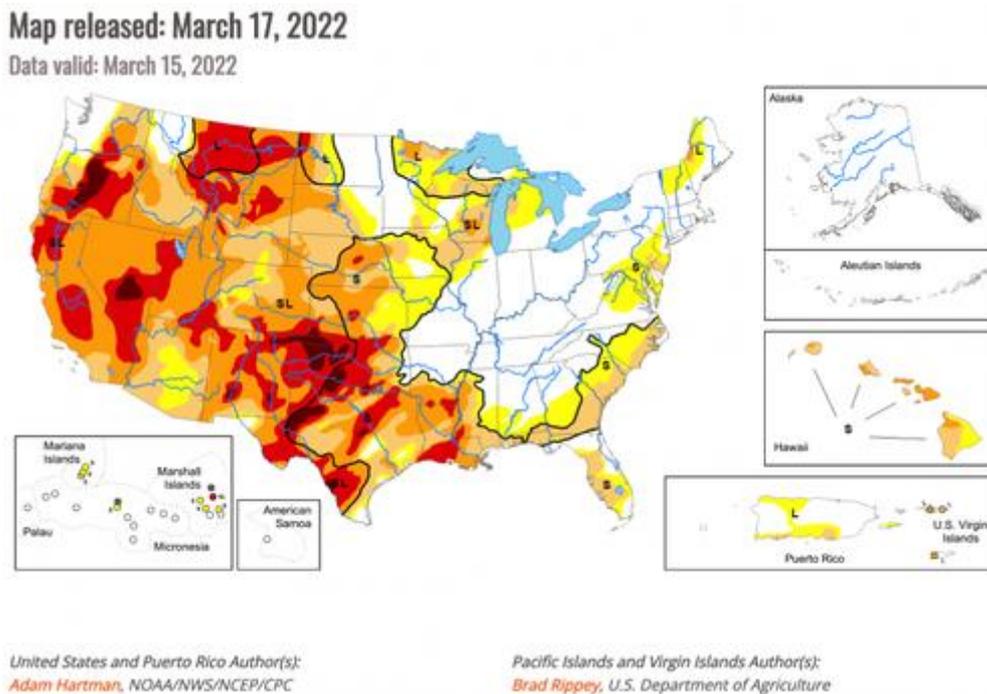
Some time in the next 5-6 months the news will come out about the drastic decline in total world acreage that was sowed in Spring. By the Fall of September - November

the world will wake up to a harvest catastrophe. In the next months world stock piles of grain will diminish to empty. People will begin to realize why China 18 months ago had already started buying up grains and soybeans as much as they could store. They knew what was coming.

Diesel

There is a world shortage of diesel. Strangely that is because there is shortage of natural gas and gas prices are sky high.... world refineries have struggled to match this revival in demand. One key reason is pricey natural gas. Refineries use gas to produce hydrogen, which they then use to remove sulphur from diesel. The spike in gas prices in late 2021 made that process prohibitively expensive, cutting diesel output.

World Weather Disaster



This is a map of the terrible drought across the West and Mid-west of America that is now in its 3d year. America has had a disaster in their winter wheat harvest that is now coming up for harvest. China had the worst winter wheat production in history. The same reason. Weather madness. You see it in Australia with worst floods and worst drought year in and year out. South America is under severe drought conditions. In Antarctica they are recording a veritable heat wave....temperatures 40 C. above normal.

Meteorologists in America are predicting a new "dust bowl" conditions of the terrible 1930's in the heartland of America's wheat producing states.

The Structural Problems

Before the Ukraine war disaster there were already severe food shortages developing around the world. To keep 8 billion people fed requires industrial scale agri-production with vast supply chains that work and inputs from multiple sources to supply the key ingredients of modern agriculture production.

However the signs were clear. This level of sustained resource depletion cannot be maintained. Just to give some sobering facts:

- Water availability is now critically in short supply. India's agriculture is kept alive by millions of wells drawing on underground water supplies. The water table there has been dropping drastically over decades. Wells are now so deep that the energy in diesel costs cannot be bought much longer to draw water from such deep depths.
- the same is true for the American mid-west underground water supplies that irrigate the great plains of America.
- the same for the Chinese northern plains underground water reserves.
- China is degrading its top soil with toxic pollution at alarming rates and also turning vast stretches of farmland into urban sprawl.
- the average age of farmers in most countries of the world like the EU, China, America, South Africa, Australia, Canada is deep into their 50's and 60's. Young people don't want to farm, they want to live in cities with office or factory jobs.
- the rise of pandemics like avian flu in chicken flocks or swine fever or the many other animal diseases are beating out antibiotics and becoming more virulent.

The Future of Food

I saw an analysis today that the availability of fertilizer in the world now is only sufficient to feed 6 billion people....2 billion people face a dire shortage of food and nutrition in the years ahead.

The rich of the world will pay more and will do so because they have the money to pay for food. Inflationary pressures will be enormous and the price of basic foods will skyrocket. The poor of the world will starve. The last time there was a wheat shortage in the world was 2010 and in 2011 the Arab Spring of mobs in the streets overthrowing governments was 2011 when there was no bread in the stores.

There will be international upheavals. Governments will fall. This is not something that will suddenly go away after the Ukraine war ends. The world is dividing. It is no longer ideological divides of communism or capitalism. It is who has food and who has energy and who has minerals and resources....and who does not have.

Who does have food, energy and minerals is Russia and they will be directing those resources east to China, India, Pakistan, Asia and those east European countries like Hungary that will break eventually with the EU and gravitate east. And those countries will be providing Russia with everything they used to get from Europe and America....and at lower cost.

Sun-Sahara Africa the poorest continent on earth with its 1,3 billion people are facing starvation. There will be no millions of tonnes of grain shipped with compassion and there will be not enough money to pay for the vastly inflated grain prices.

The Church in Southern Africa....and Africa

I have mentioned this before and I will say it again. The future of missions in Africa will be the establishment of what in a bygone era in the long history of the church was called "Monasteries". The sending out of teams of monks who would set aside a large piece of land and then worship the Lord through work, farming, education of people and skills development and by example show people what it means to lead a Godly, productive life that produces food for the body and nourishment for the soul.

We in Africa have the richest unused potential farm land of all places on earth. Africa could feed the world. Southern Africa can feed Africa.

Every so called "church network" or "Apostolic network" or ministry fellowship in a city needs to mobilize its people and its finances to start a farm project. My recommendation from my study of agriculture is this:

Invest in a 40 hectare centre pivot irrigated piece of land. There are plenty of spots available all up and down the Orange river. Out of those 40 hectares of irrigated land you will not believe the incredible money value you can produce from 40 hectares of irrigated vegetables. You can get 40 mt of potato per hectare at R3000 per mt. The price of tomatoes or onions is even higher and the tonnage of tomatoes from a hectare is incredible.

You can set up a rehabilitation centre at the farm and provide work and ministry to inner city youth caught up in gangs and drugs. You can hold an annual get away conference at your farm. You can get government financial help for buying the land and developing the farm.

And once you and other churches have built up skills and farm knowledge you can start a mission outreach into Africa based on farm and food production connected to a church planting program.

This is a topic I will return to in future. It's because I see one day in the future that Africa will be the food granary of the world. Food production is what will provide our millions of unemployed young people with work, dignity and sustain family formation and church planting. And the world will come to us for food and we will give them food and the gospel!