

## MEMORANDUM

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Food scarcity has combined with rising prices to put at risk hundreds of millions of people around the globe. “The world is a hungry place,” writes William B. Dickinson in this report from the nonprofit Biocentric Institute, which promotes the enhancement of quality of life for all peoples. “Creatures of the air, land and sea with all kinds of appetites compete for limited calories and nutrients that sustain their lives. Included in this voracious mix are seven billion humans.”

In poor nations, food security becomes a daily preoccupation. Many families spend 40 or even 50 percent of their income just to put food on the table. The World Bank estimates that rising food prices pushed 44 million people into poverty in the latter half of 2010. Oxfam, the British charity organization, warns that food prices could double in the next 20 years. And families in rich nations feel the pinch, too. Some 44.5 million Americans now use food stamps, at a cost this year of \$71.5 billion.

Fear mounts that the world is just one poor harvest away from crisis. “Jumps in food prices sparked the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings,” Dickinson, a former Washington editor and journalism professor, writes, “and the lesson has not been lost on other vulnerable nations. In China, food budgets account for 30 to 40 percent of household spending. Unlike other food-deficit nations, China has the financial clout to anticipate the problem and shore up its reserves, driving up world commodity prices in the process.”

World population is projected to grow from today’s seven billion to more than nine billion in the next 40 years. Sir David Attenborough, a naturalist, recent expressed surprise at a “bizarre taboo” that prevents a serious discussion of the population problem. Dickinson thinks the strange silence on overpopulation is slowly being broken. “The Earth is finite,” he concludes. “Our environmental and social problems become difficult if not impossible to solve as we cope with ever more people. Food scarcity tells us more about our stewardship of the planet than we may want to hear.”

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