

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

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2014 Farm Bill to Cut Food Stamp Budget, Expand Crop Insurance

by Alyssa Miller

After almost three years in court, the long-awaited Farm Bill, the Agricultural Act of 2014, passed last February in a rare 68-32 bipartisan vote. The bill faced heavy criticism in its attempt to reduce government spending by \$23 billion over the next decade.

Nearly 1,000 pages in length and with a budget of \$500 billion, the bill has two major components. First, the bill will expand crop insurance programs by \$7 billion, which will help to protect farmers in case of natural disasters or major crop loss. Second, the bill will cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or food stamp, budget by \$8 billion.

Farm Insurance Programs

The 2008 Farm Bill created a program that paid direct subsidy payments to farmers regardless of whether or not they actually grew a crop. The Agricultural Act of 2014 eliminates the subsidy program.

According to the Crop Insurance in America website, farmers may choose from two insurance programs, the Price Loss Coverage program and the Agriculture Risk Protection program.

The Price Loss Coverage program makes a payment to a producer "when the market price for a covered crop is below a fixed reference price."

The Agriculture Risk Protection program "makes a payment when either the farm's revenue from all crops or the county's revenue for a crop is below 86 percent of a predetermined or benchmark level of revenue."

Despite the expansion of the crop insurance programs, the Price Loss Coverage and Agriculture Risk Protection programs together are expected to cost less than the subsidy program they replaced.



World Hunger Relief, Inc.

See "Farm Bill" on page 5

The Good Cup: Fair-Trade Coffee & Tea in China

by Poplar Yuan

Editor's note: Most of the time, when economic-justice activists think of the words "fair trade" and "China," we think of appalling conditions in sweat shops run by international corporations in China. In this article, Poplar Yuan, a journalist with an economics specialty, gives us a look at the relationship between more affluent Chinese consumers and fair-trade coffee and tea.

The Coffee Culture in China: A Recent Development

Coffee, a daily staple in western countries, was introduced in China at the beginning of 20th century. With the consumption of tea as the traditional culture, the Chinese resisted coffee as a common drink for a long time.

Even with several places suitable for the cultivation of coffee, it did not become a popular drink until international scholars, followed by stores like Starbucks, brought the culture of coffee to China.

The best-known places in China for coffee cultivation are in the Yunnan and Hainan provinces. In early days, coffee dealers produced more instant coffee than regular ground coffee, using a lower-priced mainland coffee bean. This solved the problem of long-term storage when sales were low.

For a long time, Chinese people refused to believe that instant coffee was really coffee, even though 70 percent of the coffee consumed in China before 2003 was instant.

But coffee, the second-largest type of goods traded between countries around the world (behind oil), would soon grow in popularity in China. Starbucks opened its first Chinese store in 1999. Although the coffee was expensive, with the support of international visitors and a certain vanity of consumption, the trade expanded quickly.

Xingrong Wang, director of Starbucks public relations department, recently predicted that China will soon be the store's second-largest market in 2014, with the number of stores expanding to 1,500 in 2015.¹

Other international coffee dealers are also coveting this huge potential market. In 2013, McDonald's Corporations' relatively new division, McCafé (selling "McCoffee"), has 516 stores in 24 Chinese cities, and Britain's Costa Coffee has 516 stores in China. More and more people have begun drinking coffee daily, and Chinese coffee imports have increased 268 percent in five years. (See figure 1 on the right.)

In recent years, especially after China entered the World Trade Organisation, fair-trade concepts and fair-trade goods are rushing the Chinese market. Since China is limited to the types and production of coffee in Yunnan and Hainan provinces, the Chinese market commonly turns to Brazil and Colombia for fair-trade coffee.

However, Starbucks remains the most significant fair-trade coffee store. For most Chinese people, it's the easiest way to get a cup of coffee, since very few people have coffee machines in their homes or offices. Starbucks claims that 86 percent of the coffee it purchased in 2011 was ethically sourced, that the number was 93 percent in 2012, and that their aim is 100 percent fair-trade coffee by 2015.

Coffee consumption in China is still lower than in western countries, including fair-trade coffee consumption. In 2009, US imports of fair-trade coffee were higher than the total coffee import of China. (See Figure 2 on page 3.)

A 2008 study published by Adam Carlson at the University of Notre Dame claims that fair-trade certification causes a 22-percent increase in the price of coffee, and fair-trade-certified products are typically found in more expensive brands. Carlson reported that American consumers were willing to pay about a 3.62-percent higher premium for fair-trade certified coffee.

Figure 1:

Chinese Coffee Imports (Per 1,000 60-kilogram bags)			
Period	Green Beans	Soluble Coffee (Instant Coffee)	Total
2008-2009	320	115	435
2009-2010	425	185	610
2010-2011	680	250	930
2011-2012	625	400	1,025
2012-2013	900	700	1,600

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture – Foreign Agricultural Service

A similar case study in China in 2012 showed that Chinese consumers were willing to pay 22-percent (US\$3) more for a medium cup of fair-trade coffee compared with traditional coffee. The key questions about this are: how many people are actually buying coffee in China? and how much coffee do Chinese people really consume?

Why Don't Chinese People Buy Fair-Trade Goods?

1. People don't believe they are really fair trade goods. Just as "green" concepts are gradually integrated into the average consumer's mind, fair-trade concepts are merging as an important desire of consumers and a selling point to merchants. Many sellers falsely claim that their goods are fairly traded to increase their business. Because of this, consumers need to be reassured that the money they spend will actually go to support the producers of the goods.

Few people, however, can truly get access to producers to find out what companies have done to increase the quality

Figure 2:

U.S. Imports of Fair Trade-Certified Coffee

Year	Pounds of Coffee	Percent Annual Growth
1998	76,059	n/a
1999	2,052,242	2,598
2000	4,249,534	107
2001	6,669,308	57
2002	9,747,571	46
2003	19,239,017	97
2004	32,974,571	71
2005	44,585,323	35
2006	64,774,431	45
2007	66,339,389	2
2008	87,772,966	32
2009	109,795,363	25

Transfair USA 2009 Almanac

trade is more about the idea of supporting producers than a high-quality life for themselves. Compared to the middle class, the upper-level group may care more about increasing their quality of life by buying fair-trade goods.

Taking coffee as an example, a tall-sized Starbucks latte costs \$4.28, which is 0.93 percent of the average monthly income in China, while, in the US, a \$3.25 tall latte only translates into 0.078 percent of the average monthly income.² Starbucks has 32-percent profits from the Asian market, and apparently it's the highest price and highest profit among this entire market.

Some consumers, however, still buy the expensive coffee. One survey suggested that students and white-collar workers are the major consumers. One relies on the income of parents and the other receives a good salary. The majority of consumers believe that coffee stands for a slow-paced life, which means people who drink coffee should have good salaries and enough time to enjoy them.

Since cultural pressures in China are high for homes, cars and food, it is not easy to have both a good salary and ample leisure time. Another major thought among Chinese consumers is that imported goods are always better quality. To a certain degree, Chinese coffee customers are looking to "have face," to show other people they are living a superior life.³ Most of the elderly—who are more accustomed to drinking tea—can't understand why people are willing to buy expensive coffee, while tea costs so little and is more "cozy" to drink.

3. Customers don't understand what "fair-trade goods" means. Fair-trade certification is a process where products are labeled so that the consumer knows the producer of the goods received fair treatment and was not exploited. Fair trade can protect the environment, increase the benefits of farmers and also improve the quality of goods. However, a 2012 Chinese survey suggests that, although about 45 percent of the respondents knew at least something about organic coffee, only about 34 percent knew relevant information about fair-trade coffee.⁴

of goods and the quality of life for the producers. Tea and coffee production usually happens in remote mountains or in poverty areas. Instead of taking the risk of paying more for "fake" fair-trade goods, consumers choose to be conservative and buy regular goods.

2. Fair-trade goods are expensive for common customers. In China, fair-trade goods are expensive goods, and blue-collar or poor people will never buy them. For middle-class consumers, fair

Many people who drink Starbucks coffee or McCoffee don't know they are buying fair-trade goods. The fair-trade certification label is only recognized by a few people. Although nonprofit organizations are looking for fair-trade service for farmers, they have fallen short—in China, at least—in educating the public about fair trade.

"Direct trade" is a new trend among buyers who bypass dealers to buy coffee directly from farmers. There is some confusion about this among consumers, which could be alleviated by more education from nonprofit organizations.

Coffee is not the only product in China to become involved in fair trade. Traders of tea, one of the top three exports in China, are exploring more efficient ways to do fair-trade export. Good-quality tea is far more expensive than regular coffee. Fair-trade tea is not widespread in China, however, because certification is difficult.

Anxi, Fujian—one of the biggest tea-producing towns in China—still uses the traditional trading method, which probably means that only seven percent of the benefit goes to the farmer, 27 percent goes to dealers, 30 percent goes to the government and 36 percent is reserved for retailers.

Compared with Anxi, tea producers of the Jiangxi province acquired a cooperative fair-trade certificate, allowing them for more than 10 years to sell their products at 30 percent above market prices.⁵ Jiangxi producers also committed to developing the local economy and focusing on environmentally friendly production methods.

Education in China about fair trade and how to do it in the right way could be improved both by the government and by NGOs. Asia only has 153 NGOs that support fair trade, compared with 557 in Latin America and 320 in Africa. More participation among NGOs in Asia would go a long way toward promoting a fair-trade culture in China. "Discovery" tours, or tasting tours, operated by coffee or tea producers could be welcomed like wine-tasting tours. ,

—Poplar Yaun, who recently received a Masters of International Journalism at Baylor University, hails from Changzhou, Jiangsu, China. She was a Seeds of Hope intern in the fall of 2013 and returned as a volunteer writer in the spring of 2014. In addition to her journalism studies, she also studies economics and has held internship positions in that field.

Endnotes

1. Zhidian Economic Journal, 2013.
2. Xinhuanet, 2013.
3. Ibid.
4. Yang, Hu, Malvern & Liu, 2012.
5. Mercier, 2010.



Homelessness and US Veterans

by Natalia Alas

After returning from the stress of war, US veterans are expected to readily adjust to civilian life. They are expected to continue life as it was before they left to fight for their country.

But transitioning back to the life of ordinary citizen is not so easy. Going to war takes a large toll on a person, and almost every veteran is affected greatly by his or her experiences.

Although many veterans are able to reunite with their families, find employment or continue their education, there are many more who suffer from physical and/or psychological injuries. Many are unable to hold a job, and many eventually become homeless.

In fact, it has been estimated that about 13 percent of the homeless adult population across the US is comprised of veterans. According to a report published by the US Department of Veteran Affairs, on one single night in January 2010, 76,329 veterans were living in emergency shelters, transitional housing or in other unsheltered places.

Researchers have found that veterans do not usually become homeless immediately after returning from war.

The issue of veteran homelessness in the US was first noticed after the War of 1812, and it has only increased in numbers since that time. Veterans who fought in World War I returned home only to face the Great Depression, which threw many veterans, as well as others, onto the streets.

Researchers have found that veterans do not usually become homeless immediately after returning from war. It takes an average of five years for a veteran to experience an initial episode of homelessness.

According to research, homelessness affects so many veterans because of the unique problems that veterans face after separating from the military. Mental disorders, such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance-related disorders and traumatic brain injuries are the strongest predictors of a veteran's risk of becoming homeless.

Mental illness, a lack of social support, a lack of affordable housing and a lack of access to healthcare have all been found to contribute to the number of veterans on the streets. In addition to this, the skills that veterans learned during their military occupations and training are not often applicable to civilian jobs.

Fortunately, many organizations and advocates have decided that even one homeless veteran is too many. Organizations such as the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans have pushed for legislation and activism to end veteran homelessness.

By conducting research and creating programs for homeless veterans, organizers have discovered that veterans need a coordinated effort that consists not only of shelters and food, but of basic physical health care, substance abuse treatment and aftercare, mental-health counseling, secure housing, job assessment and placement assistance—along with personal development and empowerment.

The most effective programs to combat homelessness, and assist veterans who are at risk of becoming homeless, are those that build a strong social support network that helps veterans get back on their feet.

The state of Massachusetts has been a leader in the campaign to end homelessness among veterans. It is doing so by pursuing goals to implement a housing strategy that will re-house and stabilize veterans who become homeless, that will ensure veterans remain housed; will increase access to benefits and resources for veterans; and will integrate federal, state and community resources to support veterans.

This program is in its initial stages, and if it is shown to be effective, hopefully many more states will implement this model. Its leaders believe that it is possible that, five years time, to eradicate veteran homelessness completely.

—Natalia Alas is a recent graduate of the Baylor University Professional Writing program. She was a Seeds of Hope intern during the fall of 2013, and, before that, she served as a Social Work intern with the Veterans Affairs office in Waco, TX. Sources: US Department of Veterans Affairs, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, US Department of Labor, State of Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness among Veterans.



2014 Farm Bill, *continued from page 1*

SNAP Cuts

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) website, the SNAP program is “one of seven strategies essential for meeting the goal of ending childhood hunger by 2015.” The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently reported that, in December 2013, approximately 47 million

The 2014 Farm Bill will cut the SNAP budget by \$8 billion. Sheena Wright, president of United Way in New York says she expects to see a large number of people with food security issues.

people were participating in the SNAP program and received a monthly benefit of \$255 per household.

While no families will be removed from the SNAP program as a result of the cuts, the bill narrows a loophole in the program that has allowed a number of people to take greater advantage of the aid than others. According to the FRAC website, the Farm Bill requires that the 16 states that offer the “Heat and Eat” program—which is designed to help recipients meet their food and utility needs—invest more energy assistance benefits to trigger the SNAP option.”

Because of these changes, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that the cut will shrink the benefits of approximately 1.7 million people by an average of \$90 per household.

Sheena Wright, the president of the United Way in New York, the largest state in the “Heat and Eat” program, said in a *New York Times* interview that she expects to see a large number of people with food insecurity issues. “You are going to have to make a decision on what you are going to do—buy food or pay rent.”

Changes for the Agriculture Sector

While the bill seemed to provide a positive outlook for farmers at the expense of food-insecure people, even the agriculture sector took a hit. The bill paved the way for an upcoming California law which states that eggs from caged chickens can only be sold in the state of

California if the chickens are raised in cages in which they have room to move their wings. Although the new law placated advocacy groups, it also creates issues for out-of-state producers who will be forced to enlarge their bird cages if they want to sell their eggs to California markets.

Furthermore, the *New York Times* reports that an attempt to “remove a labeling provision in the bill that requires beef, lamb and poultry producers, among others, to stamp their products with the country of origin” was thwarted by consumer groups.

In addition, the Farm Bill also creates new soil-conservation measures, forms a program to encourage SNAP recipients to purchase more fruits and vegetables and provides catfish inspectors with a new \$20 million office at the USDA.

—Alyssa Miller recently completed a degree in Professional Writing at Baylor University and was a Spring 2014 Seeds of Hope intern. Sources: USDA (www.usda.gov); ABC News (abcnews.go.com); New York Times (www.nytimes.com); USA Today (www.usatoday.com); Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (www.cbpp.org); FRAC (www.frac.org); Crop Insurance in America (www.cropinsuranceinamerica.org)

House Approves Measure to Reform International Food Aid

Shortly before press time, the US House of Representatives approved an amendment to the Farm Bill, introduced by Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), that will provide more US food aid around the world at a reduced cost.

Royce, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and a champion of food-aid reform, introduced the amendment to the Agriculture Appropriations Bill for 2015 that would allow the US to purchase food closer to areas of crisis or conflict, which, in turn, would reduce transit time and cost.

The amendment, which passed 223 to 198, established the “Local and Regional Purchase” (LRP) program and redirects \$10 million in funding to LRP from the Agricultural Marketing Service.

“I am pleased that the House has adopted this common-sense proposal to improve US international food aid,” Royce said to a *Ripon Advance* reporter. “In a time of shrinking budgets, we are forced to do more with less. It is crucial that the United States has the tools to respond to humanitarian crises while stretching our food-aid dollars further. From the ongoing crisis in Syria to the devastating typhoon in the Philippines, starving people do not have months to wait for emergency food to arrive.”

Bread for the World hails the passing of the amendment and the LRP program as a huge and significant bipartisan victory for food-aid reform. The vote took place just after Bread’s Lobby Day, in which hundreds of members contacted their Congressional representatives, many of them in person.

Rev. David Beckmann, Bread’s president, said the victory also creates momentum for broader reform of US food aid. “With 842 million people around the world still going hungry every day, now is the time to invest more efforts to reach more people, more efficiently,” he said.

—Sources: Ripon Advance, *Bread for the World*

A Teacher's Guide to Engaging a New Generation of Anti-Hunger Leaders

reviewed by Alyssa Miller

In an education system that focuses more on standardized testing than creating well-rounded, productive members of society, it is exciting to read about a new program that allows teachers to work within their predetermined curriculum while teaching students how to care about poverty and hunger in their communities.

Youth Service America¹ has partnered with the Sodexo Foundation² to create a teacher's guide for K-12 teachers. The guide provides teachers with the tools they need to align service-learning projects with predetermined academic standards.

The guide focuses on the *Semester of Service* program, which seeks to educate students about childhood hunger in their neighborhoods and communities.

During the three-year trial period from 2010 to 2013, the program—through the efforts of 39 teachers and 3,931 students—has “raised community awareness, performed service, initiated advocacy campaigns to influence public policy and encouraged philanthropy to raise money.”

The *Semester of Service* program incorporates the IPARD/C model, which stands for Investigate, Prepare and Plan, Act, Reflect and Demonstrate/Celebrate.

Over the course of a semester, students investigate a need in their community; prepare a plan of action; act on the plan they created; reflect on the work they accomplished through their service projects; and finally demonstrate their project results to other students and community members.

The teacher's guide provides an in-depth look at the *Semester of Service* program, how teachers adjusted the program to meet the needs and capabilities of their individual grade levels, the service projects that the students performed during the semester, how the different projects aligned with state academic standards, and the reactions from both students and teachers as to the success of the program.

The guide also provides strategies to help teachers implement the *Semester of Service* program into their curriculum, as well as helpful tips from

teachers who have already gone through the process. The majority of the guide, however, is spent in a brief overview of the successes of three teachers in three different schools after they spent a semester implementing the *Semester of Service* program with their own students.

In Austin, TX, a group of third-grade students from Elsa England Elementary along with Travis Heights Elementary School, researched hunger in their community, presented their findings to a group of first-grade students, created videos and a “Hunger Wall” that showcased student journals, organized a fair to raise money for the Capitol Area Food Bank's Kids Café Program, wrote letters to President Barack Obama about hunger and advocated for the “Breakfast Bill”³ in the Texas legislature.

The Jones Middle School sixth-grade students in Upper Arlington, OH, partnered with students from Buckeye Middle School to discover childhood hunger in their community.

The students raised money for the Mid-Ohio Food Bank through a pennant-selling fundraiser. They then described their work in presentations to other sixth- and third-grade students. The students at Jones Middle School raised \$1504 for the local food bank.

In Garden City Park, NY, the Mineola High School Advanced Placement (AP) Literature and AP History students assessed the hunger needs in the community through the

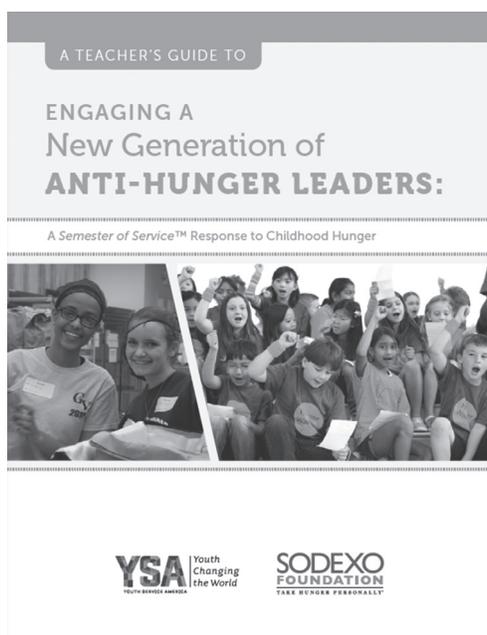
Corpus Christi Parish Outreach and the Interfaith Nutrition Network, organized donations and held a pasta dinner fundraiser, raising \$2700 for the Interfaith Nutrition Network.

This guide is an excellent accompaniment to curricula in states across the US, especially for those teachers who are concerned with teaching their students to care about people less fortunate than themselves.

—For more information about the teacher's guide or to download a free electronic version, go to www.ysa.org/featuredresource.

Endnotes

1. Youth Service America (YSA) works to improve communities by encouraging students to take on roles



Resources & Opportunities

of service. The organization sponsors large-scale campaigns like Global Youth Service Day and *Semester of Service*, gives grants to students, educators and other organizations to use for youth-led service projects, provides resources to help prepare students for roles as leaders of service projects and awards youths who demonstrate exceptional service.

2. The Sodexo Foundation was created in 1999 as a not-for-profit organization committed to ending childhood hunger in the US. The foundation works to help at-risk families and since 1999, has given approximately \$20 million in grants to end childhood hunger.

3. The "Breakfast Bill," recently signed into law, requires Texas campuses that participate in the national school breakfast program to offer a free breakfast to all students.



What Does the Lord Require?

Help your congregation find the answers.



art by Helen Siegl

Sacred Seasons offers creative worship tools to help raise awareness of hunger and justice issues. A year's subscription of US\$100 includes Advent and Lent packets, plus our most popular resource, the fall Hunger Emphasis packet. Single packets are \$30. (Non-US subscriptions are \$115; individual packets are \$40.) To order, call 254-755-7745, email seededitor@clearwire.net, or write to Seeds Publishers at 602 James Ave., Waco, TX 76706. To see back issues of *Sacred Seasons*, go to www.seedspublishers.org.



2014 Offering of Letters: Campaign to Reform Food Aid

This year's Bread for the World Offering of Letters focuses on a new opportunity to reform US food aid.

For many decades, the United States has been a global leader economically, diplomatically, and militarily. The same is true in the humanitarian arena. The US government often sends assistance in the form of food aid. However, the practices and procedures by which the US does this were set up in the 1950s, and times have changed.

This year's offering focuses on reform that will enable the US to respond faster and more flexibly in a 21st century, globalized world. Changes to the food-aid programs would allow food aid to benefit 17 million more people each year—at no additional cost to US taxpayers.

The annual Offering of Letters involves many members, congregations and groups writing letters to legislators and the President about a carefully chosen hunger issue. These letters have a profound impact on the decisions that are made by US leaders.

For more information about why reform is so critical or to order an Offering of Letters kit, go to www.bread.org/ol/2014.

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends

Quotes, Prayers & Pithy Sayings



O God of abundance,
you feed us every day. Rise in us now,
make us into your bread, that we may share
your gifts with a hungry world,
and join in love with all people,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—*from the morning prayer
at the St. Gregory's food pantry in San Francisco.
From Take This Bread by Sara Miles.
Art by Rebecca S. Ward.*

to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

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Seeds of Hope also produces *Sacred Seasons*, a series of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude. These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art and drama.

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