

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

Farm Justice, Part 2

by Katie Cook



This issue is the second of a two-part series about justice issues in farming. All of the Seeds of Hope content is ultimately about food security, and farming is the source of that security. In the summer issue, Sara

Alexander shared what she learned, from personal interviews, about the frustrations of Maya farmers in Belize. Dawn Michelle Michals wrote about the plight of migrant farm workers in the US and what some groups are doing to bring about lasting change. Michael Williamson took a deep look into the injustice experienced by Black farmers, particularly in Mississippi.

In this issue, we hear from Jonathan Grant, executive director of World Hunger Relief, Inc., about the programs at the WHRI training farm near Waco, TX. Linda Freeto explores the not-so-new urban homesteading movement in the US. Ashley Mix tells us about the status of global food prices. We have also included an eclectic, annotated list of resources about farm justice.

Although we are profoundly aware that these stories are just a drop in the ocean of farm justice issues, we hope you will learn from them and be inspired to learn more.

Many of my friends say a prayer before meals that goes something like this: "We thank you for the food that is before us. We ask you to bless the hands that planted it and watched it grow, the hands that harvested it, and the hands that prepared it for our table." Perhaps we should add, "And show us how to make their lives better."

May we never forget the lives of the people on whose labor we depend.
—Katie Cook is the Seeds of Hope editor.

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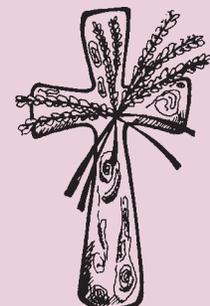
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art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

World Hunger Relief Training Farm Getting Back to Work:

An Interview with Director Jonathan Grant

by Katie Cook

World Hunger Relief, Inc. (WHRI), is a ministry dedicated to the alleviation of food insecurity and malnutrition through sustainable agriculture and community development. The 40-acre training farm—located near Waco, TX, and affectionately known to many as the Hunger Farm—has sponsored a variety of educational programs for interns, volunteers, church groups and schools since the early 1970s.

In August of 2019, Jonathan Grant became WHRI's executive director. Jonathan was born in Brazil to missionary parents. He earned a degree in business at Baylor University and one in theology at the George W. Truett Theological Seminary connected to Baylor.

Jonathan has served on church staffs and operated businesses in the Waco area, and, in all that time, never lost his passion for the hungry people in the world. In the summer of 2019, he called WHRI's interim director, Jeremy Everett (also executive director of the Baylor University Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty) with an idea for the farm's ministry.

That call led to Jonathan's present position. The organization was undergoing a transition, and Jonathan, it seems, was just what it needed. However, just a few short

months into his tenure at the farm, the coronavirus pandemic brought many of his plans and dreams to a standstill. Now the farm is beginning to revive its various projects. I recently drove out to the farm to see what new things are happening there. Below is an interview with Jonathan.

HNH: What led you to agree to take this position?

JG: I wanted to get back into the ministry. I had worked in the business world, and I love the outdoors and eating and food systems, and it seemed like the perfect fit. What I presented to the board was a plan to take seriously the call and ministry of the farm in a missional way, but also setting it up in a sustainable way.

The farm had gone through some financial struggles and had to think through how to respond. Instead of just rebooting, the board made a very difficult decision to take a pause and to ask "Who are we called to be next?" Jeremy Everett stepped in and kind of nursed the ministry along, kept it afloat and got some financial underpinning. Jeremy encouraged me to apply for the job. I knew it was going to be a bare-bones staff and a bare-bones budget, but with great possibility.

HNH: In what ways did the pandemic affect the farm's ministry?

JG: It has been an interesting year and a half. I came in with a pretty big vision and began to share it with the board and staff—and then we shut down. It has felt like a really short time to be able to do the things we want to do and be, and it has also felt like a really, really long time, because we didn't get to do some of the things we wanted to do and felt called to do.

As I told our staff in the middle of the shutdown, so much of our joy comes from being able to hear a word from God, to feel a guttural call, and to work toward those things. When you implement those things and live them out, there's reason for celebration. We all felt that call, and our education group started planning camps, internships and classes, and did all the hard planning work. And then we had to cancel all those

Left: World Hunger Relief, Inc., executive director Jonathan Grant. Photo courtesy of WHRI.



things. It was the same with our fields and our volunteers. Now we've started to have some of our celebrations again.

HNH: What Farm programs are starting up again?

JG: We are implementing all of our programs again. We held two weeks of Farm Camp for elementary school age children in June, about 50 kids each time. The theme for this year was "Farm to Table."

Most kids and many adults don't have a clue about where their food comes from, who normally harvests their food, how many hands touch it, why it takes good soil to grow good produce. So we wanted to get the kids in the dirt, let them have fun, give them exposure to the farm and our animals, and give them a deep dive into what God's work of creation looks like, other than just showing up at the grocery store.

We held our "Night on the Farm" farm-to-table dinner in the late spring. It was designed to get folks to see who we are and what we do and raise some money for our operations. We have started a partner program, in which volunteers pledge to come once or twice a week for eight or 12 weeks. After that time, they have the option to renew their partnership.

We are giving tours for small and large groups. We hope to have information for a self-guided walking tour on our website soon. We did have a brochure, but things change frequently, and this will be a better way to keep it updated.

Our Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) program shut down for one season during the pandemic, but now it is back in full swing. For 14 weeks, members get a box of food a week, 40 shares. This week it was beets, radishes, kale, carrots, lettuce and swiss chard. Later it will be cucumbers, okra, whatever is growing in each season. It's always beautiful and colorful and healthy.

One of our more missional programs with the community for the past five years has been the Produce Prescription Program with Waco Family Medicine. We had to stop that program during the pandemic, but we are again delivering 150 boxes a week for 14 or 15 weeks. Each box contains five to six seasonal items, cards for each item with nutritional facts, how to grow them and recipes for each that kids will like. It can be any of 40 different types of produce. We're trying to teach folks that it is helpful to eat foods that can grow in your climate. It's fresher, it's more nutritious and it's healthier.

Also, neuroscience students at Baylor helped created a platform where people can scan a QR code to find cooking demonstrations on our website from local chefs and farm volunteers that are culturally appropriate for them. There are lots of recipes. We are trying to do two things with this:

First, we're hoping to change people's habits. Patients are on the prescription program because the doctor has determined that their health problems are tied to their diet. Most of them live in food deserts, so they rely on convenience store food or fast food, things that aren't healthy.

And second, we want to change their long-term state of health.

From questionnaires the patients fill out, we are seeing change of habit. And they're returning week after week for the boxes. There is rarely a box unclaimed. To gauge their overall state of health is more difficult.

HNH: How do you think the community can go about gauging a long-term change like that?

JG: This has always been a calling for me, but right before the pandemic hit, I participated in conversations with the local Race Equity Institute. There were probably 50 local civic and nonprofit leaders there.

One woman told a story about a man who was walking by a pond and saw a dead fish and said, "I wonder what's

We hope there will also be theological training that asks "Why do we care about the land? Why do we care about who's picking our food? Why do we care about the systems that offer food to some but not to all?"

wrong with this fish?" Then, on the way home, he saw another dead fish, and he asked the same thing. The next morning, he walked by and there were a thousand dead fish next to the pond. That time, he didn't ask, "What's wrong with the fish?" He asked, "What's wrong with the pond?"

She said to us, "In your organizations, are you asking yourself what's wrong with the fish, or are you asking what's wrong with the pond?" Everybody in the room was confident that we were addressing the issues of the pond in our work. She shot every one of us down. While we thought we were changing systems and culture generations, we were really just trying to do something that would make the life of a fish a little bit better.

That really stuck in my craw in a really uncomfortable way, and I began to think about the veggie prescription program. I know that, in most ways, that program is helping individuals get sustenance and nutrition that's going to help their lives. But there really is a bigger system that is broken. I've known that all along; that's why I came to the farm, to bring about food justice and change food insecurity.

It's really easy to point to the prescription program and say we're doing a great thing. And we are; it's a chronic, urgent thing. But there's a bigger, generational thing that needs to be addressed. That's what we're looking at. How do we as a farm and as a player in this community bring together other leaders in such a way that we are about addressing the pond? That's why I signed up for the McLennan County Hunger Coalition, that's why I come to work here every day, to ask, "How can we as a community work in

Please see "Hunger Farm" on page 4.

Hunger Farm, continued from page 3

such a way that lives really are changed and systems really are changed?" It's a big hairy beast; it's a challenge, but it's worth getting up for every day.

HNH: You have mentioned programs that are starting up again with pretty much the same design as before. What programs at the farm are evolving?

JG: We are converting the Nicaragua House¹ into what we call the urban homestead with a quarter-acre plot, to teach what it would look like to grow your own food, raise your own bunnies and chickens and be self-reliant. It will eventually be a classroom for a huge spectrum of classes, which are now being led out in the raised beds² around the house.

We relaunched our four-month internship program in August. Starting in Spring 2022, we will have a nine-month internship program that will focus on education, livestock and produce. Two interns in each section will concentrate on education, farming produce, regenerative soil or livestock.

One thing that has changed at the farm over the years is the reason for interns to come. Once it was to prepare for agricultural missions. Now maybe 10 percent will be planning to make this a career. We hope there will also be theological training that asks "Why do we care about the land? Why do we care about who's picking our food? Why do we care about the systems that offer food to some but not to all?"

Hopefully, our interns will be changed people when they leave here. Whether they become pastors or farmers or engineers, they'll care about creation, neighbor, the systems in their communities. They'll want to make sure everybody is accounted for.

The traditional farm internship is a very different experience. There are dozens of farms across the US that offer internships and they vary greatly in their scope and mission. Before Chase and Katie Walter had finished writing the curriculum and posted the availability of the internships, people were already asking about the program. We only have six vacancies, so we are going through lots of applications of people who are highly qualified. People are hungry to come and live and work on a farm and see what doing that has to teach them. Some things you have to market, and some things they're clamoring to get in.

That brings its own challenges. It comes with stipends, room and board, but people come from different backgrounds with different needs. We hope to engage some local people for whom four-year college is not an option, and some international interns.

HNH: Will you begin to reach out to your international partners again?

JG: Originally, World Hunger Relief was set up to be a mission-sending institution to train folks, whether it was Indigenous folks from different countries or local folks wanting to help shape agricultural climates in other places. But somewhere along the way, long before my time, it became clear that hunger and malnutrition in McLennan County were astronomical.

So "How do we do both?" became the question, and perhaps working locally was easier, but for some reason some of our international partnerships faded. When I came, it was all local. But my passion from growing up as a missionary kid in Brazil makes me want to learn how to re-engage those relationships so that we can look globally again.

We are certainly committed to Waco and McLennan County and addressing the food systems here, but we don't want to do so at the expense of the partnerships that we have had in Liberia and Haiti and El Salvador. That takes a lot more work, of course.

Part of the issue is that growing crops in Central Texas is a very different thing from growing in other parts of the world. The beauty of farming is that you get to know the land that you're working. So much of what you see in the land is determined by geography. Trying to teach somebody how to respond to the land here is very different from what it is going to look like in El Salvador or Liberia or Haiti. You can't just teach farming practices. Water, climate, soil, all of those are different in different places. Farming in context is important. You have to make sure what you've done *here* makes long-lasting change *there*.

My parents were pastors in southern Brazil. The old way was to build a church in southern Brazil that looked like your church in Central Texas: the same preaching style, the same building, the same hymns. If you get to be a good missionary, you realize that context and engagement and the culture of the people are really important. So your church starts looking very different. The same thing is true in farming.

HNH: What will your Service Learning Experiences look like now?

JG: Living on the Other Side (LOTOS) had a particular bent as a simulation experience. It is being reworked. Instead of just immersion into somebody else's life, we're trying to find ways to engage folks to say "The world in which I live and decisions I make are creating a system and circumstances for folks. The way I live has a direct result in their lives. So how might I change in such a way that their lives would change for the better?" We're trying to inspire them to become an advocate for that.

Chase Jensen coordinates all of this. The retreat will last one day, three days or five days. They will live in the bunkhouse, in tents or in the urban homestead house. It is designed for college groups and high school students. We partner with a Catholic high school for boys in Dallas,

working on curriculum together that's more refined for that group. They will bring a group every semester.

We're expecting to work with 11 to 14 groups a year, in the summer, during spring break and Christmas break. We try to go hard into the things we do, and this is probably all we can do in a year.

HNH: What are some new programs at the Farm?

JG: I had read about Princeton Theological Seminary having a "farminary." When I first came to the farm, I pitched to the board that I wanted to create a partnership with Truett Seminary to begin to teach pastors and people going into ministry something that they weren't being exposed to. So we got a grant to start a program at the seminary called "Theology, Ecology and Food Justice." Jenny Howell is the director of that. We just finished the second semester of classes at the farm. Truett students have to do a month-long internship, and Jenny has found people who want to do their internships here on the farm. She guides them through different projects. One built a prayer trail through our 10-acre mesquite plot. One studied the effect of soil on the quality of food.

I have a vision that everything we do is for the benefit of the soil and the land, of the animals that are here, devising a wise way of making that sustainable long-term. We're looking at enterprises that will fund what we're called to do. We need to be as diverse and have as many entry points as possible for people to come to the farm.

HNH: Do you have any outlandish dreams for the farm?

JG: I have visions of a few bed-and-breakfasts out here, in which we house folks and introduce them to life on the farm. It would be for people who are in town for different reasons and want to spend a weekend here. It would give us a little income and exposure for them.

HNH: What do you think is going to happen at the farm in the next few years?

JG: The more refined question to me is, "What is God calling us to do with this 40 acres? What do we do, so that when I'm done in 15 years, this place is better off than when I came?" And also that points to the soil. How we are we going to physically engage the land in a way that says, "This is from God"?

The way we go about farming, the way we go about using the land depletes what God gave us more than it regenerates it. That's our first call—to build soil. When that happens and how that happens is what the rest of it is all about. We create good soil. We learn to do that by planting things in a certain way, by using animals in a certain way, and we end up with an abundance of produce.

Because of that, we can do things like the prescription program, like taking stuff to the farmer's market. We can teach our interns to do that, we can teach the kids' camp. It all comes from asking ourselves the question, "Where does this land come from? What is God asking us to do as we care for it? How do we become ambassadors for creation care? How do we handle stewardship of land? How do we work the land to benefit our neighbor? And who is our neighbor?"

—Katie Cook is the Seeds of Hope editor.

Endnotes

1. In 2001, the Waco, TX, Habitat for Humanity affiliate partnered with WHRI to build a house on the farm that was patterned after a typical Habitat dwelling in Nicaragua: a 20 x 20 one-room, cement-block frame on a concrete slab. The Nicaragua House was originally built to house a hunger-awareness simulation retreat called "Living on the Other Side." (See "Habitat for Humanity Affiliate Teams Up with Hunger Farm to Build Simulation Site," *Hunger News & Hope*, Vol 3 No 2, Spring 2001, page 8.) Since then, the "Nic House" has been home to a number of programs.
2. The farm has long used a system of raised crop beds, instituted by WHRI's first director, Carl Ryther, to teach volunteers and groups about intensive gardening.



Right: An intern works in the garden at World Hunger Relief training farm in Elm Mott, TX. Photo by Matt Lester.

Urban Homesteading: *It Can Happen Anywhere*

by Linda Freeto

More and more people in the 21st century dream about a simpler way of living. They want to be more creative with their resources and cut back on consumerism. Some folks even go so far as to draw diagrams of what their new lifestyle would look like: a small garden patch in the backyard, maybe a few chickens or rabbits, a slower pace of life, more time with family.

When thinking about crops, raising animals and having land, we envision a homestead, a farm in the country. But living in the city is, by nature, to be limited in space. Nevertheless, in today's world, millions of people living in an urban city setting are thinking about homesteading—urban homesteading.

The concept of urban homesteading has been around for a long time. In the 19th century, the United States began to spread beyond the east coast into the unknown western territory.

In May of 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act. The new Act allowed any American, “including free slaves, to put in a claim for up to 160 free acres of federal land for a small filing fee.”¹

People were looking for a place where they could raise families and have their own crops and animals. But those places began to be farther away. Cities began to develop in

places where, years before, a few homesteaders had taken hold of the land. But people did not give up. They kept moving further west, looking for land to make their own.

The Homestead Act was active for 124 years, until it was repealed in 1976.² Some 1.6 million claims in 30 states were obtained. On the other side of the coin, Native

This is not a new dream. People around the world desire to raise enough food for their families and share with their neighbors.

Americans were forced to leave their ancestral lands and were pushed onto reservations—all to make land available to the new homesteaders.³ The push to open the western part of the United States realized the dreams of many to have their own land—even if it meant that others would have to leave theirs.

As the Homestead Act became established, the Act itself was so ambiguous that fraud became a real problem. Cattle ranchers, miners, lumbermen and railroad tycoons found loopholes that made it possible for big businesses to slip in and develop their companies on lands that were meant for individuals and families.

By the time of World War I and World War II, in the United States as well as other nations, residents had begun to plant gardens in their front and backyards. The gardens were encouraged by the government. They were called “victory gardens,” “war gardens” or “food gardens for defense.” Vegetables, fruits, and herb



Left: A good example of container gardening, from Gardner's Magazine.

gardens were planted at private homes and public parks.

In the past, homesteading was a way of life. People grew their own vegetables, and most baked their own bread. They may have had a few chickens and rabbits in the yard as sources of fertilizer, eggs and meat. Even during the Great Depression, families grew vegetables in their backyards.

But today, in an age of convenience, we are too busy to bake bread and prepare a home-cooked meal for the family. People rely on the convenient produce aisle, where a head of lettuce is grown and trucked to the store, ready to purchase and take home. Meat is already packaged, ready to throw on the grill, and dairy products in large refrigerators at the back of the grocery store have become the norm.

In the search for a simpler lifestyle, some folks dream about their own acreage—planning where the chicken coops would be and planning a large vegetable garden. In their minds they see long rows of carrots and squash, a patch with new lettuce growth, and tomato plants full of tomatoes.

This is not a new dream. People all around the world desire to raise enough food for their families and share with their neighbors. For some, the dream has come true. They have moved to rural areas where land is available; they have arrived. But is this the only way to have a homestead—to move to their own land? No, it is not!

No matter where we live or what our circumstances are, we can live the homestead life. “Homesteading and simple living is a state of mind, not a place on a map,” writes “Kathi” of Oak Hill Homestead.⁴

Millions of people are taking a hard look at climate change, the loss of bees and other pollinators, as well as the decrease in water resources.

We see small family farms replaced by large corporations that crowd animals into inhumane conditions. When COVID-19 struck in 2020, we all experienced shortage of food and non-food products. And now we are facing high cost for meats, and in some cases, a decrease in the availability of meat products.

The convenient lifestyle has come with a price. People are living with

more debt than ever. As children grow, families experience extremely high college bills. Children grow up, graduate from college and return home, because they are not able to afford housing.

To make a big move to the countryside looks impossible. The resources are just not there: land is expensive, new skills need to be learned and it takes time and energy to get started. Even though urban homesteading is not for everyone, people are finding ways to make it work with great success and satisfaction.

Today, people are looking for a less stressful, more fulfilling lifestyle, no matter where they live. People are finding ways to live sustainably anywhere. Families can live simply on land in the country with many acres, or

Please see “Urban Homesteading” on page 8.

What Is Urban Homesteading?

According to the University of California at Davis, an urban homestead is a household that produces a significant part of the food, including produce and livestock, consumed by its residents. This is typically associated with residents’ desire to live in a more environmentally conscious manner.”

—Source: Kristen Reynolds, “Urban Agriculture in Alameda, CA,” University of California Small Farm Program, University of California, Davis.

According to the University of Nevada at Reno, urban homesteading can include the following:

1. Resource reduction, that is, using alternative energy sources such as solar panels, harvesting rainwater, drying clothes on lines, using bicycles and generally avoiding the use of fossil fuels.
2. Raising livestock, including chickens, goats, rabbits, fish, worms, bees and other pollinators.
3. Container gardens and edible landscaping: growing fruit, vegetables and herbs as part of one’s lawn or landscaping.
4. Recycling, using homemade products
5. Food preservation, including canning, drying and freezing food, cheese-making and fermenting.
6. Community food-sourcing, such as gleaning and barter.

—Source: University of Nevada, Reno Co-operative Extension Service, “Urban Homesteading: Sustainable Living in the City.”

What Is Urban Gardening?

People who are involved in urban homesteading use one or more methods of urban gardening. Also known as urban horticulture or urban agriculture, urban gardening is the process of growing plants of all types and varieties in an urban environment. Some types of urban gardening include container gardening (the use of all kinds of containers for growing plants in city balconies or on patios), indoor gardening, community gardening, “guerilla” gardening (a somewhat subversive effort to grow plants in public spaces like vacant lots or highway medians), and roof gardening. There is also a growing movement toward edible landscaping in many areas.

Urban Homesteading,

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they can live simply in a city apartment with little to no acreage. They are finding this lifestyle in the backyard, on porches or on balconies.

Families can live simply on land in the country with many acres, or they can live simply in a city apartment with little to no acreage. They are finding this lifestyle in the backyard, on porches or on balconies.

Homesteading is a mindset. It is no longer a place. Look in your backyard. Is there a place for a few vegetables to grow? Maybe there is a windowsill where a couple of small pots with herbs can grow.

Some begin with a few herbs in pots on a windowsill or a couple of tomato plants in five- or 10-pound containers. Others have begun to grow green beans, cucumbers, lettuce and tomatoes, dreaming about the fresh, homegrown salads that would grace their dinner tables.⁵

Think about reducing the cost of consumerism. Learn a new skill that will help you to a simpler way of living. Take time to sit outdoors and enjoy the beauty around you. Plant flowers that attract bees and butterflies to your yard.

Living on a homestead, even an urban homestead, is not always easy. However, the satisfaction and pleasure you receive from these activities will make life a joyful experience.

—Linda Freeto, a frequent contributor to Hunger News & Hope, has received a number of Associated Church Press (ACP) awards for her Special Section reports in the HNH summer issues. Some of her special reports have been included in the annual Best of the Christian Press. Linda served on the Seeds Council of Stewards for a number of years before moving to the Fort Worth, TX, area. When she returned, she agreed to serve as our volunteer Business Manager for a time. More recently, Linda has once again joined the Council of Stewards.

End Notes

1. "Homestead Act," *History*, updated March 2, 2021, (www.history.com).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. "Kathi," "Homesteading No Matter Where You Live," Oak Hill Homestead, (blog: kathi@oakhillhomestead.com).
5. Ibid.



The Hell's Kitchen Farm Project is an excellent example of community gardening in an urban setting. The 4,000-square-foot garden is located on the roof of a five-story church building in Midtown Manhattan, NY, in sight of the New York Times building. In the spring of 2011, volunteers organized a bucket brigade to carry seven metric tons of soil up six flights of stairs to the Metro Baptist Church roof, where 52 kiddie pools were planted with vegetables for neighbors in need of food. In this 2019 photo, Mark Prehn, Food Justice Coordinator for the project, checks out some of the vegetables, with Manhattan skyscrapers in the background. For more information, see "Hell's Kitchen Farm Project: A Lot More than Food," Hunger News & Hope, Vol 19 No 4, Winter 2019, beginning on page 2. Photo by Katie Cook.

Global Food Price Increase Impacts Low-Income Countries

by Ashley Mix

For the first time since May 2021, global food prices have begun decreasing in the last few weeks. However, given that the global food price average is still 33.9 percent above the previous average, the decrease of 2.5 percent is only one minuscule step in the right direction. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Food Price Index, these numbers might not look to be significant, but given the current global climate in the COVID-19 era, the numbers could mean economic ruin for the world's poorest countries.

COVID-19 has put a halt on much of the world's economic growth. For nearly 45 countries, including 34 in Africa, nine in Asia and two in Latin America and the Caribbean, the pandemic has all but decimated it. War, famine and disease are some of the leading causes of economic strife, especially in the global food industry, and according to Christian Man, columnist for the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "[D]isease may reduce individuals' ability to fully metabolize the food they consume, thereby increasing rates of malnutrition."

With increased rates of malnutrition in a disease-ridden world, the demand for crops such as corn and wheat is at an all-time high. "Those likely to be hit hardest by the rising cost of food are many of the same people who are last in line to be vaccinated," Shabtai Gold of Devex Newswire said. Countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are the most pronounced in this fight for lower food prices, with no solid hope for progress in sight.

Numbers are expected to rise for the remainder of the year. Supply chain disruptions and higher shipping costs, as well as pent-up demand and government spending, are all factors in the rise of costs for developing countries. Until COVID-19 vaccines are more widely spread and equilibrium can be achieved for the global economy, developing or economically weak countries will continue to face the brunt of high food prices. According to Devex, some 100 million people in developing or lower-income countries will have fallen into extreme poverty by the end of this year.

There is some hope amidst all the nega-

tive outlooks, however. According to the FAO, "in Southern African countries, production upturns are expected to boost households' food availability and partly offset some negative effects from the COVID-19 pandemic." The need for outside food assistance for many countries is still extremely high. However, at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic tunnel, there is a small light for food-insecure nations. Devex also gives a ray of hope by stating the benefits of the spike in food prices: "Higher food prices will bring about new investments in agriculture and higher global production. This is already happening in Asia and other parts of the world, and will accelerate over time."

A change for the betterment of the global agricultural system that includes lower-income countries and farms could accelerate this ray of hope. The debate, according to Devex, is not "comparing a world of high food prices with some other idealized world which is ordered differently. The debate is about whether the rise in food prices in this messy, distorted world we live in can have some benefit for humanity."

The global food economy is a complex and sometimes messy industry. However, there is hope for those who experience extreme food poverty. A pandemic certainly does not help matters, but there will soon come an end to the COVID-19 way of life. Nevertheless, external help is

Please see "Food Prices" on page 11.



*A produce market in Cayo, in western Belize.
Photo courtesy of Sara Alexander.*

Farm Justice Resources

BOOKS

Farming While Black

Penniman, Leah. (2018)

F*arming While Black*, by Leah Penniman, is not just a comprehensive guide for new or aspiring black farmers, but it is also a powerful tool in reclaiming African-heritage autonomy in agriculture. Penniman's guide is a worthwhile read for any level of farmer, as well as those looking to find spiritual connections to the land they inhabit. Penniman highlights how African-heritage farmers still face hardships in a fundamentally racist food industry. She also offers solutions to the issues these hardships present, such as showing how farmers can reclaim independence of their own land, finding the roots of farmers' agricultural traditions, as well as addressing ways of healing from trauma caused by slavery. Penniman's guide is more than a "how-to." It is a source of pride and healing for a minority in an industry as large as the earth itself. *—Reviewed by Ashley Mix*

In Defense of Farmers:

The Future of Agriculture in the Shadow of Corporate Power

Gibson, Jane W. and Sara E. Alexander, eds. 2019. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Industrial agriculture is generally characterized as either the salvation of a growing, hungry, global population or as socially and environmentally irresponsible. Despite elements of truth in this polarization, it fails to focus on the particular vulnerabilities and potentials of industrial agriculture. Both representations obscure individual farmers, their families, their communities and the risks they face from unpredictable local, national and global conditions: fluctuating and often volatile production costs and crop prices; extreme weather exacerbated by climate change; complicated and changing farm policies; new production technologies and practices; water availability; inflation and debt; and rural community decline. Yet the future of industrial agriculture depends fundamentally on farmers' decisions.

Speaking through the voices of farmers, *In Defense of Farmers* illuminates anew the critical role that farmers play in the future of agriculture and examines the social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities of industrial agriculture, as well as its adaptations and evolution. Contextualizing the conversations about agriculture and rural societies within the disciplines of sociology, geography, economics and anthropology, this book presents the specific

challenges farmers are facing in a number of countries in North and Latin America. *—Reviewed by Sara Alexander*

As Long As Grass Grows:

The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock

Gillo-Whitaker, Dina. 2019. Boston: Beacon Press.

On a planet with a rapidly changing climate and undergoing what many scientists believe is the Earth's sixth mass extinction, the future of humanity is looking about as bright as it did for American Indians when Felix Cohen wrote those words railing against federal Indian policy in 1953. From an American Indian perspective, we're all on the reservation now. The overall goal of this book is to highlight the importance of building alliances across social and racial divides. To do this requires an honest interrogation of the history of the relationships between the environmental movement and Indian country.

Through the unique lens of indigenized environmental justice, Gillo-Whitaker explores the fraught history of treaty violations, battles for food and water security, and the protection of sacred sites, while highlighting the important leadership of indigenous women in this centuries-long struggle. *As Long as Grass Grows* provides readers an accessible history of Indigenous resistance to government and corporate incursions on their lands and offers new approaches to environmental justice activism and policy. *—Reviewed by Sara Alexander*

DOCUMENTARIES

Cesar Chavez: Cries of "Huelga!"

The history and lives of US migrant farm workers in the 1960s often go forgotten. However, the truth of their pursuits of fair wages and working conditions through strikes and protests is shown in the 2014 documentary *César Chavez*. Following the adult life of activist César Chavez, the film depicts the struggles which many Latino farm workers in the mid 20th century faced, and how they overcame them with the help of Chavez. Grounding and revealing, the film is a worth-while experience for any who want to understand how the strikes against farm labor sparked a nation-wide change in how migrant farm workers lived and worked. The film also serves as a blueprint for today's society in the treatment of contracted farm workers, reminding society that all persons deserve just treatment and wages. *—Reviewed by Ashley Mix*

Farm Justice Resources

Grab a Hunk of Lightning

The 2014 PBS Masters documentary, *Grab a Hunk of Lightning*, showcases the life of American photographer Dorothea Lange. Lange is best known for her photograph “Migrant Woman,” depicting a life-hardened woman from the Great Depression. This documentary is a force of nature in its own right, as it compels viewers to look into the mind of Lange and see why she chose to portray the America most overlooked: the war-battered, natural-disaster-ridden, and economically profound lives of America’s poorest.

This documentary is time-specific, given that it highlights the era in which Lange worked. However, it is also a window in which to truly see the morose side of America, even in a modern context. In many ways, Lange’s work was a propelling force for social and economic change. This documentary gives an inside look into the life of the deeply insightful photographer and the legacy she left behind. It is a call to arms to notice the social injustice that impacts the lives of so many Americans to this day, just as Dorothea Lange noticed and documented it during five turbulent decades in American history. —Reviewed by Ashley Mix

Harvest of Shame

“Without these people, your table would not be laden with the luxuries we now regard as essentials.” (Edward R. Murrow, 1960). In a recent *Hunger News & Hope* article, written by Dawn Michelle Michals, the 1960 broadcast, *Harvest of Shame* was given a closer inspection. Michals highlights the conditions of migrant farm workers from the standpoint of the original investigative report as well as a 2010 revisit, in which CBS News reported on the little-improved working conditions of modern migrant farm workers. “The faces of migrant workers have changed over the last 60 years,” Michals states, “but the numbers have stayed the same.” The harsh reality of the overlooked farm workers is a grim reminder that, even during times of improved working conditions for many industries, some industries have remained neglected—even deadly—for many of America’s working class. —Reviewed by Ashley Mix (See “America’s Forgotten Work Force,” *Hunger News & Hope*, Vol 21 No 2, Summer 2021, beginning on page 4.)

The Need to Grow

Aiding in the fight for greater-quality food production in agriculture, *The Need to Grow* is a documentary well worth the watch for farmers, environmentalists and foodies everywhere.

The 2018 documentary highlights the stories of 8-year-old Girl Scout Alicia Serratos; a regenerative urban farmer Erik Cutter; and inventor Michael Smith. Each of these individuals presents the urgency facing much of the world’s food economy: the rapidly decreasing rate of farmable land across the globe. Each presents a solution to the issue as well, including regenerative farming, producing non-GMO¹ foods and self-sustaining agriculture technologies. In the current global climate, *The Need to Grow* gives the necessary push to fight against environmental downfalls caused by human consumption. —Reviewed by Ashley Mix

Endnote

1. GMO stands for Genetically Modified Organisms.

Food Prices,
continued from page 9

needed for countries facing or experiencing food insecurity. Any little bit counts in a world where one person can make a huge difference.

— Ashley Mix, a native of southern Louisiana, is a Professional Writing student at Baylor University and a Seeds of Hope intern.

Why Are Global Food Prices Higher?

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, food prices rose 40 percent from May 2020 to May 2021. Although, as Ashley Mix writes on page 9, prices are gradually going back down, this is the biggest jump in a decade. What drove these prices up so drastically?

- The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the conditions caused by crop failure and armed conflict that were already in place. The World Bank reported recently that lack of access to COVID-19 vaccines means that rising food prices will hit populations with failing infrastructures the hardest.
- According to the World Bank, disrupted supply chains and soaring shipping costs contributed to the rising cost of staple foods. The Bank reported that the price of maize rose 66 percent between January 2020 and May 2021 and that wheat prices rose 23 percent. Those inflationary trends are most pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, where hunger was already a serious problem.
- The World Bank also cited some countries’ refusal (such as that of Russia) to export food as a potential cause of higher food prices and lack of access to food.

The report predicted that, by the end of 2021, “some 100 million people will have fallen back into extreme poverty.”

—Sources: World Bank, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, Devex Newswire report by Shabtai Gold.

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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 people in God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group seeks out people of faith who feel called to care for poor and vulnerable people; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings



Christ is shown in mercy when his people break bread to them; he is shown in judgment when we do not. Never did Lazarus press closer to the rich man's door than does the hungry world that presses its claim upon us in Jesus' name right now. God's people ought to break bread to them in sacrificial giving, in political action, and in economic sharing of our abundant resources. The challenge is to find the way rather than bemoan our helplessness.

—W. Clyde Tilley

Who is my neighbor? This may be the most important question we can ask, a matter of life or death for us, and our planet. That great image of Gerard Manley Hopkins: "The Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings" only works for me when I consider it as including all the world—as in an astronaut's view of it—and not just my small portion.

—Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace*

History will judge societies and governments—and their institutions—not by how big they are or how well they serve the rich and the powerful, but by how effectively they respond to the needs of the poor and the helpless.

—Cesar Chavez, iconic labor leader and co-founder of the National Farm Workers Association

In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.

—Confucius

Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.

—US Congressman John Lewis

Editorial Address

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Seeds also produces *Sacred Seasons*, a series of worship materials for Advent, Lent and an annual Hunger Emphasis—with an attitude "toward justice, peace and food security for all of God's children." These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art and drama.

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