

What happens when you burn food?

Written by Barthélemy Barbancourt
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[The world's grain stocks have dropped from four to 2.6 months cover since 2000](#) , despite two bumper harvests in North America. China's inventories are at a 30-year low. Asian rice stocks are near danger level.

Barack Obama has not reversed the Bush policy on biofuels, despite food riots in a string of poor countries last year and calls for a moratorium. The subsidy of 45 cents per gallon remains. The world population is adding "another Britain" every year. This will continue until mid-century. By then we will have an extra 2.4bn mouths to feed.

China and Southeast Asia are switching to animal-protein diets as they grow wealthy, as the Koreans did before them. It takes roughly 3-5kgs of animal feed from grains to produce 1kg of meat.

A report by Standard Chartered, *The End of Cheap Food*, said North Africa and the Middle East have already hit the buffers. The region imports 71pc of its rice and 58pc of its corn. It lacks water to boost output. The population is growing fast. It will have to import, and cross fingers.

The UN says global farm yields must rise 77pc, which means redoubling Norman Borlaug's "green revolution". It will not be easy. China's trend growth in crops yields has slipped from 3.1pc a year in the early 1960s to 0.9pc over the last decade

Since 2000, China has lost nearly 1,400 square miles each year to desert. Urban sprawl is paving over fertile land in the East. Water supply from Himalayan glaciers is ebbing. The Yellow River has been reduced to "an agonising tickle". It no longer reaches the sea for 200 days a year.

Farmers are draining the aquifers. Environmentalist Ma Jun says in *China's Water Crisis* that they are drilling as deep as 1,000 metres into non-replenishable reserves. The grain region of the Hai River Basin relies on groundwater for 70pc of irrigation.

Ethanol Kills. Using oil is by far the more humane thing to burn. The world will really hate us when they find that they are starving so that a few enviro-weenies can feel good about themselves.

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