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EDITORIAL

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# HUNGER

A CLIMA<sup>(C)</sup>TIC PERSPECTIVE

## SLEEPING WITH HUNGER

**I** AM GUILTY. GUILTY EVERY TIME I THROW MY UNFINISHED FOOD in the trash. Guilty when I think about all the people suffering from hunger. Guilty of thinking, *You want me to package it and send it to the starving people thousands of miles away?* I am guilty of thinking that change lies outside my grasp.

Hunger is even older than Death itself, but climate change and the eating patterns of the world have strengthened Hunger's global domination. The impact of climate change is felt globally. Greenhouse gases are found at increasing levels in the atmosphere, relentlessly trapping more and more heat, causing destructive floods and droughts. The poorer areas of the globe are likely to suffer even more from the change in climate than the more developed countries in higher latitudes. FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf explained that in the lower latitudes, where people are already vulnerable to hunger, crop yield potential is likely to decline even when there are only small global temperatures rises. Farming and agriculture has changed drastically over the last decades, most importantly the birth of industrial livestock farming has put a strain on the environment and has done nothing to halt the spread of hunger. In theory, world agriculture provides enough nutrition to feed the entire population. Increased food production resulting from modern agriculture has served to provide more food to those who already had it. The high rates of production have eliminated the livelihood of local farmers and peasants who cannot compete. Intensive livestock farming also places high demands on resources, such as water and feed crops. Crops used to feed livestock use up to 33% of all arable land. And as is stated in the FAO Report, although livestock farming probably does not detract food from those that are hungry, it raises the overall demand for crops and agricultural inputs. Copious amounts of crops are used to feed the huge amounts of animals, that we intend for slaughter. Not to mention the amounts of greenhouse gases that the livestock farming industry contributes, totaling about 70-85% of the global emissions from

human activities. In theory a world without industrial livestock farming could solve a large part of the problem of hunger. That is not realistic, but careful dietary choices are a simple change to make.

According to the United Nations the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest could be met for 13 billion US dollars a year. In the global scope, this is not an absurd amount. Americans spend over 40 billion US dollars a year on dieting products and services. Unfortunately, the answer is always more complicated than the simple diversion of funds. Environmental factors, economics, and politics are only part of the complex factors contributing to hunger. World hunger can be solved by our decisions much more easily that can be solved by rubbing a magic lamp. Switching the lights off when leaving the room is practical; so is thinking about what you eat.

«Hunger stole upon me so slowly that at first I was not aware of what hunger really meant. Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly.» As Richard Wright wrote in *Black Boy*, so does hunger stand beside the bedside of humanity, it is up to us to decide whether we show it to the door or let it into our bed.

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