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THE HOT BLOG

Tuesday, April 08, 2008

**WaPo on Egyptian Food Riots** [Drew Thornley]

In a [story](#) on Egypt's bread crisis, the *Washington Post* writes, "Wheat prices worldwide have more than doubled in the past year, spurred by increased demand, rising fuel costs and bad weather." Really, is that all? Nothing at all to do with U.S. biofuel/ethanol policy? Could any of the following be a factor in the higher bread costs in the world's second-largest wheat importer?

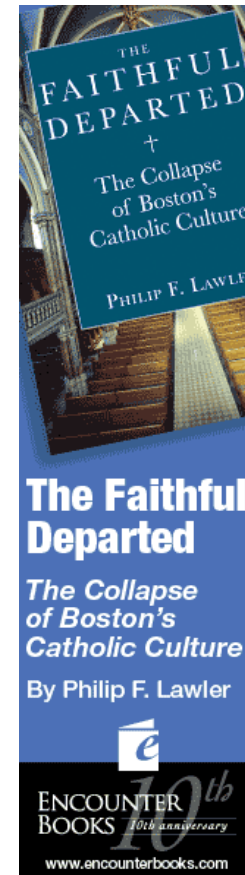
"Inflated corn prices encourage farmers to divert more acreage to corn, which means they plant less soy and wheat, which, in turn, drives up the prices of those commodities. The aggregate price of wheat, corn, soy oil and soy meal in the U.S. will be \$61.7 billion higher in the 2007-2008 crop year than it was in 2005-2006." ([Washington Times](#))

"In 2008, about 18 percent of grain in the US will go to make ethanol and, according to the Earth Policy Institute, such production over the past two years could have fed nearly 250 million people." ([Christian Science Monitor](#))

"Corn prices have shot up nearly 30 percent this year amid dwindling stockpiles and surging demand for the grain used to feed livestock and make alternative fuels including ethanol. . . . Worldwide demand for corn to feed livestock and to make biofuel is putting enormous pressure on global supply. And with the U.S. expected to plant less corn, the supply shortage will only worsen. The U.S. Department of Agriculture projected that farmers will plant 86 million acres of corn in 2008, an 8 percent drop from last year. . . .The nation's 147 ethanol plants now have the capacity to produce 8.5 billion gallons of fuel a year, according to the Renewable Fuels Association. Corn is the basic feedstock for most of the plants and about 20 percent of last year's 13 billion bushel corn crop was consumed by ethanol production. That percentage is expected to increase to 30 percent for the next crop year, which ends Aug. 31, 2009, according to Terry Francl, a senior economist for the American Farm Bureau Federation." ([Yahoo Finance](#))

". . . land used to grow biofuel feedstock is land not available to grow food, so subsidies to biofuels are a major factor in the food crisis. You might put it this way: people are starving in Africa so that American politicians can court votes in farm states." ([New York Times](#))

"In Haiti, four people were killed in protests last week over a 50 percent rise in the cost of food staples in the past year. From Egypt to Vietnam, price rises of 40 percent or more for rice, wheat, and corn are stirring unrest and forcing



governments to take drastic steps, such as blocking grain exports and arresting farmers who hoard surpluses." (*Christian Science Monitor*)

This is real, not a prediction of gloom and doom of what's in store 50 generations down the line. People are actually killing each other and starving over food crises *right now*. Though we're not the only ones to blame, the U.S.'s twisted alternative-fuels policy of, literally, burning our crops for fuel is playing an unfortunate part.

For background, see [here](#) and [here](#).

04/08 02:30 PM

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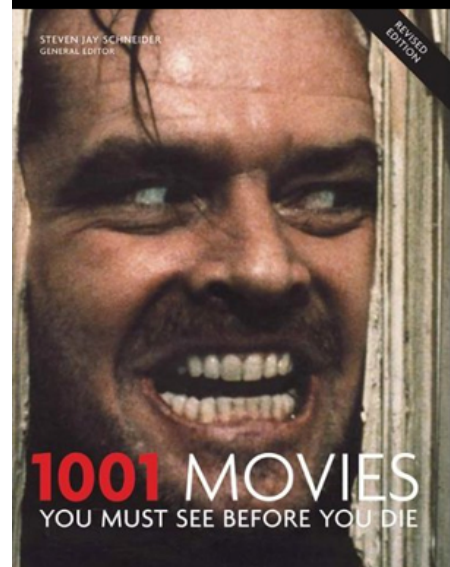
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