ALLARMEMICO inAFRICA: C'è UNA LUCE ALFAINE delTUNNEL?
UNA TESTIMONIANZA DA “TERRA MADRE” RIVELA LA MALA GESTIONE DELLA SITUAZIONE ALIMENTARE IN KENYA, MA FORSE C’È UNA SPERANZA: L’UNIONE TRA NECOFA E SLOW FOOD CENTRAL RIFT

The Kenya government formally acknowledges that the food situation in the country is bleak even as the world is faced with a serious food crisis. Many factors and inadequate policies have gradually contributed to the erosion of food and nutrition security in the country, the most serious of which was the elections-related violence in 2007.

The violence left about 1000 people dead and over half a million others evicted from their homes. Houses and food stores were burnt, and even mature crops ready for harvesting. Several thousand head of livestock were stolen (and killed) while families took refuge in urban centers and camps for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in search of safety and humanitarian aid. Other effects of the violence include disrupting education, making food producers dependent on food aid, competition for limited resources (e.g. water, health and sanitation services in urban centers), unsettling family setups, increased social vices and mistrust and suspicion among communities.

The incident is not an isolated one in the continent of Africa, that has been through so much turmoil and suffering since the slave trade, through colonization and post-independence bad governance and mismanagement. Poor policies and mismanagement have resulted in the destruction and deterioration of the environment, biodiversity and crop land, which in turn has resulted in unpredictable weather and climate change, further reducing food production. Experiences of colonization and poor perception of ‘civilization’ and ‘modernity’ have greatly eroded the pride and dignity of the African people and resulted in them ‘copying’ Western lifestyles, including food culture.

In most of Africa including Kenya, diversity in food production and utilization have always been ‘insurance’ against unpredictable and abrupt change. Food producers integrate crop farming and the rearing of different livestock species. The diet, on the other hand, was based on a wide range of food products. ‘Modernity’ and
FOOD SECURITY CONCERNS in AFRICA: Is THERE a LIGHT at the END of THE TUNNEL?

A TESTIMONY FROM “TERRA MADRE” REVEALS THE MALHANDLED FOOD SITUATION IN KENYA; BUT HOPE COULD COME FROM THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN NECOFA AND SLOW FOOD CENTRAL RIFT. THE FUTURE COULD BE BRIGHTER

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Modernità e imitazione di altre stili di vita hanno ridotto la base di risorse alimentari ad un numero ristretto di tipologie di coltivazioni come mais, patate, grano
dato vita a progetti di orticoltura e floricultura, estraendo acqua dai fiumi e diminuendo la disponibilità idrica. In aumento anche i conflitti dovuti alla scarsità di acqua, con gravi conseguenze ed un impatto negativo sulla sicurezza alimentare. Perfino i piccoli agricoltori, con terreni di circa un ettaro, sono stati 'rischiati' dall’agricoltura iper-commercializzata' e scelgono colture industriali tra cui caffe, the, pyrethrum, eucalipto grandis, eccetera, alle spese delle coltivazioni di prodotti alimentari, inseguendo un superiore ritmo economico. La nazione è tesa verso un'urbanizzazione che porterà beneficio a coloro che si trovano in posizioni autorevoli ed a investitori locali e stranieri e lascerà la grande maggioranza della popolazione priva di risorse alimentari in una situazione in cui il cibo, quando è accessibile, ha un costo superiore alla disponibilità economica della maggior parte del popolo, le cui entrate sono inferiori ad un dollaro al giorno.
Prima degli episodi di violenza etnica scatenata dalle elezioni, la nazione aveva circa sette milioni di persone dipendenti da aiuti alimentari e altri 10 milioni in situa-
bulk of the population without food, and when there is food, for the majority who earn less than a dollar a day, it’s too expensive.

Before the election-related ethnic violence, the country had about seven million people dependent on food aid and another ten million faced with acute and chronic food insecurity. The numbers have now increased, especially because major food donors, World Food Programme (WFP), World Vision, etc., have cut their supplies by almost half. In Kenya WFP was supporting school feeding programmes benefiting 1.2 million children, but this has been reduced to 665,000. The problem is further compounded by the global food crisis, the increased cost of oil and escalating food prices. This situation has far-reaching consequences and serious implications for Africa, including Kenya.

To the nation and its leadership this will mean doing everything possible to source food to avoid eminent famine. This will open a ‘window’ for developed countries and their profit-hungry investors to ‘dictate’ the type of aid that developing countries receive, including inappropriate technologies such as Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO’s) in food. The ‘beneficiary countries’

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will be intimidated to enact policies in favour of exploitative foreign and local investors, thereby compromising their independence, sovereignty and citizen welfare.

The recipient countries do not have a choice in the type and amount of food aid, which translates in ‘food dumping’ that, in turn, will damage the local economy and farmers.

Small-scale farmers are faced with increased input costs, due to high oil prices, and competition with the ‘cheap’ food sourced from highly-subsidized farmers in developed countries. This strongly affects them.

The agenda for investment in agricultural technology, especially in universities and research institutions, is driven by donor-developed-countries and focuses on foods whose production and consumption translates into high profits for the multinational companies from the donor countries. Consequently, local peasant farmers and indigenous food cultures are further marginalized. Even access to loans and credits are ‘pegged’ on the production of more commercial foods. Many small-scale

Lezioni d’incertezza acuta e cronica. I numeri sono aumentati ora che i maggiori donatori di cibo, specialmente il World Food Programme (WFP) ed il World Vision, solo per citarne alcuni, hanno tagliato gli aiuti di circa la metà. In Kenya il WFP era sostenitore di programmi alimentari nelle scuole, aiutando circa 1.2 milioni di bambini ora sono diventati 665,000. Il problema è inoltre aumentato dalla crisi alimentare a livello globale, dall’aumento dei costi del petrolio e dalla crescita esponenziale del prezzo del cibo. La situazione ha implicazioni molto ampie e serie per l’Africa, compreso il Kenya.

Per la nazione e per i suoi leader tutto questo si tradurrà nel cercare di fare tutto il possibile per trovare le risorse alimentari ed evitare un’imminente carestia. Questo apri- rà una finestra sulle nazioni sviluppate che, con i loro investitori affamati di profitto, derranno il tipo di aiuti che le nazioni in via di sviluppo potranno ricevere, compreso l’utilizzo di tecnologie deleterie, come quelle relativa- ve ai cibi geneticamente modificati (GGM). Le nazioni beneficiarie saranno costrette ad applicare politiche in favore dei sfruttatori stranieri e investitori locali, compromet- tendo la propria indipendenza e sovranità ed il benes- sere dei cittadini.
farmer's have been forced to abandon production of site-appropriate local foods, that are more adapted to local conditions and have high food and nutrition qualities, in favour of commercial foods: corn, wheat, potatoes, etc. 

*Network for Ecofarming in Africa (NECOFA)*, a local NGO promoting Ecofarming: Ecologically and Socially Sustainable Land Management, has teamed up with *Slow Food Central Rift Convivium* and other collaborators, to promote sustainable agriculture for food and nutrition security. Food secure households and nations, at all times, have the physical and economic resources to buy, produce or consume sufficient, safe and nutritious food to fulfill dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life. Sustainable agricultural approaches are capable of delivering a substantial increase in food production at low costs. They are economically, environmentally and socially viable and contribute positively to local livelihoods and peoples' health. Sustainable agriculture respects, and is based on the indigenous knowledge of the local communities. Through sustainable agriculture, the partnership aims at empowering communities to rediscover themselves, and scale up sustainable development that is based on minimum external inputs but which enhances their rich socio-cultural heritage, dignity, pride and confidence. Development that puts men and women first enhances biodiversity and lays strong foundations for the young and future generations.

The quest for alternative (and possibly cheaper) energy has resulted in investments in biofuel production. More and more land is being acquired from small-scale food producers, by rich multinational companies for the production of bio-energy, thereby reducing the land allocated to food production by local farmers and negatively impacting on food security. Sustainable agriculture policies and practices are important interventions towards the attainment of Millennium Development Goal No. (1): 'To reduce extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015'. It is upon this goal that all the others are hinged and based. The partnership is therefore working hard to empower communities to achieve food sovereignty, which we define as «the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food production through ecologically sound, and sustainable, methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems».

The partnership promotes biodiversity-based farming systems aimed at generating more employment and producing more nutritious, better quality food and higher incomes for farming families. This type of farming recognizes the importance of seed as foundation for food
security and that seed production by communities is based on a holistic concept of food quality that considers taste, compatibility with human physiology and cultural conditions, all aspects of nutritional properties, the degree of biodiversity present, the environmental impact of production as well as the working conditions, processes of participation and value retribution to producers.

Necofa and Slow Food Central Rift work with rural community groups that include self-help groups, women’s groups and youth groups. Besides increasing community food production, they also build partnerships between food producers and leading food outlets. In schools students are given hands-on experience in food production in school garden activities.

Since January 2008, the partnership has collaborated with other organizations/institutions in giving support to internally displaced families after the 2007 election violence.

It is now working on the resettlement of the ‘refugees’ back on their farms and helping start life once again and participate in sustainable agriculture and participatory community development. Necofa and the Slow Food Convivium are open and invite partnerships with other like-minded individuals, organization and institutions.

lità di un maggior guadagno ai coltivatori diretti. Questo tipo di agricoltura riconosce l’importanza della semenza, come fondamento della sicurezza alimentare ed inoltre riconosce che la produzione di semi da parte della comunità si basa su un concetto olistico di qualità alimentare, che prende in considerazione il gusto, la compatibilità con la fisiologia umana e le condizioni culturali, tutti gli aspetti relativi alle proprietà nutrizionali, il grado di biodiversità, l’impatto ambientale della produzione così come le condizioni di lavoro, i processi partecipativi e la retribuzione dei produttori.

Necofa e Slow Food Central Rift collaborano con gruppi di comunità rurali, associazioni femminili e giovanili. Oltre che costruire la capacità delle comunità di produrre cibo, si occupano anche di costruire partnership tra produttori alimentari e punti di vendita. Nelle scuole gli studenti imparano attraverso esperienze pratiche i principi di produzione alimentare grazie ad attività scolastiche di giardinaggio.

Fin dal gennaio del 2008 la partnership collabora con altre istituzioni/organizzazioni nel dare sostegno a famiglie internamente ricollocate a seguito delle violenze del 2007. Al momento si occupa del re-insediamento dei ‘rifugiati’ verso le terre originali e offre assistenza per il ripristino delle condizioni di vita precedenti, partecipando a programmi di sviluppo comunitario per l’agricoltura sostenibile. Necofa ed il Convivium sono aperti ed invitano a partecipare chiunque abbia gli stessi ideali, siano essi individui, organizzazioni o istituzioni.