Negative Case: Food Security

According to the United Nations, a vibrant, unique human being dies every four seconds from starvation.[[1]](#footnote-2) That’s someone’s son or daughter; someone with a distinct personality and hopes and dreams and family and friends. Someone whose only crime was to be born in a part of the world where there isn’t enough food to go around. This is a staggering tragedy, and we need to get it under control. That’s why I reject the resolution.

# Value: Food Security

Food security is defined by Oxford Dictionaries as: “The state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food:”

Here’s why food security is the only appropriate value for this resolution.

## Reason to Prefer: Top Priority

According to the World Hunger Education Service, there are 780 million undernourished people living in developed countries.[[2]](#footnote-3) 21,000 of them will die of hunger today. [[3]](#footnote-4) Another 21,000 will tomorrow. This will keep happening until food security is established. In the face of a tragedy like that, developing countries must prioritize ending starvation over anything else.

Now let’s talk about

# Contention 1: Economic Growth Doesn’t Secure Food

Perhaps the biggest myth about international development is that we can end starvation by growing the economy. This has been proven false.

S.V. Subramnian is a social epidemiologist at Harvard University. His recent study was described by NPR in 2014:

“And while economic growth is presumed to get more children fed, a booming economy alone doesn't fix the problem, researchers say. Children's health isn't tracking with improvements in standard of living and economic growth, according to S.V. Subramanian, a social epidemiologist at Harvard University and the study's senior author. Subramanian and his colleagues evaluated data from 36 low- and middle-income countries collected from 1990 to 2011. Researchers looked at each country's gross domestic product and the proportion of stunted, underweight and wasted (low weight for height) children under 3 years old. An increase in GDP per capita resulted in an insignificant decline in stunting. And when the researchers compared the changes in GDP to the changes in the number of wasting and underweight children, there was no correlation at all. "It wasn't that [the association] was just weak or small," Subramanian told Shots. That was the case, he said, especially for stunting. More striking was the fact that the effect overall "was just practically zero." He says things like unequal income distribution and lack of efficient implementation of public services are possible causes.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

The reasons for this are many and complex. Economic growth doesn’t tend to be enjoyed by the very poor; instead it is reinvested in the small number of wealthy companies driving the growth. Then there are other factors like poor public services and weak infrastructure. The result: as countries get richer, the world’s weakest and poorest don’t see any benefit.

Later in the 2014 NPR article, Subramian talks about India as an example of the disconnect between economic growth and food security:

"I see dramatic improvements in four-lane roads ... airports getting fancier, which helps people like me when I'm traveling," he says. "However, for the majority of the population, I don't see improvements for the slums that I pass through every day where I lived."[[5]](#footnote-6)

Contention 2: Environmental Protection Secures Food

Developing countries only have one long-term solution to starvation. Local farmers must be able to produce enough food to feed everyone. But environmental issues play a big role in jeopardizing the food supply.

According to the European Environment Agency in 2012:

“Intensification and concentrating food production in the most productive regions may appear the most efficient way to use the land. However, risks to food security may be increased, because supply chains become more vulnerable and because of pollution. Loss of crop diversity, decline of pollinators and increased vulnerability of monocultures to diseases are additional stress factors.”[[6]](#footnote-7)

If we’re serious about saving the lives of starving people, we should stop worrying about enriching foreign investors and focus on the major environmental issues third world farmers are dealing with. In addition to the ones listed in that evidence, there is soil erosion, loss of access to fresh water, extinction of livestock breeds, the rapid spread of the desert, and the list goes on and on.

The good news is that environmental regulations can transform the outlook of farmers and empower them to feed their neighbors. Here is an example:

Application: Asian Rice

Rice is a food staple all over the world and is the key to ending hunger in developing Asian countries.

Robert F. Chandler, Jr is the Founding Director of the International Rice Research Institute. He said in 1979:

“So dependent upon rice are the Asian countries that throughout history a failure of that crop has caused widespread famine and death."[[7]](#footnote-8)

He was right to point out the insecurity of rice. According to University of Minnesota Entomologist E.A. Henrichs, pests had destroyed nearly a third of rice yields in Asia in the last decade.[[8]](#footnote-9) Farmers were responding by drenching their crops with pesticides, setting themselves up for long-term consequences.

So in the late 80s, the governments of several developing countries like Thailand and Indonesia implemented Integrated Pest Management, which trained farmers in ecology and surveillance of crops.[[9]](#footnote-10) The result was significantly reduced pesticide use and the farmers’ output actually increased – to the equivalent of over $4500 per square mile of rice field.[[10]](#footnote-11)

Food insecurity is a big problem, killing more than a hundred people just during this speech.[[11]](#footnote-12) It’s made all the worse because we’re using ineffective tools to try to fix it. The good news is that the problem can be fixed. If developing countries prioritize sustainable agricultural practices, the colossal tragedy of mass starvation can be stopped. Thank you.

1. 1. “Hunger and World Poverty.” Poverty.com, accessed 12/12/15. <http://poverty.com>.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. 1. World Hunger Education Service, “2015 World Hunger and Poverty Facts and Statistics” 2015. <http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. 1. Statistic Brain Research Institute, “World Hunger Statistics” November 21, 2015. <http://www.statisticbrain.com/world-hunger-statistics/>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. 1. S.V. Sabramnian, “A Booming Economy Doesn't Save Children From Malnutrition” Capital Public Radio, March 27, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2014/03/27/294895305/a-booming-economy-doesnt-save-children-from-malnutrition>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. 1. Ellipses in original. See footnote 4 for source.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. 1. European Environmental Agency, “Food Security and Environmental Impacts,” November 6 2012. <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/agriculture/greening-agricultural-policy/food-security-and-environmental-impacts>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. 1. C.S. Reddy, “Recent Developments in Rice Pathology – National and International Status” Rice Knowledge Management Portal. Accessed online December 11, 2015. References publications as recent as 2011. [http://www.rkmp.co.in/sites/default/files/ris/research-themes/Recent%20Developments%20in%20Rice%20Pathology%20â€“%20National%20and%20International%20Status.pdf](http://www.rkmp.co.in/sites/default/files/ris/research-themes/Recent%20Developments%20in%20Rice%20Pathology%20â€)

   [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. 1. E.A. Heinreichs, “Management of Rice Insect Pests,” University of Minnesota’s electronic textbook of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), University of Minnesota. Accessed online December 11, 2015. Referencing statistics from 1967, before IPM was implemented. <http://ipmworld.umn.edu/heinrichs>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. 1. John Martin, “Integrated Pest Management in Rice: Integrating Economics, Extension, and Policy” Australian International Development Assistance Bureau. Paper presented at 32nd Annual Conference of the Australian Agricultural Economics Society, Feb 8-11, 1988. <http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/144041/2/1988-03-05.pdf>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. 1. Net difference of 243 Indonesian rupiahs ($17.56) per hectare. $17.56 x 256.9 hectares in a square mile = $4548.01 increase in profitability per square mile. K.D. Gallagher, P.A.C. Ooi, T.W. Mew, E. Borromeo and P.E. Kenmore, “Integrated Pest Management in Rice,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Accessed December 11, 2015. No publication date is visible. Data is from 1998, well after IPM was implemented. Paper was published no earlier than 2000. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/Y6159T/y6159t02.htm>

    [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. 1. 14.5 per minute \* 7 minutes = 101.5 dead from starvation during NC. See math from footnote 1.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-12)