

**RELEASE IN
PART B6**

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Sent: Friday, February 25, 2011 7:47 AM
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Subject: FW: Nyt editorial: the food crisis

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Sent: Friday, February 25, 2011 7:15 AM
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Subject: Nyt editorial: the food crisis

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Food prices are soaring to record levels, threatening many developing countries with mass hunger and political instability. Finance ministers of the Group of 20 leading economies discussed the problem at a meeting in Paris last week, but for all of their expressed concern, most are already breaking their promises to help.

After the last sharp price spike in 2008, the G-20 promised to invest \$22 billion over three years to help vulnerable countries boost food production. To date, the World Bank fund that is supposed to administer this money has received less than \$400 million.

Food prices are now higher than their 2008 peak, driven by rising demand in developing countries and volatile weather, including drought in Russia and Ukraine and a dry spell in North China that threatens the crop of the world's largest wheat producer. The World Bank says the spike has pushed 44 million people into extreme poverty just since June.

In 2008, 30 countries had food riots. That has not happened, at least not yet. Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, has benefited from improved agricultural productivity. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization warns that Mozambique, Uganda, Mali, Niger and Somalia are extremely vulnerable to instability because of rising prices, along with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Asia, and Haiti, Guatemala, Bolivia and Honduras in Latin America.

Misguided government policies could make matters worse. Some countries are stockpiling food. When India did that last year, food ended up rotting in storages. Others are imposing agricultural export bans, which discourages investment in production. The world's wealthier nations must press them to rethink these polices and back that up with real help.

The Obama administration has proposed worthy initiatives, but even when Democrats controlled Congress it had a hard time getting the money. The administration pledged \$3.5 billion to the G-20 effort. So far, it has delivered only \$66.6 million to the World Bank fund.

It is now asking for \$408 million for the fund — part of a \$1.64 billion request for its Feed the Future initiative, which aims to bolster poor countries' food production capabilities. Congressional Republicans are determined to hack as much as they can out of foreign aid. The continuing resolution passed by the House cuts \$800 million out of the food aid budget — bringing it down to about \$1 billion, roughly where it was in 2001.

The White House needs to push back hard. This isn't a question of charity. It is an issue of life or death for millions of people. And the hard truth is that if the United States doesn't keep its word, no one else will.