



Apr 2011 Green Mission News

Essential Books:

[Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things](#) by [William McDonough](#) and [Michael Braungart](#)

[Living in the Environment: Principles, Connections, and Solutions \(with CD-ROM and InfoTrac\)](#) - edited by G. Tyler Miller Jr.

Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash by [Elizabeth Royte](#)

[Ants, Galileo, and Gandhi: Designing the Future of Business Through Nature, Genius, and Compassion](#) - by Sissel A. Waage and Ray Anderson

[The Necessary Revolution: Working Together to Create a Sustainable World](#) by Peter M. Senge, Joe Laur

External Article Links:

- Plant Based Diet

<http://www.plantbasednutrition.org/>

- The Life You Can Save in 3 minutes by Peter Singer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onsldBanyY&feature=player_embedded

- Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease

<http://www.heartattackproof.com/articles.htm>

- April Earth movies: 6 films in 75 cities

<http://dosomethingreel.com/>

- Organicology 2011 intensives, online

<http://www.organicology.org/organicology/Intensives.html>

- URBAN ORE ECOPARK

<http://urbanore.com>,

- Thousands of Chemical Names and Ingredients Kept Under Wraps At

EPA <http://www.ewg.org/chemicalindustryexposed/topsecretchemicals/pressrelease>

- How Can You Avoid Genetically Modified Food?

http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/how_can_you_avoid_genetically_modified_food/

- Americans stage protest over genetically modified food

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/171816.html>

- Climate Leadership Group: cities lead the way

www.c40cities.org

- Expanding composting beyond recycling involves households separating their food scraps

www.beyondrecycling.org

Full Length Articles Below:

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Published on Thursday, March 3, 2011 by Agence France Presse

World Food Prices Hit Record Highs Amid Oil Jitters

ROME (AFP) -- World food prices have hit record highs and oil price spikes could push them even higher, the UN food agency warned on Thursday, as increasing violence in Libya sent jitters through commodity markets.

Farmers shake unhusked rice during a harvest in the Bekasi district on the outskirts of Jakarta March 1, 2011. (REUTERS/Enny Nuraheni)

The Food Price Index, which monitors average monthly price changes for a variety of key staples, rose to 236 points in February from 231 points in January, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said.

It was the highest level since FAO began monitoring prices in 1990.

"Unexpected oil price spikes could further exacerbate an already precarious situation in food markets," David Hallam, director of the Rome-based FAO's trade and market division, was quoted as saying in a statement.

"This adds even more uncertainty concerning the price outlook just as plantings for crops in some of the major growing regions are about to start."

FAO economists warned that food prices were likely to remain high until the outlook for this year's harvests is known by around April.

Crude prices dipped on Thursday after pushing higher in nervous trading amid fighting in oil-rich Libya between Moamer Kadhafi loyalists and rebel forces.

Brent North Sea crude for delivery in April fell 63 cents to \$115.72 per barrel. New York's light sweet crude for April, known as West Texas Intermediate (WTI), shed 61 cents to \$101.61.

Prices jumped on Wednesday by nearly three dollars in New York.

"Persistent uncertainty in the region continues to support fears of contagion," British bank Barclays Capital said in a report.

"Lost output from countries like Libya and the increasing likelihood of a pushback in foreign investment is set to support longer-term prices," it said.

Analysts at Germany's Commerzbank warned: "There is still a risk of the unrest spreading to other oil producing countries of the region."

The International Energy Agency said oil exports from Libya had been cut by between 850,000 and one million barrels per day, out of a total of 1.6 million barrels sent mostly to European buyers before the uprising.

Loyalist attacks on the strategic Libyan oil port of Brega, home to major petroleum operations, added to concern, while popular unrest also affects the Arabian Peninsula with protests in Bahrain, Oman and Yemen.

Higher oil prices affect all aspects of the food production chain, from fertiliser to transport.

The FAO has warned that rising food prices are in turn driving unrest around the world, including recent uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa.

Aid agencies have called on the international community to take urgent action to put an end to the recent food price volatility.

The G20 group of leading world economies has vowed to take action.

The FAO said the February increase in its Food Price Index was the eighth consecutive monthly rise, with dairy prices up 4.0 percent from January and cereal prices up 3.7 percent due to increased maize demand and lower supply.

The UN food agency said that this was due to "larger use of maize for ethanol production in the United States" and "statistical adjustments to China's historical supply and demand balance for maize."

Meat prices meanwhile rose 2.0 percent from January, while the price of oils and fats rose only marginally and sugar fell slightly.

A breakdown of Thursday's FAO data showed that in China prices for rice and wheat flour stabilised after government assurances on reserves but they remained 23 percent and 16 percent above their levels for February 2010.

The data also showed that coarse grain prices have started to increase in Africa, while in South America wheat and maize are also trending higher.

In the former Soviet Union, wheat prices stabilised or decreased.

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Published on Thursday, March 3, 2011 by The Age (Australia)

Next Mass Extinction an Eyeblink Away: Scientists

Life on Earth is hurtling towards extinction levels comparable to those following the dinosaur-erasing asteroid impact of 65 million years ago, propelled forward by human activities, say scientists.

This week, scientists from the University of California, Berkeley, announced that if current extinction rates continue unabated, and vulnerable species disappear, Earth could lose three-quarters of its species as soon as three centuries from now.

"That's a geological eyeblink," said Nicholas Matzke, a graduate student at UC Berkeley and author of a paper describing the doom-and-gloom scenario.

"Once you lose species, you don't get them back. It takes millions of years to rebound from a mass extinction event."

This means that not, too far in the future, backyards might not be buzzing with bees, bombarded by seagulls or shaded by redwood trees. And while that might seem far off, species are already disappearing on a global scale.

In recent history, we've lost the dodo bird and the passenger pigeon, the Javan tiger and the Japanese sea lion, and now, maybe the eastern cougar - declared extinct by the US Fish and Wildlife Service on Wednesday.

Amphibians, mammals, plants, fish - none are immune to going the way of the dinosaurs, courtesy of the human impact on fragile ecosystems.

Such enormous losses have occurred only five times in the past half-billion years, during events known as "mass extinctions".

The best-known of these events occurred 65 million years ago - a "really bad day," according to paleontologists - when an asteroid collided with Earth, sending fiery dust into the atmosphere and rapidly cooling the planet.

These "Big Five" events set the extinction bar high: to reach mass wipe-out status, 75 per cent of all species need to disappear within a geologically short time frame, meaning that Earth is currently on the brink of the sixth mass extinction.

To determine whether current losses could equal these mass extinction rates, scientists compared recent rates with species die-offs during the Big Five, taking into account presently endangered species.

They also looked at the number of species lost in recent history, and found that while rates are dramatically higher than expected, the percentage of vanishing species is not elevated - yet.

We already are engaged in a seemingly inexorable march toward barren landscapes and empty seas, a procession fuelled by human population growth, resource consumption and climate change, scientists say.

"The good news is, we still have most of what we want to save," said Berkeley paleobiologist and lead study author Anthony Barnosky. "But things are clearly going extinct too fast today."

The paper, published in this week's issue of Nature, resulted from a graduate seminar Barnosky organised in autumn 2009.

Together, he and students used fossils to compare extinction rates with more modern data, wanting to answer whether we really are seeing the sixth mass extinction.

To make comparisons, scientists used information from well-preserved fossils and modern accounts of disappearing animals, focusing on our milk-bearing relatives: mammals.

Stanford University biologist Paul Ehrlich, who was not involved in the study, said evidence of the sixth extinction is all around.

For years, he studied the bay checkerspot butterfly on Stanford's campus - but then, the butterfly disappeared from the campus, more than a decade ago.

And, when Ehrlich journeyed to Morocco to sample a different checkerspot species, he found no butterflies, just "sheep droppings and not one blade of grass".

Scientists say habitat destruction, global climate change, introducing invasive species, and population growth are contributing to losses.

"Those four things working in concert are kind of a perfect storm that's setting up a recipe for disaster," Barnosky said. "But people are the ones who are driving this extinction, so we can fix it."

In addition to prioritising species preservation, Ehrlich suggested starting with caps on human population growth and limiting resource consumption.

"We could do something about it, but I don't see that we have the slightest inclination to," he said.

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Published on Sunday, February 27, 2011

Profit Pathology and Disposable Planet

by Michael Parenti

Some years ago in New England, a group of environmentalists asked a corporate executive how his company (a paper mill) could justify dumping its raw industrial effluent into a nearby river. The river—which had taken Mother Nature centuries to create--was used for drinking water, fishing, boating, and swimming. In just a few years, the paper mill had turned it into a highly toxic open sewer.

The executive shrugged and said that river dumping was the most cost-effective way of removing the mill's wastes. If the company had to absorb the additional expense of having to clean up after itself, it might not be able to maintain its competitive edge and would then have to go out of business or move to a cheaper labor market, resulting in a loss of jobs for the local economy.

Free Market Über Alles

It was a familiar argument: the company had no choice. It was compelled to act that way in a competitive market. The mill was not in the business of protecting the environment but in the business of making a profit, the highest possible profit at the highest possible rate of return. Profit is the name of the game, as business leaders make clear when pressed on the point. The overriding purpose of business is capital accumulation.

To justify its single-minded profiteering, Corporate America promotes the classic laissez-faire theory which claims that the free market---a congestion of unregulated and unbridled enterprises all selfishly pursuing their own ends---is governed by a benign "invisible hand" that miraculously produces optimal outputs for everybody.

The free marketeers have a deep all-abiding faith in laissez-faire for it is a faith that serves them well. It means no government oversight, no being held accountable for the environmental disasters they perpetrate. Like greedy spoiled brats, they repeatedly get bailed out by the government (some free market!) so that they can continue to take irresponsible risks, plunder the land, poison the seas, sicken whole communities, lay waste to entire regions, and pocket obscene profits.

This corporate system of capital accumulation treats the Earth's life-sustaining resources (arable land, groundwater, wetlands, foliage, forests, fisheries, ocean beds, bays, rivers, air quality) as disposable ingredients presumed to be of limitless supply, to be consumed or toxified at will. As BP has demonstrated so well in the Gulf-of-Mexico catastrophe, considerations of cost weigh so much more heavily than considerations of safety. As one Congressional inquiry concluded: "Time after time, it appears that BP made decisions that increased the risk of a blowout to save the company time or expense."

Indeed, the function of the transnational corporation is not to promote a healthy ecology but to extract as much marketable value out of the natural world as possible even if it means treating the environment like a septic tank. An ever-expanding corporate capitalism and a fragile finite

ecology are on a calamitous collision course, so much so that the support systems of the entire ecosphere---the Earth's thin skin of fresh air, water, and topsoil---are at risk.

It is not true that the ruling politico-economic interests are in a state of denial about all this. Far worse than denial, they have shown outright antagonism toward those who think our planet is more important than their profits. So they defame environmentalists as "eco-terrorists," "EPA gestapo," "Earth day alarmists," "tree huggers," and purveyors of "Green hysteria."

In an enormous departure from free-market ideology, most of the diseconomies of big business are foisted upon the general populace, including the costs of cleaning up toxic wastes, the cost of monitoring production, the cost of disposing of industrial effluence (which composes 40 to 60 percent of the loads treated by taxpayer-supported municipal sewer plants), the cost of developing new water sources (while industry and agribusiness consume 80 percent of the nation's daily water supply), and the costs of attending to the sickness and disease caused by all the toxicity created. With many of these diseconomies regularly passed on to the government, the private sector then boasts of its superior cost-efficiency over the public sector.

The Superrich Are Different from Us

Isn't ecological disaster a threat to the health and survival of corporate plutocrats just as it is to us ordinary citizens? We can understand why the corporate rich might want to destroy public housing, public education, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Such cutbacks would bring us closer to a free market society devoid of the publicly-funded "socialistic" human services that the ideological reactionaries detest. And such cuts would not deprive the superrich and their families of anything. The superrich have more than sufficient private wealth to procure whatever services and protections they need for themselves.

But the environment is a different story, is it not? Don't wealthy reactionaries and their corporate lobbyists inhabit the same polluted planet as everyone else, eat the same chemicalized food, and breathe the same toxified air? In fact, they do not live exactly as everyone else. They experience a different class reality, often residing in places where the air is markedly better than in low and middle income areas. They have access to food that is organically raised and specially transported and prepared.

The nation's toxic dumps and freeways usually are not situated in or near their swanky neighborhoods. In fact, the superrich do not live in neighborhoods as such. They usually reside on landed estates with plenty of wooded areas, streams, meadows, and only a few well-monitored access roads. Pesticide sprays are not poured over their trees and gardens. Clear cutting does not desolate their ranches, estates, family forests, lakes, and prime vacation spots.

Still, should they not fear the threat of an ecological apocalypse brought on by global warming? Do they want to see life on Earth, including their own lives, destroyed? In the long run they indeed will be sealing their own doom along with everyone else's. However, like us all, they live not in the long run but in the here and now. What is now at stake for them is something more proximate and more urgent than global ecology; it is global profits. The fate of the biosphere seems like a remote abstraction compared to the fate of one's immediate--and enormous--investments.

With their eye on the bottom line, big business leaders know that every dollar a company spends on oddball things like environmental protection is one less dollar in earnings. Moving away from fossil fuels and toward solar, wind, and tidal energy could help avert ecological disaster, but six of the world's ten top industrial corporations are involved primarily in the production of oil, gasoline, and motor vehicles. Fossil fuel pollution brings billions of dollars in returns. Ecologically sustainable forms of production threaten to compromise such profits, the big producers are convinced.

Immediate gain for oneself is a far more compelling consideration than a future loss shared by the general public. Every time you drive your car, you are putting your immediate need to get somewhere ahead of the collective need to avoid poisoning the air we all breathe. So with the big players: the social cost of turning a forest into a wasteland weighs little against the immense and immediate profit that comes from harvesting the timber and walking away with a neat bundle of cash. And it can always be rationalized away: there are lots of other forests for people to visit, they don't need this one; society needs the timber; lumberjacks need the jobs, and so on.

The Future Is Now

Some of the very same scientists and environmentalists who see the ecology crisis as urgent rather annoyingly warn us of a catastrophic climate crisis by "the end of this century." But that's some ninety years away when all of us and most of our kids will be dead---which makes global warming a much less urgent issue.

There are other scientists who manage to be even more irritating by warning us of an impending ecological crisis then putting it even further into the future: "We'll have to stop thinking in terms of eons and start thinking in terms of centuries," one scientific sage was quoted in the New York Times in 2006. This is supposed to put us on alert? If a global catastrophe is a century or several centuries away, who is going to make the terribly difficult and costly decisions today whose effects will be felt far in the future?

Often we are told to think of our dear grandchildren who will be fully victimized by it all (an appeal usually made in a beseeching tone). But most of the young people I address on college campuses have a hard time imagining the world that their nonexistent grandchildren will be experiencing thirty or forty years hence.

Such appeals should be put to rest. We do not have centuries or generations or even many decades before disaster is upon us. Ecological crisis is not some distant urgency. Most of us alive today probably will not have the luxury of saying "Après moi, le déluge" because we will still be around to experience the catastrophe ourselves. We know this to be true because the ecological crisis is already acting upon us with an accelerated and compounded effect that may soon prove irreversible.

The Profiteering Madness

Sad to say, the environment cannot defend itself. It is up to us to protect it—or what's left of it. But all the superrich want is to keep transforming living nature into commodities and

commodities into dead capital. Impending ecological disasters are of no great moment to the corporate plunderers. Of living nature they have no measure.

Wealth becomes addictive. Fortune whets the appetite for still more fortune. There is no end to the amount of money one might wish to accumulate, driven onward by the auri sacra fames, the cursed hunger for gold. So the money addicts grab more and more for themselves, more than can be spent in a thousand lifetimes of limitless indulgence, driven by what begins to resemble an obsessional pathology, a monomania that blots out every other human consideration.

They are more wedded to their wealth than to the Earth upon which they live, more concerned about the fate of their fortunes than the fate of humanity, so possessed by their pursuit of profit as to not see the disaster looming ahead. There was a New Yorker cartoon showing a corporate executive standing at a lectern addressing a business meeting with these words: "And so, while the end-of-the-world scenario will be rife with unimaginable horrors, we believe that the pre-end period will be filled with unprecedented opportunities for profit."

Not such a joke. Years ago I remarked that those who denied the existence of global warming would not change their opinion until the North Pole itself started melting. (I never expected it to actually start dissolving in my lifetime.) Today we are facing an Arctic meltdown that carries horrendous implications for the oceanic gulf streams, coastal water levels, the planet's entire temperate zone, and world agricultural output.

So how are the captains of industry and finance responding? As we might expect: like monomaniacal profiteers. They hear the music: ca-ching, ca-ching. First, the Arctic melting will open a direct northwest passage between the two great oceans, a dream older than Lewis and Clark. This will make for shorter and more accessible and inexpensive global trade routes. No more having to plod through the Panama Canal or around Cape Horn. Lower transportation costs means more trade and higher profits.

Second, they joyfully note that the melting is opening up vast new oil reserves to drilling. They will be able to drill-baby-drill for more of the same fossil fuel that is causing the very calamity descending upon us. More meltdown means more oil and more profits; such is the mantra of the free marketeers who think the world belongs only to them.

Imagine now that we are all inside one big bus hurtling down a road that is headed for a fatal plunge into a deep ravine. What are our profit addicts doing? They are hustling up and down the aisle, selling us crash cushions and seat belts at exorbitant prices. They planned ahead for this sales opportunity.

We have to get up from our seats, quickly place them under adult supervision, rush the front of the bus, yank the driver away, grab hold of the wheel, slow the bus down, and turn it around. Not easy but maybe still possible. With me it's a recurrent dream.

Michael Parenti's recent books include: God and His Demons (Prometheus), Contrary Notions: The Michael Parenti Reader (City Lights); Democracy for the Few, 9th ed. (Wadsworth); The Assassination of Julius Caesar (New Press), Superpatriotism (City Lights), and The Culture Struggle (Seven Stories Press). For further information, visit his website: www.michaelparenti.org.

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{please note this article is both a critique of an obsolete technology, as well as offering solutions: Reinventing Fire }

Published on Saturday, March 19, 2011 by RMI Outlet

Learning From Japan's Nuclear Disaster

by Amory Lovins

As heroic workers and soldiers strive to save stricken Japan from a new horror--radioactive fallout--some truths known for 40 years bear repeating.

An earthquake-and-tsunami zone crowded with 127 million people is an unwise place for 54 reactors. The 1960s design of five Fukushima-I reactors has the smallest safety margin and probably can't contain 90% of meltdowns. The U.S. has 6 identical and 17 very similar plants.

Every currently operating light-water reactor, if deprived of power and cooling water, can melt down. Fukushima had eight-hour battery reserves, but fuel has melted in three reactors. Most U.S. reactors get in trouble after four hours. Some have had shorter blackouts. Much longer ones could happen.

Overheated fuel risks hydrogen or steam explosions that damage equipment and contaminate the whole site--so clustering many reactors together (to save money) can make failure at one reactor cascade to the rest.

Nuclear power is uniquely unforgiving: as Swedish Nobel physicist Hannes Alfvén said, "No acts of God can be permitted." Fallible people have created its half-century history of a few calamities, a steady stream of worrying incidents, and many near-misses. America has been lucky so far. Had Three Mile Island's containment dome not been built double-strength because it was under an airport landing path, it may not have withstood the 1979 accident's hydrogen explosion. In 2002, Ohio's Davis-Besse reactor was luckily caught just before its massive pressure-vessel lid rusted through.

Regulators haven't resolved these or other key safety issues, such as terrorist threats to reactors, lest they disrupt a powerful industry. U.S. regulation is not clearly better than Japanese regulation, nor more transparent: industry-friendly rules bar the American public from meaningful participation. Many presidents' nuclear boosterism also discourages inquiry and dissent.

Nuclear-promoting regulators inspire even less confidence. The International Atomic Energy Agency's 2005 estimate of about 4,000 Chernobyl deaths contrasts with a rigorous 2009 review of 5,000 mainly Slavic-language scientific papers the IAEA overlooked. It found deaths approaching a million through 2004, nearly 170,000 of them in North America. The total toll now exceeds a million, plus a half-trillion dollars' economic damage. The fallout reached four continents, just as the jet stream could swiftly carry Fukushima fallout.

Fukushima I-4's spent fuel alone, while in the reactor, had produced (over years, not in an instant) more than a hundred times more fission energy and hence radioactivity than both 1945 atomic bombs. If that already-damaged fuel keeps overheating, it may melt or burn, releasing into the air things like cesium-137 and strontium-90, which take several centuries to decay a millionfold. Unit 3's fuel is spiked with plutonium, which takes 482,000 years.

Nuclear power is the only energy source where mishap or malice can kill so many people so far away; the only one whose ingredients can help make and hide nuclear bombs; the only climate solution that substitutes proliferation, accident, and high-level radioactive waste dangers. Indeed, nuclear plants are so slow and costly to build that they reduce and retard climate protection.

Here's how. Each dollar spent on a new reactor buys about 2-10 times less carbon savings, 20-40 times slower, than spending that dollar on the cheaper, faster, safer solutions that make nuclear power unnecessary and uneconomic: efficient use of electricity, making heat and power together in factories or buildings ("cogeneration"), and renewable energy. The last two made 18% of the world's 2009 electricity (while nuclear made 13%, reversing their 2000 shares)--and made over 90% of the 2007-08 increase in global electricity production.

Those smarter choices are sweeping the global energy market. Half the world's new generating capacity in 2008 and 2009 was renewable. In 2010, renewables, excluding big hydro dams, won \$151 billion of private investment and added over 50 billion watts (70% the total capacity of all 23 Fukushima-style U.S. reactors) while nuclear got zero private investment and kept losing capacity. Supposedly unreliable windpower made 43-52% of four German states' total 2010 electricity. Non-nuclear Denmark, 21% windpowered, plans to get entirely off fossil fuels. Hawaii plans 70% renewables by 2025.

In contrast, of the 66 nuclear units worldwide officially listed as "under construction" at the end of 2010, 12 had been so listed for over 20 years, 45 had no official startup date, half were late, all 66 were in centrally planned power systems--50 of those in just four (China, India, Russia, South Korea)--and zero were free-market purchases. Since 2007, nuclear growth has added less annual output than just the costliest renewable--solar power --and will probably never catch up. While inherently safe renewable competitors are walloping both nuclear and coal plants in the marketplace and keep getting dramatically cheaper, nuclear costs keep soaring, and with greater safety precautions would go even higher. Tokyo Electric Co., just recovering from \$10-20 billion in 2007 earthquake costs at its other big nuclear complex, now faces an even more ruinous Fukushima bill.

Since 2005, new U.S. reactors (if any) have been 100+% subsidized--yet they couldn't raise a cent of private capital, because they have no business case. They cost 2-3 times as much as new windpower, and by the time you could build a reactor, it couldn't even beat solar power. Competitive renewables, cogeneration, and efficient use can displace all U.S. coal power more than 23 times over--leaving ample room to replace nuclear power's half-as-big-as-coal contribution too--but we need to do it just once. Yet the nuclear industry demands ever more lavish subsidies, and its lobbyists hold all other energy efforts hostage for tens of billions in added ransom, with no limit.

Japan, for its size, is even richer than America in benign, ample, but long-neglected energy choices. Perhaps this tragedy will call Japan to global leadership into a post-nuclear world. And before America suffers its own Fukushima, it too should ask, not whether unfinanceably costly new reactors are safe, but why build any more, and why keep running unsafe ones. China has suspended reactor approvals. Germany just shut down the oldest 41% of its nuclear capacity for study. America's nuclear lobby says it can't happen here, so pile on lavish new subsidies.

A durable myth claims Three Mile Island halted U.S. nuclear orders. Actually they stopped over a year before--dead of an incurable attack of market forces. No doubt when nuclear power's collapse in the global marketplace, already years old, is finally acknowledged, it will be blamed on Fukushima. While we pray for the best in Japan today, let us hope its people's sacrifice will help speed the world to a safer, more competitive energy future.

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Physicist Amory Lovins consults on energy to business and government leaders worldwide. His books include, Winning Oil Endgame, Natural Capitalism (iwth Paul Hawken and L. Hunter Lovins), and The Essential Amory Lovins: Selected Writings. He's written 31 books and over 450 papers, and received the Blue Planet, Volvo, Onassis, Nissan, Shingo, Zayed, and Mitchell Prizes, MacArthur and Ashoka Fellowships, 11 honorary doctorates, and the Heinz, Lindbergh, Right Livelihood, National Design, and World Technology Awards. He's an honorary U.S. architect, a Swedish engineering academician, and a former Oxford don, and has taught at nine universities, most recently Stanford. His RMI team's autumn 2011 book Reinventing Fire describes business-led pathways for a vibrant U.S. economy that by 2050 needs no oil, coal, or nuclear power to provide clean and resilient energy with superior economics.

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BPA ban may see some canned foods disappear from shelves - NAMPA

By Rory Harrington, 22-Mar-2011

Some canned foods could vanish from supermarket shelves if any future deadline by lawmakers to ban bisphenol A (BPA) outstripped the pace of research to find replacements, said the North American Metal Packaging Alliance (NAMPA).

Trade body chairman Dr John Rost issued the warning as he declared the only way to ensure public confidence in new materials was through the lengthy route of testing and research followed by regulatory approval. He urged that any legislative deadlines must take this into account.

In an exclusive interview with FoodProductionDaily.com earlier this month, he said a large number of initiatives had been launched to find BPA substitutes in metal packaging but that bringing alternatives to market remained “years away”.

“Legislative changes that fail to take that process into account may lead to some canned foods for which alternatives are not yet approved no longer being available,” said the NAMPA

chief. *“That unintended consequence would result from an arbitrary legislative mandate that is not justified by the science and fails to recognize the manufacturing realities of today's market.”*

Fear tactics?

However, campaigners calling for a BPA ban have previously dismissed such warnings as scare tactics. A proposal to ban the chemical in baby bottles in California in 2009 spawned a fierce campaign which saw industry-sponsored newspaper advertisements and mail-shots showing pictures of empty shopping carts saying ‘Your favourite products may soon disappear’.

There was no suggestion of any involvement by NAMPA in this. However, Dr Rost’s warning echoes the sentiment behind these adverts and he has criticised moves by some politicians to outlaw the substance despite what he said was *“overwhelming scientific support for the safety of BPA in metal packaging”*.

BPA legislation

So far bans on use of the chemical in food packaging have been confined to polycarbonate baby bottles and sippy cups for children – with Canada, the European Union and a number of US states all passing laws prohibiting its use for these applications.

But there is concern among food packaging players that the ban on the chemical could spread to other materials – particularly as a bill that would bar its use is currently being reviewed by US Congress. This would veto BPA in food and beverage containers that are composed, *“in whole or in part,”* of the substance or can release it into food contents. The ban would be effective for reusable containers 180 days after enactment, with 180 days or more for other food containers.

The legislation stipulates that waivers may be granted where no technologically feasible alternative to replace BPA in a certain product or package exists, or if an alternative package cannot be used for the product. The waiver will not last for more than one year and requires that all packages be clearly labelled as containing BPA, said the body. The legislation remains in the Republican-controlled Energy Committee but Dr Rost told NAMPA members earlier this year *“the food fight continues”*.

No food safety compromise

Summing up the frustrations of many in the metal packaging sector, he told FoodProductionDaily.com that despite the backing of regulatory bodies across the globe that BPA was safe, *“elected officials in many jurisdictions have chosen to pursue a legislative solution to allay consumer concern”*

Such consumer concern was the spur behind industry efforts to develop substitutes, said Dr Rost - but he stressed it was vital that BPA alternatives provide the same level of safety and performance.

“We will continue to pursue that end, but we will not compromise food safety in the process, regardless of legislative mandate,” he said

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Subject: BPA-Free Plastic May Release Chemicals with Estrogenic Activity

BPA-Free Plastic May Release Chemicals with Estrogenic Activity

By GreenBiz Staff

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The estrogenic chemical bisphenol-A (BPA) has been villified in recent years for its ubiquitous presence in numerous consumer products.

But even plastic-containing products claiming to be BPA-free can still leach chemicals with estrogenic activity (EA), according to a new study published in the Environmental Health Perspectives Journal. The leaching can get worse during regular types of use, such as microwaving or dishwashing.

Researchers at Georgetown University, PlastiPure, a Texas-based plastic maker, and CertiChem, a chemical testing firm, purchased 455 plastic products from stores such as Whole Foods, Walmart and Trader Joe's made to contain food, including baby bottles, water bottles, bags and deli containers. The resin type varied, but nearly all tested positive for the leaching of chemicals with detectable levels of EA.

Studies suggest exposure to EA can change the structure of many types of human cells, raising concern about adverse impacts on infants and children, including birth defects and behavioral disorders.

However, researchers contend EA-free plastic can be commercially produced at a cost in line with conventional plastic.

"Many scientists believe that it is not appropriate to bet our health and that of future generations on an assumption that known cellular effects of chemicals having EA released from most plastics will have no severe adverse health effects," researchers wrote. "Since we can identify existing, relatively-inexpensive monomers and additives that do not exhibit estrogenic activity, even when stressed, we believe that plastics having comparable physical properties but that do not release chemicals having detectable EA could be produced at minimal additional cost."

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[Source URL: http://www.greenbiz.com/news/2011/03/03/bpa-free-plastics-release-chemicals-estrogenic-activity](http://www.greenbiz.com/news/2011/03/03/bpa-free-plastics-release-chemicals-estrogenic-activity)

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Published on Tuesday, March 8, 2011 by [Reuters](#)

Eco-Farming Could Double Food Output of Poor Countries, Says UN

Report cites insect-trapping plants in Kenya and Bangladesh's use of ducks in paddy fields, and resulting rise in crop yields

A move by farmers in developing countries to ecological agriculture, away from chemical fertilisers and pesticides, could double food production within a decade, a UN report says.

Insect-trapping plants in Kenya and ducks eating weeds in Bangladesh's rice paddies are among examples of recommendations for feeding the world's 7 billion people, which the UN says will become about 9 billion by 2050.

"Agriculture is at a crossroads," says the study by Olivier de Schutter, the UN special reporter on the right to food, in a drive to depress record food prices and avoid the costly oil-dependent model of industrial farming.

So far, eco-farming projects in 57 nations demonstrated average crop yield gains of 80 per cent by tapping natural methods for enhancing soil and protecting against pests, it says.

Recent projects in 20 African countries resulted in a doubling of crop yields within three to 10 years. Those lessons could be widely mimicked elsewhere, it adds.

"Sound ecological farming can significantly boost production and in the long term be more effective than conventional farming," De Schutter said of steps such as more use of natural compost or high-canopy trees to shade coffee groves.

It is also believed "agroecology" could make farms more resilient to extreme weather conditions associated with climate change, including floods, droughts and a rise in sea levels that the report said was already making fresh water near some coasts too salty for use in irrigation.

Benefits would be greatest in "regions where too few efforts have been put in to agriculture, particularly sub-Saharan Africa," he said. "There are also a number of very promising experiences in parts of Latin America and parts of Asia.

"The cost of food production has been very closely following the cost of oil," he said. Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia have been partly linked to discontent at soaring food prices. Oil prices were around \$115 a barrel on Tuesday.

"If food prices are not kept under control and populations are unable to feed themselves ... we will increasingly have states being disrupted and failed states developing," De Schutter said.

Examples of successful agroecology in Africa include the thousands of Kenyan farmers who planted insect-repelling desmodium or tick clover, used as animal fodder, within corn fields to keep damaging insects away and sowed small plots of napier grass nearby that excretes a sticky gum to trap pests.

The study also called for better research, training and use of local knowledge. "Farmer field schools" by rice growers in Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh had led to cuts in insecticide use by between 35 and 92 percent, it said.

De Schutter also recommended a diversification in global farm output, from reliance on rice, wheat and maize.

Developed nations, however, would be unable to make a quick shift to agroecology because of what he called an "addiction" to an industrial, oil-based model of farming – but a global long-term effort to shift to agroecology was needed.

It cited Cuba as an example of how change was possible, as the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to supplies of cheap pesticides and fertilisers being cut off. Yields had risen after a downturn in the 1990s as farmers adopted more eco-friendly methods.

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