

## Prince Charles Promotes World Hunger

*by Dennis T. and Alex A. Avery*

Prince Charles of England has come out again against the genetically modified foods that are a key hope for producing the extra food needed by our richer, more populous world in the decades just ahead. He must know that, thanks to science, world grain production tripled during his lifetime, from about 700 million tons per year to nearly 2,100 million tons. This achievement was certainly not due to his elitist organic farming, which continues to yield about half as much per acre as conventional farming. For fifty years, we've even bombarded seeds with radioactive isotopes to force useful new seed mutations!

Dr. Norman Borlaug, winner of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize was honored for breeding the high-yield seeds of the Green Revolution of the 1960. What if we hadn't tripled the world's crop yields with the Green Revolution? Not only would one billion people have starved, but the fabric of the planet would have been rent by more "hunger wars." Millions more would have died in the battles, and in the famines and disease epidemics that always accompany wars.

Charles says biotech crops "haven't raised crop yields." Nonsense! For openers, biotechnology's pest-resistant cotton seeds have raised yields by one-third on the 35 million cotton acres in China and India. That has freed 15 million acres for additional food crops in the very countries which are currently adding the most pressure on world food supplies. Biotech varieties also produce higher corn and soy yields.

In Africa, genetically researched corn produces four times as much corn per acre—and an even bigger gain in food security—because new varieties are naturally tolerant of an herbicide called imazopyr. When these corn seeds are soaked in small amounts of the herbicide, the imazopyr suppresses the endemic witchweed, a parasitic weed that invades grain plants through their roots.

The newest biotech rice, wheat and rapeseed varieties suddenly need only half as much nitrogen fertilizer to produce a full yield. This cuts food costs, and means almost no Nitrogen left-over to leach into nearby streams. Nitrogen-efficient corn is also on its way.

We might ask the future King of England: "What about the millions of pounds of pesticide that haven't been sprayed in the air to protect our crops, because a safe and ubiquitous soil organism called *Bacillus thuringiensis*, engineered into the plants, kills crop-eating caterpillars?"

If humans will need twice as much food and feed in 2040 how would we feed ourselves and our increasing number of pets with low organic yields? Organic fields yields are limited primarily because of the global shortage of manure. However, the world would need billions more cattle to get extra manure, and we'd have to clear forests to grow their forage. "Green manure crops" steal land, sunshine, water, and soil nutrients from food and feed crops.

How would the future king tell the cat and dog owners of Britain that, because of his anti-science elitism, pet food sales must be banned so people could eat?

The best non-science solution I've heard is from Vijay Prakash, Secretary of Welfare in India's Bihar state. Prakash says we should eat rats. Then the rats won't eat the stored grain, and the people will get more high-quality protein. He is promoting rat meat in the villages—and talking with hotels about rat meat on their menus. It's at least more realistic than expecting humans to become vegetarian.

And we wish Queen Elizabeth a very long and healthy life.

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