

Conservation Loses Out to Global Warming Panic

By Dennis T. Avery

A global food crisis looms, as crops are diverted to biofuels. Food prices have soared 83 percent in three years. Thousands of U.S. farmers are pulling their land out of the government's biggest conservation program to plant millions of acres back to crops and pasture. U.S. environmentalists warn that "years of conservation progress" will be lost as America's 35-million-acre Conservation Reserve dwindles, especially in the important bird-nesting areas of the northern Great Plains.

Global grain shortages are spreading. The World Food Program says it must abandon some of the drought-stricken hungry. U.S. hog farmers are quietly asking their veterinarians how to euthanize their baby pigs, corn prices have risen so high they'd bankrupt their families trying to feed the pigs to market weight.

Europe is buying Asian palm oil from what used to be tropical forests, to make biodiesel instead of cooking oil. Orangutans, man's closest DNA relative, are being captured and killed by the thousands as they're attracted by the palm seedlings. EU biodiesel mandates exacerbate the world's cropland scarcity, setting the stage for still-higher grain prices and more hunger next year.

Asian countries are banning rice exports to make sure they can supply rice to their own consumers. Too much land in Asia has been growing increasingly valuable corn and tapioca for feed, instead of rice for food, because rich-country biofuel mandates raised feed prices worldwide. But, increased population and affluence continue to demand more rice.

Meanwhile, soil carbon lost from the replanted Midwest acres and the cleared tropical forests gases into the air, worsening global warming risks even as governments vainly promise to cut greenhouse emissions. And gas prices continue to rise

All of this because of the rush to biofuels—the first, big, panicked mistake of the global warming scare. The public was sold on the now obviously foolish idea that it's better to burn food in our fuel tanks than to feed people and raise livestock from the world's scarce cropland.

Economists began predicting these awful consequences two years ago when President Bush first announced his federal biofuels mandate. We already needed to double crop yields by 2050—to prevent the plow down of the world's remaining wildlands while we

supplied food and feed for the last global surge of world population growth, fast-rising affluence, and expanding pet numbers.

U.S. corn nets only about 50 gallons worth of gasoline per acre per year, and Americans burn more than 134 billion gallons of gasoline per year. We were already using virtually all of the country's cropland to produce food and food. Biodiesel is no more productive. The massive land requirements of biofuels made this disaster inevitable—but few thought the disaster would arrive so fast.

Over the past two years, corn has soared from \$1.86 per bushel to more than \$6, and the U.S. spring planting intentions confirm there won't be enough grain—for people or pigs—again this year. If we refuse to burn coal, drill for oil, or build nuclear power plants, this is what we must expect: hunger, deprivation, and destruction of the planet's natural resources.

The earth's global warming since 1940 totals only 0.2 degree C. We've had no warming at all for the past 10 years and temperatures dropped in 2007—while CO₂ in the atmosphere continued to rise.

Must we sacrifice the wildlife even before we find out if CO₂ really controls the climate? As President Bush finally caves in to the global warming alarmists, the answer is evidently “yes.”

DENNIS T. AVERY is a senior fellow for the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC and is the Director for the Center for Global Food Issues. (www.cgfi.org) He was formerly a senior analyst for the Department of State. He is co-author, with S. Fred Singer, of Unstoppable Global Warming Every 1500 Hundred Years, Readers may write him at PO Box 202, Churchville, VA 2442 or email to cgfi@hughes.net