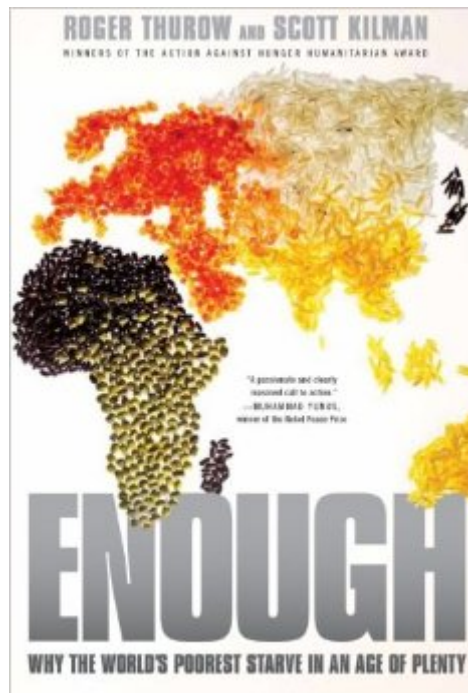


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Enough: Why The World's Poorest Starve In An Age Of Plenty



Synopsis

For more than thirty years, humankind has known how to grow enough food to end chronic hunger worldwide. Yet in Africa, more than 9 million people every year die of hunger, malnutrition, and related diseases every year—most of them children. In this powerful investigative narrative, Wall Street Journal reporters Kilman & Thurow show exactly how, in the past few decades, Western policies conspired to keep Africa hungry and unable to feed itself. Enough is essential reading on a humanitarian issue of utmost urgency.

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Customer Reviews

Half way through the book, you'll be mad as hell. By the end, you'll see some rays of hope. Thurow and Kilman lay out the problem: a billion or so starving or malnourished people in the world, in spite of the fact that there is enough food to feed everyone. Then they describe the barriers to getting the food to the people who need it: greed, politics, good intentions gone awry, and infrastructure/technical issues. Finally, they describe some of the ongoing efforts to overcome or end-run the barriers, and they lay out what needs to happen for the great vision of Jesus in Matthew 25 - the least being fed - to come to fruition. An important read, yet an interesting read and an easy read.

A wonderful, readable, engaging treatise on the positive strategies for fighting hunger in a world of plenty. Basicall, the altruistic idea of "give a man a fish" does not work very well, despite its best

intentions, especially if you are in the business of selling fish. Sound odd or ironic? Not really. When foreign aid in the form of free grain from American farmers arrives too late in a famine area, the local farmers are unable to sell their own product. What appears to be compassionate charity is clearly a deal to support American farmers and shippers and, perhaps only by chance, starving Africans. The "green revolution" started in Mexico and moved to Asia and then stumbled a bit in Africa. In Africa, the absence of the social and physical infrastructure needed to promote wealth-creating, modern, efficient agriculture had a hard time materializing. And foreign aid requirements that thwarted development, by insisting on premature free-market practices in a fledgling agricultural industry, only continued the problems while exposing foreign aid for what it is: government farm support for American farmers but not African farmers. Tens of millions, if not billions in aid was siphoned off by greedy African leaders and paid to shippers for carrying grain to Africa, grain that could have been purchased for much less locally and supported local farmers. It makes American accusations of "dumping" hypocritical at best, and life-threatening at worst. Many of these case studies and stories have been published previously in the Wall Street Journal, so they will be familiar to readers of the Journal. And the authors conclude with some useful recommendations. It may seem surprising that such a compassionate treatment should come from a bastion of capitalism yet, as more and more authors reveal each year, the solution to starvation in Africa is not more, free, American grain. The solution needs to be local and sustainable. "Enough" offers a bright light on the subject.

There is a great deal of interesting (not to mention heart-wrenching) information in this book, but the gist of the argument is this: Food policy for the last 30 years has more or less ignored agricultural development and food self-sufficiency. Instead policy has focused on moving poor countries directly to industrialization. With industries, the reasoning goes, poor countries can export goods and use their export earnings to buy food from rich countries, including the United States. We produce food cheaply, they produce goods cheaply. We get cheap stuff, they get cheap food. The authors point out a number of problems with this approach. First, it tends to fail just when poor countries need it most. A few years ago, there was a dramatic escalation in the price of rice. Immediately, famine threatened poor countries around the world. Second, as programs helping poor farmers are cut back or eliminated, they often have little choice but to abandon their farms and become urban slum dwellers - or to emigrate legally or illegally. It's this dynamic that has driven much of the post-NAFTA immigration from Mexico to the United States. The authors argue that we need to re-orient global food policy to help poor farmers and encourage food self-sufficiency in poor nations. They admit that the task won't be easy, and that other factors (war, corruption, and disease) also

help create hunger. They also point out that our current policies are very convenient for powerful economic interests - not least large-scale farmers, global grain trading companies, and manufacturers seeking cheap labor. The authors have been covering this beat for the Wall Street Journal for many years and are clearly both passionate and very well-informed. They are also excellent writers - if some of the subject matter weren't so grim, I'd almost be tempted to describe it as a "fun read." Highly recommended.

Farm subsidies started out as a good way to protect hardworking US and European farmers against the vagaries of the marketplace and the weather. But they've morphed into a major reason why the developing world suffers regular, devastating famines. The effects of subsidies on commodity prices often mean that poor farmers, particularly those in Africa, cannot make any money selling their harvests, so they cannot buy the seeds and fertilizers they need to grow future crops. Without incomes, they and their families starve. In this revealing, shocking book, Wall Street Journal reporters Roger Thurow and Scott Kilman examine how - as they contend - practices by rich nations keep developing nations poor and hungry. getAbstract recommends this book to those who want to know why, in the 21st century, people still starve to death, and what's to be done about it.

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