

# Soy a solution as global hunger intensifies

BY MARTIN ROSS  
FarmWeek

U.S. soybean producers are well positioned not only to feed the world's hungry but also to fuel global economic recovery and, potentially, help protect the planet.

According to a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report released last week, a record 1.02 billion people worldwide face

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WISHH

serious hunger and/or malnutrition issues. FAO cited 20 countries in Africa alone that currently require emergency food aid.

In many African nations, hunger has cut heavily into school attendance and medical care as families struggle to provide children even a single daily meal.

"Soy can be part of the solution," argued Jim Hershey, executive director with the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH). Hershey told **FarmWeek** the growing hunger problem is "largely a function of the (global) economic slowdown," noting soy protein is cheaper than dairy or meat protein in many developing regions.

"Africa is deficient in protein: They don't grow enough

soy; they don't grow enough meat, milk, and eggs," he said. "But that creates opportunities, if we can introduce to their food processing companies the ability to use soy to stretch animal resources by putting soy with meat products. Many African companies are very interested in that technology."

"We can help lower the cost of sausages and meat — things African companies are targeting at the lower-income folks. We can help them achieve a lower cost of production, they'll sell more, and people will eat better."

The need for African ag development, rather than direct aid, was the key focus of the FAO report. Hershey noted introduction of soy has fueled African development in the form of soy restaurants offering "economical but very nutritional meals."

Soy protein also can be blended with corn or other staples to build demand for locally grown crops.

Because textured soy protein is precooked, soy food preparation often takes far less time than cooking beans or other indigenous foodstuffs. That conserves wood, a major source of African fuel, in areas where kindling is expensive or deforestation is a serious issue.

Further, a Kenyan school nutrition program supported by WISHH and the University of Illinois' National Soybean Research Laboratory uses soy not only to feed 600-plus children and encourage school attendance, but also to reduce illegal wildlife poaching by economically strapped families.

A lack of protein "stunts (children) both physically and mentally," noted Northern Illi-

nois producer and WISHH Treasurer Pat Dumoulin, who recently toured Kenya and South Africa. Dumoulin witnessed the impact of soy nutrition on children at a Kenya school where

soy "porridge" was served.

"Those little ones were jumping around, and they had a little twinkle in their eye, where before they were much more sober," she related. "They had

some energy after they'd eaten. It was the protein.

"Some of those little ones would walk as far as four miles to get to school. The big incentive, of course, was that meal."



School children in Kenya are careful not to spill a drop of the soy milk that is part of a unique school feeding program that also benefits local wildlife protection efforts. The Masai Mara School Lunch Program is using defatted soy flour to feed more than 600 children in two schools. Initiated this year, the program is supported by the National Soybean Research Laboratory and the checkoff-supported World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH). (Photo by Pat Dumoulin)

## FROM THE COUNTIES

**BUREAU** — Bureau, Henry, Knox, and Stark County Farm Bureaus, the University of Illinois Extension, and Black Hawk East (BHE) will sponsor a series of three equine seminars from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursdays, Nov. 5, 12, and 19, in the Black Hawk East ag arena. There is no charge for 4-H and FFA members and BHE students. Cost for others is \$9 per session or \$20 for all three sessions. Call the Farm Bureau office at 309-937-2411 for reservations or more information.

**ROCK ISLAND** — The Rock Island County Farm Bureau Foundation will sponsor its Harvest Gala

fundraiser at 6 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6, at the iWireless Center, Moline. Darryl and Karen Anderson, will present the program on their experience with Agriculture in the Classroom. A silent and live auction will be held. Donated items for the auctions will be accepted. Tickets are \$50 per person, which includes reserved parking, and must be purchased by Thursday, Oct. 29. Call the Farm Bureau office at 309-736-7432 for reservations or more information.

"From the counties" items are submitted by county Farm Bureau managers. If you have an event or activity open to all members, contact your county manager.

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