

A Proposal for Combating World Hunger LOW LEVEL 3

A

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In the entire existence of man there has been no accomplishment so significant, so monumental, as that of agriculture. Once civilized human beings realized they could grow as much of their own food as they desired the entire world was permanently affected. While this triumph enabled humans to consume and store as much food as they wanted, it was not without negative consequences. Conflict broke out among the different people resulting in ceaseless power struggles, and while some gained food others lost it. As well, crops being planted changed the face of the environment and its ecosystems. Like they did thousands of years ago, these activities are still occurring. Because of things such as political conflict millions of people are left without an adequate supply of food while other millions bask in the knowledge that they will never run out. Because of things such as ‘civilized’ people taking resources for granted there is an extreme global resource crisis. Because of things such as intense land degradation, land necessary for crops and agriculture are becoming more scarce, resulting in a severe food shortage in many parts of the world. As well as these factors, there are at least a dozen more that can help explain how and why so many of the world’s citizens, roughly one billion, suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition.

Land degradation is a major cause of global hunger. The rate at which arable land is being lost is increasing and is currently 30-35 times the historical rate. If land is not suitable for the production of food, how are people to eat? Poverty stricken people have always had to place enormous stress on their land; crops were their key to survival. While some causes of land degradation are natural, such as erosion, most of the causes are human inflicted, such as overcultivation and overgrazing, which continually accelerate the level of desertification occurring. It is unpractical to believe any plan will stop land degradation or even decelerate its rate quickly, but if a plan can be implemented to assist people in using their land more efficiently the effects may be more favourable. This three-step proposal is meant to accomplish just that.

Step One

Perhaps the most obvious action to take is to heighten awareness and create strategies to improve and guard the environment against further degradation. Because this is mainly a result of human activity, it can certainly be controlled by human effort. Encouragement is key; people have to want change. One plan could be to encourage the integration of environmental concerns into research on dry land management and crop yield maximization. Also helpful might be reviewing current policies for combining desertification, and making amendments as rendered necessary to fit current concerns.

B

Many countries have already adopted programs to deal with protection against erosion, degradation and other specific concerns for their given areas. An important step in turning the problem around is promoting afforestation; the planting of trees on land supporting non-forest types; grasslands for example. If governments and organizations recognize this possibility and provide funding, then for each plant destroyed, a tree or another plant can be planted in its place. For many people this would hold the prospect of a better future, encouraging them to do what they can to reach it.

Step Two

As well as protecting the environment, protecting water supplies are vital, as well as planting crops that can grow with less water. This allows resources to be stretched further and be used more efficiently. If less water is used on one crop, the water that is saved contributes to creating an extra crop, or can be used for other things such as drinking water. This is a practical step as it is a relatively simple concept, and initiating and maintaining a lower level of water use, if regulated, would be fairly trouble-free.

Step Three

Profoundly helpful in terms of resource management and efficiency is the introduction of better farming techniques and technology into countries where traditional methods are used. Many regions facing land degradation today are cultures that have used the same methods of farming for thousands of years. As technology spread through the western world these people continued to use preferred methods that had always worked for them in the past, either oblivious, unable, or unwilling to use newer techniques. Unfortunately, as land is becoming less available so are options. These people are being forced to begin using land more efficiently. It is true that wealthier and developed countries could simply provide these impoverished people with rations to feed their families, but the result of that would be an avoidable dependence on these developed countries for food. Teaching them how to grow their own food and giving them tools to do such will allow them in the future to pass this knowledge on so that they are not forced to be dependent on anyone.

Providing these countries with improved farming tools and techniques is priceless for them to get the most out of their crops and land. Examples of simple techniques could be rotating crops on a regular basis, to keep areas refreshed and arable, and introducing new and effective fertilizers and pesticides. Every method that is introduced will more or less in the long run have a positive impact on soil erosion, land degradation, and the way crops are grown.

C

Each of the three above steps proposed will contribute in different ways to the deceleration of land degradation, and will hopefully encourage further steps to be taken to improve the quality of land and soil. Once these are under control the people who depend upon their land and crops will be able to produce more food not just for themselves, but for other regions and countries as well. Human survival begins with food production, and food production all begins with the earth's land. If something is not done to improve the stress that the planet's land is under chronic hunger will continue to be a growing crisis for millions around the world. To ensure survival all humans and cultures need to work together to conserve the land, regardless of economic and continental boundaries. It is the obligation of every human being to do what is in their ability to help any others who may need help and support.

D

Bibliography

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www.globalchange.umich.edu/./land_deg/land_deg.html. March, 2002.

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<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/worldsoils/landdeg/>. May, 2003.

LOW LEVEL 3**Teacher's Notes****Knowledge and Understanding**

- The student describes a cause of world hunger, land degradation, with considerable effectiveness, supporting the description with a variety of historical information about agriculture and differentiating between natural and human causes of land degradation. The student also demonstrates a solid understanding of the connection between land degradation and hunger in the statement “If land is not suitable for the production of food, how are people to eat?”. However, not all of the supporting information is relevant (e.g., the statements about political conflict are not well integrated).

Thinking

- The student analyses land degradation as a cause of world hunger with considerable effectiveness. The work shows evidence of research in most areas, as the student introduces a variety of factors associated with land degradation (e.g., technological, political, and environmental). The student also correctly interprets the factors involved (e.g., “Poverty stricken people have always had to place enormous stress on their land; crops were their key to survival.”). However, although the student states that “Many countries have already adopted programs to deal with protection against erosion, degradation ...”, no countries where such programs have been successful are cited, indicating a lapse in the depth of the research in some areas.

Communication

- The student communicates ideas and information with considerable clarity. The proposal is well organized and includes a thought-provoking statement in the introduction: “While this triumph enabled humans to consume and store as much food as they wanted, it was not without negative consequences.” The student is generally articulate, but does use an inappropriate term (i.e., “‘civilized’ people”) and uses the term “combining desertification” when it is likely that “containing desertification” was meant, thereby somewhat impeding the readability of the paper.

Application

- The student develops a considerably effective three-step strategy, proposing feasible and sustainable solutions (i.e., heightening awareness of land degradation and promoting conservation measures, reducing the amount of water used in agriculture, introducing farming techniques that will keep the land “refreshed and arable”). However, the student is somewhat unrealistic about the implementation of these strategies (e.g., with respect to conservation of water, the student says, “This is ... a relatively simple concept, and initiating and maintaining [it], if regulated, would be fairly trouble-free.”). By suggesting both short- and long-term measures, the student demonstrates an understanding that the proposal will contribute to a process of change, and that there is no simple solution.
- The student justifies the three-step strategy with some effectiveness. The student provides practical arguments to support the validity of each step, but does not provide enough supporting detail. For example, the student points out that “If less water is used on one crop”, the water saved can be used for an additional crop or for drinking water, but no mention is made of the kind of crop that could be grown with less water. In addition, the student’s support of the steps in the strategy is unbalanced: the second step receives very little comment and the third step includes somewhat irrelevant arguments (e.g., about wealthier nations providing food to impoverished people).

Comments

This work is representative of a low level-3 performance. The student demonstrates a considerable degree of achievement of the expectations in the Knowledge and Understanding, Thinking, and Communication categories of knowledge and skills, as well as in the “effective strategy” part of the Application category. However, in the “justification” part of the Application category, the student demonstrates some degree of achievement – i.e., achievement that is more characteristic of level 2.

Next Steps

In order to improve his or her performance, the student needs to:

- exclude irrelevant information, or provide links and support to make all information relevant;
- provide sufficient support for each step in the strategy;
- review wording to avoid implying that the strategies proposed are easy to implement;
- proofread to eliminate inappropriate and unintended words.