

## Global education module

<b>AUTHOR:</b>	Anthropolis Egyesület
<b>COUNTRY:</b>	Hungary
<b>TITLE:</b>	Global food crisis
<b>AGE GROUP:</b>	12+
<b>SUBJECTS:</b>	geography, economics, ethics
<b>TIME REQUIRED:</b>	45 minutes

### Global food crisis

**the aim of the exercise:**

- to uncover the causes of the global food crisis

**related subjects:** geography, economics, ethics

**age group:** 12+

**number of participants :** 5-30 people

**tools:** a description of the causes of the crisis (each cause is written on a separate sheet)

**time required:** 45 minutes

Description of the exercise:

The group will be divided into smaller groups of 4 to 6 students. Each small group will be given a set of the “CAUSES OF THE CRISIS” cards (see Appendix 1). From each group one person will volunteer to be the Expert who will then get the “EXPERT REMARK” cards (see Appendix 2).

As a group, arrange the “CAUSES OF THE CRISIS” cards into an order of importance. When the place of a card in the sequence is decided by the group the Expert should read out the “EXPERT REMARK” card whose number corresponds to the given crisis card. Based on this additional information you can change the order so far established if you wish.

When the order of the cards is finalized, stick them on a sheet of wrapping paper or on the board, following which the groups can present and justify their results one by one.



Appendix 1

**CAUSES OF THE CRISIS:**

**1 – FUEL FROM FOOD**

The earth's oil resources are not unlimited. Therefore scientists are constantly searching for alternative energy sources. In order to replace petroleum oil, they have already started using grains (mainly maize), which is called bio fuel. An estimated 100 million tonnes of grain are being redirected from food to fuel. Total worldwide grain production is just over 2000 million tonnes. There are increasingly less cereals available for food.

**CAUSES OF THE CRISIS:**

**2 – WORLD POPULATION GROWTH**

World population has grown from 1.6 billion in 1900 to an estimated 6.6 billion in 2008. The world's population, on its current growth trajectory, is expected to reach nearly 9 billion by the year 2042. Population growth also means an increase in food demand and food prices, endangering the poor.

**CAUSES OF THE CRISIS:**

**3 – CHANGING EATING HABITS IN ASIA**

In certain Asian countries (primarily China and India), having become more affluent, the middle classes spend their extra income on food items previously absent from their diet. The most important change is that instead of vegetables they eat more white and red meat. Therefore more grains (for feed) are being used in stock farming and thus less remains for food. In order to produce 1 kg of beef, 7 kg of grains are needed.



## CAUSES OF THE CRISIS:

### 4 – HIGHER OIL PRICES

The rise in the price of oil and natural gas effects food prices in two ways. On the one hand, oil and natural gas are the main raw materials for fertilizer production. The price of certain fertilizers doubled between November 2007 and April 2008. On the other hand, the increase of the price of fuel used for agricultural machinery and for transporting food also resulted in growing food prices.

## CAUSES OF THE CRISIS:

### 5 – FINANCIAL SPECULATION

Financial speculation in commodity futures following the collapse of the financial derivatives markets has contributed to the crisis due to a "commodities super-cycle." Financial speculators seeking quick returns have removed trillions of dollars from equities and mortgage bonds, some of which has been invested into food and raw materials. This is also a contributing factor in rising food prices, although its extent is difficult to gauge.

## CAUSES OF THE CRISIS:

### 6 – CLIMATE CHANGE AND UNFAVOURABLE WEATHER

Several distinct weather- and climate-related incidents have caused disruptions in food crop production. Such incidents led to a drop in food production and an increase in prices. A few examples:

- A drought in 2006 in Australia reduced wheat production from the pre-drought 25 million tonnes per year to 9.8 million tonnes;
- the 2006 heat wave in California in the USA;
- the unseasonable 2008 rains in India;
- in 2008, because of the Nargis cyclone, Burma, previously a rice exporter, became a rice importer.



## Appendix 2

<p><b>EXPERT REMARK 1</b></p> <p>Filling a tank of an average car with biofuel amounts to as much maize, which is Africa's principal food staple, as an African person consumes in an entire year. Despite this fact leaders of some rich countries claim that bio fuel production is not the primary cause of growing food prices. A good example is that in Brazil, sugarcane has been grown for years for the purposes of bio fuel production and it still did not result in a rise in food prices.</p>	<p><b>EXPERT REMARK 4</b></p> <p>Among poorer farmers of the world, the use of oil-based fertilizers and transport is much lower than in rich countries. But they are still dependent on imported food, the price of which is influenced by the price of oil.</p>
<p><b>EXPERT REMARK 2</b></p> <p>Growth in food production has been greater than population growth and food per person increased during the 1961-2005 period. Aggregate food production per capita slightly declined in recent years, at least for cereals. The question remains whether this small change in itself could be a cause of the rise in prices.</p>	<p><b>EXPERT REMARK 5</b></p> <p>If we treat food as an investment, this will result in unpayably high prices for the poor. Although world-wide food production would be able to satisfy everyone's demand, but prices are determined by dealers and businessmen, not by governments.</p>
<p><b>EXPERT REMARK 3</b></p> <p>Although the growth of the affluent middle class in China and India has been dramatic, the vast majority of the population in Asia remains poor. The diet of these people mostly living in rural areas still consists of mainly vegetables.</p>	<p><b>EXPERT REMARK 6</b></p> <p>Humanity has always adapted to climatic changes, and it was no different in agriculture. As a result of the 2006 drought in Australia, the drop in global production was only 0.0075%, which is very small. This may have caused a food shortage in countries commercially related to Australia, but was insignificant on a global scale.</p>

