

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1407

Financial Services Committee
Hearing "Contributing Factors and International Responses to the Global Food Crisis"
Opening Statement for Congressman André Carson
May 14, 2008

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Bachus for holding this extremely important hearing today on the global food crisis. It is shocking to think that 800 million people go hungry each day. We see images of suffering from every region on this planet and food riots have erupted in 20 countries already.

I look forward to gaining first hand insight to this food crisis as I join several of my colleagues on a trip to Haiti this Friday to investigate the devastating effects this crisis has had on the people there. As you know, anger over food shortages just recently forced the Prime Minister of Haiti to resign. Sadly, this nation is just a small portion of the world reeling from increases in food prices. As a member of the Congressional Hunger Caucus, led by Representative James McGovern and Representative Jo Ann Emerson, I am pleased that we are examining the multitude of factors that lead to this massive crisis in this committee today.

One factor that has been identified by many as a contributor to the global increase in the cost of food especially concerns me as a Representative of Indiana's 7th Congressional District. There has been a dramatic increase in the use of corn for producing ethanol. My home state is responsible for 7.5 percent of the U.S. corn crop and 6.3% of U.S. ethanol production. Further, 19% of the corn from my state is directed towards ethanol, a dramatic increase from 11% this previous crop year.

While it is imperative that we pursue alternatives so that we are a more energy independent and environmentally progressive nation, we must closely examine whether or not our increasing biofuel mandates are sustainable or wise given the current global needs.

Further, it is evident that certain agriculture policies pursued by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the 1980's and 1990 have had tremendously negative consequences on small farmers throughout the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Moving forward, we must ensure that the IMF and the World Bank do not impose conditionalities that prevent countries from strengthening their local food production and economies. We must ensure that countries are able stockpile grain, create domestic

support systems for small farmers and invest research and technology to enhance agricultural productivity without depleting soil nutrients.

The only positive development from this crisis will be if global attention is focused on ways to improve international and domestic systems so that future price fluctuations are not so devastating to the most vulnerable populations. I want to thank the witnesses for taking part in this hearing today I look forward to hearing your testimony. Thank you.