WN *The issue*

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Equity
Coming together to work and to win



Above from left: Isabela Sattamini on Feedback. Evo Morales on the South now taking the lead. Anand Grover on Big Food. Thiago de Sá on gross national happiness. Sarah Elton on rational agriculture. Tony McMichael on impact of climate change Fabio Gomes from Rome on sustainable development. Rich Cohen on sugar as revenge of the slaves. Below from left: Alejandro Calvillo on the soda wars. Geoffrey Cannon on Theodore Roosevelt. Letters from Alejandro Calvillo, David Sanders, Barry Popkin, Claus Leitzmann, Thomas Samaras, Urban Jonsson. And more, more!

Editors' note

People above are in bold type. Upper row. In *The Issue* (below) **Isabela Sattamini** reports on progress so far with *WN* letters. In *Update:* Bolivian president **Evo Morales** presides over the G77 Summit on sustainable development. The UN rapporteur on health **Anand Grover** denounces transnationals and ultra-processed products. **Thiago Hérick de Sá** redefines the meaning of development. **Sarah Elton** promotes eating local. This issue's cover story, and our *Editorial*, celebrates the work in Mexico of *Consumer Power* and the *Alliance for Healthy Eating.* Then our commentaries. For *Climate,* **Tony McMichael** sees the big picture. For *Development.* **Fabio Gomes** reports from Rome on preparation for the UN International Conference on Nutrition. For *Sugar,* **Rich Cohen** tells the dark history of the slave trade that made sugar a world food commodity. Lower row. For *Big Food Watch* **Alejandro Calvillo** ascends the Soda Summit. **Geoffrey Cannon** gains inspiration from Theodore Roosevelt. Then 22 pages of letters, including from Alejandro Calvillo**;** Leigh Haines, David Legge, Leslie London, David McCoy, **David Sanders**; Tony McMichael; notes from **Barry Popkin** and Geoffrey Cannon; **Claus Leitzmann**; **Thomas Samaras**; **Urban Jonsson;** Thiago Hérick de Sá.

Editorial. Direct action

Power to the Mexican people!



Mexico is now militant against the impact of transnational corporations on the health, culture and identity of the Mexican nation. One imperative demand is 'Basta' (stop) propaganda at children

Fabio Gomes reports: In November the UN International Conference on Nutrition is meant to agree new and progressive agriculture, food and nutrition policies. Its right to do so is now challenged. Public interest organisations and social movements are fighting to be fully included. A lead is being taken by the Mexican organisations *El Poder del Consumidor,* and *Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria* (Consumer Power, and Alliance for Healthy Food). The Alianza has sent a scorching open letter signed by over 40 Mexican organisations and movements to the heads of the UN Food and Agriculture Oganization and the World Health Organization. Part of the letter states:

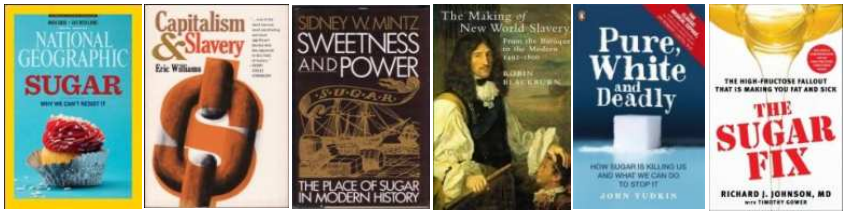
> While millions of small-scale producers are submerged in poverty, in debt and in ruin, ten of the biggest agro industries are receiving billions of pesos in government subsidies... Meanwhile 18 million of the estimated 27 million people living in rural areas in Mexico do not have access to the basic food basket. Imports of products like maize and beans continue to grow while small and medium-scale producers work with great efforts and face huge conflicts to be able to produce and commercialize their products.
>
> Human rights violations and thousands of preventable deaths lie behind these numbers. These realities shape environments which induce deterioration of eating habits and produce overweight, obesity, diabetes and other diseases at alarming rates. The population is unprotected, lacking guarantees of the rights to information, health, water, and healthy, safe and culturally appropriate food, as well as dignified lives.

Access the Editorial on pages 608-611 here.
Access profile of the Alliance for Healthy Food on pages 627-631 here
Access Alejandro Calvillo on framework convention for food and health on pages 680-682 here



Sugar

The revenge of the slaves



The high profile of sugar has raised interest in its origins as an arm of the slave trade (books at left) and also in quantities now typically consumed, its impact on various disorders and diseases (right)

The Update team reports: Sugar from cane has a dark history. It was part of the 'triangular' trade of slaves to the Americas, sugar and other goods to Europe, and manufactured goods to Africa. The English drive to end the slave trade implicated sugar. The poet Robert Southey spoke of tea as 'the blood-sweetened beverage'. Campaigner William Fox told the British parliament the story of a slave, unable to work, being plunged into a boiling cauldron of sugar cane liquor by his owner. The savage caricaturist James Gillray portrays this here (below) as cannibalism.



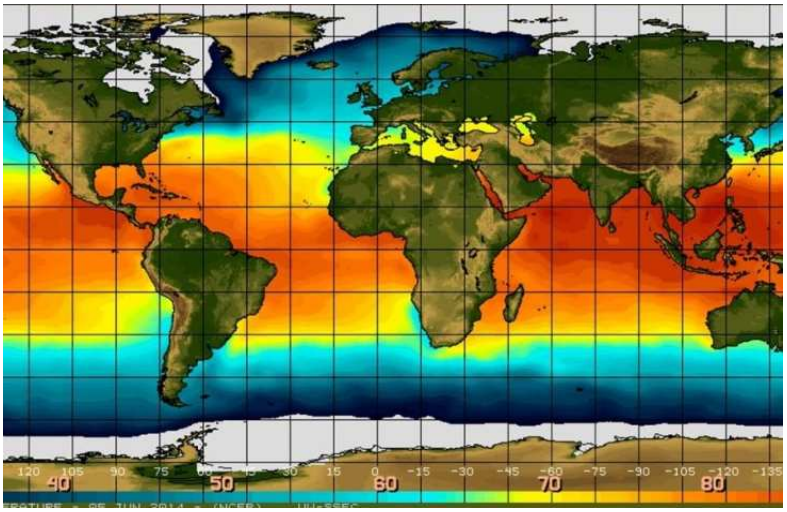
James Gillray, the most savage English satirical cartoonist in the turbulent late 18th and early 19th centuries CE, here imagines a plantation owner in the West Indies boiling slaves for sugar

Access this commentary on pages 642-653 here.
Access Update items on sugar on pages 617-619 here



Climate

Seeing the big picture



A predicted El Nino climatic oscillation in 2015 will warm the equatorial oceans (above) and adjoining land masses and make existing global warming more severe in its effects on food supplies

Tony McMichael writes: The currently recognisable face of climate change is predominantly one of increases in heatwaves, severe weather disasters, longer mosquito seasons and bleached corals. But the likely and much greater threat to human health and physical survival will be from regional food and water shortages, to which climate change will be a major contributor.

Food and water are the basic necessities of life and health. Moderate warming may benefit crop yields in mid- to high-latitude regions but will reduce yields in seasonally dry and low-latitude regions. The northern region of South Asia, much of Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Central America are vulnerable – and so, therefore, are child development, general health, well-being, and social stability.

There is great biophysical, ecological, social and political complexity in this. But the more we understand the ways in which climatic and environmental conditions affect food yields and nutrient quality and the nutrition and health of humans, especially children, the clearer becomes the centrality of food and nutrition to life, health, social cohesion and our future. Greater awareness should help to drive overdue radical policy changes that may yet secure a future habitable, fairer and well-fed world.

Access Climate on pages 632-636 here.

Feedback

Keep them coming, please



WN Feedback contributors in 2014 so far. Top from second to left, Fabio Gomes, Colin Tudge, Claudio Schuftan, Thomas Samaras, Fred Kummerow, Walter Willett, Gyorgy Scrinis. Middle: Marcela Reyes, Geoffrey Cannon, Katharine Jenner, Barry Popkin, Urban Jonsson, Thiago de Sá, Michael Krawinkel, Patti Rundall. Bottom: Gaye Palmer, Claudia Roden, Colin Butler, Diana Parra, Tony McMichael, Alejandro Calvillo, David Legge, Claus Leitzmann . Not pictured: Stineke Oenema, Leigh Haynes, David Sanders, Leslie London, David McCoy, Hélène Delisle, Lautaro Viscay, Arnoldo de Campos, Berta Sanseverino

Feedback editor Isabela Sattamini reports: That's me at left in the top row above. We publish 22 pages in the Feedback section in this issue, whose writers are from Tanzania, South Africa, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, the US, the UK and Germany. In the seven issues this year we have published over 100 pages of letters – 109, to be exact – and we are not satisfied!

Our 2014 letter writers above so far show one reason why. Of the total of 32 writers, 10 only are women (4 not pictured) and 22 are men (5 not pictured). The geographical mix needs improvement also: 10 writers (not letters) come from Europe (England 6, Scotland 1, Germany 2, Netherlands 1), 6 come from North America (5 US, 1 Canada), 9 from Latin America (Brazil 3, Chile 2, Uruguay 2, Mexico 1, Columbia 1); but 4 only from Africa (South Africa 3, Tanzania 1); 1 from Asia (Vietnam); and 2 from Australia. We have in the past had plenty of letters from India and Africa – keep them coming! We need voices from China and Japan, the Mediterranean region, the Arab world, and more sub-Saharan countries.

We want more letters from young correspondents. Not all the beards shown above are grey, true, and experience counts, also true. We are proud to have amplified the campaign of Fred Kummerow (top row, third from left) against *trans*-fats in his

100th year, as supported by Walter Willett (next to him), true. But part of our job is make sure that the voices of those who now are in their 20s and 30s are also heard, loud and clear. One triumph is that Thiago de Sá (middle row, third from right), a new member of the *WN* editorial team, after an *Update* contribution in our May issue and a couple of *Feedback* contributions, has a letter on Coca-Cola penetration of scientific conferences published in *The Lancet (access it here),* with a supporting *Lancet* editorial *(access it here).* His letter includes a *WN* commentary co-written by Fabio Gomes (next to me, top row) and Marcela Reyes (below me in the second row), in his list of references. That's the spirit!

One facility we lack is that for instant response. This will involve development of *WN*'s electronic capability. This is on our 'to-do' list, but perhaps not for this year. Advice will be welcome, addressed please to me at wn.letters@gmail.com

We intend to continue to publish around 13-15 pages of letters every issue. Our letters usually respond to *WN* contributions. We see most of our contributions as work to be progressed in future issues of *WN*, and this means letters, please. We want more letters in each issue, which means more short letters and notes, like those from Hélène Delisle and Barry Popkin (middle row, fourth from left) in this issue. We recommend long flights as a good time to write: Barry Popkin composed his two letters on the history of snacking and the spread of snacks in the East, during a 15 hour flight from Shanghai to back home at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. We want discussion and debate please, such as that now being shared by Claudio Schuftan and Geoffrey Cannon and in this issue Urban Jonsson on equ(al)ity.

We want more letters on the current public health implications of clinical nutrition, such as those by Michael Krawinkel and in this issue Claus Leitzmann on kwashiorkor and protein requirements. We welcome *Feedback* in the form of letters on key public policy issues, which can be open letters, signed by a number of organisations or authors, such as that by Leigh Haynes, David Legge, Leslie London, David McCoy and David Sanders in this issue. Such letters may be published elsewhere in *WN*, an example being that to the director-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization *on the UN ICN2 conference this month.*

All movements have journals. With *'The great protein fiasco'* piece in the *Lancet* by Donald McLaren, published 40 years ago this month, as an example, we want letters whose persuasive powers will shape policies and actions throughout the world, in the interests of public health and public goods. Sometimes we will decide that a long contribution submitted to *Feedback* should become a full *WN* commentary. Please don't always wait to react to *WN* contributors. Act, tell us what we should be covering, in letters for publication, or simply to spur us on.

Access Feedback on pages 680-701 here.

Network. Vitamin A. Fruit
Yes, we have bananas



Bananas! A basic fruit, Also an icon of a Brazilian singer, a rich source of vitamin A in Pacific, sustenance for a family in Sri Lanka, and the cover of a classic US rock music album. Bananas!

Fabio Gomes writes: Our *Network* page has been running for a year now. This month we show a bunch of *Ouro*, a type of banana rarely found outside the tropics. In Brazil these are common, along with *Prata* and *Nanica*, *Maça* and *San Tomé*. Among the 1,000 varieties in the world are the red types of the Pacific, a rich source of vitamin A precursors. In Brazil we make green bananas (plantains) into a basis for the classic *moqueca* fish dish (above), cooked in a clay pot with coriander, onions and tomatoes. The other big picture above shows the boys of a guest-house in Sri Lanka hauling in a great bunch from a palm in the garden. Carmen Miranda who wore bananas in her hair gave her nickname of Chiquita to the corporation previously known as United Fruit of the 'banana republics'. Andy Warhol launched the Velvet Underground band in 1967 with a banana image that could be peeled. Fidel Castro owed his education to his father's banana farm profits. Bananas tell many stories…

Access Network on page 702 here.

Status

The issue is reviewed by members of the editorial team. Please cite as: The Issue team. Equity. Coming together to work and to win. *World Nutrition* July-August 2014, **5**, 7-8, 601-607. Obtainable at www.wphna.org/worldnutrition. Contributions to *World Nutrition* are the copyright and responsibility of their authors. They should not be taken to be the view or policy of the World Public Health Nutrition Association (the Association) or of any affiliated or associated bodies, unless this is explicitly stated.