

Epreuve du 1<sup>er</sup> groupeANGLAIS

## THE ERA OF CHEAP FOOD IS OVER

“World agriculture has entered a new, unsustainable and politically risky period”, says Joachim von Braun, the head of the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, DC. To prove it, food riots have erupted in countries all along the equator. In Haiti, protesters chanting “We’re hungry” forced the prime minister to resign ; 24 people were killed in riots in Cameroon ; Egypt’s president ordered the army to start baking bread ; the Philippines made hoarding rice punishable by life imprisonment.

Last year wheat prices rose by 77 % and rice 16 %. These were some of the sharpest rises in food prices ever. But this year the speed of change has accelerated. Since January, rice prices have soared 141 % ; the price of one variety of wheat shot up 25 % in a day. Some 40 km outside Abidjan, Mariam Kone, who grows sweet potatoes and maize but feeds her family on imported rice, laments : “Rice is very expensive, but we don’t know why.”

The prices mainly reflect changes in demand—not problems of supply, such as harvest failure. The changes include the gentle upward pressure from people in China and India eating more grain and meat as they grow rich and the sudden, voracious appetites of western bio-fuels programmes, which convert cereals into fuel. This year, the share of maize crop going into ethanol in America has risen and the European Union is implementing its own bio-fuel targets.

Such shifts have not been matched by comparable changes on the farm because governments have softened the impact of price rises on domestic markets, muffing the signals that would have encouraged farmers to grow more food. Of 58 countries whose reactions are tracked by the World Bank, 48 have imposed price controls, consumer subsidies, export restrictions or lower tariffs.

But the food scare of 2008, severe as it is, is only a symptom of a broader problem. The surge in food prices has ended 30 years in which food was cheap, farming was subsidized in rich countries and international food markets were widely distorted. Eventually, no doubt, farmers will respond to higher prices by growing more. If all goes well, food will be affordable again without the subsidies, dumping and distortions of the earlier period. But at the moment, agriculture has been caught *in limbo*. The era of cheap food is over. The transition to a new equilibrium is proving costlier, more prolonged and much more painful than anyone had expected.

The Economist April 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> 2008, page 30.

Note : *in limbo* = *in uncertainty*

**Epreuve du 1<sup>er</sup> groupe**

**I. COMPREHENSION (09 marks)**

**A. Are these statements True or False ? Justify your answers by quoting the text.**

- 1. In 2007 cereal prices were higher than in 2008. T/F  
.....
- 2. World agriculture has placed politicians in a risky period. T/F  
.....
- 3. The unprecedented rise in rice price is due to problems of supply. T/F  
.....
- 4. Governments' decisions to soften the impact of high prices encourage farmers to produce more. T/F  
.....

**B. Answer the questions**

- 5. Why is the rice price getting more expensive ?  
.....  
.....
- 6. Why were food prices cheaper before 2008 ?  
.....  
.....

**C. Fill in this table about the percentage rise of cereal prices**

	<b>Wheat</b>	<b>Rice</b>
2007	7.	8.
2008	9.	10.

**D. Complete the sentences using your information from the text**

Food prices have gone up due to :

- 11. ....
- 12. ....
- 13. ....

**E. Find in the text a word that means :**

- 14. Gives food to someone : .....
- 15. Selling exports at artificially low prices : .....
- 16. Storing grains for example : .....

**II. LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE (07 marks)**

**Exercice 1 : Re-write the sentences without changing the meaning**

- 17. "Rice is expensive but we don't know why", said Mrs Kone.  
- Mrs Kone said that .....
- 18. The government will have to lower food prices.  
- Food prices.....
- 19. The situation is dramatic for poor people because prices have risen sharply.  
- Due to the.....
- 20. She does not feed her family on local product but lets them consume imported rice.  
- Instead of .....
- 21. Farmers do not grow more food because they are not encouraged by the government.  
- If farmers .....
- 22. Although the situation gets worse, most families do not reduce the consumption of imported cereals.  
- In spite of .....

**Exercice 2 : Complete the text with the words from the list :**

Fuel – pressure – unprecedented – implemented – supply

The world has experienced an.....rise in cereal prices not because of a  
deficit in.....but there has been an upward.....on  
the quantities of cereals available. Programmes, either in Western Europe or America,  
are.....to turn cereals into.....

**Exercice 3 : Put the verb in brackets in the right tense**

- a) If we had restricted cereal imports, the balance of trade (improve)  
28. ....
- b) Oil prices (be) .....low since the beginning of the year.  
29
- c) Last year the share of maize crop going into ethanol (rise) .....  
30

**III. WRITING Choose letter writing or essay (04 marks)**

31. **Letter writing** : Mr Joachim Von Braun, the head of the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington DC, has written to the Secretary General of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation). In the letter, he is asking for information on the terms and conditions of delivery and dispatch of food to Hunger Project Organisations in Third world Countries.  
In about 150 words write a reply to Mr. Joachim's letter of inquiry.

**ESSAY : (about 150 words)**

32. Some African countries find it difficult to get enough food for their populations. Look at the reasons for these problems and suggest solutions to help eradicate food shortages in these countries.

**ANSWER KEY****I. COMPREHENSION (09 marks)**

1. F "Since January prices have soared by 141 per cent..."
2. T "World agriculture has entered a politically risky period"
3. F "Bio fuel programmes / pressure from people in China and India"
4. F "Muffled the signals that would have encouraged farmers"
  
5. Pressure from people in China and India /turning cereals into fuel
6. Government subsidies / dumping / distortions
  
7. 77 per cent
8. 16 per cent
9. 25 per cent
10. 141 per cent
  
11. Pressure from China and India
12. Western bio-fuel programmes
13. America's turning maize into ethanol
14. feeds
15. dumping
16. hoarding

**II. LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE (07 marks)**

17. Mrs Kone said that rice was expensive but they didn't know why.
18. Food prices will have to be lowered by the government.
19. Due to the sharp rise in prices, the situation is dramatic for poor people.
20. Instead of feeding her family on local products she lets them consume imported rice.
21. If farmers were encouraged by the government, they would grow more food.
22. In spite of the worse situation, most families do not reduce the consumption of imported cereals.
  
23. unprecedented
24. supply
25. pressure
26. implemented
27. fuel
  
28. would have improved
29. have been
30. rose

**III. WRITING (04 marks)**