

Good News, Bad News - Where Do We Stand?

Indicate whether you believe each of the following statements to be good news or bad news. Give a brief reason for your decision.

1. Some countries are paying their farmers not to produce food.
2. Much potentially arable land must be irrigated.
3. Tropical land receives greater solar radiation, and several crops could be raised each year on this land.
4. The soil in many tropical areas is poor and erodes easily.
5. Many of the new high-yield varieties of grains have lower protein content than varieties grown before the Green Revolution.
6. Research is now concentrating on developing and testing grain varieties with higher protein content as well as possible additives to enrich the present varieties.
7. The population of the world is growing by about 82 million people each year.
8. The use of improved seed varieties, water control, more fertilizer, and disease and pest controls have together brought about sharp increases in grain production around the world.
9. A map of the cultivated land on the planet shows Eastern and Central United States, Western Canada, Europe, India and China to be the major cropland areas; the best, by far, are those of the mid-western US.
10. Most countries are running out of land that can be converted to cropland.
11. Land not under cultivation will require immense inputs of money for clearing, irrigation, and fertilization to make it productive.
12. Much productive land is used for non-nutritive crops (cash crops) such as tobacco and coffee.
13. The food that is annually lost in India to pests, poor storage, and poor transportation could feed 50 million people.
14. Less than 5% of the soils of the tropics are potentially fertile cropland.
15. Some poor families in Canada report having to buy pet food as a source of protein at least once.
16. The popularity of a vegetarian lifestyle continues to grow in Canada and the US.
17. Topsoil naturally accumulates at a very slow rate.
18. About 1/4 of the world's total grain is fed to livestock.
19. Since 1950, world cereal production has more than doubled.
20. As the world population continues to grow, the amount of cropland per capita will decrease.
21. In Asia, an estimated 82% of potential cropland is already under production.
22. Cropland expansion will most likely come at the expense of rangeland, forests, wetlands, and other areas that are both economically important and ecologically fragile.
23. The number of calories available per person rose from 2000 per day in 1950 to 2500 per day in 2001.
24. There is a growing trend among small farmers to reduce their use of chemicals and adopt alternative farming practices that are both economically and environmentally beneficial.
25. Average worldwide marine catch increased 400% from 1950 to 1990 but has been flat or declining since then.
26. Waterlogging and salinity are lowering productivity of one quarter of the world's irrigated cropland.
27. Each year, farmers lose an estimated 24 billion tons of topsoil from their cropland in excess of new soil formation.
28. Many widely used pesticides and herbicides are toxic. The runoff of these chemicals can contaminate groundwater and endanger wildlife.
29. Enough grain is currently grown worldwide to feed six billion people on a vegetarian diet.