

## Heart for the Poor Food Security

New Zealand recorded its first annual trade surplus in nearly eight years in the year to April, Statistics New Zealand (SNZ) says. The main contributors to the rise in exports have been in milk powder, logs, cheese, butter and meat. Imports were slightly down with consumption goods such as textiles and clothing figuring in the drop. The surplus amounted to \$656m. Farmers all over the country will be thankful for the recent rain as their farms kick into normal production. Even our vegetable garden is looking better than it has for a while. Every night I get sent out in the dark with my very fashionable head lamp to search for herbs, salad things and whatever is in season. These days I return with hands full where as a month ago I had to apologise to each plant for pulling leaves off them when they were so thirsty.

Regular listeners to this slot will have heard me say “we in NZ take for granted...” this or that almost every week. The ability for NZ to produce a food surplus is really a blessing that many all over the planet do not enjoy. It is for most of us inconceivable that we might face uncertainty as to whether there will be enough food around to feed our children tomorrow. When was the last time that you felt really hungry? And I don't mean right now 3 or 4 hours after lunch with dinner still some time away.

I have met mothers who have overcome the acute embarrassment of admitting they cannot provide for their families telling me about the shame and anxiety of seeing their children hungry and not knowing what to do about it. The reasons such mothers are in this dilemma are many and varied. Lack of water for irrigation, fertiliser, animals to pull ploughs, unstable political environments to name a few.

The challenge when talking about hunger is that it is almost always the result of poverty. It is hard to talk about poverty without colliding with issues of wealth and injustice like icebergs in the dark. Isaiah could not have put God's position more succinctly:

### **Isaiah 58:6-7 (The Message)**

<sup>6-9</sup>“This is the kind of fast day I'm after:  
to break the chains of injustice,  
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,  
free the oppressed,  
cancel debts.

What I'm interested in seeing you do is:  
sharing your food with the hungry,  
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,  
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,  
being available to your own families.

Do this and the lights will turn on,  
and your lives will turn around at once.

Your righteousness will pave your way.

The God of glory will secure your passage.

Then when you pray, God will answer.

You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.'

According to an excellent bible study I have been looking at called “The fast that I choose” that can be downloaded from <http://www.endhunger.org/study> current world production of food means there is around 1kg available for every person on the planet per day, that is more than enough. So if there is enough, why do people go hungry? The writers suggest “because we allow this situation to

occur". I guess I am not too concerned whether one takes a justice approach (advocating to governments or the powerful for structural changes that allow hunger) or a mercy approach (feeding the hungry), my suggestion is that we should do something.

TEAR Fund is supporting the work of the African Cooperative Action Trust in Sth Africa to provide microloans and training to communities in sustainable home gardens to establish food security, budgeting, life skills and finally discipleship and bible distribution. I can recommend this project to you. On the local scene, starting your own vege garden is not hard. It can be done even in buckets. Our small garden at home has provided me with a fresh salad in my lunch every day and herbs and greens for dinners for the past two years. I am coming across more and more people who are giving away veges from their home gardens or starting community gardens.

Prayer: Father God if we accept there is enough food to feed everyone, how can we accept that nearly 1 billion people go to bed hungry each night? Inspire in ways to do something about this. Amen.