



Drumbeat: December 27, 2010

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[Could Acacia trees solve Africa's hunger problems?](#)

Mr. Cunningham is frustrated by aid organizations, both faith-based and NGOs, who continue to offer a band-aid approach, handing out food aid but doing little to change the underlying conditions of poverty. Why not put that money and energy into solving the region's agricultural problems? The agronomic answers are out there, Cunningham believes, but they will not be found by using genetically modified "miracle" seeds, petro-fertilizers, pesticides, and other so-called Green Revolution practices. Rather, they must start with agroecological and organic farming practices.

Using what he learned from Niger farmers, Cunningham sought an agroecological approach that would be both regionally adapted and culturally specific. That meant starting with the Sahel's original ecosystem. "In zones where God created the ecosystem as a savannah – trees, grasses, and herbs – then we should follow that pattern with trees. If large areas of productive land once had trees and were cleared, then we should go back to having trees with annual crops inter-planted between them," Cunningham told me.

[More farmers' markets expand to year-round](#)

A growing number of farmers' markets are extending their operation into and through the winter months – even in cold-weather states like Massachusetts. The expansion comes as more farmers are prolonging their growing seasons with greenhouses and other methods. It's also fueled by an increased number of people who aim to eat locally produced food year-round.

[Consumers' holiday splurge may be just that](#)

Consumers hit stores in droves this year and are feeling better about their futures. But they still confront bleak job prospects and still are trying to pay down their hefty debt loads.

That sets the stage for a "spending diet" come January, which could weigh on U.S. economic growth, since consumer spending accounts for 70 percent of the U.S. economy. If gasoline prices – back above \$3 a gallon this week even before crude oil hit two-year year highs – continue to rise in 2011, the spending squeeze could be even steeper.

[Has innovation hit a brick wall?](#)

“Current and projected rates of innovation might not be sufficient to improve or even maintain living standards in the face of still rapidly growing population, global warming, and other challenges of the 21st century,” Prof. Brander writes.

His thesis is relatively simple. Look around at all the things you depend upon to live and to work. Prof. Brander argues that all the big ideas are already out there.

Innovation is literally hitting a wall, of physical and biological limits. Larger and larger investments are netting increasingly modest and incremental gains. We’ve all been living off the fruits of what our parents and grandparents achieved.

[Ex Shell president sees \\$5 gas in 2012](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- The former president of Shell Oil, John Hofmeister, says Americans could be paying \$5 for a gallon of gasoline by 2012.

In an interview with Platt's Energy Week television, Hofmeister predicted gasoline prices will spike as the global demand for oil increases.

[Brazil eyes energy and farms for future emission cuts](#)

RIO DE JANEIRO - After winning global praise for protecting its Amazon forests, Brazil now faces another tricky obstacle to cutting its carbon emissions -- the gases produced by its booming economy.

International pressure for reductions to slash-and-burn deforestation led Brazil to cut illegal Amazon logging by 34 percent from 2004 to 2009, making it one of the few nations at climate talks in Cancun to show progress against global warming.

But with its farm belt fast becoming the bread basket to the world and its free-spending consumers spurring greater use of fossil fuels, Brazil will not be able to depend on simply Amazon protection to become a low-carbon economy.

[Harsh realities on the flip side of Iranian reform](#)

Imagine pulling into a petrol station and finding that the cost of filling your tank has quadrupled overnight. At the supermarket, wheat, rice, cooking oil, milk, sugar and other essentials have soared in price. Then you go home and your electricity bill is three times higher. You call for a new bottle of cooking gas - it is five times more expensive.

That was the reality that Iranians woke up to on December 19. The last time petrol prices were raised, in 2007, there were riots. This time, in a re-run of the repression following the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president, Tehran was flooded

with police who watched carefully for any signs of unrest.

A reform of Iran's subsidy system was long overdue. Below-market prices for motor fuel, cooking gas, electricity, water and basic food items cost the country a third of its GDP. Subsidies fuelled rampant consumption: Iran is, remarkably, the world's third-largest user of natural gas, after the US and Russia, despite a much smaller population and economy.

[Gas taxes being hiked in Oregon](#)

NEW YORK (CNMoney.com) -- Oregon drivers may get an unpleasant shock when they pull up to the pump in the new year.

Drivers there are already paying an average of \$3.06 per gallon, but in the new year the state Department of Transportation is hiking the gas tax by 6 cents. That will bring the state tax to 30 cents per gallon.

Taxpayers in the rest of the nation, however, can breathe a sign of relief. Oregon's gas tax increase is one of the few hikes taking place on Jan. 1.

[Pemex to Invest 550 Million Pesos in Pipelines, Economista Says](#)

Petroleos Mexicanos, Latin America's largest oil producer, may invest 550 million pesos (\$44.5 million) to strengthen its oil pipeline monitoring system in order to avoid theft and accidents, El Economista said.

[China: a record increase in oil demand](#)

Demand for oil in China has increased at a record pace in 2010, as it jumped to about 8.64 million barrels per day in the period between the beginning of the year and the end of November, or by 7.1 percent relative to the same period in 2009. Increases in demand recorded their highest rates back in November, when monthly consumption levels reached around 9.3 million barrels per day, or an 8.9 percent increase relative to November 2009. This took place in spite of the four different tax increases imposed in 2010 on gasoline and other types of transport fuels, the most recent of which was the four percent tax increase passed on December 22.

[Power, gas outages return](#)

LAHORE - PEOPLE are facing the worst-ever energy crisis in the form of abrupt and prolonged electricity and gas outages despite tall claims of the authorities about improvement in the situation.

[US missiles hit Pakistan borderlands killing 18](#)

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Pakistan – Suspected U.S. missiles struck two vehicles in a Taliban stronghold on Pakistan's side of the border with Afghanistan on Monday, killing 18 alleged militants, Pakistani intelligence officials said.

The attack in the North Waziristan tribal region came in the final days of a year that has witnessed an unprecedented number of such strikes from drone aircraft flying over Pakistani soil, part of a ramped-up U.S. campaign to take out al-Qaida and Taliban fighters seeking sanctuary outside Afghanistan.

[Panel challenges Gulf seafood safety all-clear](#)

A New Orleans law firm is challenging government assurances that Gulf Coast seafood is safe to eat in the wake of the BP oil spill, saying it poses “a significant danger to public health.”

It's a high-stakes tug-of-war that will almost certainly end up in the courts, with two armies of scientists arguing over technical findings that could have real-world impact for seafood consumers and producers.

[Australia: Excise cut may leave ethanol in a pickle](#)

SHORT of retroactive taxes, business hates nothing more than mandates.

Free-market proponents argue fiercely that they do nothing but distort the delicate supply and demand balance. It is the policy equivalent of being forced to eat your greens despite wanting fast food.

[Copper pipe thefts more dangerous when natural gas is involved](#)

Many of the copper pipe thefts that have become a problem in the area have involved cutting into copper water lines in homes, but now there is a new wrinkle.

Columbia Gas of Maryland is asking people to be vigilant because there have been cases of thieves cutting pipes carrying natural gas.

[New Zealand: Summer school offers survival skills](#)

Concerned about peak oil and climate change? So is Oamaru's Natural Heritage Society.

It has taken a pro-active approach to raise awareness of the issue by encouraging people to learn new skills to ensure they can function when readily available oil and its products become increasingly scarce.

[Jamaica: Energy Future \(Part I\)](#)

For reasons and developments that I shall discuss in this two-part series, developments in nuclear-energy technology have made it possible that it can play a central role in Jamaica's sustainable energy future and national energy security.

[Ford to extend gas-saving feature](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- In a move to boost fuel economy, Ford Motor Co. said Monday it will add an Auto Start-Stop system that shuts off the engine when a vehicle comes to a stop. The automaker said the feature will be added to its conventional cars, crossovers and SUVs in North America.

Ford's statement said that the feature is expected to boost fuel economy by between 4% and 10%, and eliminate tailpipe emissions while the vehicle is stationary.

[Rare earth metals mine is key to US control over hi-tech future](#)

It's a deep pit in the Mojave desert. But it could hold the key to America challenging China's technological domination of the 21st century.

At the bottom of the vast site, beneath 6 metres (20ft) of bright emerald-green water, runs a rich seam of ores that are hardly household names but are rapidly emerging as the building blocks of the hi-tech future.

[The Dump](#)

San Francisco diverts 77 percent of its waste, the best landfill-avoidance rate for any large city in the United States. The goal for 2020 is zero waste. The 3-Bin Recycling Program started in July 1997.

[Ultimate electric car challenge: Dead batteries](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- We've all had to get rid of spent lithium-ion batteries from laptops and cell phones so it's natural to worry about the ones in electric cars.

Won't those eventually have to be disposed of, too? Are they just going to sit rotting in land fills fouling the environment?

[Back to the future](#)

Imagine reducing emissions by 80 per cent. It seems huge and daunting without a technological revolution. But imagine achieving that target just by turning the clock back to the time when emissions were still at that level. For example, how far back would you have to go to reduce by 80 per cent the amount that British people fly?

1972. Yes, 1972. It really isn't so long ago – and if it does seem a long time, consider that to halve flights you only have to go back to 1993.

[A Battle Over Uranium Bodes Ill for U.S. Debate](#)

NATURITA, Colo. — The future of nuclear power in America is back on the table, with all its vast implications, as global warming revives the search for energy sources that produce less greenhouse gas.

But in this depressed corner of western Colorado — one of the first places in the world that uranium, nuclear energy's primary fuel, was ever dug from the ground in industrial scale — the debate is both simpler and more complicated. A proposal for a new mill to process uranium ore, which would lead to the opening of long-shuttered mines in Colorado and Utah, has brought global and local concerns into collision — jobs, health, class-consciousness and historical memory among them — in ways that suggest, if the pattern here holds, a bitter national debate to come.

[Oil Trades Near 26-Month High on China Growth Speculation, U.S. Stockpiles](#)

Oil fell from a two-year high in New York amid concern that China's second interest-rate increase since October may slow economic growth in the world's biggest energy consumer.

Futures snapped a five-day rising streak after the People's Bank of China boosted benchmark one-year lending and deposit rates by 25 basis points Dec. 25 to tackle the fastest inflation in more than two years. Oil advanced earlier as temperatures fell and storms blanketed the eastern U.S. with snow, raising demand for heating fuels.

[EIA Forecasts More Shale Gas Resources And Greater Use](#)

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) released its Annual Energy Outlook 2011 (AEO2011) Early Release Overview last week that dramatically increased its estimate of technically recoverable unproved shale gas resources and raised its forecast of the amount of natural gas to be consumed in the future. Neither of these changes to their annual forecast is a great surprise given ongoing industry trends, but what may be somewhat of a surprise is the smaller increase in gas shale resources compared to the 2009 forecast from the Potential Gas Committee at the Colorado School of Mines.

[Iraq's Oil Production Reaches Highest in 20 Years to 2.6 Million Barrels](#)

Iraq's oil production exceeded 2.6 million barrels a day for the first time in 20 years, newly appointed Oil Minister Abdul Kareem al-Luaibi said at a press conference in Baghdad.

The rising output will boost Iraq's oil exports by 5 percent to 2 million barrels a day next month, Falah al-Amri, head of the country's State Oil Marketing Organization, said today in an interview in Baghdad. The nation sells about 60 percent of supplies to India, China and other Asian countries where demand is increasing, he said

[The World's Real Oil Problem](#)

Oil plays a role in the world economy that's far more important than any other commodity, so when I'm in a mood to worry I worry about oil prices. I don't know if we've hit peak oil, but we have reached the point at which the growth of supply has reached the point where it can barely keep up with growing demand in a normal economy.

[ATP eyes Israeli gas play](#)

Houston-based ATP Oil & Gas may enter Israel's offshore gas play, according to reports.

Israeli financial daily Globes reported that the company is looking to take a 33% slice of the Mira and Sarah licences and 50% of the Daniel and Shimshon licences .

[Saudi Electricity's Clients to Increase to 7.9 Million by the End of 2016](#)

Saudi Electricity Co., a state- controlled utility, expects to have a customer base of 7.9 million by the end of 2016 as it seeks to meet rising demand for power in the Persian Gulf's largest Arab country by population.

The utility expects to add 309,000 new customers next year and 1.79 million between 2011 and 2016, the company announced in a statement to the Saudi bourse website today.

[Libya wants larger slice of energy pie](#)

TRIPOLI, Libya (UPI) -- The Libyan government aims to position the country as an important energy player while exploring renewable energy at home, a panel said.

[Kazakhstan moves to extend president's rule](#)

Kazakhstan moved on Monday to extend the reign of President Nursultan Nazarbayev for another ten years without re-election, imperilling hopes of a transition to democracy in the oil-rich former Soviet state.

[Khodorkovsky Found Guilty in Trial, Lawyers Say](#)

A Moscow judge found Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the jailed former head of Yukos Oil Co., guilty of stealing crude from the company during a six-year period, his lawyers said.

[Venezuela ex-president Perez dies in Miami: daughter](#)

CARACAS (AFP) – Former Venezuelan president Carlos Andres Perez, who nationalized the oil industry and then survived a coup attempt by future leader Hugo Chavez, has died in Miami, his daughter told local media.

As a two-term president, Perez led Venezuela through rising fortunes as well as deeply turbulent times -- including the country's worst-ever riots that left hundreds dead in 1989 after he initiated economic reforms -- and eventually was driven out of office on corruption allegations.

[Gulf casino workers' claims denied for BP funds](#)

BILOXI, Miss. — When Brad McDonald saw the robust tips he usually earns as a dealer on blackjack and craps tables dip abruptly last summer, he did what scores of other Gulf Coast workers have done in the wake of the BP oil spill: He applied for an emergency payout from the oil company's compensation fund.

No dice, he was told. The claim was denied by the Gulf Coast Claims Facility, the agency doling out the \$20 billion in BP's compensation fund to victims of the spill.

[Arch, Peabody seek coal exporting deals to Asia](#)

WRIGHT, Wyo. • From atop the 25-story coal silo overlooking Arch Coal Inc.'s Black Thunder mine in northeast Wyoming, a seemingly endless string of rail cars stretches into the horizon.

More than 20 trains arrive a day, each a mile and a half long. One by one, they snake around a loop where more than 120 hopper cars are topped off with dusty, black rock.

Almost every bit of coal that leaves is headed east, where the vast majority of the nation's 1,000-plus fiery coal boilers await their next feeding. But trains could soon start heading west — to dump their cargo on ships headed to the Far East. Miners here in the coal-rich Powder River Basin, the self-proclaimed energy capital of America, have plans to tap the Mother of All Energy Users: China.

[Nuclear power plant application filed to UAE regulator](#)

Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC), the company in charge of the UAE's plan to develop reactors, has filed a 9,000-page construction application to the Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation.

The application, for the first two reactor units of the project, is the result of a year of planning and preparation demonstrating the safety case for the country's first power plants, to be situated in Braka, in the Al Gharbia region.

[Floods Swamp Australia After Cyclone Hits](#)

Coal mines have been flooded and some producers have declared "force majeure" - indicating to their buyers that they may not be able to meet targets as originally agreed for reasons beyond their control.

[Japan greenhouse gas emissions fall 5.7 percent in 09/10](#)

Japan's greenhouse gas emissions fell 5.7 percent to 1.209 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent in the past financial year, a second straight year of decline due to weakness in the global economy, preliminary data showed.

[Small Beetles Massacre The Rockies' Whitebark Pines](#)

The Whitebark pine trees in the high-elevation areas of America's Northern Rockies have stood for centuries. But these formerly lush evergreen forests are disappearing at an alarmingly fast rate; what remains are eerie stands of red and gray snags.

Warmer climates have sparked an outbreak of a voracious mountain pine beetle that is having devastating consequences for whitebarks and the wildlife that depend on them.



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