

How to Beat Coming Killer Food Shortages

By Holly Deyo

PREFACE: Only a small space is required to grow most fruits and veggies for a family. So, Stan and I will scamper over to our local garden center this week and for additional organic compost to augment our Super Soil and get those growies growing! By the end of Summer our own compost piles should be ready to sustain the gardens hereafter. It just takes a little while to get there.

Sunday, we planned out this year's garden – including more than usual. Definitely making time for canning this year. Had the equipment, not the time. Since warmth – and dry (drat!) – are coming early this year to the West, Southwest and Southeast, it's important to get our garden ready in February and seedlings sprouted and sunk in the ground by late March instead of late April – a full month ahead of normal. The most time-consuming aspect will be getting the Super Soil pre-warmed as described in Garden Gold, which will only require a couple hours, so plants get a head start and beat this Summer's killing heat.

These NOAA maps show the probability of temperatures exceeding the norm, so roughly 1/3 of the Country can get their veggies and fruits in early. Unfortunately, as the year progresses, a bunch of us will be sweating bullets living in tank tops and shorts.

It's weird that after this blisteringly bitter cold winter, we have to think in terms of excessive heat, but that's what extreme climate change is about and something Stan and I have warned would descend since 1995. Now that it's here, everyone must act with forethought and planning. With what's coming, every day counts.

TAN DROUGHT KILLING THE GOLDEN STATE



Government has lost its mind. It is no more evident than their decision last week to cut off water to America's food basket. Squeezed by the worst-ever drought in the state's history, California is dying of thirst. Crushing news was delivered to farmer's that no water would be coming from the Federal government. This dreaded decision was compounded by the Sierra Mountains getting just 25% of normal snowpack. There is no water to replenish already dangerously low reservoirs, so no water for farmers.

Photo: A pipe emerges from dried and cracked earth that used to be the bottom of the Almaden Reservoir on January 28, 2014 in San Jose, California. Now in its third straight year of drought conditions, California is experiencing its driest year on record, dating back 119 years, and reservoirs throughout the state have low water levels. Santa Clara County reservoirs are at 3% of capacity or lower. (Justin Sullivan, Getty Images)

Despite recent storms, it's done nothing to alleviate the staggering dryness. California needs snow. Desperately. Down bursts can't soak into parched, concrete-like soil so it rolls off, unused, into sewers and drainage ditches. Snowpack melts slowly and is easily funneled into reservoirs and sinks into land and eventually groundwater basins.

Gov. Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency 5 weeks ago and conditions have worsened since.

Farmers who thought this might be coming delayed planting crops. Some have given up altogether. Even late harvests, where possible, would be better than wasting the cost of fuel to run equipment, paying farm workers to work dying fields, paying for seeds that likely won't survive summer – and have it all come to nothing. Over half a million acres won't even be planted.

Not that anyone wants a business penalized, but golf courses will be allowed to waste water in the most extravagant method possible. What would you rather have: food on the table or 225,000 acres of lush golf links? The amount of water required to keep them verdant is staggering. Residential customers are already being warned to conserve and some cities have passed mandatory water restrictions. The San Francisco Chronicle reports that 17 communities are at risk of running dry.

Image: It's clear from the image below that regions of California worst hit and in danger of running out of water are the prime food growing areas.

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITIES RUNNING OUT OF WATER

State officials say these communities and water districts could run out of water in 80 days



We saw this same scenario play out in Beulah, Colorado in 2002 – the year after Stan warned the Pine Drive Water District, they needed vastly more water storage. They didn't listen. The very next year when residents turned on their faucets, literally not a drop dripped. So dire was the situation, it made national news. It was a shock to have literally no water available.

Huge white plastic water storage tanks were hastily set up in front yards and water was trucked in weekly from Pueblo. Wells went completely dry and livestock were reluctantly sold off. It was either that or watch them die.

The next Spring when Stan and I drove around Beulah, the wildlife took your breath. Most telling were larger animals. Baby deer that survived were unbelievably scrawny. Their mothers' ribs stuck out of their backs and sides from patchy coats like awkward jagged tree branches. Their faces were unhealthily gaunt, lit by haunted eyes. It was heartbreaking.

That was one small mountain community. Now we're talking about an entire state facing extreme conditions. Heaven help them in the 2014 fire season, which for Californians, began January.

PROMISES, PROMISES

Last week the president promised \$100 million in livestock-disaster aid, but that doesn't make water fall from the sky. This is less than a pittance when livestock and poultry alone gross nearly \$10 billion in California.¹ Instead farmers, like Beulah residents, will be forced to sell their animals. This is a calamity. We're not talking about a few hundred

head. On average, when drought conditions hammer down, like those in Texas a couple years ago, it takes at least 3 years to rebuild herds. This means further rising beef prices that we Americans are already experiencing. Just wait, it will get worse. I warned in 2010 what the Texas drought would do to beef prices in the next few coming years, and this story bears it out: Ground Beef Prices Have Skyrocketed, Here's Why. The article warns to expect steak to double.

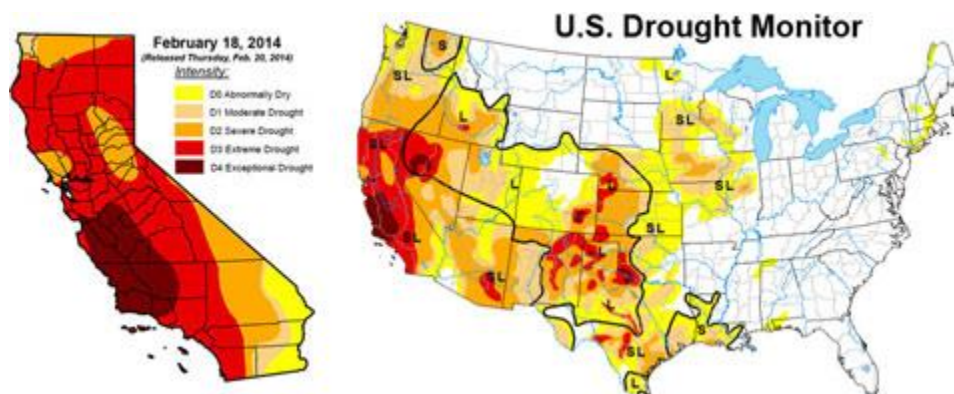
Three weeks ago news agencies reported that beef herds are the smallest since 1951 – and this didn't factor in what will surely be a massive cattle sell-off in the Golden State.

Other crops feel it too. "Retail prices for tomatoes rose 10% in the 12 months through Jan. 31, and U.S. retail prices for beef, bacon, lettuce and broccoli have also risen at least 10% last year."² This hike came before farmers found out they won't be getting water for crops and 8 million California farmland acres depend on federal and state irrigation.

MEGA-DROUGHT, MEGA-DISASTER

In a stunning report from Time Magazine, Bryan Walsh writes that scientists fear California's dryness "could get much, much worse" bringing back the horrible era of mega-droughts. "These mega-droughts aren't predictions. They're history, albeit from a time well before California was the land of Hollywood and Silicon Valley. And the thought that California and the rest of the modern West might have developed during what could turn out to be an unusually wet period is sobering. In 1930, a year before construction began on the Hoover Dam, just 5.6 million people lived in California. Today more than 38.2 million live in the largest state in the U.S., all of whom need water. California's 80,500 farms and ranches produced crops and livestock worth \$44.7 billion in 2012, but dry farming districts like the Central and Imperial Valleys would wither without irrigation."³

Image: According to the Drought Monitor, 91% of California is in Severe to Exceptional Drought. For comparison, the rest of CONUS looks much better except Nevada and they don't grow much of anything.



SQUEEZE PLAY

As one Millennium-Ark reader pointed out in an email last week, after the jump in beef prices, people will look to chicken, pork, fish and turkey. Chicken is already up though not

as much as beef. This will, in turn, drive up their costs and affect availability of these other meats. Keep in mind that California also produces all of these proteins plus lamb. Then consider this: Ag Specialists Warn of Higher Wheat Prices Due to Drought. It's not just beef, weather is clobbering food from all angles. Rising Threat to Crops from Climate underscores it.

Not to be totally depressing, but remember to factor in possible health issues from the Corexit ridden fish and seafood in the Gulf courtesy of BP's Deepwater Horizon debacle. Then there's Fukushima Daiichi's radiation affecting fish all up and down the West Coast.

Food production is not a national only issue. We export food around the world. In the grain arena, so does Argentina, Australia, Canada, the EU with India, Pakistan, Thailand, the U.S. and Viet Nam contributing to world rice production. Every – single – country is being hit with flood, heatwaves or drought.

Friends, serious climate issues are clobbering beef, grain, fruit and veggies – nearly all food – with unpleasant trickle-down repercussions coming. At this point, it doesn't matter if it's caused by geo-engineering, climate change (aka global warming), natural cycles or Sun-driven events. We must deal with the fallout and it's coming fast.

If you think the beef and grain scenario is bad, check what's happening in the fruit and veggie department.

CALIFORNIA'S GOLDEN BREAD BASKET

California grows half, HALF of America's produce. Another 13% is exported⁴ around the world. California's yearly produce is valued at more than \$45 billion⁵. In the list below, out of some 400 different foods it grows for our Nation, California leads production for 79 of them. Out of these 79, California grows ALL of 14 crops (in bold). Keep in mind, this list is only 79 out of some 400 foods including sugar beets, mushrooms, oats, potatoes, cucumbers and many more.

Now scroll down to one very important item in the 4th column – Greenhouse Vegetables. These are the nicely potted vegetable, fruit and herb seedlings people purchase every year at building materials centers and nurseries around the Country. These are now at risk.

Crop and Livestock Commodities in Which California Leads the Nation ⁶			
Almonds	Escarole/Endive	Mandarins & Mandarin Hybrids	Plums
Apricots	Figs	Melons, Cantaloupe	Plums, Dried
Artichokes	Flowers, Bulbs	Melons, Honeydew	Puots
Asparagus	Flowers, Cut	Milk	Pomegranates
Avocados	Flowers, Potted Plants	Milk Goats	Raspberries
Beans, Dry Lima	Garlic	Nectarines	Rice, Sweet
Beans, Fresh Market Snap	Grapes, Raisins	Nursery, Bedding Plants	Safflower
Bedding/Garden Plants	Grapes, Table	Nursery Crops	Seed, Alfalfa
Broccoli	Grapes, Wine	Olives	Seed, Bermuda Grass
Brussels Sprouts	Greens, Mustard	Onions, Dry	Seed, Ladino Clover
Cabbage, Chinese	Hay, Alfalfa	Onions, Green	Seed, Vegetable and Flower
Cabbage, Fresh Market	Herbs	Parsley	Spinach
Carrots	Kale	Peaches, Clingstone	Strawberries
Cauliflower	Kiwifruit	Peaches, Freestone	Tomatoes, Fresh Market
Celery	Kumquats	Pears, Bartlett	Tomatoes, Processing
Chicory	Lemons	Peppers, Chile	Vegetables, Greenhouse **
Cotton, American Pima	Lettuce, Head	Peppers, Bell	Vegetables, Oriental
Daikon	Lettuce, Leaf	Persimmons	Walnuts
Dates	Lettuce, Romaine	Pigeons and Squabs	Wild Rice
Eggplant	Limes	Pistachios	

California is the sole producer (99% or more) of foods and commodities in bold

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, START YOUR SEEDS!

People who have never grown their garden plants from seed think it's hard and jet down to retailers to buy what they want to grow. There's nothing wrong with this; we've done it too. However, it is so much more economical – and fun – and easy – to start your own plants from seed.

For those who are interested in starting their seedlings this year, here are some practical reasons.

- 1) Most retailers don't offer non-hybrid, non-GMO, open-pollinated and heirloom plants.
- 2) It saves a bunch of money in the long run.
- 3) Allows a head start on the growing season. Retailers normally have their veggies and fruits for sale on a predictable timetable not taking into account yearly climatic differences. It's possible to lose weeks in the growing season.
- 4) Get what you want. Last spring, some plants we wanted, like romaine, NuMex chilies and red lettuce, sold out early. Due to the economy, some veggies were completely unavailable as they only stocked the most popular. Additionally, we noticed that Lowe's and Home Depot didn't carry as extensive a variety as they normally do.
- 5) Avoid greenhouse-borne diseases.
- 6) This is a fun project for kids and grandkids – a good educational tool so they see how plants make food from seed to table.

Assuming you see the need to get busy, this is the set-up we use.

Photo: From top left, clockwise: seed tray bottom, lights set into the plastic dome cover, seed tray, heating mat.



Seeds don't need sunlight to sprout, but do need warmth around the clock. We set the Seedling Heat Mat on a 1" piece of Styrofoam. The foam both protects the tabletop and keeps the warmth from escaping out the bottom. The heat mat keeps the soil temperature consistent and 10-20 degrees warmer over room temperature air. They're relatively inexpensive and really improve germination and seedling growth.

The bottom tray goes on top of the mat with the little seedling plastic pots set inside. Depending on how many seedlings are needed, it's more economical to do these plastic pots in a sheet than peat pots. It's cleanable and reusable. If you're only going to start 20 or so plants, then peat pots save washing it out.

The Seedling Heat Mat (9" x 19-1/2") and lights are extra. Mats are about \$20 and grow lights are about \$21 each, but vary widely in price depending on retailer.

Then the clear plastic greenhouse dome cover sits on top with its edges resting on the sides of the bottom tray. Stan puts aluminum foil between the dome and the metal so it doesn't turn the plastic an ugly yellow-brown. The yellowing problem we found out the hard way and ruined one dome. No place mentions this tip – and others – except in Garden Gold.

It's important to get a greenhouse that has a high enough dome cover. Some kits' covers are only about 2" or 3" tall. We use the Mondri 7" dome (7-1/2" H x 11" W x 21-1/4" L) that sells for \$4.60 and fits the 1020 tray. As the seedlings grow, if the lights become too close, they can burn tender leaves and suck the life out of tiny plants. Stan has even put in a set of 2" or 3" risers at each end between the dome and the bottom tray if the seedlings grew too tall. Risers can be made out of anything that's not too heavy, just strong enough to support the dome and not break the bottom tray's lip. The 1020 Tray runs \$1.40 and the 72-cell propagation tray that fits perfectly inside is \$9 for 10.

Photo: This is how it looks assembled – all ready for 72 seedlings waiting fill your food needs!



Some seed starter kits come without the plastic tops, but you need the dome to both hold the lights and keep moisture in. On top are two circles for moisture control. They can be opened or closed as needed.

Simply setting planted seeds in a window won't provide enough light once the seedlings sprout. Plus, windows can get transmit cold, which can either delay or stop germination altogether and defeats the purpose of the heat mat.

Stan cut holes in the ends toward the top of the greenhouse dome and inserted 4 grow lights that are 2 feet long. We use Sun Blaster F24T5 24W HO lights. If you're looking on-line for the best price, they are normally listed as "Sun Blaster T5 HO". Gave a cursory look and the best price so far was at GroswersHouse.com: growershouse.com/sun-blaster-t5-ho-fluorescent-strip-light-2.

GETTING SEEDY

NOW is the time to purchase open pollinated, organic, non-genetically engineered seeds. When we ordered onion sets last week, I noticed there were already a few products on Seeds of Change that had sold out or were temporarily sold out. People are getting on the stick early this year!

You'll get further savings from companies that offer seed in bulk. This is a smart purchase for the foods you love. We did this several years ago and now have our own seed bank.

Here are 4 great resources – ones we use – for open pollinated, heirloom seeds:

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds – rareseeds.com

Fedco Seeds – fedcoseeds.com

John Scheepers Kitchen Garden Seeds – kitchengardenseeds.com

Seeds of Change – seedsofchange.com

If they don't have what you want, Garden Gold lists over 350 suppliers with their contact information and websites. You'll spend less time hunting for open-pollinated seeds and supplies, which leaves you more time to get your plants going.

NO COLORADO DOPE, JUST THE STRAIGHT SKINNY

I'm no mystic, but do see what's coming down. It will be hurtful – possibly signaling prophetic bells to remind of us of Revelation's 3rd Seal. ALL of our food is being squeezed one way or another. Just after I placed that short note Sunday on our website about getting the garden going, within 15 minutes a dozen people wrote saying they feel that same pressing urgency.

For many fruits and veggies, you can greatly lessen the pain at the grocery store simply by starting (or continuing) your home gardens. While community gardens and farmer's markets are preferable to depending on the grocery stores and getting 'robbed' at check out, it's best to have fruits and veggies right in your own yard. As they say with precious metals, if it's not in your hand you don't own it. You can harvest so much in such little space by using the ancient Chinese technique of bio-intensive growing described in Garden Gold. You will have produce running out your ears. There will be enough to can or sell depending on your family size. Whatever method of gardening you choose, get your beds ready soon.

Now for the beef and other proteins dilemma, if you have a spare freezer, it would behoove you to stock up now before prices shoot up further. You would easily be money ahead to purchase a freezer and stock that baby till it's ready to burst. Alternately, look at some freeze-dried meats. The last time we checked, the food price bump had not yet hit this industry. Why? Because they literally buy tons of meats at a time and process same until they nearly run out. Then they take the hit on food prices and pass it onto customers. However, we the grocery store consumer, feel every bump and tickle along the way. There is a window of opportunity here...

We caution you to buy from only reputable, long-established retailers. It's questionable for some smaller outfits where they got their foods, especially if they are a new name. One company is selling food that was around at least since 1998 and has been repackaged to look new. This is a smaller, lesser-known company so stay with the power names for best freshness: Mountain House, Alpine Aire, Thrive (Shelf Reliance). Read What They Don't Tell You About Storable Foods for more insight. Also check these reviews: Mountain House, Provident Pantry / Emergency Essentials, Shelf Reliance / Thrive, Wise, Efoods Direct.

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