The Exploitation Of Corn Essay, Research Paper

Any modern American would be hard-pressed to find a way to live without corn. Consider a typical day: You put on a cotton shirt which has fibers strengthened by cornstarch. The eggs you eat for breakfast were laid by a corn-fed chicken. At lunch you drink a cold cola sweetened with corn syrup. In the afternoon you read a book-the paper fibers are bound with corn starch to keep them together as they race through high speed presses. You drive home in a car powered, in part, by ethanol, a fuel derived from corn. When you get there, you feed your dog pet food containing corn meal. You mix yourself a Manhattan with bourbon distilled from corn. For dinner you eat a steak that was once a steer fattened on corn feed.You take out the garbage in a trash bag derived from corn. Finally, you brush your teeth with toothpaste containing traces of sorbitol, a sweet powder processed from corn to make the paste tasty. And that’s not all: Corn’s by-products turn up in such items such as glue, canned goods, shoe polish, fire works, lotions, crayons, ink, ice cream, batteries, marshmallows, mustard, aspirin, paint, and cosmetics. Through all the years of developing crops, corn has remained the grain of the Americas. It sustained the pioneers pushing westward. Today it nourishes millions of people in developing nations. The United States grows nearly half the world’s corn, which feeds most of the livestock here and in Japan and South Korea. With the annual harvest worth 40 billion dollars, corn grows in more countries than does any other crops. In the U.S. alone the annual value of the corn crop(20 billion dollars)exceeds that of wheat, oats, rice, rye, barley, and sorghum combined. Without corn, millions of people would starve, and the U.S. economy would falter. There some major drawbacks of such a mass production of corn. It was just announced over the last summer that Mexico is self sufficient in maize after twenty years. But in the mountainous rain forests this selfsufficiency is exacting an environmental price. Large ranches and agribusinesses have forced landless peasants onto fragile mountain slops. With no other recource, the peasants depend heavily on maize.

The farmers reliance on maize often puts them at odds with a government caught between either feeding its own people or saving the remaining forests. The peasants slash and burn the forests and sow small fields, or milpas. After the protective forest canopy is removed, torrential rains cut deep gullies, washing away top soil. Only dead, black tree stumps remain. I believe that blaming maize for deforestation and soil loss is far to simplistic. For more than 200 million people in developing nations in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, corn is their staple. Population pressure and poverty are the real culprits and small-scale corn production is the only chance for real survival for many Third World populations. THE END REFERENCES 1) Graves, William; June 1993. National Geographic. 1993 National Geographic society. Vol. 183, No.6 pg. 93-117