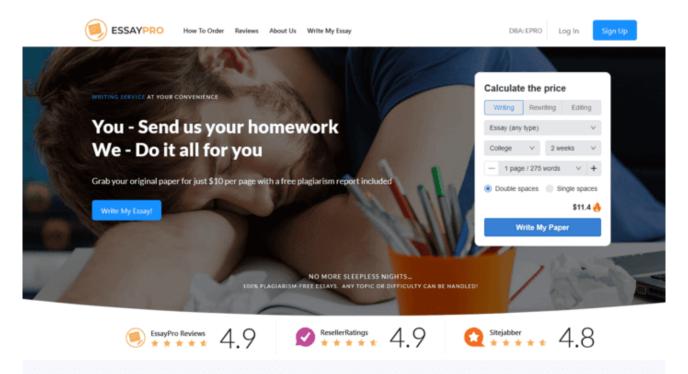
## **OXFAM's Global Reach**



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## **OXFAM's Global Reach**

"Consequences of the New Economy" was the theme for St. Olaf College's Globalization and Social Responsibility conference. The conference explored the social and economic effects of the globalization of capitalism. One of the speakers for this event was Raymond Offenheiser, a leader in international development and philanthropy, and president of OXFAM America. OXFAM America, an international nonprofit agency, is recognized for its human rights and national public education program on issues of hunger and injustice throughout the world. Offenheiser's lecture, OXFAM's Global Reach, addressed the increasing interdependence in global markets and its effects on agriculture, coffee, and fair trade.

World trade has the potential to reduce poverty, if poor people could sell their products at a reasonable price. However, the injustices of the world trade system are stopping them. Unfair trade agreements and agricultural subsides hinder efforts to reduce poverty in poor countries. In particular, farm and trade policies in the United States and the European Union are creating adversities for family farmers worldwide. The world's wealthy countries provide a substantial amount of money to support agriculture, enabling corporate and large-

scale farmers in these countries to grow more than is needed. The access is dumped on international markets, where it is sold for less than it costs to grow. This dumping drives down prices and destroys the livelihood of farmers in countries that do not subsidize farmers and are forced to open their markets to foreign commodities.

Unfair trade and farm policies that allow dumping are a major cause of poverty, since many poor communities rely on agriculture as a major source of income. If farmers can't sell their crops for a fair price, they must leave their lands, their families, and migrate in search of jobs. American cotton subsidies are a prime example of how US agriculture and trade policies worsen poverty in Africa. These American subsides have greatly reduced world cotton prices, generating losses to African producers. Although West African cotton farmers are more efficient, low-cost producers they cannot compete with the US producers' access to huge subsidies. Consequently, the cotton price crisis is contributing to the poverty for millions of African farmers. Unfortunately, farm and trade policies do not help most small farmers in the United States either. Low world prices are quickly forcing US family farmers out of business, while large-scale, corporate agriculture benefits from government payments.

The global coffee crisis is also creating hardships for families around the world.

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