

The great harvest hi-jack

A BBC news item

Commentator – Les K

Imagine a BBC world news event. Our news presenter this evening is at the news desk in our London Studio ...

News presenter – Frances K

Good evening. Our first news item today comes from the beautiful tropical island of St Lucia in the Caribbean where representatives from around the world are gathering for the first-ever Food Olympics. After the 2016 Olympics in Rio, and then the Paralympics, this is certainly a first for Food. The giant multi-nationals in the food and catering industry are laying on “Food Olympics 2016” - to showcase to the world the very best of the national dishes from around the globe. And we’re going over now to the first of our reports on the ground from our reporter, Stanley W. Good evening Stanley.

News Reporter - Stan W

Good evening to your viewers, though I should say it’s early afternoon here in St Lucia where we are 4 hours behind British time.

You are joining us at a time of great excitement for the island, because although this is a popular destination for up-market British holiday makers, there has never been anything just like this here before. And it is a mega event, believe me. Special chartered flights have been arriving from around the world for days now as the great and the famous gather for this gigantic food event. I guess you could call it the “Gastro-Olympics” – though the name probably wouldn’t go down very well with the organisers. The participants here are not athletes but food connoisseurs, chefs and CEOs from the catering industry. And I have to say they don’t look half so lean or mean as the Olympic teams in Rio!

The capital is bulging at the seams, almost literally, as tens of thousands descend on this idyllic island. Every hotel in this plush holiday resort is crammed full, and still they are arriving by the jet-load. The invited guests – limited to 50 per country - and then the huge support staff of several thousands. And added to that the many thousands of curious tourists who have come for the spectacle – and no doubt some of the gourmet food! Food Olympics will be beamed around the world of course by satellite TV to millions of viewers.

But now I understand the event is about to begin so we’ll take you over to our reporter within the mega arena specially built for the occasion. Our reporter is Vivien W

News Reporter - Viv W

Yes, hello Stanley and here we are in the main arena where the invited guests to this unique event are gathered and the President of the host nation along with the President of Food Olympics 2016 are about to start proceedings. There are tables as far as the eye can see, laden with every kind of national dish and all manner of special food creations piled high. It’s quite spectacular. No expense spared, and an eye-watering budget.

But I have to say in the last few minutes a major crisis has arisen ...

It appears that a small protest group has managed to penetrate the security system and enter the arena. They have been distributing leaflets and protesting loudly about the nations and peoples who have either not been invited or not been able to afford to attend. I'll see if I can get a copy of one of the leaflets but meanwhile just looking around the arena I can see that there are some big gaps where a good number of countries are not represented. In fact the number attending is far smaller than the organisers claimed ...

But here we are – I've just managed to get hold of one of the protest leaflets, so we can see what it's all about ... Scanning it quickly I see they claim that less than a third of the nations you would expect to attend are here ...

There are the obvious ones absent, like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan which are conflict zones ... Syria they say where nearly half a million have died in the war and 45 per cent of the population has been displaced

Then there's Iraq of course and the Yemen, still torn by terrible violence - 10s of thousands of refugees fleeing ...

Sudan where 25 per cent of the population is undernourished and hunger on the rise ...

Chad where they say where 33 per cent of the population is undernourished ...

To say nothing of the huge waves of refugees risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean, and the millions barely existing in the huge refugee camps in Jordan and Turkey ...

And here's Zimbabwe where, after years of disastrous misrule and now a terrible drought, over 4 million are in critical danger of starvation. A quarter of the population has already fled ...

I could go on through this long list but just end with this one – quoting the World Food Programme reports ... that worldwide over 870 million people are seriously hungry NOW as I speak – by a tragic irony 98 per cent of that figure living in developing countries which produce most of the world's food stocks ...

News Reporter - Stan W

Thank you Vivien In fact we are running out of time with this report, so we'll have to come back to this breaking story later. But just to say that in the last few minutes some chaotic scenes have been developing in the main arena. The organisers have not been able to restore calm or stop the protest. Not yet. Some of the guests are willing to listen to what the protestors are saying but others are angrily demanding they be expelled to allow the gourmet food event to continue ... So for now, from Stanley W in St Lucia it's back to the BBC news room in London ...

Commentator – Les K

We'll cut the broadcast at that point ... Certainly an unexpected turn of events there in St Lucia. Not at all what the organisers planned or hoped for. Raising the question whether Food Olympics 2016 will be able to continue.

What do you make of it all? Do you think the protestors have a valid point?