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Blaming Socialism, US Media Distorts Venezuela's Food Crisis

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The facts are clear — Venezuela does have a food crisis, but mainstream U.S. media always blames the socialist government.

Disgruntled customers, empty store shelves, long supermarket lines. These are the images that mainstream U.S. media typically feature in their coverage of Venezuela's ongoing food crisis.

These images are usually accompanied by sarcastic headlines like Forbes' "Venezuela Discovers the Perfect Weight Loss Diet" and the Cato Institute's "Hunger Is in Retreat, But Not in Socialist Venezuela."

U.S. media outlets publish stories blaming Venezuela's food crisis on the socialist government almost daily. Today isn't any different.

A new study released by researchers from three Venezuelan universities reported that nearly 75 percent of the population lost an average of 19 pounds in 2016 for lack of food. The report, titled, "2016 Living Conditions Survey," added that about 32.5 percent of Venezuelans eat only once or twice a day, compared to 11.3 percent last year.

Moreover, 93.3 percent told the researchers that their income was not enough to cover their food needs.

The facts are clear — Venezuela does have a food crisis. Mainstream U.S. media, however, blames the socialist government that has radically improved the country's standard of living instead of right-wing U.S.-backed opposition forces intentionally sabotaging the economy.

Since the early 2000s, supermarket owners affiliated with Venezuela's opposition have been purposefully hoarding food products so they can resell them at higher prices and make large profits. Food importing companies owned by the country's wealthy right-wing elite are also manipulating import figures to raise prices.

In 2013, former Venezuelan Central Bank chief Edmee Betancourt reported that the country lost between US\$15 and \$20 billion dollars the previous year through such fraudulent import deals.

It doesn't stop there.

Last year, over 750 opposition-controlled offshore companies linked to the Panama Papers scandal were accused of purposely redirecting Venezuelan imports of raw food materials from the government to the private sector. Many of these companies sell their products to private companies in Colombia, which resell them to Venezuelans living close to Colombia.

“Selling contraband is a serious problem. People here are taking large quantities of products meant for Venezuelans and selling them in Colombia,” Valencia resident Francisco Luzon told Al Jazeera in a 2014 interview.

Reuters admitted in 2014 that Venezuelan opposition members living in border states are shipping low-cost foodstuffs provided by the Venezuelan government into Colombia for profit.

Overall, Venezuela’s millionaire opposition are profiting handsomely from the country’s food crisis while blaming it on the socialist government that’s trying to eliminate it.