

Today's NY Times has two unusually interesting pieces, one on food and the other on oil. The [article](#) about food examines the difficulty of feeding an expanding and more affluent world population in the face of climate change:

A rising unease about the future of the world's food supply came through during interviews this year with more than 50 agricultural experts working in nine countries.

These experts say that in coming decades, farmers need to withstand whatever climate shocks come their way while roughly doubling the amount of food they produce to meet rising demand. And they need to do it while reducing the considerable environmental damage caused by the business of agriculture.

Carbon dioxide does have some ability to raise crop yields, which may offset some of the problems, but there are increasing questions about the extent of the offset. And quite apart from climate change, current projections are that the population will increase two billion by mid-century, with much of the increase in the poorer countries in Africa. Feeding this extra population will be a challenge, with or without climate change.

The other notable piece today is an [editorial](#) on fuel efficiency standards. The government is now considering strengthening the standards. Not surprisingly, the car industry is pushing for a modest strengthening, while the enviros want more. It sounds like there's a good economic case for the stronger standards:

Industry says cars will cost more. Federal studies say the most aggressive plan — 62 m.p.g. [by 2025] — would add \$2,800 to \$3,500 to the price of a car. They also show that the improved technology could deliver as much as \$9,700 in reduced gasoline bills over the life of the car. That sounds like a good deal for consumers, and the environment.

Consumers can spend the money they're saving on other things, increasing demand and creating jobs. Sounds like win-win for everyone except the shareholders in the auto and oil industries.