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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Human Geography

Field Note Awakening to World Hunger



Figure 1.1
Kericho, Kenya. Tea plantations established by British colonists in western Kenya. © H.J. de Blij.

Dragging myself out of bed for a 9:00 A.M. lecture, I decide I need to make a stop at Starbucks. "Grande coffee of the day, please, and leave room for cream." I rub my eyes and look at the sign to see where my coffee was grown. Kenya. Ironically, I am about to lecture on Kenya's coffee plantations. Just the wake-up call I need.

When I visited Kenya in eastern Africa, I drove from Masai Mara to Kericho and I noticed nearly all of the agricultural fields I could see were planted with coffee or tea (Fig. 1.1). I also saw the poor of Kenya, clearly hungry, living in substandard housing. I questioned, "Why do farmers in Kenya grow coffee and tea when they could grow food to feed the hungry?" Trying to answer such a question sheds light on the complexities of globalization. In a globalized world, connections are many and simple answers are few.