



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



16 October 2022

World Food Day



Better production, better nutrition,
a better environment and a better life.

THE HURDLES

Three years into the pandemic, two things have come into sharp relief. One is how interconnected our economies and lives are. The other is that on the road to recovery, too many people are being left behind and are unable to benefit equally from innovation and prosperity. Battered by conflict, economic crises, inequality, the climate crisis and rising food prices, today, 3.1 billion people around the world still cannot afford a healthy diet. Paradoxically, two out of three people living in extreme poverty live in rural settings and mostly rely on agriculture for their livelihood. In the face of a global hunger crisis, we need to harness the power of solidarity and collective action to build a sustainable world where everyone has regular access to enough nutritious food.





Global hunger at a new high

Hunger is still on the rise and affected as many as 828 million people in 2021 – an increase of about 46 million people since 2020 and 150 million since 2019. The situation is similar for crisis-level acute food insecurity, or sporadic, sudden crises that limit people's access to food in the short term to the point that their lives and livelihoods are at risk. In just two years, the number of acutely food insecure people has risen from 135 million to 193 million, and 2022 is likely to prove worse. Some 750 000 people are living in famine conditions in five countries (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen) – more than five times as many as in 2020 according to the FAO and WFP Hunger Hotspots report (June 2022).

In some parts of the world, people are dying from starvation and children are losing their chance of a healthy future due to severe malnutrition. Even mild to moderate malnutrition can increase a child's risk of dying from multiple causes and it has a lasting effect on physical and cognitive development. Together, these effects threaten to undo years of hard-fought development gains.

Conflict, economic slowdowns and downturns, the climate emergency and environmental degradation are major drivers of food insecurity and global hunger. So are the knock-on effects of COVID-19, which have disrupted supply chains and limited people's ability to earn a living.

The war in Ukraine has further exacerbated the situation by preventing access to staple grains from that region, one of the world's major breadbaskets, for major importing countries, and by increasing the cost of inputs, especially fertilizers, making them less affordable for farmers and affecting the planting of staple food crops and other nutritious foods for the next season. As a result, prices have increased even more and could tip millions more over the edge into hunger and malnutrition.

Hunger, malnutrition and poverty are harder to overcome when you live in war, conflict or an area prone to natural hazards. In recent decades, an increasing number of crises have evolved from catastrophic, short-term events to longer-term protracted crises where many kinds of shocks combine and, over time, leave an increasing number of people behind.

HOW IS THE WAR IN UKRAINE AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY?

The Russian Federation and Ukraine are among the key producers of staple grains and oil seeds in the world. Both countries are net exporters of agricultural products and are leading suppliers of staple foodstuffs and fertilizers to global markets, where exportable supplies are often concentrated in a handful of countries. The high concentration could increase the vulnerability of these markets to shocks and volatility. In 2021, either the Russian Federation or Ukraine, or both, ranked among the top three global exporters of wheat, barley, maize, rapeseed and rapeseed oil, sunflower seed and sunflower oil. The Russian Federation also ranked as the world's top exporter of nitrogen fertilizers, the second leading supplier of potassium fertilizers and the third largest exporter of phosphorous fertilizers.

The exacerbation of food prices as a result of the war in Ukraine has significantly affected access for countries that were already experiencing a food crisis, and countries that imported more than 30 percent of their cereals from these two countries due to significantly higher import bills.

If high fertilizer prices continue, today's crisis could affect the planting season for many other food crops, especially rice, which would impact billions of people in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.



Prices on the rise



Food prices have increased in the past year due to bottlenecks in supply chains, soaring transport costs and other disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts in a number of regions worldwide including the war in Ukraine, and the growing frequency and intensity of climate extremes.

Farmers worldwide tried to offset this year's higher input costs by planting less, switching to crops that require fewer nutrients or scaling back their fertilizer use, which can hurt yields. They struggled with higher feed costs to sustain livestock production. Developing countries are most at risk of seeing their production shrink as farmers have fewer financial resources to compensate for rising input prices, which are growing at a faster rate than the prices for their produce.

Beyond the obvious threat to global food security and nutrition, spikes in food and input prices can limit incomes, disrupt markets and lead to social unrest.

Limited fiscal space



Most developing countries lack the fiscal space to cushion the blow of these substantial price increases and the corresponding increase in their food import bills. At the same time, many cannot borrow money because lending markets are closed to them. Those that are able to borrow are charged high interest rates that put them at risk of debt distress and default.

Many developing countries are already on the brink of default. Low-income families need social safety nets now more than ever to maintain food security and nutrition and a decent standard of living. The international community needs to come forward and coordinate efforts to support the most vulnerable.



THE LONG SHADOW OF SHORT-TERM SHOCKS



Three years after Typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng hit the Philippines in 2009, the incidence of poverty in the affected province of Rizal nearly doubled.



The Ebola crisis, meanwhile, may have cost West Africa an average of USD 3.6 billion in income per year between 2014 and 2017, as a result of declining trade, closed borders, reduced foreign investment and declining tourism.

THE WAY FORWARD

Because our agrifood systems are interlinked to so many different areas of our lives and economy – from agriculture to natural resources to energy to health – they hold great potential as vehicles for a more equitable and prosperous future. Agrifood systems transformation is critical if we want to honour our pledge to leave no one behind and deliver better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all.

For this reason, agrifood systems transformation is higher on the global agenda than ever before. The 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit and other multilateral initiatives have spurred dialogues and the development of pathways to transform agrifood systems in many countries around the world. But there is still much more to be done to ensure that no one is left behind!



For one, we need to empower the most vulnerable, including small-scale producers, by investing in agrifood systems that are more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable. That means we need to improve access to training, incentives and innovation, among others, so smallholders can be at the centre of this transformation and become active and equal agents of sustainable development.

At the same time, governments need to provide timely and well-targeted social protection programmes to protect the most vulnerable. In addition to cash, this may mean providing nutritious food and agricultural inputs, improving agricultural infrastructure, as well as complementary actions that protect people's livelihoods and improve their nutritional status.

While this may prove very beneficial in the long term, it comes at a cost, which is a struggle for many developing countries. There is simply no answer to the food crisis without an answer to the financial crisis. That's why G20 countries need to support countries at risk of hunger, malnutrition and famine, transforming their agrifood systems, funding humanitarian appeals and boosting resilience. Greater priority must be given to both boosting local nutritious food production and preserving natural resources as a frontline response, given that agriculture is among the most cost-effective humanitarian interventions.

International financial institutions must support the financial access of developing countries with investments or debt relief - particularly when funding enables timely action in response to agricultural seasons - so that they can keep providing robust social safety nets, invest in rural areas and strengthen their agrifood systems.

Agrifood systems and related livelihoods are affected in the short and longer term by the intertwined impacts of

the climate crisis, biodiversity loss - including degradation of ecosystems, loss of species and genetic resources erosion - and competition over access to natural resources.

Due to the impacts of the climate crisis, plant pests that ravage economically important crops are becoming more destructive and posing an increasing threat to food security and the environment. Small-scale farmers, people whose livelihoods rely on plant health and those who live in countries beset by food insecurity, are especially vulnerable to these risks.

Protecting plants from pests and diseases is far more cost effective than dealing with plant health emergencies. FAO promotes sustainable and ecological approaches to prevent and control the potential impact of plant pest and diseases through continuous monitoring, early warning, and the promotion of innovative and environmentally friendly preventive control strategies that are sustainable.

The 2022 Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that the increasing weather and climate extreme events affecting all regions of the world have already exposed millions of people to acute food insecurity and reduced water security. The sustainable management and use of our natural resources not only contributes to a better environment, but are also vital to ensuring the transformation of our agrifood systems to the benefit of all.

FAO IN ACTION



Leaving no one behind means working on many fronts at the same time. For the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that includes promoting decent rural employment and services, ensuring social protection, ending child labour, and supporting local food production for vulnerable populations in food crisis countries while fostering gender equality and supporting rural and Indigenous Peoples who are the custodians of much of the Earth's biodiversity. Here are some examples of the ways FAO is closing the gap.

- In **Guatemala, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Tunisia and Uganda**, FAO is helping governments build policies, strategies and programmes that promote more and **better jobs** for young people in agrifood systems and increase their access to training and finance.
- FAO has been working with the Government of the **Philippines** to make their **social protection** system more responsive to shock situations. As a result, when COVID-19 hit, the Government managed to channel rapidly extra cash to people in vulnerable areas and expand the number of families covered by the system.
- With FAO's support, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are bringing more **women entrepreneurs** into **value chains** for fisheries, poultry, honey and tourism. Women in **Barbados, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Palau, Saint Lucia** and **Samoa** are gaining more control over resources, technologies and services.
- FAO is creating a **global network of farmers' markets** and working with governments to build policies that link consumers to nutritious foods and increase producers' **access to new markets**.
- In **Ecuador, India, Peru** and **Thailand**, FAO works with **Indigenous Peoples** to restore around 1 000 hectares in indigenous territories through **biocentric restoration**, a more inclusive approach that builds on indigenous knowledge.

- In response to the drought in **Somalia**, FAO and local government partners are working to protect 11 million livestock with feed and veterinary care, so that 275 000 people can maintain their productive assets, food security and nutrition.
- In **2021** alone, FAO provided **humanitarian livelihoods assistance** to over 30 million people worldwide, helping them to keep producing food for their families and communities, despite multiple crises.



FAO works with the most vulnerable countries through the Hand-in-Hand initiative, which supports the implementation of nationally led, ambitious programmes to accelerate agrifood systems transformation by eradicating poverty (SDG1), ending hunger and malnutrition (SDG2), and reducing inequalities (SDG10). It uses advanced geospatial modelling and analytics, as well as a robust partnership-building approach to accelerate the market-based transformation of agrifood systems, leading to increased incomes, improved nutrition and well-being among poor and vulnerable populations, and strengthened resilience to the climate crisis.

The Initiative prioritizes countries and territories where poverty and hunger are highest, national capacities are limited, or operational difficulties are greatest due to natural or man-made crises. Areas of intervention have included developing value chains for priority commodities, building agro-industries and efficient water management systems, introducing digital services and precision agriculture, reducing food losses and waste, and addressing climate challenges and weather risks.

RELIEF FOR UKRAINE



FAO is providing assistance to families in Ukraine so they can plant food in time for the next harvesting season. As of 12 July 2022, FAO has reached 30 622 households (80 000 people) in 13 oblasts of Ukraine, with emergency agricultural support. Of these, 16 855 households (43 823 people) from ten oblasts were assisted with seed-potatoes and 20 147 households (52 382 people) from 11 oblasts received vegetable kits, while some were assisted with both types of support.

Multi-purpose cash assistance to 3 700 rural households (9 620 people) is also covering the basic needs of populations in the hardest hit locations in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine. The value of the cash transfer is based on household size, providing each person with USD 226 (UAH 6 660) for three months. FAO is also working to boost food availability and access and is addressing grain storage shortages with the necessary technical support and equipment.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE DESERT LOCUST CRISIS



The Desert Locust is the most destructive migratory pest in the world – feeding on pasture and crops that millions of people across Africa rely on for their livelihoods and jeopardizing food security.

Between January 2020 and January 2022, FAO's fully funded appeal allowed for the treatment of nearly 2.3 million ha of desert locust-infested land in affected countries. These efforts averted 4.5 million tonnes of crop losses, saved 900 million litres of milk production, and secured food for 41.5 million people. The commercial value of the cereal and milk losses averted through the response is estimated at USD 1.77 billion.

Part of the response included providing USD 14 million in cash transfers to affected families, protecting 750 000 breeding animals with feed and distributing 150 000 farming kits to save lives and livelihoods.

SPOTLIGHT: THE CLEAR COTTON PROJECT



Child labour is often a product of necessity and the fact that many rural families cannot afford to hire extra hands on their farm. That is why in Burkina Faso, Mali and Pakistan, FAO is collaborating with the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the CLEAR Cotton project, which not only promotes national policies to protect children, but also actively helps cotton farmers build side incomes so they become less dependent on the work of their children. The project provides vulnerable rural families with training, inputs and access to finance so they can start profitable micro businesses that make enough money to hire external farm labour and send their children to school. FAO has already trained more than 1 000 vulnerable families in high-profit activities such as poultry rearing, sheep fattening, and sesame production.

A LIFELINE FOR FARMERS IN AFGHANISTAN



In 2021, FAO assisted farmers in 30 provinces across Afghanistan with wheat cultivation kits, an intervention that is expected to grow enough staple food to feed 1.3 million Afghans for an entire year. Each package consisted of 50 kg of high-quality wheat seeds to plant 2 jeribs (0.4 hectares) of land, 50 kg of fertilizers, and technical training. In 2022, FAO is expanding its programmes and intends to reach 9 million people by the end of the year.

Innovation

FAO is taking major steps to rise to the challenge of harnessing the transformative potential of science and innovation. The Organization's first-ever Science and Innovation Strategy recognizes the need for a diversity of innovations (technological [including digital], social, policy, financial, and institutional). New tools and approaches are changing the way we farm and raise livestock, fight pests and diseases that affect animal, plant, and human health, protect and restore our natural resources and act on crises. Additionally, transformative partnerships and innovative funding and financing are essential to catalyse action and speed up coordinated efforts for impactful results. To ensure that no one is left behind, it is critical we invest in all areas of innovation, from the laboratory to the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and small-scale producers, so we find the best solutions adapted for local needs and ecological contexts to end hunger and malnutrition.

For producers, and policy makers alike, accurate, up-to-date information is critical to decisionmaking. FAO's eLocust3 monitoring tool was critical in our early action and successful fight against the recent desert locust upsurge in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2020-2021. Earth Map and FAO's Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform bring the Google Earth Engine power and the large FAO data catalogue to everyone's computer for analysis of land, water,

crop and livestock conditions, along with socio-economic and climate data.

Cutting edge research and development can help jump-start much needed agrifood systems transformation. For instance, the Joint FAO/International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Centre and labs develop novel approaches to optimize nuclear and isotopic techniques on land and water management, crop nutrition, animal health and food safety.

The Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS), monitors food supply and demand and other key indicators of food security to warn of possible crises – so governments and development agencies can act quickly when food becomes scarce or unaffordable.

Better technology and data means we now have the tools to predict and act early on unfolding crises and significantly reduce their impacts. FAO leads global efforts to scale up anticipatory action based on early warning signs, with returns for crisis-hit families of up to USD 7 for every dollar FAO invests in protecting their livelihoods.

For people in need of aid, the Identification, Delivery and Empowerment Application (IDEA) system is making it easier to redeem support, including through electronic vouchers

and mobile money, and FAO staff can register and support beneficiaries even in complex operational contexts.

In addition, FAO is converting at least 1 000 rural villages worldwide into digital hubs through its Digital Villages Initiative – so all farmers can get online, make more informed decisions about their production and access new markets, tools and services.

FAO's Farmer Field Schools, in turn, are innovative in the way they use peer learning to introduce new methods and sustainable practices into farming communities in a collaborative, hands-on way.

Given that by 2050, the world's urban population is expected to reach nearly 70 percent, FAO's Green Cities Initiative focuses on improving the urban environment, strengthening urban-rural linkages and the resilience of urban food systems, services and populations to external shocks.



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GET INVOLVED

FOOD HEROES

Small-scale farms produce more than a third of the world's food, but they represent 80 percent of the world's producers. While they are one of the foundations of our agrifood systems, smallholders are too often trapped in cycles of poverty and food insecurity and excluded from opportunities in systems dominated by large producers and retailers. If we are committed to ensuring that no one is left behind, we have to transform our current agrifood systems to provide equal opportunities for all producers, and help smallholders gain access to new markets. This also means investing in rural transformation.





What governments can do

- Use people-centred data to identify who is being left behind and why, and design policies that close the gap.
- Use early warning information to alert communities to upcoming threats and link these to anticipatory action to protect lives and livelihoods ahead of a crisis.
- Make institutions inclusive, transparent and accountable, and ensure investments and policies recognize links between economic, social and environmental challenges.
- Ensure equal access to social protection.
- Invest in data decision-making, science, technology and innovation.
- Make healthy diets affordable and promote them.
- Keep markets open.
- Create more resilient, sustainable and diverse supply chains, including by growing a variety of nutritious foods domestically.
- Make food reserves available to countries vulnerable to famine and hunger and work with international financial institutions to provide financial liquidity.
- Give a voice, tools and training to those on the margins, to ensure active participation of all in agrifood systems.
- Give incentives to the private sector to provide healthier, sustainably produced foods at affordable prices.
- Prevent food loss and waste, and promote responsible consumption.

What businesses, NGOs and research institutions can do

- Pioneer responsible production practices, source sustainably produced ingredients, reduce waste and opt for more sustainable packaging.
- Produce and promote affordable, nutritious foods,

- including as a core part of humanitarian response.
- Prioritize human rights and accountability.
- Support international and local organizations when working in developing countries.
- Improve access to finance for agrifood system actors and make businesses and markets more inclusive, involving smallholders, women, young people and Indigenous Peoples.
- Offer skills-based training, encourage knowledge-sharing and improve local infrastructure.
- Invest in data decision-making, science, innovation and technology.
- Share solution-driven data on ways governments can transform agrifood systems.

What we all can do

- Keep informed on global threats to food security and nutrition and the solutions at hand.
- Call on local decision-makers to take action to support the most vulnerable.
- Donate time, money and resources to development and relief organizations and causes in your community.
- Buy only what we need and avoid waste with proper storage and creative meal planning.
- Choose local foods, cut down on resource-intensive products including excessive packaging and eat seasonal produce.
- Support smallholder producers by shopping at farmers' markets and looking out for labels indicating support for smallholders.

FACTS

3.1 billion people – almost 40% of the world's population – **cannot afford** a healthy diet.

Some **193 million people** required **humanitarian assistance** for their survival in 2021.

Conflict was the main driver of high acute food insecurity for **139 million people** across 24 countries and territories in 2021.

While as many as **828 million** go hungry, **1 in 8** adults is **obese**, a problem on the rise in all regions of the world.

More than **80%** of the **extreme poor** live in **rural areas**.

Two-thirds of those experiencing high acute food insecurity are rural **food producers**.

Globally, **women** are **15%** more likely than men to be moderately or severely **food insecure**.

Indigenous Peoples are guardians of **80%** of the world's terrestrial **biodiversity** on **22%** of the Earth's surface. Yet, they suffer higher rates of **poverty, malnutrition** and internal **displacement**.

160 million children are engaged in **child labour**. The **agriculture sector** accounts for more than **70%** of child labour worldwide.



MAKING FOOD AND AGRICULTURE A SOLUTION

Although food and agriculture currently contribute around one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, the good news is that the agrifood sector can also be a key part of the solution.

Forests play an important role in relation to climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation, including serving as carbon sinks and storage and housing biodiversity, as well as buffering risks caused by the impacts of the climate crisis.

Halting deforestation and maintaining forests could avoid emitting around 3.6 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO₂e) per year between 2020 and 2050, including about 14 percent of what is needed up to 2030 to keep planetary warming below 1.5 °C, while safeguarding more than half the Earth's terrestrial biodiversity.

Restoring degraded lands and expanding agroforestry is also part of the solution. 1.5 billion hectares of degraded land would benefit from restoration, and increasing tree cover could boost agricultural productivity on another 1 billion hectares. Restoring degraded land through afforestation and reforestation could cost-effectively take up to 1.5 GtCO₂e per year out of the atmosphere between 2020 and 2050, similar to taking up to 325 million gasoline-powered passenger cars off the road each year.

16 October 2022

World Food Day

Collective action across 150 countries worldwide is what makes World Food Day one of the most celebrated days of the UN calendar. Hundreds of events and outreach activities bring together governments, businesses, civil society organizations (CSOs), the media, the public, and even youth. They promote worldwide awareness and action for those who suffer from hunger and for the need to ensure healthy diets for all, leaving no one behind.

#WorldFoodDay 2022 is being marked in a year with multiple global challenges including the ongoing pandemic, conflicts, climate change, rising prices and international tensions. All of this is affecting global food security.

It's time to work together and create a better, more sustainable future for all. Make #WorldFoodDay YOUR day. Join the call by organizing an event or activity or show how you are taking action.



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