



Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Collective Action for Ending a Collective Problem: A Multi-stakeholder Project on Global Food Security

**Report
25 July 2023**

**Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations,
Dublin City University**

Proem

*What makes the cornfields happy; under what star
It's best, Maecenas, to plough the soil or train the vine
On elm-trees; the care of cattle, keeping of flocks;
All the experience those housekeeping bees require,
This is my song ... Come bless me, gods and goddesses,
Who care for the land. You nourish fruits not sown by us,
You send to our sown fields the plentiful rain from heaven.*

(Virgil, Georgics, opening lines)

The word “culture” in modern European languages derives from the Latin *colere* – to take care of, tend, preserve, ‘cultivate’. ‘Culture’, in its original meaning, is inspired by the activities celebrated in Virgil’s *Georgics* – farmers working with commitment and reverence to create a landscape fit for habitation. Capturing the full resonance of the words ‘culture’ and ‘agriculture’ can help us to reimagine the world of work. We can begin to see that action in shared hope is our only means of sustaining the gift of life.

Table of Contents

Proem.....	1
I. Introduction	3
II. Working Groups	14
II. A Food and the sacred	14
II. B Food and human rights	19
II. C Selected global issues relating to food security.....	24
II. D Food security and polarisation	44
II. E The future of agriculture and farming	48
III. Conclusion: Interim Recommendations.....	60
III. A High-level values	60
III. B Examples of practical steps.....	62
IV. Annexes.....	66
Annex 1: Initial discussion paper on food security (September 2022)	66
Annex 2: EU’s role in global agricultural and food systems.....	85
Annex 3: Food insecurity and human rights: State of the Field and Recommendations	96
Annex 4: Case study: palm oil.....	109
Annex 5: Case study: fisheries.....	114
Annex 6: List of participants in our in-person and on-line discussions ...	117

I. Introduction

‘Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.’¹


Food insecurity is not a new challenge. Research has identified seven periods in the history of food production.² Post -1945, there emerged the ‘productivist’ food regime. Europe’s and America’s farming was protected. The food industry developed strongly. This phase saw the emergence of the Green Revolution – a huge increase in food productivity based on technology linked to the use of fossil-fuel based inputs, including synthetic fertilisers and agrochemicals. During this period, overpopulation was considered to be the cause of hunger. Post-1980s, under the ‘neoliberal food regime,’ many governments saw their role primarily as facilitating private actors. Arguably we are now in a (very different) eighth period. Over the last quarter century or more, climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and new insights in the sphere of nutrition and malnutrition are reshaping the debate on food.³ The key pattern that can be observed across all seven or eight historical periods is a growing awareness of mutual interdependence. Recently we have also begun to see clearly the interdependence not only of countries but of subject areas: food security, climate, conflict, biodiversity, inequality.

In the aftermath of the food-and-fuel crises of 2007–2008, governments around the world recognized the need to better prioritize their food and nutrition policies and to increase investments in agricultural research, rural economies, and early-warning systems to anticipate future food crises. The

¹ FAO report, “The state of food insecurity in the world 2001”

² Chris Otter, *Feast and Famine: The Global Food Crisis*, March 2010, https://origins.osu.edu/article/feast-and-famine-global-food-crisis?language_content_entity=en

³ Gordon Conway’s *The Doubly Green Revolution* (1997) was a landmark publication.



year 2015 saw the adoption, separately, of two hugely important policy frameworks—the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement—establishing goals to ensure food and nutrition security and to limit greenhouse gas emissions.


The first United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) was held in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic saw entire economies shut down and food systems interrupted at the levels of production, supply chains, workforces, and retail. Over the past year and more, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has served to further highlight the vulnerability of our food systems. Energy- and fertilizer-price increases have had a major impact on global food production in 2022 and 2023 and contributed to the rise in the number of hungry people in the world, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.

In proportion to its population, Africa bears the heaviest burden of malnutrition and is currently not on track to meet the goal of ending hunger by 2030.⁴ The continent continues to face major food challenges, including acute hunger driven by conflict, drought, and other extreme-weather events; recurrent outbreaks of pests and diseases; high levels of chronic undernutrition; ecosystem breakdown; and under-productive agricultural systems; while in other parts of the world we face rising levels of obesity and poor nutrition leading to rising health costs.

Unfortunately, neither the SDGs nor the climate negotiations are on track to meet their targets, and the core challenge remains: to achieve food security for an estimated global population of 10 billion in 2050 while respecting the 1.5 °C target set by the Paris Agreement of 2015.

The goal of our multi-stakeholder project is to respond to our growing shared awareness of food insecurity by coming together as a group of colleagues to reflect on possible policy responses. Effective climate action and

⁴ Sustainable Development Goal 2. In absolute terms, the highest number of undernourished people is in Asia.



reimagined agricultural systems will entail the sustained coordination of actors across multiple domains. Pope Francis in his message on World Food Day in 2021 emphasized the ‘need for concerted action’ and ‘innovative solutions’ to overcome hunger and stated that ‘we must encourage active participation in change at all levels and reorganize food systems as a whole.’⁵ Action must be in keeping with such core values as equity, justice, and inclusion. In the long run, there is a case for reconsidering our models of society. A society driven too much by commerce may fail to account for such critical externalities as an unliveable climate and the loss of social cohesion. Fundamental to our project is an understanding that food security is a human right, and food insecurity results not from a lack of available resources but from injustice and structural inequalities.⁶

The project has involved meetings in Prague in October 2022, in Dublin in April 2023, and in Rome in early July 2023. Five on-line working groups have examined, respectively: (1) food and the sacred; (2) food and human rights; (3) cross-cutting global issues in the sphere of food systems (including headline policies of the European Union); (4) politics and polarization; and (5) the future of agriculture and farming. In Dublin, we heard from experts and activists outside our group. In Rome, we spent a half-day at the headquarters of IFAD for a dialogue with the head of IFAD and key members of her team. A list of participants and speakers is at Annex 6.

First, we will discuss the latest developments relating to global food security which form the background to our work. Since the 1990s, the percentage of the global population living in what is termed ‘absolute poverty’ has declined significantly, according to World Bank figures. However, as of July

⁵ Christopher Wells, Pope: *Overcoming hunger is one of humanity’s great challenges*, October 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-10/pope-overcoming-hunger-is-one-of-humanity-s-great-challenges.html>

⁶ Cf. R.H. Tawney: “Poverty is a symptom and consequence of social disorder”

2023 the FAO calculates that the number of people unable to afford a healthy diet is more than 3 billion.⁷ In parallel, the number of people facing acute hunger and undernourishment has risen to 9.2 per cent of the global population; around 735 million people.⁸ The 2023 report notes that acute food insecurity is more pronounced in some regions than others, with Africa being the worst affected (with 20 per cent of the population facing hunger), followed by Asia (8.5 per cent) and the Caribbean (16.3 per cent)⁹ and Latin America. However, it should be noted that almost all States and regions have seen a growth in the number of people facing food insecurity, including in high-income countries.¹⁰ We are witnessing the likely beginning of an affordable food crisis on the European continent and elsewhere. In March 2022 we could already see a 60% increase in global food prices, compared to March 2020,¹¹ and in August 2022 the price of bread in the EU was on average 18% higher than a year before.¹² As of spring 2023 there was still no end in sight for the continuing increase of food prices in the EU.¹³

It seems unlikely that the rising rates of food insecurity are primarily a reflection of absolute (i.e., global) availability of food. Between 2000 and 2019 the global population increased by approximately 26 per cent. In the same period, the FAO reports that global production of primary crops increased by 53 per cent, production of vegetable oils increased by 118 per cent, and meat production increased by 44 per cent. The FAO produces food balance sheets that show global food availability. In 2020 this stood at 3,000 kcals per capita per day. In 2010 the figure was 2,858 kcal per capita.

⁷ <https://www.fao.org/publications/home/fao-flagship-publications/the-state-of-food-security-and-nutrition-in-the-world/en>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, xvi. FAO figures are supported by other surveys including the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC), the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), and World Food Programme (WFP) figures based on countries where the WFP has an operational presence.

¹⁰ The Trussell Trust/Glen Bramley et al., 'State of Hunger: Building the Evidence on Poverty, Destitution, and Food Insecurity in the UK, Year Two Main Report' (May 2021), 11.

¹¹ Cf. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/food-security-and-affordability/>.

¹² Cf. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20220919-1>

¹³ Cf. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/wdn-20230125-1>

In 2000 it was 2,727 kcal.¹⁴ It seems clear that rising rates of food insecurity and malnutrition are primarily related to structural forms of inequality—between and within States¹⁵— as well as to political and organizational issues including the forms of dependency that we discuss below.¹⁶

Armed conflicts have been identified as having a significant negative impact on food security. Civil conflicts in particular routinely cause or exacerbate hunger, malnutrition and famine,¹⁷ as ongoing situations in Yemen, Somalia and Syria can attest. In 2022, the top five projected hunger hotspot countries declared by World Food Programme (WFP) were Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Yemen.¹⁸ The latest hunger hotspot report (June 2023) reports that Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen remain at the highest concern level. Haiti, the Sahel (Burkina Faso and Mali) and Sudan have been elevated to this level.¹⁹ In each of these hunger hotspot countries, there has been some form of conflict.²⁰ It is estimated that approximately 30 per cent of the arable land in Ukraine has been rendered unusable as a result of mining and other direct impacts of the Russian invasion, which has also impacted fuel supplies and supplies of other agricultural raw materials. In addition, the war in Ukraine has highlighted the lack of resilience in food systems; in particular, ‘just in time’ logistics have been shown to have very limited capacity to respond to supply chain disruptions.

¹⁴ In 1961 when the series started, global food availability was just 2,161 kcal on average per capita per day. Of course, there was less inequality in the 1960s and 1970s than nowadays. See <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#home>

¹⁵ See e.g., Hans Konrad Biesalski, ‘Hidden Hunger in the Developed World’ in Manfred Eggersdorfer, et al. (eds), *The Road to Good Nutrition* (Basel: Karger 2013).


¹⁶ Michael Fakhri, Interim report of the Special Rapporteur in the right to food, 2021, para. 26, and further paras. 17-19.

¹⁷ FAO, *Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict: Causes, Consequences, and Addressing the Challenges*, 2011.

¹⁸ World Economic Forum 2022, *How to avert a global food crisis?* May 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYa8ffbwwFE>

¹⁹ See <https://www.wfp.org/publications/hunger-hotspots-fao-wfp-early-warnings-acute-food-insecurity-june-november-2023>

²⁰ The former WFP Executive Director David Beasley points out that ‘with every one percent increase in hunger, there is a two percent increase in migration.’



The climate crisis, too, is a significant (and worsening) factor in food insecurity. The ability of communities to feed themselves and earn a living is severely compromised by their exposure to changing and severe weather conditions, natural disasters, and environmental destruction, including soil degradation.²¹ As climate change advances, changes to rainfall patterns and seasonal average temperatures will affect the habitable range for crop species, and will deprive some farmers and communities of their traditional crops. The IPCC has warned that ‘hard’ limits may be reached in the future (that is, beyond which it is impossible to adapt, even with theoretically limitless resources).²² Indeed, in some areas, such as the Horn of Africa where rains have failed in four consecutive rainy seasons, those hard limits may be approaching, or may already have been reached. Climate change disproportionately affects the right to food of rural women, smallholder farmers, people living in poverty and indigenous communities, who have less ability to invest in climate adaptation.²³

Poverty and growing inequality, both within and between nations, are underlying structural factors that make some people more likely to experience food insecurity than others. It has therefore been suggested that food security should be classed as an economic public good, as a food-secure world produces numerous benefits that can be enjoyed simultaneously and from which no-one can be practically excluded, such as moral benefits, public health gains, market opportunities, and higher social stability.²⁴


Poverty and inequality are, in turn, linked to **trade and investment regimes**. In this context, we often refer to ‘liberalised’ market mechanisms,

²¹ FIAN, *The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it*, July 2022, p. 4.

²² Hans-Otto Pörtner et al, ‘IPCC WGII: Summary for Policymakers’ in Rita Adrian et al (eds), *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability: Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge University Press 2022), paras. B.4.3, C.2.2, C.4.3.

²³ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni, *The right to food*, 2020, p. 157.

²⁴ Cristian Timmermann, *Food security as a global public good*, 2018, pp. 88 et seq.



including in agriculture. However, an associate editor of the Financial Times offers a more radical critique:

What we have today is no longer a truly “free” market system that allows for productive and fair transactions between buyers and sellers who exist on an equal footing, but rather, a system of concentrated power and oligopoly.²⁵

FIAN and the FAO have argued that spikes in food prices following the invasion of Ukraine *preceded* any actual food shortages,²⁶ a phenomenon which FIAN attributes, inter alia, to the overdominance of export crops, price speculation, and a poorly-functioning market in which four companies control the vast majority of the global grain trade. The top four companies also control 60 per cent of the global seed market and 70 per cent of the agrochemicals market. In several geographies, there is an urgent need to promote **market development at local level**.

Financial incentives offered by governments often favour economies of scale and promote large-scale, capital-intensive agriculture, thereby reducing support for smallholder farmers.²⁷ Commercialisation and intensification tend to increase specialisation, with crops grown as monocultures and only a few varieties planted. Commercialised commodity seed systems extract genetic material from plants with which communities live in symbiosis, in effect disrupting that relationship.

Financial flows in support of the transformation of food systems are low in absolute terms. Approximately one-fifth of ODA is directed towards infrastructure, social protection, agricultural development and other

²⁵ Rana Farooq, 2022. *Homecoming*. New York. Crown, p. XVI

²⁶ Ibid., 11; FAO, Crop Prospects and Food Situation Quarterly Global Report, 2022 #1 (March 2022).

²⁷ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni et al., Agricultural commercialization, gender equality and the right to food, p. 5.

interventions in the area of food systems transformation.²⁸ In 2022 the trend in relevant financial flows was downwards, even as compared with pre-pandemic levels. Over 50 developing economies that are home to more than 50% of the people in extreme poverty have growing debt burdens and therefore a reduced capacity for public spending.²⁹

The ocean covers 71 percent of the surface of the earth, and aquatic foods play a key role in food security and nutrition, not just as the main source of protein for more than a billion people, but as a provider of other essential nutrients. On 8 June 2023, World Oceans Day, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned: ‘We should be the ocean’s best friend. But right now, humanity is its worst enemy.’ According to the FAO, 35 percent of **fish stocks** worldwide are today exploited beyond sustainable levels.³⁰ Much of the problem can be traced to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU), all of which harm fish populations, ocean health, and people. In the Indian Ocean off Madagascar, illegal fishing may represent as much as half of the total catch,³¹ with all that this means for local fishers, related artisanal industries, and public revenue. Inadequate trade and investment regimes and misdirected financial incentives are centrally involved in our failure to deliver on ‘an evolving and positive vision for fisheries and aquaculture in the twenty-first century’³² – and in the continuing pollution of our coastal waters with chemicals, plastics, and human waste. Fisheries are the subject of Annex 5 of this report.

A questionable corporate influence on food systems can be seen in the growing problem of low-quality food. **Ultra-processed foods** and foods with extremely high fat, sugar, and salt content aggressively advertised by the industrial food industry are creating concentric health crises, in which the


²⁸ Presentation by IFAD to our group, 5th July 2023

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “The State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,

³¹ Pew CharitableTrusts, November 3, 2022.

³² The 2022 edition of The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture – Towards Blue Transformation.



prevalence of both malnutrition and obesity are rising. Unhealthy diets are responsible for millions of deaths every year,³³ as well as adding to pressures on public health- and welfare systems. As ‘junk’ foods tend to be less expensive on a per-calorie basis than equivalent fresh-, whole- and other high-quality foods, individuals and groups with lower incomes or suffering from economic exclusion are most likely to be negatively affected.³⁴

It has been argued that we risk ‘**corporate capture**’ of food-related international organisations. A lack of transparency in relation to voluntary contributions means that it is often unclear whether a risk assessment has been carried out and what procedures, if any, have been undertaken to evaluate proposed partnerships.³⁵


Waste is major factor in food insecurity. An estimated 14 per cent of food is lost during production, storage, transport, processing and distribution¹², with an additional 17 per cent wasted downstream.¹³

There are more than **476 million indigenous people** in the world, spread across 90 countries and representing 5,000 different cultures. 80 per cent of the planet's remaining biodiversity is estimated to be located in their lands. Indigenous peoples’ traditional knowledge and knowledge systems represent (in political parlance) an integrated approach to the pursuit of multiple public goods and offer potential insights for the design of a sustainable future for all. Respecting and promoting the rights of indigenous peoples strengthens their role as custodians of nature and serves as a significant confidence-building measure in the wider picture.

³³ FIAN, The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it, July 2022.

³⁴ See, e.g., Adam Drenowski, ‘Food Insecurity has Economic Root Causes’, (2022) 3 *Nature Food* 555-556.

³⁵ FIAN, Corporate Capture of FAO, p. 10.



To sum up the present situation: Sustainable Development Goal 2, adopted in 2015, looks forward to a world free of hunger by 2030. In reality, the situation is worsening. The right to food, a customary human right and a right upheld in several international conventions, has been severely compromised over a long period. According to a conservative estimate, the number of people *dying* of hunger is around 8 million per year, many of whom are children.³⁶


Moreover, SDG 2 cannot be viewed in isolation; most of the other SDGs are linked to food security. The SDGs embody, in embryo, a vision of transformation based on the global citizenship of nation States and a common medium-term plan for humanity. The pursuit of resilience in food systems will have a multiplying effect³⁷ as we seek to realise this vision. The adaptation of food systems is closely related to other public goods³⁸ such as preserving resources, including water and soil; addressing climate change; promoting biodiversity; protecting the oceans; and guaranteeing affordable and healthy diets for everyone. Investment in food security is cost-efficient, greatly reducing the need for emergency aid. Like the green economy, food systems transformation can become a focus for creativity and innovation in the business sector. The pursuit of resilience in food systems may help us to see beyond disagreements and to begin resolving conflicts. We argue in the section of this report devoted to polarisation that food security reduces political instability, conflict, and forced migration.

Our first recommendation (see below, under ‘principal recommendations’) is that a values-led approach to politics and security in the perspective of 2030 or 2050 should give an over-riding priority to sharing the primary goods

³⁶ Open Letter from 238 NGOs to the UN General Assembly in September 2022.

³⁷ The term “multiplying effect” is taken from IFAD’s presentation to our group on 5th July.

³⁸ For this argument see the food systems ‘portfolio’ of the EU Joint Research Centre, accessible at https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-science-and-knowledge-activities/sustainable-food-systems_en.



of life while also accepting a longer-term responsibility to promote the ecological and climatic conditions on which life depends.

II. Working Groups

II. A Food and the sacred

Discussions on food security are complex and require a precise focus and expert knowledge. However, what is also needed is perspective: an inclusive vision that holds the many strands of reflection together. In this project, we have approached the subject of food security through the twin lenses of food and the sacred and food and human rights. A sense of the sacred and a commitment to human rights converge in support of an overall vision. In the words of one member of our group, we need to *bring a communal dimension back into the centre of our thinking and action...we are not just individuals achieving our own goals but rather we are fundamentally building our society together.*³⁹

As part of our consideration of food and the sacred, we posed the following three questions to the representatives of several different faith communities represented in the Dublin City Inter-Faith Forum:

- What role do food and fasting play in your religious tradition?
- What are the values and principles that underlie the practices of your community in relation to food?
- What lessons can we learn from the festivals and occasions where food plays a role?

A central conclusion is that religious traditions associate food with concepts and values such as sharing, celebration, community, and solidarity. In *Deus Caritas Est* Pope Benedict XVI writes about the Eucharist as follows: 'Eucharistic communion includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete

³⁹ Sr. Helen Alford, O.P.


practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.’⁴⁰ Here is Maimonides: ‘To eat and drink on a festival in the company of your family without providing for the poor and distressed is not ‘the joy of the commandment’ but the joy of your stomach. It is a disgrace.’ According to Gandhi, ‘To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and the promise of food as wages.’⁴¹ Sikhs welcome guests for free meals in their houses of worship. As a member of the Irish Sikh community states: ‘Langar [the distribution of free meals] was started by Guru Nanak to feed the visiting Sangat [the community] who were coming to listen to his sermons and discussion ... The same vegetarian food is served to everyone irrespective of caste, creed, status; to king, saint or pauper. It is the service of mankind ...’

In Islam during Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, and in many other religions, food is paired naturally with fasting. The abstinence from certain types or all food and drink can further patience, introspection, discipline, appreciation, detachment and compassion. Fasting, temperance, and dietary rules, as practiced in faith communities, have considerable relevance to the transition in food habits that is now so urgently needed at the global level.

Many religions, including Hinduism, teach that wasting food is intrinsically wrong because food is a gift that requires gratitude. In many traditions, eating is preceded by prayer. To accept that the earth and the food it yields are in some sense ‘given’, or sacred, has ethical implications going beyond food security. In response to the 6th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the World Council of Churches (WCC) General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay stated: ‘The pursuit of short-term financial gains through aggressive land use and

⁴⁰ https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html

⁴¹ Quoted by Rajmohan Gandhi (grandson) in Gandhi, R. (2006). *Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, His People, and an Empire*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, p. 257.



wanton resource extraction has wrought immeasurable costs to life and all creation and will impose a heavy burden on our children for millennia, imperiling their very future. As Christians we believe that life-in-creation is a sacred gift from God.⁴²


In the battle to ensure food security for all, it is increasingly recognized that political processes need to be complemented by *multi-stakeholder forms of cooperation* at many levels. We need ‘due diligence to ensure that the relevant stakeholders are included.’⁴³ In the light of the values described here, we urge the inclusion in multi-stakeholder processes of the representatives or nominees of churches and faith communities, for several practical reasons.

First, faith communities are open to a dialogue drawing on deep cultural sources, such as respect for nature and a holistic understanding of what it means to be human. Religious perspectives bring to the debate on food security a strong focus on providing the basic necessities of life for all, and upholding the value claim that this goal must not be subordinated to concerns for profit or the logic of the market. Religious perspectives thus offer a distinct order of priorities which can bring a useful catalyst to the wider public debate.

Second, religious actors and the narratives of religious traditions can often reach and engage people who cannot be reached by secular narratives and appeals. In particular, they can reach the marginalised and under-represented.

⁴² <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-general-secretary-rev-prof-dr-jerry-pillay-on-the-6th-assessment-report-of-the-intergovernmental-panel-on-climate-change>

⁴³ “Rethinking our food systems/A guide for multistakeholder cooperation.” UNEP/FAO/UNDP, 2023



Third, faith-inspired organizations operate on the local, regional, national and global levels. They are well-placed to nurture friendships across institutional and national divides.

Fourth, behavioral shifts will have to take place to improve food security under conditions of climate change, ecological degradation, shrinking resources, and a growing world population. Notably, we need a shift away from patterns of overconsumption—particularly when it comes to meat and dairy among wealthier populations—and towards a more deliberative relationship with nature and the land. Faith communities can help promote the changes of lifestyle that are needed for a ‘just transition.’

Fifth, faith communities have long practical experience in alleviating hunger and malnourishment, not least in areas affected by instability and conflict. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many religious actors extended their existing initiatives to focus on food insecurity. Faith-inspired organizations are supported in their efforts by the funds raised among believers and supporters. In some contexts, religious actors may be judged especially trustworthy and altruistic by donors and recipients.

Sixth, and finally, faith communities are often exemplary role models for ‘action in hope’. In the 18th and 19th centuries, it was sometimes imagined that individuals maximising their personal consumption could unintentionally serve the public good by creating a demand for products and services. Therefore, the liberal principle of pursuing self-interest as long as it did not (seemingly) harm others was not necessarily a restraint on consumption or the accumulation of wealth:

[...] probably all the great seas fisheries are inexhaustible; that is to say that nothing we do seriously affects the number of fish.’ (T.H Huxley, speech at the International Fisheries exhibition, 1883)⁴⁴

‘Negligibility’, as an economic term, implies that ‘as an individual, much of what I do is irrelevant to social outcomes.’⁴⁵ In the 21st century, the liberal reliance on self-interest becomes less plausible the more clearly we see that the destruction of the environment and the impairment of social services through structural inequalities are not ‘negligible’ as consequences of our personal economic choices. The ‘do no harm’ principle can only be interpreted today in the light of an over-arching responsibility to build society together. Economic choices made by businesses and other actors give rise to social and environmental externalities. It is increasingly understood that we should put an economic value on those externalities, as in the case of carbon taxes. However, taxes are not enough.⁴⁶ A broad vision is needed of the interrelationship between the profit motive and not-for-profit motivations in all economic activity.


Action in accordance with responsibility can be described as *action in hope*. Hope is an inner resource implying a readiness to engage with our circumstances and act positively and rationally, even in the face of uncertainty and steep odds.⁴⁷ Planetary ecology and the need for a just transition in the organisation of the economy depend on numerous individual decisions linked together by a common criterion of evaluation. This common criterion cannot be the standard of mere self-interest, which pushes us in different directions. How then can we picture ourselves as co-workers in a shared project?

⁴⁴ Melissa Lane. 2012. *Eco-Republic*. Princeton University Press, p. 52

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51

⁴⁶ Taxes may be ineffective in any case due to inelastic demand (for energy, etc)

⁴⁷ Vaclav Havel on hope: ... a state of mind, not a state of the world ... an orientation of the spirit, of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons ... It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.



From a religious perspective, actions that conform with hope will be in harmony with other similar actions, including other people's actions. There is an 'in-built' consistency, compatibility, and coherence. This is not just about shaping coalitions; the point is deeper. When we act in hope, the fruits of action are in some sense 'given'. We do not see ourselves as complete masters of cause and effect. The overall design may not yet have taken shape. In this way, the 'standard of hope' becomes a way of understanding how separate actors, often invisible to one another, work together towards an unseen future. We suggest that any common criterion of evaluation at the local or global level will resemble such a standard. Hope, if restored to a fuller meaning in our culture, can help to bridge the gap between the familiar and the unknown – between today and a future that is perhaps not even imaginable. To paraphrase Voltaire, *si l'espérance n'existait pas, il aurait fallu l'inventer* – 'if there were no such thing as hope, we would need to invent it.'


II. B Food and human rights

We cite above the definition of *food security* agreed in the FAO in 2001.⁴⁸ The international peasants' movement, La Vía Campesina, in 1996 proposed an alternative concept, *food sovereignty*, which has been defined as the 'right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through socially just, ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their collective right to define their own policies, strategies and systems for food production, distribution and consumption.'⁴⁹

The human right to food is guaranteed by several international instruments. It was first recognised in 1948 as a component of an 'adequate standard of

⁴⁸ Cf. Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action, 1996.

⁴⁹ Declaration of Nyéléni (27 February 2007), available via <<https://nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/DeclNyeleni-en.pdf>>.



living' in Article 25(1) of the UDHR. This right was also included in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)⁵⁰, and as an aspect of the right to life in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)⁵¹. Moreover, the right to food can be found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 24(2)(c) and 27(3)), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Articles 25(f) and 28(1)), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (where Article 20 guarantees the right 'to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence'), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 12(2)). The right to food, too, is proclaimed in several regional human rights instruments, as well as in domestic constitutions. Finally, the right to food is implied in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, which mainly addresses food security.⁵²


The fundamental human right to food is both a self-standing guarantee protected under conventional and customary international law and an integral part of an indivisible fabric of rights relating to the right of the individual to an adequate standard of living (inter alia, the rights to food, housing, sanitation, water, and health); the rights of workers, peasants, and smallholders (inter alia, rights to land, to seeds, to safety at work, to fair wages, and to organise); and the rights of communities and indigenous peoples (indigenous rights to land and traditional means of subsistence; rights to social security; food sovereignty).

The body of regulation pertaining to the right to food offers several advantages. States are under a legal obligation: the right to food promotes the transformation of social benefits that individuals or households receive

⁵⁰ with its specific components clarified by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment No. 12

⁵¹ in accordance with General Comment No. 36 of the Human Rights Committee

⁵² the right to food was already recognised in the UN Declaration on the Right to Development of 1986 (UN General Assembly resolution 41/128) which was a key step towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the SDGs.



under government food security programmes into legal entitlements. The primary objective of the right to food is to ensure that everyone, individually or as a member of a group, has permanent and secure access to healthy food that is produced in a sustainable and culturally acceptable manner.⁵³ This access can be provided through three channels that often work in combination: (a) self-production, (b) access to income-generating activities and (c) social protection, either informally through community support or through State-administered mechanisms.⁵⁴ The State is under immediately applicable obligations not to interfere with the enjoyment of the right to food, for example by depriving individuals or communities of food or the ability to produce food. Finally, aspects of the right to food which cannot be implemented immediately and in full are subject to an obligation of progressive realisation, and States must adopt national strategies to work towards full compliance with the right.⁵⁵ The *obligation of progressive realisation* is often overlooked, though some countries have introduced comprehensive social protection systems that reference the right to food.⁵⁶

At present there is no effective multilateral, human rights-based, globally coordinated response to the hunger crisis that would prioritise the voices of the most affected countries and peoples.⁵⁷ However, the above brief mapping of the state of the field does strongly indicate the potential of a human-rights-centred approach, in consort with and in support of food sovereignty movements and others, to increase the priority given at the international level to realising the right to food. A human-rights centred approach to the right to food will flourish best within a strong overall human


⁵³ Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action, 1996.

⁵⁴ Olivier De Schutter, Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, 2013, para. 6.

⁵⁵ See Olivier De Schutter, Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, 2013, para. 8. For the origin of the 'respect, protect, fulfill framework in the work of another Special Rapporteur on the right to food, see Asbjørn Eide, The New International Economic Order and the Promotion of Human Rights: Report on the Right to Adequate Food as a Human Right Submitted by Mr. Asbjørn Eide, Special Rapporteur, 1987.

⁵⁶ FAO, WFP, UNECE, UNICEF, WHO, WMO, *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia 2020: Affordable healthy diets to address all forms of malnutrition for better health*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3849en>

⁵⁷ FIAN, Food Crisis Response Entrenches Corporate Influence, October 2022, p. 7.




rights culture focussed on the dignity⁵⁸ of every person and on positive action to create the social and physical environment in which human dignity is respected and rights can be enjoyed. We discuss these challenges further below under the heading ‘spaces for dialogue and negotiation.’

A human-rights-centred approach further suggests a wide range of specific recommendations:

- i. Given our conclusion that a sense of the sacred and a commitment to human rights converge in support of an overall vision, the European Union’s Fundamental Rights Agency, building on its conferences in 2018 and 2021, should continue to promote a holistic understanding of human rights obligations, including the right to food, and to encourage cooperation and mutual literacy between human rights advocates and religious actors
- ii. The land rights of indigenous peoples, peasants, and other groups which depend on access to land for the realisation of their right to food must be protected by law.
- iii. Ethical principles, such as the non-wastage principle, should be interpreted more strictly, to include resources needed for food production such as land and water distribution.⁵⁹
- iv. States are under an obligation to protect individuals’ enjoyment of the right to food against violations by third parties, including by establishing an adequate regulatory framework for cross-border activities of corporations. Commercial values such as predictability should be weighed against the obligation of public authorities to protect ecosystems and livelihoods.

⁵⁸ *Dignitates* in Latin are ‘persons of rank.’ Later, ‘dignity’ is understood as belonging to every person, irrespective of their personal profile, their position, and the conventions of society.


⁵⁹ Cristian Timmermann, Food security as a global public good, 2018, p. 91.

- 
- v. The manufacture and export for use elsewhere of agrochemicals banned for domestic use should be prohibited.
 - vi. Crop diversification should be encouraged, and mandated on massive monoculture plantations.⁶⁰
 - vii. Governments should use market-based tools, labelling, and regulation to discourage the use of ultra-processed junk food and beverages, ban their targeted advertising to young people and other vulnerable groups, and implement and support campaigns that aim to regulate the advertising of unhealthy products.⁶¹ Funds raised through junk food taxes should be used to subsidise the cost of producing and consuming high-quality, healthy foods.
 - viii. Centring human rights obligations and in particular the right to food, States should urgently consider restructuring or relief from unsustainable debt, and where appropriate, the need for new or dedicated financing mechanisms.
 - ix. Following the example of the WHO's framework convention on tobacco control, States should enact provisions to guard against the risk that international organisations will be unduly influenced by agri-food corporations, including the major operators in high-risk sectors such as agrochemical, fast food, beverage, tobacco, and fossil fuel industries.⁶²

⁶⁰ FIAN, *The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it*, July 2022, p. 6.

⁶¹ FIAN, *The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it*, July 2022, p. 7. For definitions, and State obligations and the responsibilities of the food and beverage industry, see *Unhealthy foods, non-communicable diseases and the right to health*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Anand Grover, 2014.

⁶² FIAN, *Corporate Capture of FAO*, p. 20.


- 
- x. Food-related international organisations should promote transparency frameworks and the disclosure of financial donations by private actors.
 - xi. States should fully implement the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, and in particular the provisions of that treaty on farmers' rights.⁶³
 - xii. States, international organisations, and other agencies and actors should adopt a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to their work on food security.
 - xiii. Civil society organisations should support the work of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food⁶⁴ by submitting relevant complaints and by asking him to evaluate the relationship between the right to food, food security, resilient food systems and food sovereignty.
 - xiv. The progressive development of international law can be envisaged in other areas, in relation, for example, to the jurisprudence of ecocide and the responsibilities of non-State actors in the sphere of human rights.

II. C Selected global issues relating to food security

“Realism,” as a value in foreign policy and international relations, should refer in the first instance to *contact with reality*. We need to clarify the structural factors that are changing the nature of international relations and to identify the main global phenomena that deserve urgent attention. Broadly speaking, these trends are to be found in nature (climate,

⁶³ Voices in civil society argue that the UPOV Convention is preventing farmers using farm-saved seed in many countries. The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) is an intergovernmental organization with headquarters in Geneva (Switzerland).


⁶⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-food>



biodiversity, genetics), the virtual world (devices connected to the Internet, AI), and the political sphere (polarization and the hollowing out of dialogue). The premise of our project is that food insecurity is a useful lens through which to view environmental, technological, and social challenges – and thereby to bring the many dangerous trends within the scope of a workable philosophy. We offer some further thoughts here on the climate and biodiversity emergencies; the international financial architecture and the ‘financialization’ of trade and investment; the almost complete disconnect between the disarmament and development agendas, though in the real world they are closely linked; trade policies; inequality and food insecurity; conflict and food insecurity; the question of sanctions; and the potential role of the European Union in a global transition.

The climate and biodiversity emergencies

Much of the discussion around climate focusses on the risk of temperatures rising by 1.5 degrees centigrade above the pre-industrial average. Unfortunately, there is a risk of an even higher rise in temperature. We do not know precisely when certain ‘tipping points’ will be reached that will unleash dramatic changes in ice sheets, forests, and other critical influences on climate. Such tipping points are the largest threat to our long-term food security. Our current global heating level (the average for 2022) is 1.2 degrees centigrade above the pre-industrial average. In March 2023, the temperature was 1.48 degrees centigrade above (though that statistic refers only to one month). The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) recently estimated that there is a 66 per cent chance that at least one year in the period 2023 to 2027 will see an average global temperature of more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We are already exposed to increased heatwaves, droughts, floods, fires and other extreme weather events which endanger global food production and distribution. For example, parts of Europe have experienced an unprecedented heatwave in summer 2023. Pakistan saw one third of its land area flooded last year. The Horn of Africa



has suffered consecutive droughts with successive crops failing and livestock dying. Both the yields and nutrient contents of many crops are damaged by high temperatures. The tropics are being pushed toward the limits of human habitability.

Synthetic fertilisers and pesticides cause damage to our ecosystems and biodiversity, including nitrate pollution to waterways.⁶⁵ The current rate of species loss is far greater than was seen in the previous five mass extinctions (that we know of).⁶⁶ We require regulations to discourage the over-use of synthetic fertiliser and pesticides and to encourage a greater production of organic fertiliser; and measures to prevent further wildlife destruction both to save the ecosystem from collapsing and to avoid potential new pandemics.

Food systems and climate

Food systems account for an estimated 30 to 34 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, with around 71 per cent of this originating from agriculture and land use-related activities. This means that increases in food production under the status quo would cripple the chance of meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change. We need to envisage an overhaul of food and agriculture policy with a focus on net zero; as well as a dietary transition.

Financialization and the international financial architecture


Globally, financial assets are four times the size of the real economy.⁶⁷ The argument that futures exchanges buffer markets against risk is increasingly tenuous. According to one study, 'every year between 65 and 215 times as much wheat is traded in the US as harvested.'⁶⁸ Speculation is rife; including

⁶⁵ as well as greenhouse gas emissions when fossil fuels are involved in their production.

⁶⁶ The last 'Great Dying' occurred 252 million years ago. Global heating from volcanic activity wiped out 95% of species at that time.

⁶⁷ Rana Farooq, 2022. *Homecoming*. New York. Crown, p. 43.

⁶⁸ George Monbiot. 2022. *Regenesis*. Allen Lane, p. 38



by tens of thousands of ‘teenagers with trading apps.’⁶⁹ Financiers are buying land. According to Land Matrix,⁷⁰ over 70 per cent of the world’s farmland is owned or controlled by 1 per cent of its farmers. In many geographies, the organisation of markets favours ‘productivity’ and profit at the expense of biodiversity, the protection of habitats, dietary health, avoiding pollution, meeting climate change commitments, and equitable international trade – not to mention resilience in food systems. The agri-business sector is consolidating ‘vertically’ as well as ‘horizontally’. That is, as well as ‘horizontal’ mergers and acquisitions, we are seeing the same companies involved in seed, fertiliser, processing, packing, distribution, and retail.

Traditionally, antitrust policy in the US was oriented towards the distribution of power in the economy and the welfare of citizens broadly understood. Since the 1980s, partly because of globalisation and its perceived imperatives, there has been a shift towards an antitrust policy based on the single idea of lowering prices for consumers. But ‘cheap’ food in the US raises the price tag of diet-related diseases, which according to one study costs \$3.7 trillion per year to treat.⁷¹ When companies control the storage of food, as they often do, there are obvious conflicts of interest surrounding the price of stocks released to the market. Crisis planning is undermined if the size and nature of food reserves are invisible to public authorities.⁷²

As of June 2023, any discussion of the international financial architecture needs to address the UN Secretary General’s new, wide-ranging policy brief.⁷³ The purpose of the Secretary General’s new study is worth quoting in part:


⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 42 - 46

⁷⁰ <https://landmatrix.org> over 70

⁷¹ Mark Hyman, *Food Fix*, quoted by Farooq, op.cit., p. 39

⁷² In some jurisdictions, it would seem appropriate to have larger public stocks of food for release onto the market at times of higher prices. Such interventions could be targeted at those less well off.

⁷³ <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21824.doc.htm>




The international financial architecture, crafted in 1945 after the Second World War, is undergoing a stress test of historic proportions – and it is failing the test ... [it] already had structural deficiencies at the time of its conception ... [it] is entirely unfit for purpose in a world characterized by unrelenting climate change, increasing systemic risks, extreme inequality, entrenched gender bias, highly integrated financial markets vulnerable to cross-border contagion, and dramatic demographic, technological, economic and geopolitical changes ... The existing architecture has been unable to support the mobilization of stable and long-term financing at scale for investments needed to combat the climate crisis and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ...

The change that is now needed is partly about perspective and proportionality in relation to the scale and allocation of resources and what this may tell us about our values. In 2021, global financial assets held by financial corporations were estimated at \$510 trillion. In 2019, subsidies for fossil fuels added up to \$468 billion worldwide, more than double all aid to poor countries.⁷⁴ In 2022, western oil companies doubled their profits to \$219 billion⁷⁵ and paid \$110 billion in dividends. The US Administration's proposed military budget for 2024 is of the order of \$840 billion. Global military spending amounts to more than \$2000 billion and is increasing. These sums can be compared with the \$100 billion per year, not yet delivered, that developed countries committed to mobilize collectively to support developing countries throughout the world in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. In the IMF, the continent of Africa, home to 1.4 billion people and more than 60% of the world's extreme poor, received only 5.2 per cent of the latest issuance of special drawing rights (SDRs).⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Neil McCulloch, 2023. *Ending Fossil Fuel Subsidies: the Politics of Saving the Planet*. Practical Action Publishing.

⁷⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/big-oil-doubles-profits-blockbuster-2022-2023-02-08/>

⁷⁶ <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-international-finance-architecture-en.pdf>, p.3



A report published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) at the end of June 2022 highlighted that there had been an increase in the need for humanitarian assistance that year by 29%, compared to mid-2021. Further, the report notes that there is a shortage of \$36.9 billion to meet these requirements.⁷⁷ In a news briefing in July 2023, the Chief Economist of the World Food Programme (WFP) stated that his agency has received 29% less in funding this year than at the same point in 2022.⁷⁸ Donor contributions are the basis on which IFAD mobilises further funding through borrowing and co-financing. The latest IFAD replenishment (IFAD 12, covering the years 2021 – 2023) had raised approximately \$1.2 billion by the end of 2022. Few countries have met the agreed 0.7% target for ODA.

Disarmament and development

Article 26 of the UN Charter recognizes the need to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security ‘with the least diversion of the world’s economic and human resources to arms.’ The legally binding commitments of the Charter and the politically binding commitments of the Helsinki Final Act remain unfulfilled. There is scope to link the implementation of disarmament objectives with the Sustainable Development Goals in a decisive way, in order to bring the historical relationship between disarmament and development back to the forefront of international consciousness. This is partly a matter of political culture. A decade ago, climate experts and food systems experts, and climate diplomacy and food systems diplomacy, were largely separate spheres. As we discuss below, COP 28 is an opportunity to bring those ‘two cultures’ into dialogue. In a similar way, we need to reconnect development diplomacy and disarmament diplomacy. This connection was in any case always implicit in

⁷⁷ 60 Relief Web, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2022, Mid-Year Update, 2022*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2022-mid-year-update-snapshot-21-june-2022>

⁷⁸ <https://www.unmultimedia.org/avlibrary/asset/3069/3069487/>

the committee structure of the UN General Assembly and the parallel 'baskets' of the Helsinki process.

We recommend:

- i. Reconnecting the disarmament and development agendas on the model of the growing interaction between climate experts and food systems experts
- ii. Supporting proposals for a fourth Special Session of the UN General Assembly on disarmament ('SSOD IV')

Trade policies

Overdependence on agricultural and food imports leaves countries extremely vulnerable to external shocks. For example, while a high percentage of the world's uncultivated arable land is in Africa,⁷⁹ only a third of cereals consumed in Africa is produced on the continent.⁸⁰ From 2016 to 2018, about 85% of Africa's food imports came from outside the continent, leading to an annual food import bill of \$35 billion, which is forecast to reach \$110 billion by 2025.⁸¹ That African countries are net food importers, with farmers producing below their potential, is partially due to the effects of certain trade policies and practices, including a focus on crops grown for export, such as cottonseed oil, cocoa, and coffee.

Smallholders produce 70% of the food consumed in low- and middle-income countries. 80% of the people in extreme poverty live in rural areas. Against this background, it is estimated that small-scale farmers receive about \$0.06 for every \$1 of food they produce.⁸² Linking small producers to markets is a vital aspect of food systems transformation.

⁷⁹ <https://www.dw.com/en/with-vast-arable-lands-why-does-africa-need-to-import-grain/a-62288483#>

⁸⁰ Cf. FAO Food Outlook (2022), <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9427en/cb9427en.pdf>. See also UNEP, Our work in Africa, <https://www.unep.org/regions/africa/our-work-africa>.

⁸¹ <https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-threat-food-security-> Africa.

⁸² Presentation at IFAD, 5th July

Inequality


The problem of rising inequality arose in all five working groups under our project and was a special concern of the working group on polarisation. In this domain, domestic and international policies intersect. We recommend:

- i. Better provision of social safety nets, cash and food transfers, and access to health services for those experiencing food insecurity
- ii. A greater political say for women, youth, small-scale farmers, and indigenous communities
- iii. Increased financial transfers from the 'developed' to the 'least developed' world, including as compensation for the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions which have largely emanated from the developed world
- iv. A reconsideration of debt repayments and the role and use of SDRs
- v. A reconsideration of the influence of 'informal' groupings within the financial system
- vi. Progressive taxation
- vii. Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing/ reporting metrics to focus on reducing inequality
- viii. ESG criteria to acknowledge companies' dependence on social goods (education, infrastructure, public order) and a review in the light of social values⁸³ of remuneration packages for executives and profit-taking by shareholders

Conflict

Conflict, like inequality, is a topic that arose in each of our working groups. In conflict situations acute hunger and malnutrition can spread quickly

⁸³ Cf. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-international-finance-architecture-en.pdf>, p.26



through a breakdown of food systems. This can lead to forced migration.⁸⁴ Food supply chains can also break down; particularly where opposing forces control different areas of the food supply chain. Other potential impacts include a rise in energy costs and food production costs. The impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the continuing war is felt in many third countries which import basic cereal staples. We recommend a continuing strong commitment by faith communities and others to creative peace-making.

Sanctions

Addressing food insecurity caused by non-State actors in armed conflicts or by failed States requires a multifaceted approach, including both sanctions and in some circumstances greater engagement.

At the same time, the use of sanctions, such as asset freezes, is also a major contributor to food insecurity. Sanctions imposed on Iraq in the 1990s cost hundreds of thousands of lives and permanently damaged the country's social and economic fabric.⁸⁵ Most of the food insecure countries in the world are also sanctioned states. For instance, according to the Global Hunger Index, countries such as Burundi, Eritrea, Yemen, Afghanistan, Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and North Korea are the most food insecure countries, and at the same time these countries have also suffered long periods of international sanctions. At the country level, when such sanctions are imposed, governments frequently either do not or cannot provide the resources that are needed to produce food or/and control food distribution. A study by a Venezuelan economist shows that US sanctions (though not on food imports) had a huge impact on securing food, and left millions hungry.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ The number of refugees has doubled in the past 20 years and many displaced people (80%?) are categorised as acutely food insecure.

⁸⁵ Nicholas Mulder. 2022. *The Economic Weapon/The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War*. Yale University Press, p. 293

⁸⁶ Luis Oliveros, *The Impact of Financial and Oil Sanctions on the Venezuelan Economy*, WOLA, October 2020, <https://www.wola.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Oliveros-report-summary-ENG.pdf>

We recommend:

- i. Upholding UN resolution 2417 (concerning the use of starvation as a weapon of war) so that the recent events in Tigray, Ethiopia, will not be replicated (only 15% of food aid needs were allowed into Tigray by the Ethiopian government⁸⁷) and in some circumstances promoting greater engagement with non-State actors.
- ii. Paying closer attention to the implications of economic measures for the right to food.

Fisheries

Fisheries and marine ecology have an essential part to play in the transformation of global food systems. The Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, unanimously endorsed in 2021 by the 34th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, is now a benchmark. Work should continue on ‘an evolving and positive vision for fisheries and aquaculture in the twenty-first century, where the sector is fully recognized for its contribution to fighting poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.’⁸⁸ Similarly, the World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (June 2022) should be fully supported. This agreement sets out measures for transparency and accountability in how governments support their fishing sectors.

Towards a global dietary project

Unhealthy diets are responsible for millions of deaths every year, as well as adding to pressures on public health and welfare systems. We quote above the study suggesting that ‘cheap’ food in the US contributes to diet-related diseases costing \$3.7 trillion per year to treat. The global dietary project

⁸⁷ At one stage in early 2022 it was reported that less than 10% of food aid needs were being met. See Guardian report at - <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/23/trying-to-survive-millions-in-tigray-face-hunger-as-they-wait-in-vain-for-aid>

⁸⁸ The 2022 edition of The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture – Towards Blue Transformation.

promoted by the Lancet⁸⁹ suggests that improving nutrition, especially early childhood nutrition, in the poorest populations can converge with a much-needed transition in richer countries towards healthier eating. In this area, the choices made by individuals cumulatively shape overall developments. Faith communities can help promote the changes of lifestyle that are needed, in particular a shift away from patterns of overconsumption among wealthier populations.

The role of the European Union

The European Union is a unique actor. It has a broad range of policy areas and instruments at its disposal, ranging from agricultural, trade, development and climate policies to diplomacy, human rights promotion and peacebuilding. The EU together with its 27 Member States continues to be the world's largest aid donor, its voice is represented in important global and multilateral fora, and it is a major contributor to global trade through both imports and exports. The EU is thus well placed to play a key role in contributing to resilience in global food systems. Building on its many humanitarian initiatives, the European Union should favour systemic shifts in support of the transition towards more just, resilient and sustainable food systems, as stipulated in the March 2022 Communication of the European Commission on '*Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems*'⁹⁰ and reaffirmed by the EU Council in its June 2022 conclusions on '*Team Europe response to global insecurity*.'

We recommend:

- i. Strengthening localisation as the first pillar of EU leadership. This points to the importance of agroecology⁹¹ as an approach based on


⁸⁹ <https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/>

⁹⁰ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/safeguarding-food-security-reinforcing-resilience-food-systems_0.pdf

⁹¹ European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2022 on addressing food security in developing countries, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0287_EN.html

- science and traditional wisdom, and strongly rooted in ecological principles, food sovereignty and the right to adequate food.
- ii. The European Union should foresee adequate spaces for consultation with local communities, smallholder farmers and civil society within pertinent policy frameworks and mechanisms (trade agreements, the EU Global Gateway investment initiative).
 - iii. Consultations with stakeholders should continue through time (an 'iterative approach') allowing for course corrections and adaptation (a 'sense-making approach').
 - iv. As the second pillar of EU leadership, the European Union should bring a stronger policy coherence (overcoming silo approaches) to the many international contexts in which there is scope to reduce poorer countries' external dependencies. We note that the EU Joint Research Centre aims to 'contribute to the adoption of an integrated approach to the external dimension of EU policies to maximise their positive impact.'⁹²
 - v. The EU should consider adopting a food sovereignty lens on international trade, and in particular to privilege domestic and local-scale production of diverse, culturally appropriate crops over export-led agriculture.
 - vi. Following-up on the current EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020- 2024), the European Union should step up action on the promotion of the right to adequate food in bilateral, regional, and international fora.
 - vii. The EU should reinforce the integrated approach to external conflicts and crises by strengthening its civilian peacebuilding policies and by setting up an EU Human Security & Peace Index with people-centred benchmarks (including on access to adequate food)

⁹² JRC portfolio 24, 'International cooperation, sustainable and trusted connections/Science for the Global Gateway and the International Green Deal,' accessible at: https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-science-and-knowledge-activities/international-cooperation-sustainable-and-trusted-connections_en

- 
- viii. The European Union should fulfil its commitments on climate finance,⁹³ should take the lead in the operationalisation of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility, as agreed at COP, and uphold and step up its commitments to the implementation of international agreements on climate, deforestation, biodiversity, access to water, and governance of the oceans
 - ix. The European Union should provide greater transparency on the destination of food exports in the EU Solidarity Lanes⁹⁴ and ensure that these exports reach ‘hunger hotspots’ in sufficient quantity
 - x. The European Union should embed short-term emergency humanitarian measures in a broader long-term framework to make them consistent with the objective of transforming global food systems.
 - xi. The European Union should significantly increase direct humanitarian and development funding to local grassroots civil society organisations, including faith-based and religious organisations who can be important allies in the effort to enhance food and nutrition security.
 - xii. The Commission, EU Member States, and the EIB, which together constitute a major source of IFAD’s funding, should significantly strengthen that support in the course of the IFAD 13 Replenishment, whose pledging session will take place in late 2023.

⁹³ Cf. UNFCCC (2021), COP26 Outcomes: Finance for Climate Adaptation, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-glasgow-climate-pact/cop26-outcomes-finance-for-climate-adaptation#:~:text=COP26%20urged%20developed%20nations%20to,balance%20between%20adaptation%20and%20mitigation.> .


⁹⁴ Cf. https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news/european-commission-establish-solidarity-lanes-help-ukraine-export-agricultural-goods-2022-05-12_en .

Spaces for dialogue and negotiation

Our working group on global issues and other working groups spent time considering the spaces for promoting our recommendations. A significant parameter is that international cooperation will increasingly depend on a better understanding of the articulation between local, regional, international, and transnational governance. A second parameter is the potential shift from traditional forms of party-political organisation to social mobilisation and activism as a means for influencing change. The principle is easily stated: States, acting within the framework of appropriate multilateral mechanisms, should conduct an end-to-end review of structural issues and opportunities at the international level which impede, or which could assist, all public authorities and actors in civil society to fulfil international human rights obligations on the right to food. Such a review should take place in an open and transparent way, and with full participation by civil society, food sovereignty advocates, peasants organisations, and indigenous peoples.

At the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in 2021, 110 countries committed to embark on ‘national pathways for food-systems transformation,’ policies consistent with both the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. The Food Systems Summit ‘Stocktaking Moment’ will take place in Rome in the last week of July 2023. The UNFSS meeting in Rome is evidently an important occasion for reviewing the implementation of our commitments and looking to the future.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, provide for Summits at four-yearly intervals. The first SDG Summit since 2019 will be held in New York in September 2023. SDG 2, ‘zero hunger,’ is centrally important for present purposes. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the action plan based on the SDGs, encourages member states to ‘conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national




and sub-national levels.’ These voluntary national reviews (VNRs) are not a box-ticking exercise; they require continuous learning.⁹⁵ VNRs are for the consideration of the UN membership as a whole. As the year 2030 approaches, the relevant UN bodies face the task of evaluating the SDGs in the light of the progress made between their adoption in 2015 and the target year 2030. It can be expected that UN member states will maintain the commitments already made beyond 2030. However, they may also need to develop additional themes and to improve working methods.

The World Food Forum 2023 flagship event will take place on 16 – 20 October in Rome, hosted at the FAO headquarters. The next meeting of the Committee on World Food Security of the FAO (CFS) is scheduled for 23 – 27 October 2023. This meeting will be in a position to consider a new document prepared by FAO, UNEP, and UNDP as a joint project: ‘Rethinking our food systems/A guide for multi-stakeholder collaboration.’ For the reasons stated above, we believe that multi-stakeholder processes should include the representatives or nominees of churches and faith communities.

COP 28, the 28th United Nations Climate Change conference (Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC) will be held from 30 November to 12 December 2023, at the Expo City, Dubai, UAE. The Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, established in 2017 under the UNFCCC, recognizes the role that agriculture must play in tackling climate change. In the present context, it is relevant that the host country, UAE, is strongly committed to the 2019 Document on ‘Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’ as a source of political guidance.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Some states have not yet undertaken VNRs

⁹⁶ <https://www.azhar.eg/walangpdf/en.pdf>




Other significant dates in the international calendar include meetings in the UNCTAD and WTO frameworks, meetings of the G20 (New Delhi, September 2023) and G7, and the next Nutrition for Growth Summit (N4G) (Paris, summer 2024). The right to food is supported by an international institutional system in which the central actors include the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The wider institutional framework relating to the right to food also includes the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and numerous other bodies and agencies the mandates of which relate to food and food security in various ways. Within this constellation, IFAD is notable for its exclusive focus on transforming rural economies and food systems.

The many different spaces in which it is possible for civil society to engage in a policy dialogue with the institutions of the European Union require careful consideration. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 6 July 2022 on addressing food security in developing countries⁹⁷ and a resolution on 23 June 2022 on the future of EU-Africa trade relations.⁹⁸ From the perspective of stakeholders in the present project, particular importance is attached to Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in force since 2009, which provides for ‘an open, transparent and regular dialogue’ with churches, faith communities, and philosophical organisations. There is scope for a renewal of the Article 17 dialogue, taking a fresh look at the underlying vision, working methods, and policy priorities. In this context, resilience in global food systems could be an important topic. It can be noted as well that the Economic and Social Committee has a workstream on Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment.

⁹⁷ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0287_EN.html .

⁹⁸ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0267_EN.html .



The UN Secretary-General's document *Our Common Agenda*, released in September 2021, offers a vision of the future of global cooperation. In the light of this document, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution in 2022 to hold a Summit on 22 – 23 September 2024. The 'Summit of the Future' is intended to build upon the SDG Summit in 2023 and breathe new life into the multilateral system. The UN Secretary-General's *New Agenda for Peace*⁹⁹ was published on 20 July 2023.


Our group held its first meeting at the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague in October 2022. The OSCE, one of the world's largest regional organizations, has been developing a food security agenda over many years. In a Ministerial decision in Vilnius in 2009, the OSCE participating States stated:

... the issue of food security must become a top priority on the OSCE agenda, embracing attention and commitment to all three areas traditionally falling within the remit of the Organisation (conflict prevention, economic environmental co-operation and human rights), since the right to food must be considered intrinsic to other fundamental human rights, including political rights ... conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of protracted conflicts on the basis of the appropriate principles of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act through dialogue between peoples and governments are also essential to ensure food security

At approximately the same time, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted a 'Resolution on Food Security, Limited Water Resources and Stability in the OSCE Area.'

In 2022 and 2023, Russia and Ukraine have signed and renewed agreements on the export of grain (though under the auspices of the UN,

⁹⁹ <https://dppa.un.org/en/new-agenda-for-peace>



not the OSCE). The European Union and others have taken concomitant measures. These understandings demonstrate that constructive relationships need not wholly vanish even in the middle of a crisis. As of 17 July 2023, the grain deal has been ended by Russia, leaving its future and the role of Ukrainian grain in global food systems open to uncertainty.

All sides recognise that the present conflict affecting the production and export of Ukrainian grain is accentuating severe food insecurity in Africa and in some locations real famine.¹⁰⁰ The OSCE's Mediterranean conferences with Partners for Cooperation in North Africa and Middle East illustrate the potential for region-to-region dialogue in the sphere of food security.

It is important, even in a situation of deep conflict, not to lose sight of the OSCE comprehensive model of security, its regional scope, and its methodology. We understand that new forms of academic support for the OSCE are under consideration, in the perspective of the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025. Several members of our group are ready to associate their future work with such a community of reflection under OSCE auspices. In the light of circumstances, this research could support far-seeing 'talks about talks' with a view to a new, multi-layered, pan-European process to begin on or after the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025.


In the end, a global roadmap, including effective climate action and reimagined agricultural systems, will entail the establishment of clear goals and the sustained coordination of actors across multiple domains. It is our hope that European and other policymakers will advocate for change in all the upcoming international fora described above.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)

The room behind the shop

At the centre of our thinking are the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As argued above, they embody, in embryo, a vision of the global citizenship of nation States and a common medium-term plan for humanity. Other global strategies are easily combined with the SDGs – we think in particular of disarmament and a renewal of the global financial architecture. At the same time, it seems appropriate to step for a moment into the ‘room behind the shop’ (Michel de Montaigne) to ask ourselves whether some new ingredient is needed to make multilateralism fit for purpose. Do we have frameworks of engagement that focus effectively on vision and values? Where we can think twenty or thirty years ahead, in a global perspective, in the light of our deepest cultural sources? Is there scope to improve existing frameworks or support them through new forms of mobilisation?

There is always an inevitable distinction between a specific decision or agreement and an underlying ethos or sense of direction. In the long run, it is only the presence of an underlying sense of direction or ‘standard of hope’ that will enable the international community to interpret, question, and reform the granular details of the SDGs in a consistent way and to respond to new circumstances. However, the search for agreed criteria for action across political and cultural boundaries is very difficult given the complexity of the subject matter, the need to engage business and civic society, the breaking down of knowledge into specialised fields, new ways of manipulating public debate, and at least to some degree, a loss of trust in our shared future. All these factors are exacerbated by polarisation and conflict, which of their nature metastasise into new threats. We are experiencing the continuing formation of a global space in which decisions resonate across borders without there being an equivalent development in the realm of conscience and mutual understanding. There is important work to be done, involving multiple stakeholders, to *create the consensus, the*



constituency and the civilisation that will enable the SDGs and the forthcoming Summit of the Future to fulfil their intended purpose.

In many cases, the structuring of dialogue implies in itself the broad outcome; so much so, that ‘talks about talks’ are often the most fruitful stage of any process. Mediation is essential: someone ‘holds the pen.’ As a delegate, a diplomat represents his or her government’s point of view. As a chair, coordinator, facilitator, or rapporteur, he or she is expected to act impartially in the role. We suggest that any ‘civilizational’ encounter or process of the kind we envisage should have a long timeline, a comprehensive agenda, and a role for mediation, and should carry in its ‘DNA’ potential outcomes at three levels:

- i. the gradual definition of new criteria or points of agreement (a ‘matrix of principles’) in the sphere of international relations with food security for all and (more generally) sharing the primary goods of life as a core value
- ii. in parallel, the progressive adoption of confidence-and security-building measures with ‘demonstration value’ in the larger picture
- iii. a paradigm change (over time) in our understanding of governance and of the economy

The diplomatic work we advocate reflects a ‘theory of change’ in harmony with the SDGs but resting ultimately on an evolving cultural pattern. We seek a transformation at the level of habits and assumptions, a greater historical self-awareness, and an enhanced capacity to work *systemically*, as our global situation requires. Time-lines will depend in part on how we read the climate crisis. In the sphere of climate adaptation, some policy responses are already urgent if we are to prevent catastrophic conditions and respond coherently to the inevitable movement of people from areas under threat.

II. D Food security and polarisation

Our group arrived at a common understanding that food insecurity is not caused by a lack of available resources, but rather by systemic failure. Thus, politics and democracy are essential topics when we address food insecurity. We asked ourselves such questions as the following:


- Is it credible for citizens to reason together about a shared future without being concerned for one another's economic, social, and environmental wellbeing and security?
- Can freedom be understood as mere 'choice' or should it be exercised in friendship and with responsibility?
- Are we accountable for the impact of our economic choices on others, including external stakeholders?
- Is democracy a given, or is it 'an ever-evolving process' in which we 'strive towards the better adoption and implementation of democratic principles'?¹⁰¹

As one definition proposes¹⁰², 'Democracy will be fully implemented only when individuals and all peoples have access to the primary goods of life, food, water, health care, education, work, and certainty of their rights, through an ordering of internal and international relations that guarantees everyone a chance to participate.'

In this very broad field, we focussed on the ongoing work under the auspices of the Institute for Integrated Transitions (IFIT) aimed at achieving a baseline understanding of the concept of polarisation. We are fortunate that IFIT was represented in our group. Polarization – where differences

¹⁰¹ Declaration of the Summit for Democracy, March 29, 2023

¹⁰² Benedict XVI, "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Members of the 'Centessimus Annus' Foundation" (Clementine Hall, Vatican City, May 19, 2006).



between two opposing groups (poles) become extreme – can be understood as a ‘hyper-problem’ which stops us addressing any other problem effectively. Even in its mildest forms, it can result in paralysis that can hinder any major social change. It is important to recognize that not all differences in opinion or disagreements between groups amount to polarization. By accurately defining what polarization is and what it is not, it becomes possible to identify and address the root causes. This, in turn, can help to promote a more inclusive and collaborative environment that fosters constructive dialogue and collective action towards a common goal, such as addressing the issue of food insecurity.

IFIT’s provisional definition of polarization is as follows:


Polarisation: a prominent division or conflict that forms between major groups in a society or political system and that is marked by the clustering and radicalisation of views and beliefs at two distant and antagonistic poles.

This working definition is informed by eight hallmarks which can be studied in detail in the discussion paper ‘First Principles: The Need for Greater Consensus on the Fundamentals of Polarisation.’¹⁰³ To give just one example, here is part of the definition of the ‘othering’ hallmark:

In a state of polarisation, affect is the norm. Viewpoints radicalise, complexity declines, allegiance trumps ideas, and a combination of in-group romanticisation and out-group demonisation prevails.

As well as standing in the way of public reasoning, polarization has a direct impact on food security in a variety of ways. Increased polarization can lead


¹⁰³ <https://ifit-transitions.org/publications/first-principles-the-need-for-greater-consensus-on-the-fundamentals-of-polarisation/>



to political instability, economic inequality, and inaction on climate change. Political instability can disrupt food supply chains and make it challenging to distribute aid to those in need, leading to food shortages and famine in extreme cases. Greater economic inequality resulting from polarization can mean that those who are less well-off struggle to afford adequate nutrition. Climate change, which is exacerbated by inaction on the issue, can cause droughts, floods, and storms that destroy crops, disrupt food supply chains, and lead to food shortages and price spikes.


It is essential to address the root causes of polarization as part of any effort to promote a more equitable and sustainable food system. In fact, progress toward resilience in global food systems can be understood as a project that in itself is an antidote to polarisation. We drew on IFIT's field work to begin to envisage an indicative solutions spectrum. A clear picture emerges in IFIT's work. The vast majority of attempted strategies and solutions fall into three overlapping categories, as in a Venn diagram: outreach and dialogue efforts, fact and narrative interventions, and structural reforms.

When there is a conflict between major groups that is marked by the clustering of views and beliefs at antagonistic poles, dialogue is an understandable antidote. When there is 'othering' at scale, it is logical that factual clarification and narrative change are understood as necessary parts of the solution (described by IFIT as the 'truth and reconciliation reflex'). The third solutions category has to do with changes to the ecosystem in which polarisation thrives or recedes: 'structural reforms' involving a re-ordering of incentives and disincentives. Changes in the social 'variables' will produce shifts in behaviour, even if not at once. This multi-faceted theory of change implies a need for well-designed interventions involving analysis, coalition building, and the identification of measures having demonstration value in the larger picture. No one initiative is a solution in its own right.



In this perspective, our group considered the relevance to polarization of *participatory-based approaches* and *community-based approaches* in the field of food security. Participatory decision-making processes and effective outreach and dialogue efforts can be used to ensure that all stakeholders, including those most affected by food insecurity and polarization, have a voice in shaping policies and programs related to food security. Engaging parties at opposing ends of views and beliefs, especially actors at the local level, who have too often been excluded from the conversation, can provide a valuable perspective and contribute to policy formation and implementation. By involving farmers and consumers in the process, international agreements, codes of conduct, and food security policies can be more informed and better shaped to meet the needs of local communities. Dialogue based on a people's perspective offers a simple yet powerful measure that can help depolarize society and overcome some of the complexities surrounding the food security challenge. It can also help to build trust and increase transparency and accountability.

Community-based approaches can be used to address both food insecurity and polarization by engaging community members in the process of identifying and addressing local food-related challenges. Bringing together diverse groups of people to work towards a common goal can help build trust and promote social cohesion. As discussed above, churches and faith communities are well-suited to community-based approaches. By providing food assistance, raising awareness, fostering community building, and providing education and skills training, to name a few examples, they can help create a more just and equitable society. As the century progresses, faith communities are learning to work together and to devote increasing attention to the contribution they can bring to advocacy in support of multilateral responses to the major challenges facing the whole of humanity.



Right to food and food sovereignty movements worldwide have launched effective campaigns to highlight the need for a greater focus on the social factors underpinning, and dependent on, well-functioning food systems. In particular, these movements have highlighted the roles women play in building and maintaining robust food systems as part of communities, a factor which has only recently begun to be captured in international processes, as well as the ways in which gender and other forms of discrimination compound vulnerabilities in food systems.¹⁰⁴


The moral orientation and practical methodology that helps us to counter global food insecurity can help to bring about a more salubrious global political environment. Today, international society is showing symptoms of ‘othering’, as described above. A step-change in common efforts to actualize the right to food can help us find a bigger language through which to communicate across ‘physical, ideological, and emotional distances.’¹⁰⁵

II. E The future of agriculture and farming

Our working group on agriculture and farming identified as a core challenge the need to explore and integrate different perspectives. First, any policy perspective – such as a commitment to a complex transition in food systems - needs to connect with the perspective of individual farmers and farming businesses, who in many cases look to the long-term trends with anxiety. Second, there are multiple farmer realities: different types of farming are present simultaneously in any one geographical area at any point in time. A dialogue is needed between the proponents of ‘conventional’ agriculture, on the one hand, and ‘organic’ and/or ‘regenerative’ agriculture, on the other. Broadly speaking, ‘conventional’ agriculture and its high productivity is defended by COPA-COGECA, the largest agriculture-related lobbying

¹⁰⁴ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni et al., *Agricultural commercialization, gender equality and the right to food*, pp. 1-2, 6.

¹⁰⁵ IFIT, *Ibid.* p. 6



organization in the EU; and La Via Campesina, the global farmers' movement, advocates on behalf of regenerative agriculture. Third, we need to pursue unifying approaches, or unity in diversity, across continents. In principle, the national pathways developed within the UN food systems security dialogue should point to significant and growing commonalities between regional programmes such as those of the European Union and the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Policy (CAADP).¹⁰⁶ The case study on palm oil undertaken as part of our project (Annex 4 to this report) further illuminates the many inter-related issues at stake in the transformation of agriculture, including the frequent non-alignment of business interests with easily recognizable public goods.

In connection with the need for a multi-dimensional dialogue on the future of farming and agriculture, we found it useful to refer to the 'obligation of progressive realization' as defined in the human rights working group. Where aspects of the right to food cannot be implemented immediately, States have a human rights obligation to adopt long-term strategies to work towards full compliance with that right. In relation to food systems transformation, working to ensure that time is on our side is a key value. 'Gradualness' becomes a principle of benign change. Often there are steps valid in themselves – intrinsically valid – whose precise consequences cannot be measured or foreseen.

The European Union's 'green transitions' agenda represents the world's most ambitious policy framework to shape the future of agriculture in the light of wider goals.¹⁰⁷ The goal is to 'identify what needs to be done to deliver a truly green and regenerative economy, that gives back to the

¹⁰⁶ initiated in 2003 to develop the continent's agri-foods sector and rural economies.

¹⁰⁷ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-science-and-knowledge-activities/green-transitions_en

planet more than it takes, remaining within planetary boundaries, in a socially inclusive, fair and just manner.’¹⁰⁸

Approved in 2020, the European Green Deal aims to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% in 2030 (compared to 1990 levels) on the European continent and to achieve ‘climate neutrality’ by 2050.¹⁰⁹ This is by far the most ambitious project of the European Union and it has far-reaching consequences for almost all parts of society. One of the sectors affected the most by the Green Deal is agriculture. The EU aims to ‘lead a global transition towards competitive sustainability from farm to fork.’¹¹⁰ The main instruments to achieve this are the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the related Farm to Fork Strategy.¹¹¹

One of the most important objects of the CAP is to support income of farmers through direct payments. Approximately 6.3 million farms in the EU benefit from it – nearly half of farmers’ income comes from the CAP budget. In 2018 this amounted to €41.74 billion. To adapt the CAP budget to the goals of the Green Deal, an agreement on reform of the CAP (for the period 2023-2027) was reached in June 2021. This reform gives member states more flexibility to adopt their own farm support plans from a toolbox of policies. National plans were approved by the end of 2022. The new CAP came into being on 1 January 2023.

The Farm to Fork Strategy, lying ‘at the heart of the European Green Deal,’¹¹² has as its main objective the accelerated transition to a sustainable food system within the EU, addressing, inter alia, the impact on the environment and climate of our current food system; the loss of biodiversity;

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ European Commission (2019), The European Green Deal, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

¹¹⁰ Cf. European Commission (2020), Agriculture and the Green Deal. A healthy food system for people and planet, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/agriculture-and-green-deal_en

¹¹¹ European Commission (2020), Farm to Fork Strategy, https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en

¹¹²

food security; and the affordability of food. The Farm to Fork Strategy includes a range of very specific targets, such as having 25% of total farmland under organic farming by 2030.

Not to forget are the effects the energy policies of the EU can have on the agricultural sector. The decoupling from cheap Russian natural gas following the Russian invasion of Ukraine has accelerated the employment of renewable energy systems. But as these alone are not capable of completely replacing imports of Russian gas, the drastic reduction of Russian natural gas imports has also necessitated increased LNG imports, especially from the United States.¹¹³ These imports come at a much higher financial price. This may have a lasting impact on the prices of fertilizers and food but also on the financial stability of farms.

Following a dramatic increase of 149% in nitrogen fertilizer prices in September 2022, compared to September 2021,¹¹⁴ the EU Commission addressed the availability and affordability of fertilizers on 9 November 2022 and proposed a set of solutions, which were heavily criticized by COPA-COGECA.¹¹⁵ While acknowledging the value of the proposed medium and long-term strategies, the association criticized the lack of short-term solutions, and they warned of the consequences of a fertilizer shortage that would affect the 2023 harvest, affecting yields, crop quality and rotations, consumer prices and the competitiveness of European farms. In response to the criticism of EU's fertilizer strategy, the EU has eased some of the

¹¹³ IEA (2022), Gas Market Report, Q4-2022

<https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/5c108dc3-f19f-46c7-a157-f46f4172b75e/GasMarketReportQ42022.pdf>

¹¹⁴ Cf. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/agri-food-supply-chain/ensuring-availability-and-affordability-fertilisers_en

¹¹⁵ Euractiv (2022), EU farmers slam Commission's 'empty' fertilisers plan, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/eu-farmers-slam-commissions-empty-fertilisers-plan/> European Commission (2022), Food security: the Commission addresses the availability and affordability of fertilisers in the EU and globally, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_6564

sanctions through derogation to facilitate Russia's export of fertilizers and agricultural goods.¹¹⁶

Owing to high energy prices and inflation, European farmers face growing financial instability. Record inflation in the Eurozone has in effect led to a devaluation of the CAP budget. The EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, announced in his exchange with the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament on 9 January 2023 that he will support an increased budget.¹¹⁷

We acknowledge the enormous achievement of the European Union in agreeing on the interconnected policy frameworks represented by the Green Deal, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies, and the EU Soil Health Mission funded by the Horizon Europe budget. Nevertheless, there is evidence that a significant part of the farmer population within the European Union genuinely struggles to identify with the process of transition. Examples of this reality include farmers fearing to invite other stakeholders – school students, chefs, policymakers, etc. – to their farms; farmers lacking belief that they can sell directly to consumers; and farmers believing they have to produce food in a conventional way, as they lack independent and high-quality agronomic advice on transitioning to regenerative ways of producing food. One potential difficulty lies in the complexity of the criteria with which farmers are working.¹¹⁸ The real and perceived struggles of farmers and the differences

¹¹⁶ Cf. European Council (2022), Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: EU adopts 9th package of economic and individual sanctions, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/16/russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-eu-adopts-9th-package-of-economic-and-individual-sanctions/>

¹¹⁷ Cf. European Commission (2023), Mr Janusz Wojciechowski in the European Parliament, Brussels; contribution to exchange of views with the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development about the consequences of inflation on the CAP budget, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_23_144

¹¹⁸ For example, under the CAP:


- 40% of the CAP budget has to be climate-relevant;
- at least 35% of funds for rural development have to be allocated to measures supporting climate, biodiversity, environment and animal welfare;
- there are higher green ambitions and the obligation to contribute to the Green Deal targets;



in perspective described above may translate into forms of polarisation as discussed in our working group on that subject. There were farmers' protests throughout Europe in the summer of 2022 that will likely continue in the future. In the Netherlands, for instance, the governments' plan to reduce the country's nitrogen emissions and to shut down up to 3,000 farms has led to the establishment of a pro-farmer party, the BoerBurgerBeweging (BBB), which enjoyed major success in the Dutch provincial elections on 15 March 2023.

Moreover, for the majority of farmers the long-term trends in terms of rural livelihoods are far from encouraging. In 2020 there were 9,1 million farms in the EU. Of these more than 30% were located in Romania, while Poland, Italy and Spain had each a share of more than 10%. The vast majority of EU farms (63.8%) are small farms, less than 5 hectares in size. Only 3.6% belong to the largest category with at least 100 hectares. At the same time, these larger farms had 52.5% of the total area used for agricultural production in the EU. In 2020, as compared to 2005, there were far fewer farms in the EU – a loss of approximately 5 million. The only category increasing in numbers was that of the 100-hectare plus farm. In 2020, more than half of all EU farm managers were at least 55 years of age (around one third at least 65 years of age), and only 11.9% were young farmer managers (defined as those under the age of 40). The number of farm managers had fallen 11.2% in comparison to 2016. Agriculture's share of employment in the EU had also fallen, from 6.4% in 2005 to 4.2% in 2020. Finally, in almost every EU Member State people employed in the agricultural sector have far more working hours per week on average than the rest of the work force.

-
- at least 25% of the budget for direct payments has to be allocated to eco-schemes, providing stronger incentives for climate-and environment-friendly farming practices and approaches as well as animal welfare improvements;
 - enhanced conditionality: beneficiaries of the CAP have to have their payments linked to a stronger set of mandatory requirements.




European farmers are confronted with an enormous set of challenges – ambitious EU legislation, increased conditionality for financial support, and various crises - at the same time as they are engaging with what we describe below as a ‘transition to deliver multiple public goods.’ We need a clearer involvement of farmers and farmer unions in political discussions that especially concern them and their future. Instead of portraying farmers as ‘peak polluters’¹¹⁹ who stand in the way of a sustainable future, it seems necessary to listen to farmers and understand their reasons for frustration. This might also help to understand why the number of small and medium farms as well as farm managers is sharply decreasing with dramatic consequences not only for their personal lives but for the many rural areas throughout Europe they are leaving behind. We also need to understand the attachment many farmers feel to their farms, often held for generations, and farming communities’ social and cultural needs. Only then political solutions might be found that can truly contribute to a sustainable future of our food systems and food security while ‘leaving no one behind.’

The FAO has identified Ireland, Costa Rica, and Rwanda¹²⁰ as countries which are developing credible national processes of climate-related transition. We note that in Costa Rica, since the 1980s, forest cover has increased from 24.4% to 57% (close to the optimum). This transition has been enabled by financial incentives and creative ideas such as loan guarantees, a debt-for-nature swap with Netherlands, a special tax on fossil fuels of 3.5%, and the promotion of ecotourism. The change in Costa Rica has included a cultural change: the promotion of *la pura vida* (‘the simple life’) and the renunciation of military expenditure.

¹¹⁹ The Guardian (2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/30/peak-polluters-last-chance-close-dutch-government>

¹²⁰ Guijt J, Wigboldus S, Brouwer H, Roosendaal L, Kelly S and Garcia-Campos P. *National Processes Shaping Efforts to Transform Food Systems: Lessons from Costa Rica, Ireland and Rwanda*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; 2021. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6149en>.




The Irish approach has taken a step forward in recent days (July 2023) with the publication by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) of the report ‘Exploring a Just Transition in Agriculture and Land Use.’¹²¹ NESC is a body with a broad remit that reports to the office of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister). Dr. Larry O’Connell, Director of NESC, spoke to our group on 27 April. On the same day, we had the benefit of a detailed presentation by Dr. John Gilliland, Professor of Practice at Queen’s University Belfast.¹²² Dr. Gilliland has led a seven-farm project in Northern Ireland aiming at a ‘transition to deliver multiple public goods.’ In the paragraphs that follow we try to draw some practical lessons from NESC and from the work of Dr. Gilliland.

The transition advocated by NESC starts from ‘vision and values.’ A sense of where we are trying to go and what we want to achieve risks being lost sight of if we aim merely at a series of technical changes in separate sectors – carbon commitments, agriculture, land use, soil and water quality, biodiversity, employment, housing, transport infrastructure, taxation, EU policy, international policy, and so on. Nor is it enough to aim at a single formula such as ‘creating a functioning market for ecosystem services’ (to quote from some recent commentary). What is needed is an overarching vision that will inspire individual farmers and farming communities to embark on a journey of positive change. NESC asserts that justice and fairness are essential and underlines that there is no question of a ‘transition out of agriculture;’ the goal is a transition into making optimal use of our land and agricultural resources for environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

A transition to deliver multiple public goods requires us to map the soil at finer resolution, to understand varied ecologies, and to grow food in new

¹²¹ <https://www.nesc.ie/publications/exploring-a-just-transition-in-agriculture-and-land-use/>


¹²² Dr. Gilliland is the former Chair of DEFRA’s Rural Climate Change Forum (London).



ways. We cannot rely on commercial agendas to deliver this change. Public authorities should be directly involved, developing new forms of public investment and new career paths for qualified advisors. For example, we need public investment in the technologies that enable a precise ‘accounting for nature.’ We need increased financial incentives to farmers to protect and enhance the ecosystem and to deliver the other public goods referred to above. Because inevitably there are some relative losers in a ‘just transition,’ targeted financial supports should be in place for the most vulnerable or negatively impacted groups.

A just transition or transition to deliver multiple public goods should be understood in broad terms and should not focus only on the managers of farming businesses. For example, more research is needed on the implications of transition for workers in the supply chains and downstream activity associated with agriculture and land use. The questions of housing and transport infrastructure are integral to the social transformation that is required. While some initiatives will be local and context-specific, action at local levels should be congruent with policies at the national, European, and international levels. The methodology of transition advocated by NESCC is based on **research** – a multifaceted/ multi-method inquiry into different forms of evidence; dialogue - respectful, deep listening to experts, those impacted by policy, those at the ‘front-line’, decision-makers, and social thinkers; and **advice** – a commitment to continuous learning and the scaling up of advisory services. Research, dialogue, and advice form a nexus or system: lessons or insights in any one space create ripples and real change in others.

NESCC recommends that work on ‘accounting for nature’ should be accelerated. Dr. Gilliland’s seven-farms project in Northern Ireland empowers farmers by enabling a regular, holistic assessment of progress by each farming business in the light of a range of public goods – reducing




carbon emissions, sequestering carbon, changing the pattern of energy consumption, improving the nutritional quality of food, restoring water and soil quality, protecting animal welfare, and enabling biodiversity. The farm-by-farm approach to accurate measurement points to the use of new technologies for soil sampling and of aerial surveys to assess topography and above-ground biomass. This holistic, yet individualized and accurate, approach to measurement reaches beyond the IPCC ‘source and sink’ categories in which the statistics are aggregated in broad silos (energy, agriculture, waste).

We conclude that the vision of *accounting for nature* in order to enable a *transition to deliver multiple public goods* is the way of the future. The many factors and actors involved call for innovative ways of engaging with stakeholders, a point that also emerged strongly several other working groups. The focus should shift from the further commercialising of agriculture towards agroecology and regenerative approaches that do not use synthetic pesticides.¹²³ There will be a role for local government in enabling multi-stakeholder approaches and promoting compliance with the emerging strategies. New forms of public investment can build on the extensive systems of public support that are already in place in the agricultural sector.

There is scope to include social metrics or indicators as part of a holistic approach to measurement. These indicators would draw on the ethos that is in any case widely shared among farmers by measuring the impact of the transition on local livelihoods and communities and by promoting the sharing of knowledge and experience. There are lessons to be learned from the introduction of new technologies and reporting requirements into medical practice. This was initially seen as burdensome by some

¹²³ Seeds, right to life and farmers’ rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, 2022, para. 79.




practitioners. But it has contributed to multiple public goods, including better healthcare overall, income streams for medical practices, the development of new professional qualifications, cost reductions, and immense research benefits.

Ultimately, *a transition to deliver multiple public goods* is a political question. To avoid a conflictual, crisis-centred approach, and gain traction for the changes that are required, we need to find spaces in which to deliberate on the wider context - including issues around food and diet, global food security, EU policies and legislation, and local democracy.

Our recommendations from the working group on agriculture and farming can be summarised as follows:

- i. *A transition to deliver multiple public goods* requires us to account for nature in new ways. We cannot rely on commercial agendas to deliver this change. Public authorities should promote a localized approach involving a regular, holistic assessment of progress by each farming business in the light of a range of public goods.
- ii. *New forms of public investment and social protection* are needed to support this transition – for example, financial incentives for relevant actions by farmers and local communities, investments in precision measuring technologies, and targeted financial supports for the most vulnerable or negatively impacted groups.
- iii. We should *accompany the new metrics with new ways of engaging with stakeholders and new social indicators* tracking the impact of the transition on local livelihoods and communities and ensuring that lessons or insights in any one space create ripples and real change in others.

- 
- iv. In order to take root, the social vision underpinning *a transition to deliver multiple public goods* through the optimal use of our land and agricultural resources (and marine resources) will need to embrace society as a whole and ultimately international society. At stake are (i) the distinction between the profit motive and not-for-profit motivations in companies and administrative entities and (ii) a better articulation of the levels at which decisions are taken and of the need to factor in the long-term foreseeable impact of business decisions.

III. Conclusion: Interim Recommendations

III. A High-level values


- i. Effective climate action and reimagined agricultural systems will entail the establishment of clear goals and the sustained coordination of actors across multiple domains. A values-led approach to politics and security in the perspective of 2030 or 2050 should give an overriding priority to sharing the primary goods of life while also accepting a longer-term responsibility to promote the ecological and climatic conditions on which life depends.*

- ii. In relation to food security, we need ‘holistic’ or ‘systems thinking,’ taking into account cultural, economic, ecological, nutritional, financial, technological and other factors.¹²⁴ Polarisation, inequality, conflict, and preparation for conflict are an integral part of our political and economic systems and represent key variables.*

- iii. We put forward for consideration the following definition of democracy: Democracy will be fully implemented only when individuals and all peoples have access to the primary goods of life, food, water, shelter, health care, education, work, and certainty of their rights, through an ordering of internal and international relations that guarantees everyone a chance to participate.*

- iv. A dichotomy between profit-based activities and non-profit activities does not do full justice to reality, or offer adequate practical direction for the future. To recognise that our political and economic thought is ‘incomplete’ is to invite a practical response. More conceptual work is needed and also the continued development of environmental,*

¹²⁴ In his message on World Food Day 2021, Pope Francis said that ‘we must encourage active participation in change at all levels and reorganize food systems as a whole.’



social, and governance (ESG) investing and reporting metrics with a focus on reducing inequality. It is key that we renounce part of the economic advantage we might otherwise enjoy as individuals or associations of individuals for the sake of a life lived in common.

- v. Because change cannot happen all at once, *we need to reappraise policy frameworks and in particular to develop new long-term multi-stakeholder frameworks of engagement in support of the UN SDGs.* The goal is to enable governments and peoples to deliberate on our shared medium-term future, making room for new ideas, while remaining committed to the day-to-day negotiations taking place elsewhere.
- vi. Due diligence to ensure that the relevant stakeholders are included in multi-stakeholder dialogue processes should lead to the involvement of the representatives or nominees of churches and faith communities.

Without offering simple or immediate solutions, we suggest that global politics needs a *bigger language*. The concept of hope, if restored to a fuller meaning in our culture, can help to bridge the gap between the familiar and the unknown – between today and a future that is perhaps not even imaginable.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ We note the following formulation: *earth care – people care – fair shares*. This ethic forms the foundation for permaculture design and is also found in most traditional societies: <https://permacultureprinciples.com>


III. B Examples of practical steps


- i. We can give expression to the change needed in food systems in terms of *a transition to deliver multiple public goods*. New forms of public investment and social protection should support this transition. We should accompany the new metrics with new ways of engaging with stakeholders and new social indicators.
- ii. The social vision underpinning a transition to deliver multiple public goods through the optimal use of our land, agricultural, and marine resources will need to embrace other parts of society and promote social cohesion. We should ensure that lessons or insights in any one space create ripples and real change in others.
- iii. Food-related international organisations should consider commissioning a report on the concepts, organisational principles, and medium-term objectives that can encourage a mutually beneficial engagement by political leaders and other stakeholders with religious actors.
- iv. The European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency, building on its conferences in 2018 and 2021, should continue to promote a holistic understanding of human rights obligations, including the right to food, and to encourage cooperation and mutual literacy between human rights advocates and religious actors.
- v. Governments should implement taxes and warning labels to discourage the use of ultra-processed junk food and beverages, ban their targeted advertising to young people and other vulnerable groups, and implement and support campaigns that aim to regulate

the advertising of unhealthy products.¹²⁶ Funds raised through junk food taxes should be used to subsidise the cost of producing and consuming high-quality, healthy foods.

- vi. We should start promoting a dietary transition at the global level with a focus on nutrition, beginning in early childhood, as well as sustainable production (reducing meat and dairy consumption).
- vii. As recommended by the FAO, work should continue on ‘an evolving and positive vision for fisheries and aquaculture in the twenty-first century, where the sector is fully recognized for its contribution to fighting poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.’
- viii. The European Union, as a unique actor on the world stage with a broad range of policy areas and instruments at its disposal, should promote systemic shifts at the global level (as anticipated by the European Commission in March 2022), by strengthening localisation and promoting agroecology and by bringing a stronger policy coherence, overcoming silo approaches, to the many international contexts in which there is scope to reduce poorer countries’ external dependencies.
- ix. The Commission, EU Member States, and the EIB, which together constitute a major source of IFAD’s funding, should significantly strengthen that support in the course of the IFAD 13 Replenishment, whose pledging session will take place in late 2023.

¹²⁶ FIAN, *The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it*, July 2022, p. 7. For definitions, and State obligations and the responsibilities of the food and beverage industry, see *Unhealthy foods, non-communicable diseases and the right to health*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Anand Grover, 2014.

- 
- x. In the light of the comparisons set out in this report, all States should bring a renewed sense of perspective and proportionality to the allocation of budgetary resources.
 - xi. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should remain at the centre of global diplomacy. In this perspective, key international meetings such as the UNFSS Stocktaking and COP 28 should continue to develop ‘systems thinking,’ beginning with the progressive alignment of food systems diplomacy and climate diplomacy. UN member States should reconnect the disarmament and development agendas and should examine in a far-seeing manner the UN Secretary General’s policy brief on options for reforming the international financial architecture.
 - xii. As a step in the direction of policy coherence, regional organisations should seek synergies between their existing programmes and the national pathways developed within the UN food systems security dialogue.
 - xiii. Civil society organisations should support the work of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food by submitting relevant complaints and by asking him to evaluate the relationship between the right to food, food security, resilient food systems and food sovereignty.
 - xiv. The land rights of indigenous peoples, peasants, and other groups which depend on access to land for the realisation of their right to food must be protected by law.
 - xv. The progressive development of international law can be envisaged in several areas, in relation, for example, to the jurisprudence of ecocide and the responsibilities of non-State actors in the sphere of human rights.

- 
- xvi. In regulating the cross-border activities of corporations, States should take into account the long-term impact of today's actions and decisions. They should balance commercial values such as predictability against the obligation of public authorities to protect ecosystems and livelihoods, with a focus on issues such as concentrations of power (horizontal and vertical integration), the manufacture and export for use elsewhere of agrochemicals banned for domestic use, and the impact of massive monoculture plantations on food systems security.
 - xvii. Following the example of the WHO's framework convention on tobacco control, States should enact provisions to guard against the risks associated with lobbying on food-related issues.
 - xviii. Renewed attention is needed to the implications of sanctions/economic measures for the right to food.
 - xix. Academics and practitioners should develop a new field of study focussing on polarisation and de-polarisation, as recommended by the Institute for Integrated Transitions.
 - xx. Similarly, academics and practitioners should acknowledge that any dichotomy between profit-based activities and non-profit activities does not do full justice to reality, or offer adequate practical direction for the future; this should lead to new research agendas and also to the continued development of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) metrics with a focus on reducing inequality.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ In calling for new metrics, we do not to ignore the 'greenwashing' and 'seaspiracy' risks to which civil society organisations frequently draw attention (see <https://www.seaspiracy.org/facts>)

IV. Annexes

Annex 1: Initial discussion paper on food security (September 2022)

Authored by the team at Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations, DCU

I. Introduction

Food insecurity is not a new challenge. The world has faced countless famines over the last few centuries. Some of these deadliest ones are listed in the text box on the right. The world has lost about 128 million people due to food scarcity since the 1860s until 2016,¹²⁸ and it continues to be the same despite many advancements. A

**The 10 deadliest Famines in History
(Source: Larry Slawsonjul, 2022)**

10. Irish Potato Famine
9. Bengal Famine of 1943
8. Russian Famine of 1921
7. Great Bengal Famine of 1770
6. Doji Bara Famine (“Skull Famine”) of 1789
5. Chalisa Famine of 1783
4. Ukraine Famine of 1932
3. Northern China Famine of 1876
2. Chinese Famine of 1907
1. Great Chinese Famine

A new (July 2022) report by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) highlights the bleak situation the world is living through in the past some years.¹²⁹ According to this report around 702 to 828 million people (8.9 and 10.5 % of world’s population) had to face hunger in 2021, and it is estimated that 670 million people will have to deal food insecurity in 2030. That would be 8% of the world’s population, the same as it was in 2015. The percentage will remain unchanged during the 15-year time frame of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

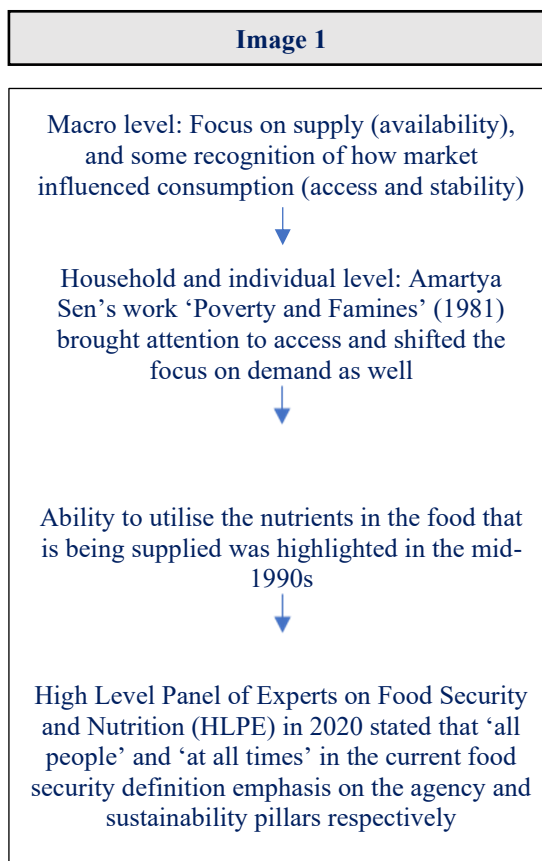
There is enough food being produced in the world, yet there is ‘shortage’ of food because of structural problems, which leads to inaccessibility to healthy food. Amartya Sen’s work on the Bengal famine of 1943 is often regarded as a turning point in the study of food insecurity and famine. In recent years, a number of studies have applied systems thinking to the study of peacebuilding, including the achievement of food security. According to Steve Killilea, the founder of the Institute for Economics and Peace, ‘breaking subjects down into their constituent parts and using cause-and-effect thinking was inadequate to explain the operation of the whole.’¹³⁰ Systems thinking helps both to explain the interrelationship of issues and to illuminate how

¹²⁸ Joe Hasell and Max Roser, *Famines*, December 2017, <https://ourworldindata.org/famines>

¹²⁹ FAO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*, <https://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2022/en/>

¹³⁰ Steve Killilea, *Peace in the Age of Chaos*, 2020, pp.85 – 96

positive change can be promoted. Arguably, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which propose a wide range of interconnected indicators of change, are influenced by systems thinking. Writing in 2022, George Monbiot argues that the ‘global standard diet’, the drive to maximise ‘efficiency’, and the continuing ‘horizontal and vertical integration’ of corporations is undermining the element of ‘redundancy’ or slack that is an essential aspect of any resilient ‘complex system’.¹³¹ Systems thinking signifies the complexities in the Food System; therefore, Food Security can only be achieved with the involvement of multiple actors/stakeholders taking on different approaches to reduce hunger. Pope Francis in his message on World Food Day in 2021 emphasised the ‘need for concerted action’ and ‘innovative solutions’ to overcome hunger, and stated that ‘we must encourage active participation in change at all levels and reorganize food systems as a whole’.¹³²



Churches and faith communities by definition cross national and other boundaries. As the century progresses, they are learning to work together and to devote increasing attention to the contribution they can bring to advocacy in support of multilateral responses to the major challenges facing the whole of humanity. In this perspective, the Centre’s new project, ‘World Food Security and Finding a Bigger Language in Global Diplomacy’, serves a number of converging purposes, as set out in our parallel concept note.¹³³ Using a human rights lens, we aim to involve people from different backgrounds, including faith communities, in addressing Food Insecurity. This is intended to lead to other projects of engaged research on consequential global issues in the perspective of 2025. Along the way, we

¹³¹ George Monbiot, *Regeneration*, 2022, especially chapter 2

¹³² Christopher Wells, Pope: *Overcoming hunger is one of humanity’s great challenges*, October 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-10/pope-overcoming-hunger-is-one-of-humanity-s-great-challenges.html>

¹³³ Kindly refer to the Concept note on the project that has already been circulated to know more about this project.

can support ‘mutual literacy’ between public authorities and religious actors and help to clarify the organisational principles – timelines, frameworks, modes of accessibility – that can strengthen the impact of multilateral diplomacy.

This paper is aimed at generating a discussion on ensuring Food Security. It sets off with an overview of the terms, concepts, and the history of Food Systems, followed by causes and impact of Food Insecurity. This sub-section is further divided into four main causes, namely problems with agricultural policies, economic causes and trade policies, geopolitical reasons, and climate change. The next part of the paper examines the relevant actors and the different approaches they have taken to ensure Food Security. These may possibly help in approaching the issue holistically, and development of ideas and multidimensional actions that will contribute to ending Food Insecurity. The last part of the paper, which is titled concluding thoughts and way forward, details proposed short- and medium-term measures that can be taken up by those involved in the project.

II. A brief background

II. A The concept of Food Security and the history of Food Systems

The concept of Food Security and its definition have evolved and become more complex since the 1970s. The term Food Security originated in the mid-1970s as a result of global food crisis during this time period and the focus of discussions were on the supply side of food. The earliest established definition was during the 1974 World Food Summit (WFS), and some of the discussions (as during the 1943 UN Conference on Food and Agriculture) from the earlier decades contributed to how Food Security was defined in 1974. Following which there have been at least five changes over the last five decades. The definition that has been commonly used now was established in FAO’s 2001 the State of Food Insecurity report. According to this report ‘Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.’¹³⁴

At present, as per FAO’s 2022 report there are six pillars that help achieve Food Security - availability, access, utilisation, stability, agency, and sustainability.¹³⁵ The first four pillars are reflected in the 1996 definition, and other two have been recently identified and listed from the 2001 definition.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ FAO, *Chapter 2. Food security: concepts and measurement*, <https://www.fao.org/3/y4671e/y4671e06.htm>

¹³⁵ FAO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition...*, op. cit., <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0639en/online/sofi-2022/introduction.html>

¹³⁶ HLPE, *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030*, 2020, <https://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf>

These pillars help in addressing what aspects need to be looked at on both the supply and demand side to ensure Food Security. Image 1 in this document provides an overview of how these pillars came into being over the last five decades, and what they symbolise.

Changes in the way Food Security was specified over 50 years has contributed to how targets were defined in the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDG 1 - Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger) versus now in the SDGs. Achieving food security falls under Goal 2 of the SDGs, and the UN has listed certain targets for countries to attain for ensuring food security. These targets are – 'ending hunger, and ensuring access by all people to safe, nutritious food; doubling the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers; ensuring sustainable food production systems; increasing investment in agriculture; correcting and preventing trade



restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets; and adopting measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets'.¹³⁷ Whereas target 1.C of the MDGs emphasised only on undernourishment and underweight.¹³⁸

SDG 2 with regard to hunger is interconnected with other seven of the 17 SDGs.¹³⁹ These seven are SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production), SDG 14 (Life below water) and SDG 15 (Life on land).

The UN Sustainable Development Goals represent, in embryo, a vision of the global citizenship of nation States and a medium-term common plan for humanity that takes into account the 'density' of interactions across borders and the interconnectedness of issues. The Global Compact for Migration, adopted in 2018, rests in part on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development framed by the SDGs. Similar values underpin the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the work of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in bringing Covid-19 under control. The approach we take to Food Security and Food Systems can help to shape the overall global future.

Along with Food Security, to be able to understand the nuances around this issue, it is useful to know two other terms – Food Insecurity and Food Poverty – that have been used in this paper. Long, Gonçalves, Stretesky, and

¹³⁷ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture*, <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/food-security-and-nutrition-and-sustainable-agriculture>

¹³⁸ UN, *MDGs*, <https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml>

¹³⁹ FAO, *Tracking progress on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators 2021*, <https://www.fao.org/sdg-progress-report/2021/en/>

Defeyter, note that ‘Food insecurity occurs when people have restricted access to “safe and nutritious foods” and are unable to “access enough food to meet dietary energy requirements” [17] (p. 5) for an active healthy life.’ However, the same authors feel that this definition does not address the structural gaps that further Food Insecurity, and as a result, Food Poverty is seen a more appropriate term to use. Food Poverty is defined as ‘insufficient economic access to an adequate quantity and quality of food to maintain a nutritionally satisfactory and socially acceptable diet’ by O’Connor, Farag, and Baines (as quoted in the abovementioned authors’ work).¹⁴⁰

Analysts on Food Security maintain that ‘...there is enough food on the planet to feed everyone.’¹⁴¹ This leads one to question the causes behind hunger around the world. While the objective of this section was to provide a common understanding of Food Security as a concept and how it has changed over time, an overview into the history of Food Systems will help in understanding the reasons behind Food Insecurity that the world faces today. Chris Otter, a Professor at Ohio State University, documenting the history of Food System, divides these into seven periods until 2010.¹⁴²

- i. Early historic period: Food grown for self-consumption
- ii. Around 600 AD onwards: Exchange of food (namely the spice trade, sale of sugar by Islamic farmers in the Mediterranean)
- iii. 1500-1750: Mercantile food system, where basics food items were grown in Europe and rest were brought from the colonies, and these colonies were only allowed to trade with the colonisers.
- iv. 1850-1930: Settler-colonial regime, where non-European settler colonies supplied food items to Europe and bought goods manufactured in Europe from the profits.
- v. Post-1945 was called the ‘productivist’ food regime, and it was the period when Europe and America’s farming industry was protected, and food industry developed. This phase saw the emergence of Green Revolution (push for increasing food productivity using technology) in different parts of the world, and overpopulation was considered to be the cause of hunger during this period.
- vi. Early 1970s: The phase where food crisis was seen as an effect of economic and climate changes. For the first time, World Food Conference of 1974 was organised in Rome during this phase.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Long, M.A., Gonçalves, L., Stretesky, P.B. and Defeyter, M.A., 2020. Food insecurity in advanced capitalist nations: A review. *Sustainability*, 12(9), p.3654.

¹⁴¹ Sally Hayden, *World hunger is not an inevitability. It's politics*, August 2022, <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/2022/08/13/world-hunger-is-not-an-inevitability-its-politics/>

¹⁴² Chris Otter, *Feast and Famine: The Global Food Crisis*, March 2010, https://origins.osu.edu/article/feast-and-famine-global-food-crisis?language_content_entity=en

¹⁴³ UN, *Report of the World Food Conference, Rome, 5-16 November 1974*, 1975, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/701143?ln=en>

- vii. Post-1980s: Neoliberal food regime. A phase that has been affecting food systems and causing food insecurity till date. This phase, where the role of governments was to facilitate private actors' role in agriculture and reduce their own control over food production to consumption, have hugely impacted agriculture polices, which add to Food Security problems.

One can track the changes in food production and consumption over many centuries from just this brief description that has been given above. A key pattern that can be observed here is the world becoming more globalised and interdependent with each of the phases. While it is a positive trend in many ways, it can also be harmful. For example, in cases where developed countries take advantage of developing countries – particularly since the fourth phase – and encourage or/and force (through various means) them to produce and export most of the food grains. This not only affects the production of local crops, sometimes completely wiping out those crops, but it also causes Food Insecurity within these developing countries, and often impacting indigenous communities the most.

II. B Causes and impact of Food Insecurity

Food Insecurity and Food Poverty occur broadly because of two reasons – unavailability of healthy food and people's lack of resources and capabilities to access food that is available. It is clear that inaccessibility to nutritious food is invariably caused by larger international and national level policies decided by States, people's inability to buy food are also most often caused by structural inequalities that the governments fail to address. For instance, a recent study shows that those who live in rented accommodation in Ireland find it nine times more difficult to pay for basic needs (which includes food) compared to the others.¹⁴⁴

Multiple factors create hurdles in ensuring Food Security. Although they can vary from country to country or region to region, these factors largely apply everywhere. It is important to note that within these countries and regions, most often, marginalised communities based on gender (women and queers); race, caste, and ethnicity (people of colour, ethnic minority groups such as the Travellers in Ireland, Dalits, and indigenous people); and other groups such as refugees and religious minorities are much more likely to face hunger compared to the others. Which set of people, how and why they get affected due to Food Insecurity and Food Poverty have been highlighted by those in the Food Justice movement.

¹⁴⁴ Tweet by Ciarán Nugent <https://twitter.com/ciarannugent/status/1557709035096391680?t=uJs33wPyqHGU4EsUbK83uA&s=03>, August 2022,

'Conflict, climate variability and extremes and economic slowdowns and downturns have widened existing inequities in the world's food systems' noted the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri in the July 2021 Interim report.¹⁴⁵ Most analysts state that Food Insecurity started becoming a major problem since 2010. In recent years many of them note three Cs as the main reasons for Food Insecurity - conflict, climate shock, and Covid-19. In the following part of this section, some of the broad causes are discussed which will help in identifying key issues/gaps that affect Food Systems, and subsequently cause Food Poverty and Insecurity. These causes are very much interrelated to each other, and it is important to address them all together.

Agricultural policies

The momentum for enhancing agriculture output, which has been the primary goal of most agricultural policies, especially since the Green Revolution phase, has led to many adverse strategies and practices.¹⁴⁶ The Green Revolution no doubt addressed the short-term issue of food scarcity. However, some of the approaches that countries pushed the farmers to take, such as use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, and providing subsidies on these, have done long-term harm, not just in the context of food production: they have also led to environmental degradation. Further, the neo-liberal phase (post-1980s), which introduced some drastic changes such as deregulation of agricultural markets, decrease in States' funding to counter Food Insecurity, and policies that worsened farm workers' rights, have weakened systems that are needed to ensure Food Security.¹⁴⁷

Economic causes and trade policies

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) in recent years has acknowledged (something social movements have been highlighting since WTO's origin) that Food Security is a concern of global governance, especially in relation to trade policies.¹⁴⁸ Trade policies and practices affect availability of food at a country level, as well at the global level. At present, rich countries and their farmers profit the most from WTO's and other international trade rules, and consequently, import, export, and food production are influenced by

¹⁴⁵ Michael Fakhri, *A/77/177: The right to food and the COVID-19 pandemic - Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food*, July 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a77177-right-food-and-covid-19-pandemic-interim-report-special>

¹⁴⁶ OECD, *Food security and Nutrition*, <https://www.oecd.org/agriculture/topics/food-security/>

¹⁴⁷ The Campus Environmental Center, *Neoliberal Food*, [https://utenvironment.org/projects/microfarm/food-justice/glossary/neoliberal-food/#:~:text=HomeProject%20TeamsMicrofarmFood,good%20\(Harvey%2C%202020\).](https://utenvironment.org/projects/microfarm/food-justice/glossary/neoliberal-food/#:~:text=HomeProject%20TeamsMicrofarmFood,good%20(Harvey%2C%202020).)

¹⁴⁸ Michael Fakhri, *A/76/237 Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to Food*, July 2021, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/208/03/PDF/N2120803.pdf?OpenElement>

these policies. Furthermore, trade policies also impact the income of citizens, thus affecting their capacity to buy healthy food. Free trade or liberal trade practices need not necessarily mean that people have enough nutritious food. Food is exported by countries even when their population do not have enough to eat. On balance, having unrestricted or liberal trading of food across borders does contribute to ensuring Food Security. Increase in trade can lead to economic growth, more employment, and more income. At the same time, open trade does not necessarily mean that the income will be distributed equally within the country. There have been many debates around unrestricted agricultural trade policies not leading to equity.¹⁴⁹ The 2007-2008 food crisis showed the world that ‘...food prices are simultaneously too low for producers and too high for consumers, and prone to fluctuations.’¹⁵⁰ States need to take steps to ensure growth along with equity, but most often neoliberal policies (followed by most countries in the world) make it difficult for this to happen.¹⁵¹

Economic strategies and geopolitical reasons influence trade policies, including trade sanctions which affect food availability. A study which examined the impact of economic sanctions on Food Security found that ‘...most of the food insecure countries in the world are also sanctioned states. For instance, according to the Global Hunger Index, countries such as Burundi, Eritrea, Yemen, Afghanistan, Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and North Korea are the most food insecure countries and at the same time these countries have also suffered long periods of international sanctions.’ At the country level, when such sanctions are imposed, governments either do not provide enough resources that are needed to produce food or/and control food distribution and use it to its advantage.¹⁵² In recent years, the Covid-19 pandemic has further disrupted the food supply chain, as cross border trade was halted in many parts of the world. It showed the world how fragile the current Food System is. The pandemic pushed millions of people into poverty and made it difficult for them to access food, but one set of people saw their wealth grow by 45%, in monetary terms by \$382billion,

¹⁴⁹ FAO, *Chapter 1. Food security and trade: an overview*, <https://www.fao.org/3/y4671e/y4671e05.htm>

¹⁵⁰ Michael Fakhri, *A/76/237 Interim report...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁵¹ Christopher Stevens, Romilly Greenhill, Jane Kennan, Stephen Devereux, *The WTO Agreement on Agriculture and Food Security*, January 2010, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242075421_The_WTO_Agreement_on_Agriculture_and_Food_Security

¹⁵² Sylvanus Kwaku Afesorgbor, *Sanctioned to Starve? The impact of economic sanctions on food security in targeted states*, Research Handbook on Economic Sanctions, Edward Elgar Publishing, UK, 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343212464_Sanctioned_to_Starve_The_impact_of_economic_sanctions_on_food_security_in_targeted_states

during this time. Since the pandemic began in 2020, food and agribusiness sector has had 62 new food billionaires.¹⁵³

It seems that economic and trade policies alone will not overcome Food Poverty, mainly because these policies are influenced by geo-political drivers. The case of Sri Lanka's 2021-22 economic crash leading to Food Insecurity is a good case in point where economic, geo-political and internal policies and practices, all together cause shortage and inaccessibility to food.

Geopolitical causes

Competition between global powers, heightened right-wing nationalism, conflicts, and increase in authoritarian states are immeasurably affecting Food systems.¹⁵⁴ A contributor to Irish Times in a recent article noted that according to some lawyers, 'Famine and acute food insecurity is generally caused or exacerbated by human actions – it can be a result of bad governance, war tactics or opportunism.'¹⁵⁵ The recent case of EU sanctions on Russia and Russia's blockade of ports in the Black Sea, preventing Ukraine from sending food grains are some examples from Europe.¹⁵⁶ However, 'under the auspices of the United Nations, Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on the export of grain. Other actors confirmed that they are not blocking Russian agricultural exports.'¹⁵⁷ In early August, China banned exporting of certain food items from Taiwan, as a response to the US's House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit.¹⁵⁸ In South Asia, India and Pakistan's relations have affected India's humanitarian support to Afghanistan. Not being able to use Pakistan's territory to transport food grains (wheat in this case) to Afghanistan was delaying aid delivery until Pakistan allowed India to do so in December 2021.¹⁵⁹ In the Americas, a report by a Venezuelan economist shows that USA's sanctions (though not on food imports) had a huge impact on securing food, and left millions hunger.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵³ Oxfam International, *Fixing our food, Debunking 10 myths about the global food system and what drives hunger*, September 2022, <https://oxfamibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621411/bp-food-systems-10-myths-080922-en.pdf;jsessionid=5E5ED3DCC86ADE174E77014BD2C8D682?sequence=1>

¹⁵⁴ Jiayi Zhou, Lisa Maria Dellmuth, Kevin M. Adams, Tina-Simone Neset and Nina Von Uexkull, *The geopolitics of food security: barriers to the sustainable development goal of zero hunger*, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2020/11, November 2020, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/sipriinsight2011_zero_hunger_2.pdf

¹⁵⁵ Sally Hayden, *World hunger is not an ...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁶ Matina Stevis-Gridneff, *Russia Agrees to Let Ukraine Ship Grain, Easing World Food Shortage*, The New York Times, July 23, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/22/world/europe/ukraine-russia-grain-deal.html>

¹⁵⁷ Philip McDonagh, *It's time to talk*, The Tablet, vol 276 no. 9464, 6 August 2022

¹⁵⁸ Al Jazeera, *China restricts trade with Taiwan amid tensions over Pelosi trip*, 3 Aug 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/8/3/china-halts-sand-exports-to-taiwan-amid-tension-over-pelosi-trip>

¹⁵⁹ Baqir Sajjad Syed, *India to use Afghan trucks for sending aid to Afghanistan through Pakistan*, Dawn, 4 December 2021, 117 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1661874>

¹⁶⁰ Luis Oliveros, *The Impact of Financial and Oil Sanctions on the Venezuelan Economy*, WOLA, October 2020, <https://www.wola.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Oliveros-report-summary-ENG.pdf>

“...if we don’t silence the guns, it’s not going to work” stated Tanzania’s Vice President Philip Isdor Mpango at a session ‘How to avert a global food crisis?’ during World Economic Forum 2022, while talking about how to increase food productivity.¹⁶¹ Armed conflict both internal (including civil wars) and between countries, have frequently triggered food shortage. When examined, there is a direct correlation between conflict and hunger. The top five projected hunger hotspot countries declared by World Food Programme (WFP) are Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Yemen,¹⁶² and in each of these countries, there have been some form of conflict in the last few decades. There is also a direct link between forced migration and hunger – where forced migration is both a cause and consequence of hunger. WFP Executive Director David Beasley points out that “with every one percent increase in hunger, there is a two percent increase in migration.”¹⁶³ Equally, lack of control over the Food System can cause conflict, for instance, the origin of 1967 Naxalbari uprising (lead by peasants) in India.¹⁶⁴

Measures driven by geopolitical reasons do not contribute to ensuring Food Security. As seen in all of the cases mentioned in the earlier paragraphs, dialogues and cooperation between countries and regions have stopped causing distressing situations for ordinary people. India-Pakistan and Russia-Ukraine relations have shown that countries need to engage in discussions, and it is possible to do so to provided there is political will.

Climate change

At the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP) last year experts working on Food Security noted that Climate change affected Food Security.¹⁶⁵ While the extent of mid-term impact on agriculture production can differ, it is anticipated that the world will certainly face long-term effects.¹⁶⁶ The 11th August case of ‘wheat fire’ in Wexford county, Ireland is one such instance

¹⁶¹ World Economic Forum 2022, *How to avert a global food crisis?* May 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYa8ffbwwFE>

¹⁶² FAO and WFP, *Hunger Hotspots. FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: February to May 2022 Outlook*, 2022, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000136243/download/?_ga=2.255727752.145675538.1661620236-3418259.1660555963

¹⁶³ World Economic Forum 2022, *How to avert...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁴ Vidushi Kaushik and Denise Ripamonti, *Debating Peace in Contested Spaces: Foregrounding Adivasi Assertion in Revolutionary India*, 2021, <https://iicr.ie/debating-peace-in-contested-spaces/>

¹⁶⁵ Teresa Welsh, *Deep dive: Food security’s climate problem*, Devex Newswire, 10 August 2022, <https://www.devex.com/news/deep-dive-food-security-s-climate-problem-103712>

¹⁶⁶ Jiayi Zhou, Lisa Maria Dellmuth, Kevin M. Adams, Tina-Simone Neset and Nina Von Uexkull, *The geopolitics of food...*, *op. cit.*

of where changing weather patterns are causing loss of food grains.¹⁶⁷ Situations such as water shortage, floods and drought induced by changes in the weather conditions have been very destructive in many countries – like in Pakistan, where two million acres of cultivated land have been damaged because of the recent floods.¹⁶⁸ This year, in Western Europe, many governments declared draught in some pockets of their territories, and many parts in the developing world has been facing draught for several years now.¹⁶⁹

Food production practices also contribute to worsening of the environment. 'Intensive industrial agriculture and export-oriented food policies' have been emitting 1/3rd of worlds' greenhouse gases.¹⁷⁰ This mainly started during the 'productivist' food regime phase after 1945.

Ascertaining the root causes and causal factors behind Food Insecurity and Food Poverty help in recognising that food is part of a larger system and how different processes from production to transportation to consumption lead to hunger and famine, and most often impact the marginalised groups in every country.¹⁷¹ These impacts on people have been studied extensively. Not having access to enough food causes social, mental, and physical problems in children and adults as various studies have shown. Children tend to socialise less outside of school, it affects their ability to study. Unhealthy food practices result in bad health. All this leads to a vicious cycle of poverty. Likewise, food insecure adults face similar issues, and it impacts their ability to lead a healthy life.¹⁷²

Climate change and virus outbreaks coupled with political, economic, and social factors will continue to deter countries from meeting the 2030 agenda. To succeed, meaning to end hunger, different stakeholders need to come together, accept the principle of accountability in the light of their commitments, and start meeting the goals that have been arrived at the global level.

¹⁶⁷ Rachel Donovan, *Watch: major crop fire in Ferns, Wexford*, Irish Farmers Journal, 12 August 2022, <https://www.farmersjournal.ie/watch-major-wheat-fire-in-ferns-co-wexford-715849>

¹⁶⁸ Shah Meer Baloch and agencies, *Pakistan declares emergency as floods hit over 30 million people*, The Guardian, 26 Aug 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/26/pakistan-declares-emergency-floods-monsoon-rains>

¹⁶⁹ Paul Gillespie, *Impact of China's impending water catastrophe will be felt around the world*, Irish Times, 27 Aug 2022, <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/2022/08/27/impact-of-chinas-impending-water-catastrophe-will-be-felt-around-the-world/>

¹⁷⁰ Michael Fakhri, *A/76/237 Interim report...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷¹ Food systems analysis is one such way of doing it.

¹⁷² Long, M.A., Gonçalves, L., Stretesky, P.B. and Defeyter, M.A., *Food insecurity in advanced capitalist nations: A review*, Sustainability, 12(9), p.3654, 2020

III. Different actors working on ensuring Food Security

Food System involves many actors, involving everyone who are participating in primary production, distribution, and consumption. The policies around this System are made by States, global governing institutions, and multilateral bodies – from what to produce, who produces it to who consumes it or where food supply will flow into. Multiple actors are engaging at different stages in the Food System, every so often repeating the work that others are already doing, sometimes in harmony and alignment with what is being done, and in some cases bringing additional efforts that contribute to ensuring Food Security. There have also been cases where work done by people have either been detrimental to the communities or have led to loss of resources. In view of these factors, it becomes important to understand what some of the actors are doing to ensure Food Security, which can then guide the discussions in October, and help in charting a plan on how participants through the Multilateralism and Methodology Project can contribute.

III. A The role of States and multilateral actors in ensuring Food Security

Discussions around ensuring Food Security conventionally and rightly so have been in the context of developing countries, especially those located in the global south. However, people living in developed countries and regions such as the UK, USA, Ireland, and the European Union are increasingly encountering food insecurity in the past some years.¹⁷³ A report by Oxfam published very recently notes that the US, between August 2021 and April 2022, saw a 3.4% increase (from 7.8% to 11.2%) in the rate of people who are facing Food Insecurity.¹⁷⁴ According to the 2022 report by FAO, 20.2% of the population in Africa, 9.1% in Asia, 8.6% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5.8% in Oceania, and less than 2.5 % in Northern America and Europe faced hunger in 2021.¹⁷⁵ Taking the discussion on root causes into consideration, the role of States in the Food System becomes very important. States have the primary moral and legal responsibility to make sure that people do not face hunger, not just within their own territories but also in other countries because of how the current Food System works. Where our actions impact on others, we have responsibilities. Ultimately, governments, as duty bearers, must ensure that the multilateral system is fit-for-purpose and that the most consequential issues are addressed.

¹⁷³ Long, M.A., Gonçalves, L., Stretesky, P.B. and Defeyter, M.A., *Food insecurity...*, *cit. op.*

¹⁷⁴ Oxfam International, *Fixing our food, Debunking...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁵ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0639en>

Recognising food as a human right

Access to food is a human right since it was added to the Declaration in 1948 (part of Article 25, Right to Adequate Standard of Living). Even where Human Rights treaties cannot in practice be used to hold States accountable, countries like India have introduced legal provisions such as the Food Security Act, 2013 – which is one step further than just being a signatory to the international treaties. Some countries have Food as a right mentioned in their constitutions, giving citizens the constitutional entitlement to gain access to healthy food. To fulfil with their obligations, countries provide subsidised food grains, and other basic food items to certain sections of the society (this could be based on age, income level etc.). Some also have cash transfer schemes in place.

Commitment to SDGs

193 country members of the UN in 2015 agreed to work towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. However, ensuring Food Security has been a challenge for governments even before the Covid-19 pandemic, and reports such as the ‘State of the World, 2022’ by FAO and the ‘Global Food Policy Report, 2021’ by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) have clearly indicated that most countries will not be able to meet the SDGs by 2030. During the UN’s 2021 Food Systems Summit many of these countries once more stated their willingness to work on their Food Systems.¹⁷⁶ Countries such as Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have introduced comprehensive social protection systems aimed at reducing poverty and hunger, and these systems ‘have become part of national strategies to reduce poverty, improve livelihoods, and build resilience’.¹⁷⁷ Many countries have been taking different short - and medium - term initiatives to meet Food Security needs.¹⁷⁸ Ireland, for instance, in 2021 developed a policy, Food Vision 2030, with the goal of becoming a leading country in sustainable food systems.¹⁷⁹ The European Union has brought in a new common agricultural policy for 2023-27, and its effective implementation can help farmers across Europe.

¹⁷⁶ Tom Arnold, *We must prioritise food and nutrition security*, Irish Times, 29 Aug 2022, <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/2022/08/29/state-must-prioritise-food-and-nutrition-security/>,

¹⁷⁷ FAO, WFP, UNECE, UNICEF, WHO, WMO, *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia 2020: Affordable healthy diets to address all forms of malnutrition for better health*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3849en>

¹⁷⁸ Paul Gillespie, *Impact of China’s...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁹ Tom Arnold, *We must prioritise...*, *op. cit.*

III. B What are non-state actors doing to ensure Food Security?

Along with State actors, and the multilateral organisations, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), networks, global justice movements, faith-based groups, philanthropic organisations, and the business sector have been some of the crucial actors who have played a role to play by taking different approaches to promote Food Security.

Business and markets

As we argue in our parallel concept paper (referred to above), we find a search for a 'bigger language' in many areas of public life today. Businesses, for instance, now articulate a 'purpose' that takes them beyond mere profit-making (and if the purpose does not do that, they can be accused of 'purpose-washing', by analogy to 'whitewashing'). The climate crisis is driving us all to take a 'bigger picture' of meaning and purpose into account when dealing with technical questions in economics. The lessons we are learning in relation to climate change and the environment – that markets are their own do not protect our essential common interests – can be applied in various ways in other sectors including agriculture, water management, and food security.

Humanitarian and welfare approach


Intergovernmental organisations such as the FAO and WFP, faith-based groups, INGOs/NGOs, CSOs, community groups and individuals, and philanthropic and corporate foundations have been extending humanitarian support to people and countries facing Food Insecurity.

While UN agencies (such as WFP and FAO), INGOs and NGOs have been providing humanitarian aid in the form of food grains to countries affected by conflict and disasters, and faith-based groups, CSOs, and community groups have been providing ready to eat food for those in need. Initiatives such as food banks by the Churches and the *Langar*¹⁸⁰ by the Sikh communities are some good undertakings that have helped thousands of people.

Rights-based approach

Actors using this approach look at the Food System as a whole, and highlight structural issues such as ownership rights, the power imbalance, and the gaps in what duty-bearers should be doing, and they further

¹⁸⁰ Langar (Sikhism), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langar_\(Sikhism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langar_(Sikhism))



advocate for changes, and in some cases support duty bearers to fulfil their commitments alongside empowering rights holders. To name some such actors, organisations like the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development in the UK have been advocating with their government to fulfil its COP26 commitments and support agriculture systems that address climate change.¹⁸¹ A global justice movement called the Food sovereignty¹⁸² movement has been pushing for a fair food system. The demand has been to give control over food policies and from production to distribution to those who produce food. Movements like these can help achieve Food Security and also keep a check on economic and trade policies. For global food justice movement, anti-hunger work and guaranteeing food justice are interconnected.

At present, discussions on the Food System and approaches to address Food Insecurity do not always consider the voices of those who produce food, and this is not just in the context of global south countries such as India, where farmers had been protesting for almost a year starting in November 2020, and the central government was not taking note of their views on an agriculture bill that was proposed in the parliament; one can see similar farmer protests in Western European countries too (current developments in the Netherlands and Germany). This happens more so in the case of women producers. “We need women’s voices and leadership to be prominent in food systems. It’s the only way to guarantee that food systems are just,” noted Jemimah Njuki, Director for Africa IFPRI in a podcast.¹⁸³ Recognising the role of women, the ‘Food for Life, Food Justice, Food for All’ 2021 webinars organised by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and the Vatican COVID-19 Commission, and their partners included a dialogue on how women’s leadership roles in the Food System can be supported. This session highlighted that ‘A holistic approach, therefore, requires us to put people at the centre of the strategies adopted, starting with women.’¹⁸⁴

Another gap that has to be filled in the work that is already being done is to bring voices from developing countries. The discussions around crucial global topics, including Food Insecurity, does not take note of those in the global south. The approaches discussed here are not generally inclusive

¹⁸¹ CAFOD, *Fix the Food System*, <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Fix-the-food-system>

¹⁸² The term Food Sovereignty was coined by a farmers group, La Via Campesina.

¹⁸³ UN, *The Food Systems Summit*, 23 September 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

¹⁸⁴ Covid-19, Vatican Commission, *Healing the Planet by Ensuring the Right to Food for All*, May 2021, https://www.humandevlopment.va/content/dam/sviluppoumano/vatican-covid19-response/doc-newsletter/ecology/book/c-Healingtheplanet_foodforall.pdf

and are very top-down, even though most of the population that is affected by Food Insecurity live in these developing regions.

IV. Concluding thoughts and way forward

Borrowing P Sainath's words that he used to describe draughts, there are two types of Food shortages, 'real and rigged'.¹⁸⁵ Food has become 'as an object of strategic national importance', and countries have used different strategies to access or/and safeguard resources to avoid food shortages.¹⁸⁶ At present, the world is witnessing 'geopolitically motivated food-supply disruptions'.¹⁸⁷ As the Special Rapporteur on the right to food stated in his report 'the problem with trying to transform food systems is not a lack of solutions but a lack of concerted action, and of international political determination to address structural challenges'.¹⁸⁸ To address the root causes for Food Insecurity, having multilateral dialogues and cooperation is most important. These have to be done in combination with alliance building across geographical spaces and with different communities. On similar lines, the 2021 recommendations by a high-level expert group formed by the European Commission had emphasised on 'additional resources and broader mandates', at the same time as having 'multisectoral task forces' and 'network of networks' to synchronise the different agendas.¹⁸⁹ The Food Systems Summit of 2021 initiated 'food systems dialogues' involving a diverse range of actors including youth representatives. It is likely that the follow-up meeting in 2023, for which dates are not yet confirmed, will focus on both 'multipolarity' and 'transversality.' By 'multipolarity' we mean the interaction and interdependence of many different actors. 'Transversality' suggests that actors in a particular category, such as governments, corporations, international institutions, NGOs, or religious confessions do not talk only to their direct counterparts, but remain open to forms of dialogue that cut across categories and may prove transformative for themselves.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Sainath, P. (Palagummi). *Everybody loves a good drought* (p 324). New Delhi, India; New York, NY, USA: Penguin Books, 1996

¹⁸⁶ Jiayi Zhou, Lisa Maria Dellmuth, Kevin M. Adams, Tina-Simone Neset and Nina Von Uexkull, *The geopolitics ...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁷ Jiayi Zhou, Lisa Maria Dellmuth, Kevin M. Adams, Tina-Simone Neset and Nina Von Uexkull, *The geopolitics ...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁸ Michael Fakhri, *A/77/177: The right to food and...*, *cit. op.*

¹⁸⁹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Everyone at the table: transforming food systems by connecting science, policy and society*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022

¹⁹⁰ McDonagh and others, *On the Significance of Religion for Global Diplomacy* (2021), p. 138

Taking forward the discussion on the approaches in the earlier section here, some indicative points on what these multilateral dialogues and cooperation can include have been listed below.

I don't preach a social gospel; I preach the Gospel, period. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned for the whole person. When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, "Now is that political or social?" He said, "I feed you." Because the good news to a hungry person is bread.

- Desmond Tutu

Meeting immediate needs

"Food shouldn't be a privilege; we should have the right to food by being born and living on the planet" noted Ericka Huggins, an American activist, writer, and educator.¹⁹¹ As pointed out earlier, 8.9 and 10.5 % of world's population is suffering from hunger at present, they need immediate supply for healthy food. The suggestive list provided by FAO for countries to follow so as to reduce the risk of food insecurity around the world is to 'meet the immediate food needs of their vulnerable populations'¹⁹² and this can be starting point of discussion on what different stakeholders can do to meet this need of vulnerable population.

Advocacy for structural changes and global transformation

While food aid is important to meet the immediate hunger, what is more important are structural reforms, involving experts from multiple disciplines and actors holding governments and international institutions accountable. A report published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) end of June 2022 highlighted that there has been an increase in need for humanitarian assistance this year by 29%, compared to mid-2021. Further, the report notes that there is a shortage of \$36.9 billion to meet these requirements.¹⁹³ Though some donor countries are committing to extend aid to tackle food crisis in developing countries (USA committed to provide \$2.76 billion at the June G7 summit¹⁹⁴), this form of support from donors will continue to shrink with the current global recession.

Hence, we need to ensure the synergy of several different approaches:

¹⁹¹ Aspen Institute, *Conversations on Food Justice series: The Radical Origins of Free Breakfast and the Food Justice Movement*, 29 October 2020, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/videos/conversations-on-food-justice-series-the-radical-origins-of-free-breakfast-and-the-food-justice-movement/>

¹⁹² UN, SDG 2, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

¹⁹³ Relief Web, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2022, Mid-Year Update, 2022*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2022-mid-year-update-snapshot-21-june-2022>

¹⁹⁴ Scroll Staff, *US to give \$15 million aid to Nepal to fight food crisis*, Scroll, 22 Aug 2022, <https://scroll.in/latest/1031066/us-to-give-15-million-aid-to-nepal-to-fight-food-crisis>

- a rights-based approach, or a technique that is a combination of certain approaches which views Food as a human right, along with highlighting the moral responsibility of the communities who have the power to change the situation
- studying and addressing structural/root causes (both internal to the Food System and external to it)
- addressing the structural factors could also include urging governments in platforms such as the G20 and World Economic Forum, to take more responsibility and provide funds/resources to those in need
- advocacy can mean supporting governments and international bodies with the implementation of existing policies as well as urging them to introduce specific new policies and fill the gaps in the existing policies
- advocacy and dialogue should lead to a deeper understanding of the inter-linkages between Food Security and other common challenges such as peace-building and the movement of people, and to a reappraisal of the frameworks of engagement through which Food Security is promoted at the global level

Involving the global south communities and focusing on local solutions


Religious groups, including the Christian churches have an extensive network, and they also have the resources and infrastructure to reach out to the most remote population. This social capital can be used to promote more inclusivity, and further collect local knowledge and information to put together all the actual problems and solutions. While Food Insecurity is a global issue, like any other issue, it cannot be addressed with one set of standard solution, and this is where the network of religious groups can use a bottom-up approach to solve local food problems.

Technology

For the approaches we are considering to work well, it is important to integrate modern technology and science. For example, eco-regeneration is a central part of the agenda of the new international organisation in Geneva (GESDA) which seeks to bring scientific innovation into a dialogue with global diplomacy.

Realistic long-term goals and 'imaging the future'

Collective Action for Ending a Collective Problem: A Multi-stakeholder Project on Global Food Security report, July 2023, Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations



In this paper, we have argued that it is necessary to come up with realistic long-term goals to address food insecurity and hunger, and to achieve these it is valuable to have dialogues at various levels to understand the many layers that form the Food System. Complex systems, such as this, created by people, can also be controlled, and regulated by people for the greater good.

Climate risks, pandemics, the need for stable currencies, migratory patterns, development finance, the threat posed by conflict and new forms of violence, and many other challenges are analogous to Food Security in that they involve complex systems requiring multi-layered strategies. Insights gained in the present project can contribute to comprehensive approaches to security at the regional and global levels.

Annex 2: EU's role in global agricultural and food systems

Authors: Johannes Moravitz and Marek Misak, COMECE

I. EU internal policies

Challenges of the EU's agricultural policies in the context of various crises

The purpose of this part is to give an overview on EU policies and strategic goals in the field of agriculture and their impact on farming, farmers and rural areas throughout the European Union. As we are currently undergoing several crises that are having an enormous impact on the agricultural sector, these crises are providing the context in which agricultural policies have to be looked at. Unlike parts of the developing world Europeans will most likely not suffer a food crisis, understood as a crisis of lack of food. Our potential crisis will be one of affordability of food, and the disappearance of many small- and medium-farms. It is important to note that the very ambitious goals set by the European Green Deal in themselves pose enormous challenges for the farming sector, challenges that have been greatly enhanced by several crises.

EU's agricultural policies

Approved in 2020 the European Green Deal aims to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% in 2030 (compared to 1990 levels) on the European continent and to achieve “climate neutrality” by 2050.¹⁹⁵ This is by far the most ambitious project of the European Union and it has far-reaching consequences for almost all parts of society. One of the sectors affected the most by the Green Deal is agriculture. According to a study by Nature Food that is regularly cited by the FAO¹⁹⁶ or the UN¹⁹⁷, our food systems currently account for a third of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁹⁸ Within the EU, emissions from agriculture fell by 20,8% between 1990-2020, but its share in all greenhouse gas emissions increased from 9,9% in 1990 to 11,4% by 2020.¹⁹⁹ In response to this the EU has placed a big emphasis on food systems and agriculture in the Green Deal, aiming to “ensure food security in the face of climate change and

¹⁹⁵ European Commission (2019), The European Green Deal, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

¹⁹⁶ Cf. FAO (2021), Food systems account for more than one third of global greenhouse gas emissions, <https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1379373/icode/>

¹⁹⁷ Cf. UN (2021), Food systems account for over one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1086822>

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Nature Food (2021), Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-021-00225-9>

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Eurostat (2022), Key figures on the European food chain, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/15216629/15559935/KS-FK-22-001-EN-N.pdf/1cb9d295-6868-70e3-0319-4725040cfd8?version=3.0&t=1670599965263>

biodiversity loss”; to “reduce the environmental and climate footprint of the EU food system”; to “strengthen the EU food system’s resilience”; and to “lead a global transition towards competitive sustainability from farm to fork.”²⁰⁰ The main instruments to achieve this are the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Farm to Fork Strategy, “aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly.”²⁰¹ As both encompass an enormous variety of policy and legislative goals, I will focus on a few aspects, namely those having posing the greatest challenges for farmers within the EU.

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Besides dealing with market measures and rural development measures the most important object of the CAP is to support income of farmers through direct payments. Nearly 6,3 million farms in the EU benefit from it – nearly half of farmers’ income comes from the CAP budget. In 2018 this amounted to €41,74 billion.²⁰² To adapt the CAP budget to the goals of the Green Deal an agreement on reform of the CAP (for the period 2023-2027) was reached in June 2021. All EU Member States had to get approval of their respective national plans until the end of 2022 in order to continue getting their share from the CAP budget. After the approvals of the national plans the new CAP came into being on 1 January 2023.

Some of the conditions that were set for approval are especially relevant for our discussion:

- 40% of the CAP budget has to be climate-relevant;
- at least 35% of funds for rural development have to be allocated to measures supporting climate, biodiversity, environment and animal welfare;
- higher green ambitions and the obligation to contribute to the Green Deal targets;
- at least 25% of the budget for direct payments has to be allocated to eco-schemes, providing stronger incentives for climate- and environment-friendly farming practices and approaches as well as animal welfare improvements;
- enhanced conditionality: beneficiaries of the CAP have to have their payments linked to a stronger set of mandatory requirements.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Cf. European Commission (2020), Agriculture and the Green Deal. A healthy food system for people and planet, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/agriculture-and-green-deal_en

²⁰¹ European Commission (2020), Farm to Fork Strategy, https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en

²⁰² Cf. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/income-support/income-support-explained_en

²⁰³ Cf. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cap-2023-27_en

Farm to Fork Strategy

The Farm to Fork Strategy, lying “at the heart of the European Green Deal”²⁰⁴ has as its main objective the accelerated transition to a sustainable food system within the EU, addressing, inter alia, the impact on the environment and climate of our current food system; the loss of biodiversity; food security; and the affordability of food. A proposal for one of the main legislative frameworks of the Farm to Fork Strategy, on sustainable food systems, is expected to be published towards the end of 2023.²⁰⁵ Some of the concrete goals of the Farm to Fork Strategy include the reduction by 50% of chemical and hazardous pesticides by 2030; the reduction by 20% of fertilizer use by 2030; the reduction by 50% of the sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 2030; as well as boosting the development of organic farming to achieve 25% of total farmland under organic farming by 2030.²⁰⁶

REPowerEU

Not to forget are the effects the energy policies of the EU can have on the agricultural sector. The umbrella for our current energy policies is provided by the REPowerEU Plan, presented on 18 May 2022 by the European Commission.²⁰⁷ Initially a response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, its main objectives are accelerating the energy transition; saving energy; and diversifying energy sources. The decoupling from cheap Russian natural gas has indeed accelerated the employment of renewable energy systems. But as these alone are not yet capable of completely replacing our former imports of Russian gas (and they will not for the coming years), the drastic reduction of Russian natural gas imports has also necessitated increased LNG imports, especially from the United States.²⁰⁸ As these are coming at a much higher financial price, they will have a lasting impact on the prices of fertilizers and food but also on the financial stability of farms.

Current crises affecting the agricultural sector

While the EU has been envisioning a more sustainable and climate-friendly future for our food system, introducing very ambitious legislative packages with far-reaching consequences for everyone involved, the farming sector has been hit by several crises, starting with the Covid-19 pandemic. The disruption of supply chains, the re-emergence of the economy after Covid, the war in Ukraine and its consequences on the energy prices, inflation and the availability of fertilizers have brought much hardship and fears for the

²⁰⁴ Cf. https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en

²⁰⁵ Cf. https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy/legislative-framework_en

²⁰⁶ Cf. European Commission (2020), Factsheet: From farm to fork: Our food, our health, our planet, our future, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs_20_908

²⁰⁷ Cf. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_3131

²⁰⁸ IEA (2022), Gas Market Report, Q4-2022, <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/5c108dc3-f19f-46c7-a157-f46f4172b75e/GasMarketReportQ42022.pdf>

future for European farmers. As the increased costs for farming pass on (partly) to the consumer, we have been witnessing the likely beginning of an affordable food crisis on the European continent and elsewhere. In March 2022 we could already see a 60% increase in global food prices, compared to March 2020,²⁰⁹ and in August 2022 the price of bread in the EU was on average 18% higher than a year before.²¹⁰ As of April 2023 there is still no end in sight for the continuing increase of food prices in the EU.²¹¹

While having a positive trade balance for agricultural products, the EU has had a negative net trade for fertilizers, heavily depending on imports from Russia, Belarus and, to a lesser extent, Ukraine.²¹² Partial exports bans from Russia and Belarus, sanctions from the EU and the increasingly more expansive production of fertilizers within the EU due to the energy crisis, have caused a growing scarcity of fertilizers among European farmers. This in turn, for instance, has led to a dramatic increase of 149% in nitrogen fertilizer prices in September 2022, compared to September 2021.²¹³ The EU commission addressed the availability and affordability of fertilizers on 9 November 2022 and proposed a set of solutions²¹⁴, which were heavily criticized, among others, by the EU farmers' association COPA-COGECA. While acknowledging the value of the proposed medium and long-term strategies, they criticized the lack of short-term solutions for the imminent crisis of high costs and the lack of fertilizers, and they warned of the consequences of a fertilizer shortage that would affect the 2023 harvest, affecting yields, crop quality and rotations, consumer prices and the competitiveness of European farms.²¹⁵ In response to the criticism of the EU's fertilizer strategy, the EU has eased some of the sanctions through derogation to facilitate Russia's export of fertilizers and agricultural goods in the 9th sanction package against Russia, in December 2022.²¹⁶

Another aspect adding to the crises is the growing financial instability of European farmers due to high energy prices and inflation. Record inflation in the Eurozone has in effect led to a devaluation of the CAP budget with its immense importance of contributing to the financial stability of farmers. The EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, has announced in his exchange with the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament on 9 January 2023 to address this issue and to

²⁰⁹ Cf. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/food-security-and-affordability/>.

²¹⁰ Cf. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20220919-1>

²¹¹ Cf. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/wdn-20230125-1>

²¹² Cf. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/15216629/15559935/KS-FK-22-001-EN-N.pdf/1cb9d295-6868-70e3-0319-4725040cfdb8?version=3.0&t=1670599965263>

²¹³ Cf. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/agri-food-supply-chain/ensuring-availability-and-affordability-fertilisers_en

²¹⁴ European Commission (2022), Food security: the Commission addresses the availability and affordability of fertilisers in the EU and globally, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_6564

²¹⁵ Cf. Euractiv (2022), <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/eu-farmers-slam-commissions-empty-fertilisers-plan/>

²¹⁶ Cf. European Council (2022), Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: EU adopts 9th package of economic and individual sanctions, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/16/russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-eu-adopts-9th-package-of-economic-and-individual-sanctions/>

support an increased budget.²¹⁷

Reality of European farmers

As we can see, European farmers are confronted with an enormous set of challenges, having to deal with ambitious EU legislation, increased enhanced conditionality for financial support, and various crises at the same time. It should not be surprising that there has been much discontent on the side of farmers with EU regulations (or national regulations triggered by EU strategic goals and policies), leading to farmers' protests throughout Europe in the summer of 2022 that will likely continue in the future. In the Netherlands, for instance, the governments' plan to reduce the country's nitrogen emissions and to shut down up to 3,000 farms²¹⁸ has led to the establishment of a pro-farmer party, the BoerBurgerBeweging (BBB), which landed a major victory in the Dutch provincial elections on 15 March 2023.²¹⁹

Looking at some statistics concerning the reality of European farmers, we might get a sense of the cause of frustration with and lack of understanding for EU policies.


In 2020 there were 9,1 million farms in the EU. Of these more than 30% were located in Romania, while Poland, Italy and Spain had each a share of more than 10%. The vast majority of EU farms (63,8%) is made up of small farms, less than 5 hectares in size. Only 3,6% belong to the largest category with at least 100 hectares. At the same time, these farms had 52,5% of the total area used for agricultural production in the EU. In comparison to 2005 we could witness a decrease of 37% in farms, or 5,3 million in total numbers. Most of these belonged to the category of small farms. The category of large farms, with at least 100 hectares, was the only one witnessing an increase. More than half of all EU farm managers were at least 55 years of age (around one third at least 65 years of age), and only 11,9% were young farmer managers (defined as those under the age of 40). The number of farm managers fell 11,2% in comparison to 2016. Agriculture's share of employment in the EU also fell, from 6,4% in 2005 to 4,2% in 2020. Finally, people employed in the agricultural sector have in almost every EU Member State far more working hours per week on average than the rest of the working force.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Cf. European Commission (2023), Mr Janusz Wojciechowski in the European Parliament, Brussels; contribution to exchange of views with the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development about the consequences of inflation on the CAP budget, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_23_144

²¹⁸ Cf. The Guardian (2022), Up to 3,000 'peak polluters' given last chance to close by Dutch government, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/30/peak-polluters-last-chance-close-dutch-government>

²¹⁹ Cf. Euronews (2023), Pro-farmer party wins big in Dutch elections after protests over emissions regulations, <https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/03/16/dutch-farmer-protests-emissions-regulations-lead-to-rise-of-new-political-movement>

²²⁰ Cf. Eurostat (2022), <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/15216629/15559935/KS-FK-22-001-EN-N.pdf/1cb9d295-6868-70e3-0319-4725040cfdb8?version=3.0&t=1670599965263>



To summarize this paragraph, the majority of farms in the EU are located on the peripheries of the EU, in Eastern and Southern Europe, they are small to medium farms. Yet small to medium farms have been decreasing very sharply, while the largest category of farms has been increasing. There has been a continuous decrease in farm managers and generally, people working in the agricultural sector. The average farmer is much older and works more hours per week than the average person in other sectors.

Challenges and proposals

As the Common Good is the main object of politics, policy-making needs to be based on sound principles to achieve results that truly serve people while caring for God's creation. From the point of Catholic Social Teaching two principles seem relevant to the current discussions surrounding sustainable food systems and agriculture. First, the human person is always in the centre of ethical considerations. As *imago Dei*, the image of God, the human person is endowed with a unique dignity that cannot be taken away. And so, the human person has a dignity unique in creation. At the same time, we too are part of God's creation, and we are called to be guardians of creation, leaving us a duty towards God, His creation and our future generations.²²¹

Considering the ambitious political goals of the EU towards climate-neutrality in 2050, the various crises hitting the agricultural sector and the reality of farmers it seems clear that a clearer involvement of farmers and farmer unions in political discussions to give them a stronger voice in a political discussion that especially concern them and their future. Instead of portraying farmers as “peak polluters”²²² who stand in the way of a sustainable future, it seems necessary to listen to farmers and understand reasons for frustration and complaints. This might also help to understand why the number of small and medium farms as well as farm managers is sharply decreasing with dramatic consequences not only for their personal lives but for the many rural areas throughout Europe they are leaving behind. An understanding also seems needed for the attachment many farmers feel to their farms, often held by generations, and their social and cultural needs. Only then political solutions might be found that can truly contribute to a sustainable future of our food systems and food security while “leaving no one behind.”

²²¹ Vatican News (2020), Pope Francis: Become guardians of life and earth with contemplation and care, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-09/pope-francis-become-guardians-of-life-and-earth-by-contemplatio.html>

²²² The Guardian (2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/30/peak-polluters-last-chance-close-dutch-government>

II. EU external policies

Global context and EU's role

The number of people in need of urgent food, nutrition and livelihood assistance is on the rise²²³, whereas the **major drivers** of food and nutrition insecurity and malnutrition are manifold: conflict, climate change, environmental degradation, rising energy prices, limited access to water, economic shocks, endemic poverty, as well as persistent high levels of inequality and social injustice, lacking access to basic social and health services, and not least failing governance and the pursuit of unsustainable, unjust, non-resilient and non-inclusive agricultural and food systems.

As we could see in recent years and months with the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine that have led to disruptions of value chains and seriously exacerbated the persisting challenges to food security in some developing countries, the overdependence on agricultural and food imports leaves countries extremely vulnerable to external shocks. For example, while 65% of the world's uncultivated arable land is in Africa²²⁴, only a third of cereals consumed in Africa is produced on the continent.²²⁵ From 2016 to 2018, about 85% of Africa's food imports came from outside the continent, leading to an annual food import bill of \$35 billion, which is forecast to reach \$110 billion by 2025.²²⁶ That African countries are net food importers, with farmers producing below their potential, is partially due to the effects of certain trade policies and practices, including a focus on crops grown for export, such as cottonseed oil, cocoa, and coffee.

The European Union is a unique actor on the world stage. It has a broad range of policy areas and instruments at its disposal, ranging from agricultural, trade, development and climate policies to diplomacy, human rights promotion and peacebuilding. The EU together with its 27 Member States continues to be the world's largest aid donor, its voice is represented in important global and multilateral fora and it is a major contributor to global trade through both imports and exports. The EU is thus well placed to play a key role in contributing to an enhancement of food security in its neighbourhood and globally.

Addressing the structural causes of global food insecurity

Even though the European Union has launched several humanitarian initiatives to foster food security in affected countries in the wake of the

²²³ Cf. Global Report on Food Crises 2022, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2022> .

²²⁴ <https://www.dw.com/en/with-vast-arable-lands-why-does-africa-need-to-import-grain/a-62288483#>

²²⁵ Cf. FAO Food Outlook (2022), <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9427en/cb9427en.pdf>. See also UNEP, Our work in Africa, <https://www.unep.org/regions/africa/our-work-africa>.

²²⁶ Cf. <https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-threat-food-security- Africa>.

COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, its overall response seems to be focusing more on tackling the symptoms of fragile food systems, whereas the political will to promote systemic shifts by addressing the structural causes of food insecurity seems to be lagging behind²²⁷. While the EU has been increasingly adopting a more holistic approach to food security and increasing its support to agroecology and small-scale farmers in partner countries, there are still some policies and practices in place that may not be fully consistent²²⁸ with the objective of the transition towards more just, resilient and sustainable food systems, as stipulated in the March 2022 Communication of the European Commission on “*Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems*”²²⁹ and reaffirmed by the EU Council in its June 2022 conclusions on “*Team Europe response to global insecurity*”²³⁰.

In this respect, two aspects are of particular importance: strengthening localisation and reducing external dependencies.

Smallholder farms and small-scale fisheries play a critical role in food security by being the main food producers in developing countries²³¹, and as the European Parliament recently recalled²³², the EU should “*specifically support and empower small-scale farming, family farming and cooperatives*”. Local food production and local consumption that support small-scale farming and guarantee fair prices for producers and consumers, also reduce countries’ dependence on imports and increase their resilience to external shocks. Moreover, local farming entails traditions, values, knowledge and practices that provide a strong basis for people to respond to their own needs for an adequate and healthy nutrition, in accordance with their cultural context and in respect of their natural environment.

In this regard, the European Parliament highlights²³³ the importance of agroecology²³⁴ as an approach based on science and traditional wisdom, and strongly rooted in ecological principles, food sovereignty and the right to adequate food, and it urges the European Commission to provide support to partner countries in view of such sustainable agriculture practices. If the European Union wants to promote a shift towards a greater support to locally-led food systems, it also needs to foresee adequate spaces for consultation with local communities, smallholder farmers and civil society

²²⁷ Cf. Caritas Europa (2023), The EU needs to up its game for global food security, https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/230214_CE-food-security-paper_final.pdf.

²²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

²²⁹ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/safeguarding-food-security-reinforcing-resilience-food-systems_0.pdf.

²³⁰ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10066-2022-INIT/en/pdf>.

²³¹ Family farming provides for up to 70 % of the food supply in the African continent that is actually consumed by Africans.

²³² European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2022 on addressing food security in developing countries, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0287_EN.html.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Cf. CIDSE (2018), Principles of Agroecology, <https://www.cidse.org/2018/04/03/the-principles-of-agroecology/>.

within pertinent policy frameworks and mechanisms, such as when negotiating trade agreements or when deciding on priority projects to be funded under the EU Global Gateway investment initiative²³⁵.

With regard to reducing external dependencies of developing countries, it has to be first noted that the European Union is the world's biggest importer and exporter of agri-food products. By way of illustration, even though Africa has the most arable land in the world, African countries are net food importers, with farmers producing below their potential, partially due to the effects of certain European policies and practices on prices that African farmers can achieve for their products on local markets, increased by tariffs that render African processed food exports uncompetitive²³⁶. In this regard, the European Parliament has recently highlighted the EU's role in significantly reducing Africa's current overdependence on food imports through financial and technical support, policy dialogue, knowledge exchange and innovation²³⁷. While stressing that "*the EU must ensure that the right to food for all is not a market commodity*"²³⁸ and that "*the trade partnership between the EU and Africa must safeguard the right of African countries to food sovereignty*"²³⁹, the EU Parliament called on the European Commission to support African countries in diversifying their trade flows, enhancing their access to agricultural products and supporting them in boosting their agricultural production in order to enhance their food resilience²⁴⁰. As has been repeatedly expressed by EU leaders, the European Union needs to pursue with Africa a "*partnership of equals where both sides share opportunities and responsibilities*"²⁴¹. The lessons drawn from EU relations with Africa may also be applied to EU's partnerships with other regions in the world.

Pursuing a multi-sectoral approach

Since the major drivers and exacerbating factors with regard to global food insecurity are manifold, also the EU needs to pursue a multi-sectoral approach to be able to address them effectively. This does not only call for an intensified cooperation between different actors (public, private, civil society, academia, faith communities, etc) across various policy fields and at different levels, but it also implies the need for a stronger policy coherence and overcoming silo approaches. Making use of its wide range of policy

²³⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en#:~:text=The%20Global%20Gateway%20stands%20for,security%20of%20global%20supply%20chains.

²³⁶ Cf. European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2022 on the future of EU-Africa trade relations, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0267_EN.html.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2022 on addressing food security in developing countries, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0287_EN.html.

²³⁹ European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2022 on the future of EU-Africa trade relations, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0267_EN.html.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Cf. Ursula von der Leyen, State of the Union speech, 16 September 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655.

areas and instruments, the European Union could *inter alia* pursue the following actions in view of enhancing global food security:

Trade & Investment

- Work towards more equal trade relations and promote fair trade practices that prevent excessive financial speculation from fuelling food price volatility and entail a stronger regulation of agricultural commodity markets; Since low- and middle-income countries are still often seen as export markets, this contributes to overdependency on imported food products in many countries and, as acknowledged by the European Parliament²⁴², the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture having contributed to the specialisation of agricultural regions, further reinforces such imbalances, and is therefore in need of revision.
- Step up support to investments in agroecology and to smallholder and family farmers through initiatives such as the EU Global Gateway, in view of embarking on a transition towards more sustainable, just, inclusive and resilient food systems; at the same time, enhance the governance structure of such mechanisms so that they allow for consultation and engagement with local communities, small-scale farmers and civil society and take into account local needs.

Human Rights, Diplomacy and Peacebuilding

- Following-up on the current EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)²⁴³, step up in the future framework global EU actions on the promotion of the right to adequate food in bilateral, regional as well as international fora, including FAO, UNDP and WTO, with the premise of a food sovereignty approach and treating the right to food as a public common good and not as a mere market commodity²⁴⁴.
- Reinforce the EU's integrated approach to external conflicts and crises²⁴⁵ by strengthening its civilian peacebuilding policies to prevent more effectively violent conflicts from erupting, and by setting up an EU Human Security & Peace Index with people-centred benchmarks (including on access to adequate food) allowing the EU to pursue more coherently and effectively a holistic approach to

²⁴² European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2022 on addressing food security in developing countries, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0287_EN.html .

²⁴³ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_action_plan_on_human_rights_and_democracy_2020-2024.pdf .

²⁴⁴ Cf. Caritas Europa (2023), The EU needs to up its game for global food security, https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/230214_CE-food-security-paper_final.pdf .

²⁴⁵ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5413-2018-INIT/en/pdf> .

fostering human security as an enabler for sustainable and inclusive development worldwide²⁴⁶.

Climate

- Fulfill its commitments on climate finance²⁴⁷ to enable affected countries to prevent climate-related disasters, as well as pursue measures of adaptation and mitigation and effectively cope with pertinent restrictions to growing and accessing food; take the lead in the operationalisation of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility, as agreed at COP 27²⁴⁸.
- Uphold and step up its commitments to the implementation of international agreements on climate, deforestation, biodiversity, access to water, and governance of the oceans.

Humanitarian and Development Policies

- Provide greater transparency on the destination of food exports in the EU Solidarity Lanes²⁴⁹ (such as established in the case of the Black Sea Grain Initiative) and ensure that these exports reach “hunger hotspots” in sufficient quantity; embed short-term emergency humanitarian measures in a broader long-term framework to make them consistent with the objective of transforming the global food systems.
- Favour the localisation of humanitarian and development assistance, by significantly increasing direct humanitarian and development funding to local grassroots civil society organisations, including faith-based as well as religious organisations who can be important allies in the effort to enhance food and nutrition security; by leveraging their resources, traditions, actions and values, they can contribute to creating more sustainable, just, and healthy food systems for all.

²⁴⁶ Cf. COMECE (2022), Europe, renew your vocation to promote peace, <https://www.comece.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/2022-06-17-Statement-Background-Peace-EXTERN.pdf> .

²⁴⁷ Cf. UNFCCC (2021), COP26 Outcomes: Finance for Climate Adaptation, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-glasgow-climate-pact/cop26-outcomes-finance-for-climate-adaptation#:~:text=COP26%20urged%20developed%20nations%20to,balance%20between%20adaptation%20and%20mitigation> .

²⁴⁸ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/what-you-need-know-about-cop27-loss-and-damage-fund> .

²⁴⁹ Cf. https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news/european-commission-establish-solidarity-lanes-help-ukraine-export-agricultural-goods-2022-05-12_en .

Annex 3: Food insecurity and human rights: State of the Field and Recommendations

Authored by the team at Just Access, Heidelberg

State of the field

1. *Food security*, as defined by the 1996 World Food Summit, ‘exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life’.²⁵⁰ Where access to safe and nutritious food is not reliable, affordable, or sufficient, individuals and communities may be *food insecure*. In turn, food insecurity is closely linked to, though distinct from, concepts such as *hunger*,²⁵¹ which refers to an acute lack of food; *malnutrition*,²⁵² which refers to the physical consequences which may arise as a result of acute or intermittent lack of adequate food; and *food poverty*,²⁵³ which refers specifically to food insecurity resulting from economic deprivation. The concept of food (in)security is an important metric for understanding the patterns of availability and lack of safe and nutritious food worldwide, but has been criticised as placing too much emphasis only on access to food, without considering the means by which that food is delivered and its availability secured.²⁵⁴ The international peasants’ movement, La Vía Campesina, in 1996 proposed an alternative concept, *food sovereignty*, which has been defined as the ‘right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through socially just, ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their collective right to define their own policies, strategies and systems for food production, distribution and consumption.’²⁵⁵
2. The concept of food sovereignty is intended, in part, to shift the focus from market-based mechanisms of food production and distribution to a wider focus on just, socially-focussed and ecologically-sustainable food systems. *Food systems*²⁵⁶ which realise the food sovereignty of the people working within and supplied by them will ensure the reliable supply of ‘good quality, adequate, affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food’, produced in circumstances in which peasants’ ‘full rights to land’ are defended and preserved, workers ‘earn a living wage for their labour’, and where methods

²⁵⁰ Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action, 1996.

²⁵¹ FAO, ‘Hunger and Food Insecurity’ (2023), available via <<https://www.fao.org/hunger/en/>>.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Brigid Francis-Devine et al., ‘Food Poverty: Households, food banks and free school meals’, House of Commons Library Research Briefing, (23 September 2022), available via <<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9209/CBP-9209.pdf>>.

²⁵⁴ Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, ‘Food Sovereignty Systems: Feeding the World, Regenerating Ecosystems, Rebuilding Local Economies, and Cooling the Planet – all at the same time’ (November 2011), available via <<https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/AFSA-Documents.pdf>>.


²⁵⁵ Declaration of Nyéléni (27 February 2007), available via <<https://nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/DeclNyeleni-en.pdf>>.

²⁵⁶ ‘The food system is a complex web of activities involving the production, processing, transport, and consumption. Issues concerning the food system include the governance and economics of food production, its sustainability, the degree to which we waste food, how food production affects the natural environment and the impact of food on individual and population health’: Oxford Martin Programme on the Future of Food, ‘What is the Food System’, available via <<https://www.futureoffood.ox.ac.uk/what-food-system>>.

of food production ‘conserve and rehabilitate rural environments ... based on ecologically sustainable management of law, soils, water, seas, seeds, livestock, and other biodiversity.’²⁵⁷

3. The human right to food is guaranteed by several international instruments. It was first recognised in 1948 as a component of an ‘adequate standard of living’ in Article 25(1) of the UDHR. This right was also included in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), with its specific components clarified by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment No. 12, as well as an aspect of the right to life in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), in accordance with General Comment No. 36 of the Human Rights Committee. Moreover, the right to food can be found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 24(2)(c) and 27(3)), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Articles 25(f) and 28(1)), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (where Article 20 guarantees the right ‘to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence’), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 12(2); hereafter: CEDAW). In its General Recommendation 34, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has, too, emphasised the relevance of Article 14 CEDAW to rural women, and has reiterated that States must ‘[r]ecognise their [rural women’s] crucial contributions to local and national economies and to food production’. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP), similarly, both specifically declares the rights of ‘[p]easants and other people working in rural areas ... to adequate food and ... to be free from hunger’ (Article 15), as well as providing a number of guarantees for peasants and other rural workers in their capacities as workers within food systems (see especially Articles 4, 5, 9, 14, and 17-20). The right to food, too, is proclaimed in several regional human rights instruments, as well as in domestic constitutions. Finally, the right to food is implied in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, which mainly addresses food security. The fundamental human right to food is both a self-standing guarantee protected under conventional and customary international law, and an integral part of an indivisible fabric of rights relating to the right of the individual to an adequate standard of living (inter alia, the rights to food, housing, sanitation, water, and health); the rights of workers, peasants, and smallholders (inter alia, rights to land, to seeds, to safety at work, to fair wages, and to organise); and the rights of communities and indigenous peoples (indigenous rights to land and traditional means of subsistence; rights to social security; food sovereignty).
4. The right to food is supported by an international institutional system, in which the most central actors are the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, the World Food Programme (WFP), the

²⁵⁷ Declaration of Nyéléni.



International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD), and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Within the CFS, the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM) is a key space for inclusion of organisations and movements representing those groups most at risk of food insecurity, and comprises eleven constituencies: smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, agricultural and food workers, landless, women, youth, consumers, urban food insecure and NGOs. The wider institutional framework relating to the right to food also includes the World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and numerous other bodies and agencies, the mandates of which relate to food and food security in various ways.

5. The body of regulation pertaining to the right to food offers several advantages. First, as an autonomous right recognised in international law and in a number of national constitutions, States are under a legal obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate food. Aspects of the right to food which cannot be implemented immediately and in full are subject to an obligation of progressive realisation, and States must adopt national strategies to work towards full compliance with the right.²⁵⁸ This may include, inter alia, land reform, labour protections, and measures to protect or enhance fisheries, forest ecosystems, and biodiversity. Second, the right to food promotes the transformation of social benefits that individuals or households receive under government food security programmes into legal entitlements. The primary objective of the right to food is to ensure that everyone, individually or as a member of a group, has permanent and secure access to nutritionally adequate food that is produced in a sustainable and culturally acceptable manner.²⁵⁹ This access can be provided through three channels that often work in combination: (a) self-production, (b) access to income-generating activities and (c) social protection, either informally through community support or through State-administered mechanisms.²⁶⁰ Finally, the State is under immediately applicable obligations not to interfere with the enjoyment of the right to food, for example by depriving individuals or communities of food or the ability to produce food. This may buttress, for example, farmers right to access and reuse seed, access to water, and the rights of peasants and indigenous peoples to enjoy unrestricted access to their lands.
6. However, despite that the right to food is recognised in a number of international treaties and increasingly in domestic constitutions, a rising number of people around the world face hunger and extreme food insecurity. The FAO has highlighted that the number of people unable to afford a

²⁵⁸ See Olivier De Schutter, Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, 2013, para. 8. For the origin of the 'respect, protect, fulfill framework in the work of another Special Rapporteur on the right to food, see Asbjørn Eide, *The New International Economic Order and the Promotion of Human Rights: Report on the Right to Adequate Food as a Human Right Submitted by Mr. Asbjørn Eide, Special Rapporteur*, 1987.

²⁵⁹ Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action, 1996.

²⁶⁰ Olivier De Schutter, Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, 2013, para. 6.

healthy diet has risen year-on-year since 2019, to more than 3 billion people.²⁶¹ In parallel, the number of people facing acute hunger and undernourishment has risen to 9.8 per cent of the global population; around 820 million people.²⁶² The report notes that acute food insecurity is more pronounced in some regions than others, with Africa being the worst affected (with 20.2 per cent of the population facing hunger), followed by Asia (9.1 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (8.6 per cent).²⁶³ However, it should be noted that almost all States and regions have seen a growth in the number of people facing food insecurity, including in high-income countries.²⁶⁴

7. It seems unlikely that the rising rates of food insecurity are primarily a reflection of absolute (i.e., global) availability of food: between 2000 and 2019 the global population increased by approximately 26 per cent. In the same period, the FAO reports that global production of primary crops increased by 53 per cent, production of vegetable oils increased by 118 per cent, and meat production increased by 44 per cent. A study by Atif Awad, published in 2023, comparing factors contributing to food insecurity across countries and regions noted that increasing domestic food production leads to a ‘statistically significant’ but ‘minor’ positive impact on rates of malnutrition, but notes that ‘[f]ood production is necessary, but it is not sufficient to guarantee the achievement of food security.’²⁶⁵ By contrast, the paper identifies a clear, if counterintuitive, relationship between trade and falling rates of food insecurity, in which ‘with more food imports, more people started suffering from undernutrition.’²⁶⁶ Rather, it seems clear that rising rates of food insecurity and malnutrition are primarily related to structural forms of inequality—between and within States²⁶⁷—as well as food markets which, as a result of mismanagement or active policy choices, privilege corporate interests.²⁶⁸ To this must be added the four major drivers of food insecurity as identified by the FAO: ‘conflict, climate extremes, economic shocks, [... and] growing inequality’.²⁶⁹
8. Armed conflicts have been identified as having a significant negative impact on food security. Civil conflicts in particular routinely cause or exacerbate hunger, malnutrition and famine,²⁷⁰ as ongoing situations in Yemen, Somalia and Syria can attest. It is estimated that approximately 30 per cent of the

²⁶¹ FAO, ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2022’, xiv.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid, xvi.

²⁶⁴ The Trussell Trust/Glen Bramley et al., ‘State of Hunger: Building the Evidence on Poverty, Destitution, and Food Insecurity in the UK, Year Two Main Report’ (May 2021), 11.

²⁶⁵ Atif Awad, ‘The determinants of food insecurity among developing countries: Are there any differences?’ (2023) 19 *Scientific African* e01512.

²⁶⁶ Ibid. See also Joseph Awange, *Food Insecurity & Hydroclimate in Greater Horn of Africa: Potential for Agriculture Amid Extremes* (Cham: Springer, 2022), 3-27.

²⁶⁷ See e.g. Hans Konrad Biesalski, ‘Hidden Hunger in the Developed World’ in Manfred Eggersdorfer, et al. (eds), *The Road to Good Nutrition* (Basel: Karger 2013).

²⁶⁸ Michael Fakhri, Interim report of the Special Rapporteur in the right to food, 2021, para. 26, and further paras. 17-19.

²⁶⁹ FAO, ‘The State of Food Security’, 2.

²⁷⁰ FAO, *Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict: Causes, Consequences, and Addressing the Challenges*, 2011.

arable land in Ukraine has been rendered unusable as a result of mining and other direct impacts of the Russian invasion, which has also impacted fuel supplies and supplies of other agricultural raw materials.²⁷¹ In addition, the war in Ukraine has highlighted the lack of resilience of deregulated, corporate-driven food systems, most particularly ‘just in time’ logistics which has been shown to have very limited capacity to respond to supply chain disruptions. However, as FIAN and the FAO have highlighted, spikes in food prices following the invasion of Ukraine *preceded* any actual food shortages,²⁷² a phenomenon which FIAN attributes, inter alia, to the overdominance of export crops, price speculation, and a poorly-functioning market in which ‘four companies control the vast majority of the global grain trade. This concentration implies that those countries and companies can take advantage of a crisis situation by dictating prices and by speculation’.²⁷³ Independent research has highlighted that the effect of the crisis has been further to entrench the control of a small number of corporations over food systems, while governments have, thus far, not succeeded in imposing a greater degree of democratic control.²⁷⁴

9. The climate crisis, too, is a significant (and worsening) factor in food insecurity. The ability of communities to feed themselves and earn a living is severely compromised by their exposure to changing and severe weather conditions, natural disasters, and environmental destruction, including soil degradation.²⁷⁵ As climate change advances, changes to rainfall patterns and seasonal average temperatures will affect the habitable range for crop species, and will deprive some farmers and communities of their traditional crops. The IPCC has warned that numerous communities have already reached ‘soft’ limits to their ability to adapt to the agricultural impacts of climate change (limits resulting from their limited access to resources such as power, desalination technology, resistant seed varieties, or piped water), and that ‘hard’ limits may also be reached in the future (beyond which it is impossible to adapt, even with theoretically limitless resources).²⁷⁶ Indeed, in some areas, such as the Horn of Africa where rains have failed in four consecutive rainy seasons, those hard limits may be approaching, or may already have been reached. Climate change disproportionately affects the right to food of rural women, smallholder farmers, people living in poverty and indigenous communities, who have less ability to invest in climate adaptation.²⁷⁷ As a consequence, climate change further entrenches inequalities, giving additional advantages to the wealthy farmers who can make the investments at the cost of poorer farmers. At the same time, food

²⁷¹ FIAN International/Sofía Monsalve Suárez and Charlotte Dreger, ‘War in Ukraine: Recurring Food Crises Expose Systemic Fragility’ (May 2022), 9.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 11; FAO, Crop Prospects and Food Situation Quarterly Global Report, 2022 #1 (March 2022), 37.


²⁷³ FIAN, ‘War in Ukraine’, 15, and further 11-16.

²⁷⁴ FIAN, Food Crisis Response Entrenches Corporate Influence, October 2022.

²⁷⁵ FIAN, The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it, July 2022, p. 4.

²⁷⁶ Hans-Otto Pörtner et al, ‘IPCC WGII: Summary for Policymakers’ in Rita Adrian et al (eds), *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability: Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge University Press 2022), paras. B.4.3, C.2.2, C.4.3.

²⁷⁷ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni, The right to food, 2020, p. 157.



systems—particularly in highly developed States—are a major contributor to climate breakdown, with industrial livestock farming being among the most damaging activities. In arable farming, industrial agricultural practices involving heavy pesticide, herbicide, and fertilizer use are responsible for other forms of environmental degradation, including desertification, pollution of waterways, and ocean dead zones, in turn negatively affecting social and environmental determinants of health and accelerating negative environmental and climate feedback loops.²⁷⁸

10. Poverty and growing inequality, both within and between nations, are underlying structural factors that make some people more likely to experience food insecurity than others. It is now widely recognised that food security has little to do with insufficient levels of food production (globally), but is a problem of the unequal distribution of food: while some have access to ample food, people not having access to land or other natural resources to produce food for their own consumption, or to income from work or social security entitlements to be able to purchase food, or are unable to access food because of their race, class, caste, gender, disability or other basis of discrimination, are at greater risk of being food insecure.²⁷⁹ It has therefore been suggested that food security should be classed as an economic public good, as a food-secure world produces numerous benefits that can be enjoyed simultaneously and from which no-one can be practically excluded, such as moral benefits, public health gains, market opportunities, and higher social stability.²⁸⁰

11. The structural factors giving rise to poverty and inequality are, in turn, linked to trade and investment regimes that favour liberalised market mechanisms, including in agriculture, and to structural adjustment programmes that have imposed policies on indebted countries in the global South, and subvert national governments' control over food and agriculture. Multinational corporations take advantage of tax regimes across States, removing value from developing economies.²⁸¹ Financial incentives offered by governments often favour economies of scale and promote large-scale, capital-intensive agriculture, thereby reducing support for smallholder farmers.²⁸² However, empirical studies cast doubt on commercialisation as a means to achieving global food security. Rather, commercialisation and intensification tend to increase specialisation, with crops grown as monocultures and only a few varieties planted. In turn, overspecialisation increases vulnerability to pests (leading to a concomitant overdependence on pesticides), as well as increasing vulnerability to environmental shocks. It also tends towards larger holdings, concentrating land in a few hands, disproportionately to the benefit of those with pre-existing access to power and resources. This is

²⁷⁸ Reyes Triado, 'Dead Zones: how agriculture fertilizers kill our rivers, lakes and oceans' 2008.

²⁷⁹ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni et al., *Agricultural commercialization, gender equality and the right to food*, p. 1.

²⁸⁰ Cristian Timmermann, *Food security as a global public good*, 2018, pp. 88 et seq.

²⁸¹ Olivier De Schutter, *Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food*, 2013, para. 17.

²⁸² Joanna Bourke-Martignoni et al., *Agricultural commercialization, gender equality and the right to food*, p. 5.

particularly problematic for women, as it leads to a loss of arable land and seasonal food shortages on the one hand, and changes in the division of labour, low wages and new dependencies on men's income, on the other.²⁸³ Intersectional inequalities increase vulnerability among already disadvantaged groups.

12. A closely connected element in this context is the corporate dimension of the global food and agriculture system. For example, commodity seed systems and seed corporations have prevented farmers from freely saving, using, exchanging and selling seeds, and thus create barriers which impede people and communities from adequately feeding themselves directly from productive land.²⁸⁴ Rapaciously commercialised commodity seed systems extract genetic material from plants with which communities live in symbiosis, in effect disrupting that relationship, and alienating peasants, indigenous peoples, and others from the right to benefit from their traditional knowledge. In parallel, the overdominance of specific, highly cultured varieties tends towards the establishment of monocultures, impoverishing soil and often transforming landscapes by imposing genetic homogeneity. Although international conventional law establishes rights for farmers to keep and use seed, to access seed varieties, and to benefit from genetic diversity of certain key seed crops, corporate systems aggressively advertise proprietary seed varieties which often produce non-viable seed (preventing re-sowing) or which are keyed to function with proprietary fertilisers, herbicides, or pesticides and which thus lock farmers into relationships of dependency.²⁸⁵ It has been reported that the misinterpretation of national laws allowed intellectual property rights to dominate and construe certain farmers' rights as illegal, depriving especially those in the global South of the ability to benefit from their own seed systems.²⁸⁶ In parallel, intensification, reduction in species and intra-species diversity, and overuse of pesticides and fertilizers have contributed to a crisis of biodiversity loss. The loss of biodiversity, in turn reduces the resilience of food systems: monocultures and crops with low degrees of genetic variation are more vulnerable to pests and diseases than mixed plantings, while the global crash in insect populations reduces the availability of natural pollinators, and natural pest control systems.

13. Corporate influence on food systems, too, can be seen in the growing problem of low-quality food. The ultra-processed foods and foods with extremely high fat, sugar, and salt content aggressively advertised by the industrial food industry are creating concentric health crises, in which the prevalence of both malnutrition and obesity are rising. Unhealthy diets are

²⁸³ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni et al., *Agricultural commercialization, gender equality and the right to food*, p. 10.

²⁸⁴ *Seeds, right to life and farmers' rights*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri (2022).

²⁸⁵ *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*,

²⁸⁶ *Seeds, right to life and farmers' rights*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, 2022, para. 36.

responsible for millions of deaths every year,²⁸⁷ as well as adding to pressures on public health- and welfare systems. As ‘junk’ foods tend to be less expensive on a per-calorie basis than equivalent fresh-, whole- and other high-quality foods, individuals and groups with lower incomes or suffering from economic exclusion are most likely to be negatively affected.²⁸⁸ It is key that, as the definitions both of food security and food sovereignty emphasise, for the right to food to be fulfilled it is not enough for an individual to have access to food, but rather to *good quality* food. The Nyéléni declaration emphasises access to ‘good quality, adequate, affordable, [and] healthy’ food.²⁸⁹

14. This expansion of corporate influence on food systems through the commercialisation of agriculture and land, as well as through public-private partnerships in nutrition and food, has been a central concern for civil society organisations that work on the right to food, and has also been discussed in various human rights fora.²⁹⁰ It has been even argued that a “corporate capture” of the FAO is taking place; that is to say, that there is a loss of democratic control over the organisation, as the relative influence of States (which represent their populations) declines vis-à-vis the interests of those (often corporate) bodies providing funding to the organisation.²⁹¹ Voluntary contributions account for 69% of the FAO’s budget for 2022-2023, and donors have the opportunity to set priorities and determine how these resources are used through strict conditionality principles.²⁹² In addition, the FAO’s updated strategy for private sector engagement from 2021 encourages the expansion and scaling up of partnerships with the private sector, of both formal and informal nature. A lack of transparency means that it is often unclear whether a risk assessment has been carried out and what procedures, if any, have been undertaken to evaluate proposed partnerships, the risks identified, and any plans to mitigate these risks.²⁹³
15. Right to food and food sovereignty movements worldwide have launched effective campaigns to highlight the need for a greater focus on the social factors underpinning, and dependent on, well-functioning food systems. In particular, these movements have highlighted the roles women play in building and maintaining robust food systems as part of communities, a factor which has only recently begun to be captured in international processes, as well as the ways in which gender and other forms of discrimination compound vulnerabilities in food systems.²⁹⁴ Nor are weak

²⁸⁷ FIAN, The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it, July 2022.

²⁸⁸ See, e.g., Adam Drenowski, ‘Food Insecurity has Economic Root Causes’, (2022) 3 *Nature Food* 555-556.

²⁸⁹ Nyéléni Declaration.

²⁹⁰ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni, The right to food, 2020, p. 155.

²⁹¹ See FIAN, Corporate Capture of FAO: Industry’s Deepening Influence on Global Food Governance, May 2022.

²⁹² FIAN, Corporate Capture of FAO, p. 2.

²⁹³ FIAN, Corporate Capture of FAO, p. 10.

²⁹⁴ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni et al., Agricultural commercialization, gender equality and the right to food, pp. 1-2, 6.

food systems gender-neutral in their impacts.²⁹⁵ It has been observed that in ‘commercialized agriculture, the unpaid farm and reproductive labour disproportionately performed by women are simultaneously central to and invisible within [...] economies.’²⁹⁶ Feminist food sovereignty organisations, and the wider right to food movement in general, have a vital role to play in building strong and resilient food systems, as well as generating political will to support food system reform.²⁹⁷

16. For all of the reasons given above, there is a considerable and growing gap between States’ obligations and reality on the ground. To date, legal frameworks have not proven successful in closing this gap, in part because those legal frameworks seldom designate the judicial, quasi-judicial and administrative bodies to which complaints about violations of the right to food can be submitted. Nor does most domestic legislation adequately provide for sanctions in cases of non-compliance.²⁹⁸ Nor, at present, is there an effective multilateral, human rights-based, globally coordinated response to the hunger crisis that would prioritise the voices of the most affected countries and peoples.²⁹⁹ However, the above brief mapping of the state of the field does strongly indicate the potential of a human-rights-centred approach, in consort with and in support of food sovereignty movements and others, to increase the priority given at the international level to realising the right to food.

Recommendations

1. States must fully implement existing human rights obligations, among other measures by ensuring that those who produce their own food have secure access to the resources they depend on, such as land, seeds, and water, while those who access food through markets have sufficient access to income-generating activities or social security mechanisms to enable them to purchase adequate, healthy food.³⁰⁰ The land rights of indigenous peoples, peasants, and other groups which depend on access to land for the realisation of their right to food must be protected by law. Ethical principles, such as the non-wastage principle, could also be interpreted more strictly, in order not only limit the waste and inefficient use of edible food, but to extend the imperative to the resources needed for food production. Land and water distribution and management arrangements that fail to leave enough resources of good quality as needed to cover the needs of the whole population are a violation of the right to food.³⁰¹

²⁹⁵ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni et al., *Agricultural commercialization, gender equality and the right to food*, p. 7, and further pp. 7-10.

²⁹⁶ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni et al., *Agricultural commercialization, gender equality and the right to food*, p. 2.

²⁹⁷ Joanna Bourke-Martignoni, *The right to food*, 2020, pp. 154-155; Olivier De Schutter, *Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food*, 2013, paras. 36, 40, 53-56.

²⁹⁸ Olivier De Schutter, *Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food*, 2013, para. 40.

²⁹⁹ FIAN, *Food Crisis Response Entrenches Corporate Influence*, October 2022, p. 7.

³⁰⁰ Olivier De Schutter, *Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food* 2013, para. 11.

³⁰¹ Cristian Timmermann, *Food security as a global public good*, 2018, p. 91.

2. States are under an obligation to protect individuals' enjoyment of the right to food against violations by third parties, especially private enterprises, including by establishing an adequate regulatory framework for cross-border activities of corporations. A legislative framework, policies that execute food security initiatives, and judicial enforcement are all necessary for the right to food to be protected.³⁰² Not only is the adoption of framework laws especially important, but so is the improvement of existing ones, among other necessary measures by providing domestic remedies to individuals or organisations that have been harmed by lack of enforcement. Claimants must not be subjected to retaliation for exercising their rights, and the independent and impartial claim mechanisms that they must have access to should be established at a decentralised level, and should be free, accessible, and lacking in excessive formalities and language barriers for ethnic groups.³⁰³
3. With the full and transparent participation of peasants, smallholder farmers, and other specially affected groups, governments should seek to reduce the use of agrochemicals to a reasonable and sustainable minimum, and outlaw the use of those chemicals most dangerous to health and the environment. The manufacture and export for use elsewhere of agrochemicals banned for domestic use should be prohibited. In addition, governments should provide technical support for agricultural techniques that improve soil health, as may be appropriate in different contexts, such as composting, the use of organic fertilizers, use of perennial varieties, crop rotation, and use of no-dig systems, and increase awareness of the time and effort soil restoration requires.³⁰⁴ Crop diversification should be encouraged, and mandated on massive monoculture plantations.³⁰⁵ In parallel, The focus should shift from increasing food production by further commercialising agriculture toward agroecology, regenerative approaches, and indigenous food systems that do not use synthetic pesticides and emphasise genetically and culturally diverse agriculture at multiple scales.³⁰⁶
4. Governments should also implement taxes and warning labels to discourage the use of ultra-processed junk food and beverages, ban their targeted advertising to young people and other vulnerable groups, and implement and support campaigns that aim to ban the advertising of unhealthy products and food-related services.³⁰⁷ Funds raised through junk food taxes should be used to subsidise the cost of producing and consuming high-quality, healthy foods.

³⁰² Olivier De Schutter, Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, 2013, para. 49.

³⁰³ Olivier De Schutter, Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, 2013, para. 22.

³⁰⁴ FAO, 'Status of the World's Soil Resources: Technical Summary' (2015).

³⁰⁵ FIAN, The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it, July 2022, p. 6.

³⁰⁶ Seeds, right to life and farmers' rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, 2022, para. 79.

³⁰⁷ FIAN, The Problem with the Industrial Food System and how to fix it, July 2022, p. 7. For definitions, and State obligations and the responsibilities of the food and beverage industry, see Unhealthy foods, non-communicable diseases and the right to health, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Anand Grover, 2014.

5. States, acting within the framework of appropriate multilateral mechanisms, should conduct an end-to-end review of structural issues and opportunities at the international level which impede, or which could assist, developing States to fulfil international human rights obligations on the right to food. In particular, attention should be paid to assistance in creating, and eliminating barriers to the establishment of social protection floors, as well as re-orienting production systems towards high-resilience food crops that feed the local population instead of prioritising export-led agriculture and commodities.³⁰⁸ At a minimum, such a review should urgently consider restructuring or relief from unsustainable debt, as well as unfair trade and investment practices, tax evasion, the full implementation of existing development financing mechanisms and, if appropriate, the need for new or dedicated financing mechanisms. Such a review should take place in an open and transparent way, and with full participation by civil society, food sovereignty advocates, peasants organisations, and indigenous peoples, and should centre human rights obligations. G20 States and other States or actors holding large amounts of developing State debt should take the lead in forgiving or restructuring debts, including in advance of the review.
6. In matters relating to international trade, including negotiation of new bi-, pluri- or multilateral trade instruments, contracts, and other matters with foreseeable impacts on domestic food systems, States must centre the human rights of individuals and communities. In particular, States must ensure that new instruments and contracts accord both in letter and in spirit with their human rights obligations. States would be well advised to adopt a food sovereignty lens on international trade, and in particular to privilege domestic and local-scale production of diverse, culturally-appropriate crops over export-led agriculture.
7. States and international organisations should adopt community-led decision-making in the food sector. Establishing food policy councils and engaging with right to food organisations, food sovereignty organisations, and representatives of affected communities is vital in order to ensure that the decisions are responsive to the population's expectations and to the priorities that people identify. The principle of subsidiarity should apply, with decisions take at local and regional levels where possible, in order to enhance the participation of those most affected. States should enact regulations, in accordance with international best practice, to ensure that agencies and aid organisations active within their territories engage with populations on terms of informed consent, and in ways which respect and uphold the agency of individuals and groups.

³⁰⁸ Olivier De Schutter, Global fund for social protection: international solidarity in the service of poverty eradication - Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (A/HRC/47/36).

8. Greater emphasis on the views and self-determination of affected communities referred to in point 7, above, should form part of a wider rebalancing of the legal and institutional system pertaining to food. Following the example of the WHO's framework convention on tobacco control, States should enact provisions against agrifood corporations which seek unduly to influence decision-making within the FAO and other food-related international organisations.
9. In addition, the FAO should end its partnership agreements with entities the interests of which conflict with the organisation's mission. These include, but are not limited to, high-risk sectors such as agrochemical, fast food, beverage, tobacco, and fossil fuel industries.³⁰⁹ The FAO should likewise adopt an enhanced transparency framework, under which it would fully disclose all financial donations made to the FAO and its Member States by private actors. This reporting should, at a minimum, detail the amount of money contributed by each entity, the projects it funded, the duration of the projects, the details of the diligence assessments conducted for those relationships, and the corrective actions taken to resolve any potential conflicts of interest.
10. The FAO's regulations on engagement with the private sector must be adjusted better to reflect the fact that small-scale food producers are the ones who need FAO protection, and to take into account power imbalances that already exist between the corporate sector and small-scale food producers.³¹⁰
11. In order to guarantee farmers' rights to freely save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seeds, States should take steps to ensure that no knowledge belonging to a community can be shared or utilised commercially without that community's free, prior, and informed consent.³¹¹ Instead of taking place in non-democratic multi-stakeholder settings that are dominated by the most powerful participants, global policy coordination must also take into account the disparities between nations and ensure that the voices of the most affected communities and peoples are heard at all levels of decision-making.³¹² States should fully implement the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, and in particular the provisions of that treaty on farmers' rights.
12. Private enterprises must carry out human rights due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for their impacts specifically on the right to food, as stipulated in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.³¹³ In this respect, States should support and actively participate in

³⁰⁹ FIAN, *Corporate Capture of FAO*, p. 20.

³¹⁰ FIAN, *Corporate Capture of FAO*, p. 1.

³¹¹ *Seeds, right to life and farmers' rights*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, 2022, para. 52.

³¹² FIAN, *Food Crisis Response Entrenches Corporate Influence*, October 2022, p. 12.

³¹³ Olivier De Schutter, *Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food*, 2013, para. 13.

the UN Human Rights Council's process for a Binding Instrument on Transnational Companies and Human Rights as a crucial tool for regulating and holding corporations accountable, and should develop and implement national laws in accordance with the goals of that instrument.³¹⁴

13. States, international organisations (including the FAO), and other agencies and actors should adopt a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to their work on food (in)security, in particular taking into account racism, classism and ableism, as well as other intersecting forms of marginalisation. Structural discrimination and other systemic barriers to the full realisation of individual and community rights can compound the negative impacts of weak or vulnerable food systems, and must urgently be addressed. In particular, women often face the impacts of discriminatory laws and exclusionary or patriarchal social structures, with the effect that women produce more than 50 per cent of all food, but account for 60 per cent of the world's food insecure.³¹⁵ At the same time, 'Women are, and have always been, central to the creation of radical food politics that have the power to reconnect us with nature, remake social relations and prioritize intersectional justice.'³¹⁶ States must fully implement Article 14 CEDAW, as elucidated in General Recommendation 34 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, as well as Articles 3 and 4 UNDROP, and other relevant provisions of international human rights law.
14. Addressing food insecurity caused by non-State actors in armed conflicts or by failed States requires a multifaceted approach that includes both short-term humanitarian assistance and longer-term efforts to build more stable and accountable governance structures. International sanctions, such as asset freezes and prosecutions under the principle of universal jurisdiction for the use of hunger and starvation as a weapon of war and for crimes against humanity, could also be used against non-State actors that violate the right to food. Human rights monitoring and reporting mechanisms should ensure the effective monitoring and reporting of the compliance of non-State actors with human rights obligations, specifically including the right to food, and hold them accountable in case of violations. Finally, it has been argued that a greater engagement and negotiations with these entities is necessary, especially when they serve important State-like functions for the populations under their control.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ FIAN, *Food Crisis Response Entrenches Corporate Influence*, October 2022, p. 14.

³¹⁵ Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition, 'Peoples' Monitoring Toolkit for the Right to Food and Nutrition', 23; World Food Programme USA, 'Gender Inequality', available via <<https://www.wfpusa.org/drivers-of-hunger/gender-inequality/>>.

³¹⁶ Right to Food and Nutrition Watch, 'Women's Power in Food Struggles' (2019, issue 11), 13.

³¹⁷ Giles Giacca, *Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in Armed Conflict*, Oxford University Press 2014, chapter V. Just Access, The international responsibilities of "de facto authorities" and terrorist organisations in the Yemeni conflict, 26 December 2020, <https://just-access.de/international-legal-responsibility-of-de-facto-authorities-and-terrorist-organisations-in-the-yemeni-conflict/>

Annex 4: Case study: palm oil

Author: Jocelyn Zuckerman

In just the last few decades, the global palm oil industry has exploded. Given its profound implications for the climate, biodiversity, global health, indigenous rights, and local populations, the commodity can serve as an instructive case study for the issues that we as a group are looking to address through our project.

Today palm oil is the most-used vegetable oil in the world. Roughly half of all products in U.S. grocery stores now contain some part of the plant. (The oil palm fruit provides two kinds of oil, one from the orange flesh, and a second from the white kernel at its center.) There's palm oil in toothpastes, soaps, shampoos, conditioners, skin-care products, and makeup. It's in most processed foods, including cookies, crackers, ice creams, donuts, candy bars, and Nutella. There's even palm oil in non-dairy creamers and baby formula, and in industrial animal feeds.

Palm oil is also used as a biofuel. Energy policies introduced in the U.S. and the European Union in the mid-2000s had the effect of ramping up production. Oil-palm plantations now cover an area larger than New Zealand, and last year, global consumption of the commodity reached 73 million metric tons³¹⁸—that's roughly 20 pounds of palm oil for every person on the planet.³¹⁹

The crop is indigenous to Central and West Africa, where it's been a staple of everyday life for millennia. People there use it for cooking and to make medicines, ointments, and wine.³²⁰ It's still produced on a small scale by locals there, and it's prized for its vibrant color and strong aroma and flavor. It's also high in vitamins A and E.³²¹

These days, 85 percent of the palm oil produced worldwide comes from either Indonesia or Malaysia.³²² It's grown on massive plantations and undergoes industrial processing until what's left is something called "RBD," for refined, bleached, and deodorized.³²³ It is colorless, tasteless, and odorless, which is part of what makes it so valuable to various industries.

³¹⁸ <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/circulars/oilseeds.pdf>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/613471/palm-oil-production-volume-worldwide/>

³¹⁹ 73 million metric tons = 160 billion pounds divided by 7.8 billion people = 20.51 pounds per person

³²⁰ R.H.V. Corley and P.B. Tinker, *The Oil Palm*, 5th ed. (West Sussex, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

³²¹ *Fats and Oils in Human Nutrition*, Chapter 14: "Non-glyceride constituents of fats" (Rome: FAO, 1994) <http://www.fao.org/3/v4700e/V4700E00.htm>.

³²² Indonesia: 45 million metric tons. Malaysia: 18 million metric tons. 45 + 18 = 63 metric tons. 63 million is 86 percent of 73 million. <https://palmoilalliance.eu/palm-oil-production/>

³²³ [https://www.aocs.org/stay-informed/inform-magazine/featured-articles/red-palm-oil-february-2017?SSO=True#:~:text=Refined%2C%20bleached%2C%20and%20deodorized%20\(,snack%20products%20and%20baked%20goods.](https://www.aocs.org/stay-informed/inform-magazine/featured-articles/red-palm-oil-february-2017?SSO=True#:~:text=Refined%2C%20bleached%2C%20and%20deodorized%20(,snack%20products%20and%20baked%20goods.)

Trade liberalization and economic growth in middle-income countries over the last two decades has led to a surge of oil flowing across international borders, where it's enabled the production of ever-greater amounts of deep-fried snacks and ultra-processed foods. India, now the number-one importer of palm oil in the world,³²⁴ went from buying 30,000 metric tons of palm oil in 1992³²⁵ to 8.4 million in 2020.³²⁶ Rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease are soaring in India and in the poorer countries where the multinational corporations that peddle such junk are focused on growing their markets.

Most of us tend to blame sugar for the world's weight problems, but in the last half-century, refined vegetable oils have added far more calories to the global diet than any other food group.³²⁷ In the decades from 1991 to 2011, the supply of food energy increased by 278 calories per person, with more than a quarter of that increase coming from vegetable oils. In South Asia, the oils accounted for 32 percent of the increase in consumed calories.³²⁸ Studies have shown that diets rich in palm oil, which contains minimal amounts of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, both of which have health benefits, lead to a higher risk of heart disease than those heavy in such unsaturated fats as olive or soybean oils.³²⁹

Palm oil is 50 percent saturated fat, which means that it is semi-solid at room temperature. In the early 2000's, when the health establishment determined that trans fats—they result from hydrogenating liquid oils like corn and soy—were dangerous to health, food manufacturers looked to palm oil as a replacement for the oils they'd been using to enhance the texture and extend the shelf life of products like cookies and crackers. Palm oil's high smoke point makes it ideal for frying up doughnuts and other snacks. Multinational names like PepsiCo and Nestlé, McDonald's and Domino's now deliver large quantities of palm oil into diets worldwide. It isn't just the oil itself that is of concern, but the nutrient-deficient and heavily processed products that all this cheap oil is enabling.³³⁰

Palm oil has a profound impact on the environment. The oil palm grows best at ten degrees to the north and south of the equator, which is a swathe of land that corresponds with the planet's tropical rainforests.³³¹ These

³²⁴ <https://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?commodity=palm-oil&graph=imports>

³²⁵ <https://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=in&commodity=palm-oil&graph=imports>

³²⁶ <https://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=in&commodity=palm-oil&graph=imports>


³²⁷ Corinna Hawkes, "Uneven Dietary Development: Linking the Policies and Processes of Globalization with the Nutrition Transition, Obesity, and Diet-Related Chronic Diseases," *Global Health*, March 2006. See also" Derek Byerlee, Walter P. Falcon, and Rosamund L. Naylor, *The Tropical Oil Crop Revolution: Food, Feed, Fuel & Forests* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2, 19.

³²⁸ Byerlee, Falcon, and Naylor, 106.

³²⁹ "Intake of Individual Saturated Fatty Acids and Risk of Coronary Heart Disease in U.S. Men and Women: Two Prospective Longitudinal Cohort Studies," *BMJ*, October 2016. See also, "Palm Oil Consumption Increases LDL Cholesterol Compared with Vegetable Oils Low in Saturated Fat in a Meta-Analysis of Clinical Trials," *Journal of Nutrition* 145, no. 7 (July 2015).

³³⁰ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6853021/>

³³¹ Corley and Tinker, 3.



ecosystems are massively important for sequestering carbon. A lot of tropical rainforests sit on top of peatlands, soils formed over thousands of years through the accumulation of organic matter. Indonesia, which is the world's number-one producer of palm oil, is home to the planet's largest concentration of tropical peatlands.³³² When palm oil companies drain and burn that land in order to prepare it for planting, massive amounts of carbon dioxide escape into the atmosphere.³³³ The annual carbon emissions from Indonesia's peatlands rival those of the state of California.³³⁴ In 2015, an extended episode of haze linked to fires on oil-palm plantations on the Indonesian island of Sumatra led to an estimated 100,000 premature deaths. (A few weeks into the crisis, government officials ordered the evacuation of all babies under the age of six months.) As yet untallied is the long-term health damage caused by the fires.

There's also a problem with biodiversity loss. Though tropical rainforests cover less than 10 percent of Earth's land surface, they support more than half of the world's biodiversity.³³⁵ Sumatra is home to iconic animal species like orangutans and Sumatran elephants, rhinoceros, and tigers. They are all now critically endangered. The continued razing of the rainforest for oil-palm development means that these creatures are losing more and more of their natural habitat. In 2019, hundreds of international experts issued a report finding that global biodiversity is declining faster than at any other time in human history, with one million species already facing extinction, many within decades, unless the world takes transformative action.

Most of the folks on Sumatra used to work as farmers, supporting themselves and their families by growing food and sourcing medicines, building materials, protein, and clean water from the forest. But as more and more of the land has been planted with oil palm—and often the water polluted by agrichemicals—they have nowhere to grow food and no means of supporting themselves and their families. Many resort to poaching exotic animals.

The industry is therefore impacting health and nutrition at its source. Studies have shown that diets among indigenous peoples in Indonesia are healthier than those of people working and living on the fringes of plantations, rather than in the forests as they've traditionally done. In 2018, after a seven-year-old Guatemalan girl died while being held in detention by U.S. border agents in El Paso, her father said that the two had fled their village because

³³² Corley and Tinker, 78.

³³³ Thomas Guillaume, Martyna M. Kotowska, Dietrich Hertel, Alexander Knohl, Valentyna Krashevskaya, Kukuh Murti Laksono, Stefan Scheu, and Yakov Kuzyakov, "Carbon Costs and Benefits of Indonesian Rainforest Conversion to Plantations," *Nature Communications*, 2018.

³³⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/20/magazine/palm-oil-borneo-climate-catastrophe.html>

³³⁵ E.O. Wilson and Frances M. Peter, eds, *Biodiversity*. Chapter 3: "Tropical Forests and their Species Going, Going...?" by Norman Myers (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 1988).

deforestation to make way for oil-palm plantations had made subsistence farming there impossible.

And there's a connection to pandemics. Something like 75 percent of today's emerging infectious diseases originate in animals, and 60 percent of those can spread directly from animals.³³⁶ Over the past few decades, the number of such animal-to-human transmissions has skyrocketed.³³⁷ A third of these new diseases can be linked directly to deforestation and agricultural intensification, most of it involving tropical rainforests.³³⁸ Cutting them down sends virus-carrying wildlife like bats in search of new habitat, forcing them into closer contact with humans.

Labor is also an issue. Plantation workers in Indonesia, Malaysia, Honduras, Guatemala, Liberia, and other places complain of long hours, low wages, non-existent health benefits, inadequate safety gear, and exposure to dangerous chemicals that have been linked to various diseases. Malaysia's industry relies on more than 335,000 migrant workers—from countries like Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar—many of whom are brought in under false pretenses, have their passports confiscated, and are treated as virtual slaves.³³⁹ Women have reported being raped and many said their uteruses had collapsed from carrying the heavy fruit bunches. Some made the equivalent of \$2 a day, after having worked in the industry for decades.³⁴⁰ Amnesty International and others have reported about child labor on oil-palm plantations, many of which are located far from urban outposts and from oversight.³⁴¹ In December of 2020, the United States announced that it was blocking shipments of palm oil from two Malaysian producers over allegations of forced labor, including concerns over child workers and sexual abuse on plantations.³⁴²

The wealth of the \$65 billion industry remains concentrated among a handful of companies and the men who lead them, with little trickling down

³³⁶ "Neglected Tropical Diseases," World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/diseases/zoonoses/en.

³³⁷ Kate E. Jones, Mikkita G. Patel, Marc A. Levy, Adam Storeygard, Deborah Balk, John L. Gittleman, and Peter Daszak, "Global Trends in Emerging Infectious Diseases," *Nature* 451, 990-993, 2008.

³³⁸ Simon L. Lewis, David P. Edwards, and David Galbraith, "Increasing Human Dominance of Tropical Forests," *Science* 349, no 6250 (August 22, 2015): 827-32.

³³⁹ Syed Zain Al-Mahmood, "Palm-Oil Migrant Workers Tell of Abuses on Malaysian Plantations" *Wall Street Journal*, July 26, 2015.

³⁴⁰ "A Dirty Investment: European Development Banks' Link to Abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Palm Oil Industry," Human Rights Watch, November 2019. Part III, "Abusive Employment Practices and Extreme Poverty Wages"; footnote 148; Part III, footnote 191. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/11/25/dirty-investment/european-development-banks-link-abuses-democratic-republic>

See also, Margie Mason and Robin McDowell, "Rape, Abuses in Palm Oil Fields Linked to Top Beauty Brands," Associated Press, November 18, 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/palm-oil-abuse-investigation-cosmetics-2a209d60c42bf0e8fcc6f8ea6daa11c7>

³⁴¹ "The Great Palm Oil Scandal," Amnesty International, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/5184/2016/en/>

³⁴² <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/us-blocks-palm-oil-imports-malysias-sime-darby-over-forced-labour-allegations-2020-12-31/>

to the farmers.³⁴³ Corruption is rampant, with permits issued from inside jail cells, owners hidden behind offshore shell companies, long-dead villagers signing away their rights, and elders hoodwinked by sweet-talking executives.³⁴⁴ Last year, a Washington, DC, think tank published a report finding that international markets for commodities like palm oil are by far the most important driver of global deforestation, most of which happens illegally. In Indonesia, the researchers found, at least 81 percent of forested land cleared to produce palm oil was done so in violation of the law.

In 2019, the World Health Organization compared the tactics used by the palm oil industry to those employed by the tobacco and alcohol lobbies. It recently emerged that a Malaysian campaign accusing industry critics of being “neo-colonialists” was in fact the highly compensated work of a Washington, DC–based lobbying firm, one whose previous clients include Exxon and the former Burmese military junta.³⁴⁵ Meanwhile, those who’ve dared to speak out against the industry, whether laborers, peasant farmers, environmental activists, or journalists, often have been met with threats and violence.³⁴⁶

There are some positive developments. In 2019, the EU, reflecting on its more thorough understanding of the carbon lifecycle of palm oil–based biofuels (once you factor in the land-use change involved in their production, they’re not so green at all), passed legislation aimed at phasing out their use by 2030. And this past April, the EU passed legislation mandating that all companies ensure that goods sold inside the EU are “deforestation-free” and “have not been produced on deforested or degraded land.” In addition, various outfits in the US and beyond have begun to manufacture synthetic palm oil and are working on scaling up their operations.³⁴⁷

Their success would ultimately mean that millions of smallholder farmers would have to turn to different crops. But in the face of the massive challenges currently facing humanity—not just climate change and biodiversity loss but obesity and emerging pandemics—the hope is that we as a global community begin to think far more carefully about how we use the finite amount of land available to grow healthful food that benefits everyone on the planet.

³⁴³ “Tycoons in the Indonesian Palm Oil Sector” TuK Indonesia. https://www.tuk.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Tycoons-in-the-Indonesian-palm-oil-sector_compressed.pdf

See also, <https://news.mongabay.com/2016/12/indonesias-rich-list-stacked-with-palm-oil-billionaires/#:~:text=They%20are%20Budi%20and%20Michael.Prajojo%20Pangestu%3B%20and%20Bachtiar%20Karim.>

³⁴⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/20/magazine/palm-oil-borneo-climate-catastrophe.html>

³⁴⁵ A. Ananthakumari and Emily Chow, “Fearing Tobacco’s Fate, Palm Oil Industry Fights Back,” *Reuters*, August 21, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/malaysia-palmoil-strategy/insight-fearing-tobaccos-fate-palm-oil-industry-fights-back-idUSL4N25H1WC>

³⁴⁶ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-violent-costs-of-the-global-palm-oil-boom>

³⁴⁷ <https://www.xylome.com/>

See also, <https://www.c16bio.com/>

Annex 5: Case study: fisheries

Author: Jocelyn Zuckerman

As we know, the world is not on track to end hunger and malnutrition by 2030. Degraded ecosystems, an intensifying climate crisis, and increased biodiversity loss are threatening jobs, economies, the environment, and food security around the globe, all aggravated by the impacts of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and other humanitarian emergencies. With 820 million people suffering from hunger and 3 billion unable to afford healthy diets, we must urgently transform our food systems to improve nutrition and secure affordable healthy diets for a growing population, while safeguarding the natural environment.

The ocean covers 71 percent of the surface of the earth, and aquatic foods play a key role in food security and nutrition, not just as the main source of protein for more than a billion people, but as a provider of essential omega-3 fatty acids and bioavailable micronutrients. The Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, unanimously endorsed in 2021 by the 34th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, concludes with a call to support “an evolving and positive vision for fisheries and aquaculture in the twenty-first century, where the sector is fully recognized for its contribution to fighting poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.”³⁴⁸

In 2020, fisheries and aquaculture production totaled 214 million tonnes, worth some \$424 billion. Production of aquatic animals was more than 60 percent higher than the average in the 1990s, considerably outpacing world population growth, largely due to increasing aquaculture production. We now eat more than double the amount of aquatic foods consumed 50 years ago, with an average of 20 kilograms per person in 2020. Rising incomes and urbanization, improvements in post-harvest practices, and changes in dietary trends are projected to drive an additional 15 percent increase in aquatic-food consumption by 2030.

Fisheries are also important for the economies they support. Some 600 million livelihoods depend at least partially on fisheries and aquaculture, with the sector employing an estimated 58.5 million people. While women account for 21 percent of those engaged in the sector, they constitute a disproportionately large percentage of those engaged in the informal, lowest-paid, least-stable, and less-skilled segments of the workforce, and they often face gender-based constraints that prevent them from fully benefiting from their roles. Their plight is further complicated by limited access to information, services, infrastructure, markets, and social protections.

³⁴⁸ The 2022 edition of *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture – Towards Blue Transformation*.

On June 8, World Oceans Day, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned that “we should be the ocean’s best friend. But right now, humanity is its worst enemy.” Marine biodiversity is under attack from overfishing, over-exploitation, climate change, and ocean acidification. Over one-third of fish stocks are being harvested at unsustainable levels. And we are polluting our coastal waters with chemicals, plastics, and human waste.

According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, 35 percent of fish stocks worldwide are today exploited beyond sustainable levels.³⁴⁹ Much of the problem can be traced to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU), all of which harm fish populations, ocean health, and people. Estimates suggest that one in five wild-caught marine fish are landed from IUU fishing.³⁵⁰ A Washington, D.C.-based think tank focused on illicit trade and corruption says that IUU fishing generates up to \$36.4 billion per year in illegal profits, with billions lost to the global economy in unpaid taxes, customs, license fees, and other pieces of the legal seafood supply chain.³⁵¹ IUU fishing also disproportionately impacts small island and developing States and **takes a toll on local and regional cultures.**

In Senegal, for example, it is becoming increasingly difficult to make the national dish, thieboudienne, because populations of the local white grouper on which it’s based have collapsed thanks to illegal fishing. In the Bahamas, the population of conch, which has substantial cultural and economic value, has been depleted so severely that within a decade it may cease to be commercially viable. In the Indian Ocean off Madagascar, illegal fishing may represent as much as half of the total catch.³⁵² The drop in accessible catch has meant that local fishers have to go farther out to sea, significantly increasing their safety risk and leading to higher levels of mortality and decreased incomes. Those who work in related artisanal industries—including boat construction, net repair, ice hauling, and fish processing—also are seeing work and revenues decrease. In West Africa, the reduction of local fish catch due to illegal activities and overfishing is having a negative economic impact on the women who process and trade the fish.


Also contributing to overfishing is the fact that governments pay \$22 billion a year in subsidies that go primarily to industrial fishing fleets to artificially lower fuel and vessel-construction costs while enabling them to catch more fish by going farther out to sea for longer periods of time. In June of 2022, the World Trade Organization adopted an Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies that lays out rules for prohibiting certain forms of these subsidies

³⁴⁹ “The State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,

³⁵⁰ Ganapathiraju Pramod, Katrina Nakamura, Tony J. Pitcher, and Leslie Delagran, “Estimates of Illegal and Unreported Fish in Seafood Imports to the USA,” *Marine Policy*, Volume 48, September 2014, pages 102–113.

³⁵¹ Channing Mavrellis, “Transnational Crime and the Developing World,” *Global Financial Integrity*, March 27, 2017.

³⁵² Pew CharitableTrusts, November 3, 2022.



and sets out measures for transparency and accountability in how governments support their fishing sectors. The deal prohibits giving subsidies that enable IUU fishing; fishing of overfished stocks; or fishing of unmanaged stocks on the high seas.

Prioritizing and better integrating fisheries and aquaculture products in global, regional, and national food system strategies and policies will need to be a vital part of the transformation of our food systems. International instruments such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and related implementation tools should guide governance and policy reform worldwide, and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector should intensify collaboration arrangements to further strengthen their roles in addressing local, national, and regional fisheries management issues.³⁵³ Any policy decisions must take into account the benefits and trade-offs of environmental, social, and economic objectives of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems.

Rebuilding overfished stocks could increase marine capture fisheries production by 16.5 million tonnes and thus contribute to the food security, nutrition, economies, and well-being of coastal communities.³⁵⁴ Aquatic foods should be included in national food security and nutrition strategies, together with initiatives to improve consumer awareness about their benefits. Restoring fisheries productivity must also entail the rehabilitation of mangrove forests, seagrass meadows and reefs, watersheds and wetlands. And given that future aquatic food production will come largely as a result of intensified and expanded aquaculture, these operations must preserve aquatic ecosystem health, minimize pollution, and protect biodiversity and social equality.

³⁵³ “Global Progress Toward Implementing the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement,” The Pew Charitable Trusts, accessed March 3, 2023, <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2016/05/global-progress-toward-implementing-the-united-nations-fish-stocks-agreement>.

³⁵⁴ FAO

Annex 6: List of participants in our in-person and on-line discussions

S. No	Name	Organisation/background
1.	Philip McDonagh	Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations, Dublin City University
2.	Sister Helen Alford	Angelicum, Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Rome
3.	Damian Jackson	Irish Council of Churches, Ireland
4.	Adrian Cristea	Dublin City Interfaith Forum, Ireland
5.	Bishop Andrew Forster	Irish Council of Churches, Ireland
6.	Bruno Petrusic	Angelicum, Rome (CREATE programme)
7.	Dana Habib	Institute for Integrated Transitions, Barcelona
8.	Don Lucey	Misean Cara, Ireland
9.	Gerard Scullion	Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations, Dublin City University
10.	Gertrude Cotter	University College Cork, Ireland
11.	Giancarlo Anello	University of Parma, Italy
12.	Giuseppe Zampaglione	ex-World Bank, advisor to the Governments of Togo and Djibouti
13.	Ida Manton	PACE Global Strategies
14.	Jocelyn C. Zuckerman	Author; based in New York
15.	Johannes Moravitz	Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), Brussels
16.	John Moffett	Misean Cara, Ireland
17.	John Neary	Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations, Dublin City University
18.	Luca Brocca	Just Access, Heidelberg
19.	Lucia Scaffardi	University of Parma, Italy
20.	Marek Misak	Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), Brussels
21.	Maria Virginia Solis	Economy of Francesco, Argentina
22.	Mark Somos	Just Access, Heidelberg
23.	Mateusz Ciasnocha	European Carbon Farmers and Economy of Francesco
24.	Melanie Barbato	University of Münster/ the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies
25.	Nick van Praag	Ground Truth Solutions, Vienna
26.	Rachna Shanbog	Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations, Dublin City University
27.	Sahithi Baru	University College Cork, Ireland
28.	Seamus Collins	Misean Cara, Ireland
29.	Stephen Thornhill	University College Cork, Ireland
30.	Tom Arnold	Ireland's special representative on food security
31.	Silvija Migles	CREATE Expert Council (Croatia)
32.	Vojtech Masek	CREATE Expert Council (Czech Republic)

33.	Roland Szlias	CREATE Expert Council (Hungary)
34.	Dalia Stanciene	CREATE Expert Council (Lithuania)
35.	Fr. Arkadiusz Wuwer	CREATE Expert Council (Poland)

Acknowledgments

Prague Meeting, October 2022

We would like to thank Ambassador Irena Krasnicka and the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague for facilitating our first meeting in Prague on 26 - 27 October 2022 and contributing to our understanding of the OSCE's work on food security.

Dublin Meeting, April 2023

We would like to thank Aisling Rogerson, Jael Iglesias, and the team at the Fumbally, Dublin, for their warm hospitality and Ashish Dha for his indispensable support in running a complicated two-day programme.

We are especially grateful to our invited speakers in Dublin:

1. Aisling Rogerson, the Fumbally
2. Rev. John Godfrey, Rector, Aghrim
3. Larry O'Connell, Director, NESC
4. Prof. John Gilliland, QUB

Rome meeting, July 2023

We would like to thank Marina Russo and her colleagues for welcoming us to the Angelicum and Steve Killilea, Founder, Institute for Economics and Peace, for being part of the meeting and presenting the work of his think tank on the state of peace in 2023 and the trends of the last decade that give insight into the future.

We are grateful to Deirdre McGrena and the team at IFAD for a detailed and fruitful meeting on 5th July, to our guides at the Ville Pontificie farm on 6th July, and Ambassador Patricia O'Brien and her team who welcomed us to the Villa Spada (Embassy of Ireland) for a reception on 6th July.

Additional acknowledgments

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the assistance of many others not officially listed as participants who helped us in various ways – including the



members of the Dublin City Interfaith Forum, members of the working group on food and human rights established by Just Access, and the postdocs and Ph D students of the CREATE group.

The project on resilience in global food systems ran from September 2022 to 20 July 2023. Contributions were made by every participant. Many colleagues made written contributions. Our recommendations reflect a broad consensus.