



Advocating for the human rights of older women  
Défense des droits de la personne des femmes âgées

## The Global Hunger Crisis: Paths to Food Justice

Around the world the hunger crisis is deepening, with approximately 258 million people now facing high levels of acute food insecurity. To address the crisis, Canada (and other wealthy nations) must invest in building sustainability and resilience into our food systems.

Investments in food security and sustainable food systems would create many benefits: poverty alleviation, economic security, reduced displacement and migration, women's full participation, decreased conflict, and greater resilience in the face of a rapidly changing climate.

### Our Ask: Funding that Responds to Needs

We look to the Government of Canada to renew its promise to increase Official Development Assistance year over year to 2030 (while also making up for the reduction in Federal Budget 2023) and to invest an additional (new) \$2 billion between now and 2030 to respond to the intersecting food and climate crises.

Canada needs to immediately channel funds to vulnerable peoples in the Global South who are living with severe hunger, by increasing existing Official Development Assistance to food security. Government also needs to improve the quality of its funding in response to the expressed needs and priorities of affected communities. This can be done through:

- **Flexible and longer-term funding** -- with more grants (fewer loans) directly to local community-led groups or via Canadian development NGOs that work closely with them.
- **Support for small-scale farmers** -- Increasing emphasis on small-scale farmers who produce and distribute food, and favour farmer-led solutions.
- **Nature-based approaches** -- for local organizations working with nature-based solutions to restore soil health and biodiversity.
- **Re-purposing subsidies** -- towards sustainable farming practices rather than further investments in industrial agriculture.
- **Putting a priority on Africa** -- which is the region of greatest need.
- **Removing barriers to women's leadership** -- by supporting education, training, reducing gender-based violence, and improving access to credit, land ownership, and seeds. (In a sample of 20 countries, less than 1% of poor rural women finished secondary education, a major barrier to increasing women's autonomy.)

## Facts about Hunger and Food Justice

### The Global Hunger Crisis

- 258 million people in 58 countries/territories faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2022 (GRFC 2023). Recurrent shocks are driving up food insecurity. Primary drivers of acute food insecurity are conflict, weather extremes, migration, and economic shocks.
- The war in Ukraine has had a big impact on global food systems because of the contributions Ukraine and Russian make to the production and trade of fuel, fertilizers, and essential food commodities like wheat, maize, and sunflower oil.

### Small-Scale Farmers and Women's Rights

- Small-scale and family farms produce nearly two-thirds of the world's food.
- Smallholder farmers maintain very high seed diversity, allowing for crop diversity on their farms. This is critical for building a resilient food production system in the face of climate change.
- Agroecology, currently practiced primarily by small-scale farmers, is scalable, with many projects in the Global South demonstrating how this can be done.
- Women produce 60-80% of all food grown in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean.
- Women's groups, including farmers' associations, have consistently been shown to improve women's economic empowerment and broader well-being.
- Ensuring that women have equal access to and control over resources is central for achieving gender equality and women's self-sufficiency in agrifood systems. Secure rights over land, water, and livestock can expand rural women's economic opportunities and increase their resilience to shocks, including global economic crises and climate-related impacts.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic crisis reinforced gender inequalities in agrifood system livelihoods. The gap in food insecurity between men and women widened from 1.7 percentage points in 2019 to 4.3 percentage points in 2021.

### Global Food Systems

- Production of staple grains for world consumption is concentrated in five countries (70% of global supply). These global staples, such as wheat, maize, and rice, provide calories but insufficient nutrition.
- With ownership of seeds in the hands of just a few large corporations, farmers are increasingly dependent on external and commercially controlled seeds, often not adapted to the local environment.
- Nearly 90% of annual \$540 billion in global subsidies to farmers "cause harm" to the food system. Subsidies routinely fund price incentives for monoculture of livestock and crops, involving intense use of fertilizers and pesticides and shutting out smaller farmers and those practicing agroecology from the larger markets.
- Chemical fertilizers and those used to manage pests reduce soil health, which lowers agricultural resilience, and makes farms more vulnerable to climate shocks.
- Roughly 30% of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted.

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**Information Sources:** Global Report on Food Crises 2023 | World Resources Institute | UN Food and Agriculture Organization | Dr. Elizabeth Vibert, Professor of History, UVic | UN Environment Programme | Status of Women in Agrifood Systems | SeedChange