



Combating Global Food Insecurity

April 12, 2022

Today, [811 million people](#) go to bed hungry every night, illustrating extraordinary levels of food insecurity and the far-reaching impact of current crises around the world. Continued supply chain disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have exacerbated social, political, and economic challenges. And as climate change and conflict play an increasing role in hunger, the United States cannot lose sight of the full array of urgent and global threats that have driven food prices to their [highest levels since 2011](#).

Furthermore, the number of severely food-insecure people has doubled from 135 million people before COVID-19 to [276 million today](#), as low-income countries face an uphill recovery from the global pandemic. By the end of 2022, the World Food Program (WFP) estimates this total to rise to [323 million people](#). It is more important than ever that America continues to lead globally to protect food systems around the world and citizens at home from continued supply chain disruptions and rising prices.

Growing Hunger Around the World

After steadily declining for over a decade, global hunger is on the rise again. Inadequate funding for U.S. development agencies risks worsening these crises.

- ▶ **Ukraine.** [13 million people](#) worldwide may be pushed into [food insecurity](#) due to the crisis in Ukraine. Supply chain disruptions have driven the global price of food commodities to their [highest levels ever](#) and food inflation is contributing to [political unrest](#) in the developing world. It is [uncertain whether Ukraine](#) will be able to harvest existing crops, plant new ones, or sustain livestock production. The war has already disrupted crop production for [tens of thousands](#) of smallholder farmers.
- ▶ **Horn of Africa.** The Horn of Africa is one of the most food insecure regions in the world. As many as [28 million people](#) across Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia, and Kenya face severe hunger if rains fail again, with the region facing the worst drought since 1981. The outlook for the region has declined in the past month as global shocks have driven up the price of oil and wheat by [as much as 300%](#) in parts of East Africa.
- ▶ **Yemen.** [17.4 million people](#) are food insecure in Yemen, with [1.6 million more](#) expected to fall into emergency levels of hunger in the coming months due to economic crisis and violent conflict between the Yemini government and the Houthis. Without significant humanitarian assistance, political and economic crises will drive [161,000 Yemini](#)s into famine-like hunger by the end of 2022, a fivefold increase from early March.
- ▶ **Afghanistan.** Economic crisis and terrible droughts have pushed [95% of Afghanistan's population](#) into food insecurity of "[unparalleled proportions](#)." Russia's ban of food and fertilizer exports is pushing Central Asian states into [famine-like levels of hunger](#). With little economic and political stability, nearly [9 million Afghans](#) face famine-like conditions, a number that will only grow in the face of further supply chain disruptions.
- ▶ **Egypt.** Egypt is the world's [largest buyer of wheat](#), importing over 80% from Ukraine and Russia. To address growing food inflation, President Sisi has suggested he may [reduce government subsidies](#) for the nearly 100 million Egyptians that rely on subsidized bread and other goods. Rising prices and the limited availability of cooking oils may [fuel food riots](#) and deepen political instability as seen during the 2011 Arab Spring.

Impacts of Food Insecurity

The impacts of social, political, and economic crises on food systems are not only immediate but will also slow economic growth, perpetuate conflict, and worsen malnutrition for years to come.

- ▶ **Malnutrition.** Disruptions to food systems caused by COVID-19 and now worsened by the Ukraine crisis have rolled back [years of progress](#) combatting malnutrition. In 2022, COVID-related disruptions may push an [additional 9.3 to 13.6 million children](#) into acute malnutrition. Today [less than 40% of children](#) in the Middle East and Northern Africa have access to nutritious diets. Generally, malnutrition [negatively affects](#) physical growth, cognitive development, and can lead to chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes.
 - Malnutrition causes [significant](#) economic losses. Irreversible damages caused by child stunting cost the global economy \$3 trillion a year in productivity loss, or \$500 per individual per year.
 - In low-income settings, the losses from malnutrition range from 3% - 16% of GDP annually and lead to [worse economic outcomes](#) as an adult.
 - The COVID-19 pandemic may also result in [\\$29.7 billion in losses](#) in 2022 due to excess stunting and child mortality. However, for every dollar invested in nutrition, [\\$16 is returned](#) to the local economy.
- ▶ **Conflict.** Heightened levels of food insecurity [contribute to violent conflict](#) and make it much more difficult for communities to build lasting peace. Acute food shortages frequently [trigger incidents of conflict](#), and in turn lead to greater food insecurity. With [60 percent of the world's](#) hungry people currently living in areas afflicted by violence, the complex cycle of causality between hunger and conflict makes it extremely challenging to address persistent humanitarian emergencies.
- ▶ **COVID-19.** The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on various forms of malnutrition are still unfolding; however, it is clear that the pandemic has intensified inequality in access to food around the world. A UN projection suggests that due to COVID-19, an additional [30 million people](#) may face hunger in 2030 than if the pandemic had not occurred.

American Leadership on Strengthening Food Security

America has led the global response to tackle food insecurity for over half a century and continues to be the [largest contributor](#) to the WFP. To address short-term humanitarian hunger crises and to build long-term sustainable food systems, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) partners with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of State, farmers in America's heartland, the private sector, and local non-governmental organizations working around the world to leverage multi-sector partnerships and American innovation.

- ▶ **Response by the U.S. Government.** USAID recently released its 2022-2026 [Global Food Security Strategy](#). This five-year, whole-of-government strategy guides the agency's efforts to implement Feed the Future, the U.S. Government's global food security initiative. Since 2010, Feed the Future has helped reduce stunting for 3.4 million children and has lifted 5.2 million families out of hunger.
 - At the UN Food Systems Summit in Fall 2021, USAID Administrator Samantha Power [announced](#) a \$5 billion investment in Feed the Future over the next five years. Leveraging partnerships with public, private, and local actors, Feed the Future will seek to reduce poverty and child stunting by 20%.

- At the same UN Summit, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) [announced plans](#) to invest \$1 billion in food security projects over five years to advance agricultural production, food processing, shipping and logistics, and financial technology related to global food systems.
- ▶ **Response by Farmers in the American Heartland.** American farmers are at the heart of U.S. global food security strategy.
 - **McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program.** This U.S. government-funded program uses commodities grown by American farmers to enhance food security and strengthen nutrition for school-aged children and their families. In 2020, more than [3.6 million children, women, and families](#) benefited from the McGovern-Dole Program, with nearly half being school-aged children who received daily meals.
 - **John Ogonowski and Doug Bereuter Farmer-to-Farmer Program (F2F).** This USAID-funded program provides technical assistance from American farmers to agriculture sector institutions in developing countries. In 2018, USAID initiated a new five-year phase of programming. Over [3,200 American volunteers](#) will provide technical assistance in 36 core countries. Since F2F was founded in 1985, over 19,000 volunteers have supported more than 12,500 organizations, reaching 136 million people in over 100 countries.