

# Combatting the Global Hunger Crisis

August 2022

Today, as many as [828 million people](#) go to bed hungry every night, illustrating extraordinary levels of food insecurity and the far-reaching impact of current global crises. Continued supply chain disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have exacerbated social, political, and economic challenges around the world, particularly in developing countries. And as other conflicts play an increasing role in the hunger crisis, 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](#).

The number of severely food-insecure people has more than doubled from 135 million people before COVID-19 to [345 million today](#), as low-income countries face an uphill recovery from the global pandemic. It is more important than ever that America continues to lead globally to protect food systems around the world and our citizens at home from supply chain disruptions and rising prices.

## Global Hunger on the Rise

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.** [47 million people worldwide](#) have been pushed into acute [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](#) around the world. The Kyiv School of Economics [estimates](#) that 2.4 million hectares of winter crops worth \$1.5 billion will not be harvested this year due to the war, affecting tens of thousands of small holder 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 rainfall amounts fail again in the coming months, with the region facing the worst drought since 1981. Today, [18 million people](#) in the region are food insecure, roughly the population of New York.
- ▶ **Yemen.** [17.4 million people](#) are food insecure in Yemen, with [1.6 million more](#) expected to fall into emergency levels of hunger by the end of the year due to economic crisis and violent conflict between the Yemini government and the Houthis. A recent [survey](#) shows that almost one third of families have gaps in their diets, and hardly ever consume foods like pulses, vegetables, fruit, dairy products or meat. Malnutrition rates among women and children in Yemen remain among the highest in the world, with [1.3 million pregnant](#) or breastfeeding women requiring treatment for acute malnutrition.
- ▶ **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 [more than a third](#) of people globally cannot afford a healthy diet and [less than 40% of children](#) in the Middle East and Northern Africa have access to adequately 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% 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 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. The World Bank also reports that [nearly half the countries in the world](#) saw a significant number of people running out of food or reducing their consumption in the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## American Leadership Strengthening Global 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 World Food Program (WFP). To address short-term humanitarian hunger crises and to build long-term sustainable food systems, USAID works with multisector partners around the world to leverage American technology, creativity, and innovation.

- **Response by the U.S Congress.** Bipartisan support in Congress for America's development agencies strengthens the response to global food insecurity.
  - **Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act.** In May, [Congress approved](#) more than \$40 billion in emergency resources to support the Ukrainian people – including more than \$5 billion in international affairs resources to tackle global food insecurity. This passed the Senate with [strong bipartisan support](#) (86-11).
- **Response by Development Agencies.** USAID works closely with the WFP, private-sector partners, and other development organizations to tackle the global hunger crisis.
  - In July, USAID [announced](#) a surge of nearly \$1.3 billion to provide food, cash assistance, drought-tolerant agriculture, fertilizer, and other basics to meet the immediate food needs of people in the Horn of Africa.

- Recently, [USAID committed](#) \$200 million to UNICEF to specifically fund the purchase and distribution of ready-to-use-therapeutic food (RUTF), which will be able to feed over 2 million malnourished children globally. RUTFs can help 90% of severely malnourished children survive where most would typically die without treatment.
- 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. In 2022, Feed the Future was expanded to eight new target countries in Africa to address global hunger, increasing investments in country-level capacity and resilience.
- **Response by Farmers in America's Heartland.** American farmers are at the heart of our global food security strategy.
  - **U.S. Department of Agriculture.** In May, the USDA [doubled the amount of funding](#) for domestic fertilizer production to \$500 million. As one of the world's largest exporters of wheat, this will develop new markets for America's agricultural commodities and support jobs across the Heartland.
  - **McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program.** This U.S. government-funded program uses commodities grown by American farmers to enhance food security, train farmers, and strengthen nutrition for school-aged children and their families. Since it was signed into law in the 2002 Farm Bill, the program has [provided](#) more than 5.5 billion school meals, supported more than 31 million children and families in 48 countries, and donated more than 1.3 million tons of U.S. agricultural commodities.
  - **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.