



ISSUE BRIEF

Food and Nutrition Security for All

Hunger and malnutrition threaten families and communities around the world. Over 805 million people are chronically hungry, and 161 million children under five are stunted. **Hunger and malnutrition kill more people than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.** The changing climate, a rapidly increasing global population, and increasingly scarce natural resources exacerbate the challenges facing at-risk communities. The global population is projected to reach 9.6 billion people by 2050, requiring an increase in food production of up to 60 percent. However, one-fifth of cropland is degraded and unsuitable for farming, and nearly 90 percent of the world's fisheries are fully- or over-fished.

The food systems of today and the future must promote justice and sustainability in order to respond to emergencies, enhance food and nutrition security, promote resilience to climate change, and protect the ecosystems on which poor populations rely. **Sustainably feeding and nourishing today's populations and a projected 9.6 billion people in 2050 is one of the defining challenges of the 21st century.**

ISSUE IN FOCUS

Hunger and malnutrition are complex issues that call for a comprehensive approach that addresses all aspects, including emergency response and long-term food and nutrition security.

Small-scale farmers make up 85 percent of the world's farms, and more than 90 percent of people engaged in the fish sector work in small-scale fisheries. Small-scale food producers often struggle to grow, catch or buy enough nutritious food because of poor quality soil, small plots of land, depleted fish stocks, water scarcity, unavailability of diverse foods, or low incomes. They also often struggle to access markets or sell their harvest at fair prices.

Women and children comprise the majority of the world's chronically hungry people: when food is scarce, women are often last to eat. Poor nutrition early in a child's life permanently impairs physical and cognitive development. Focusing on nutritional needs of women and children in the first 1,000 days,

from a mother's pregnancy to a child's second birthday, helps ensure the best possible development outcomes for a child.

U.S. international food assistance—from emergency food aid to long-term food security programs—has embodied the compassion and generosity of Americans for sixty years. Now, it's time for renewed U.S. leadership on global food and nutrition security. **CARE advocates for the U.S. Government to support and fund comprehensive food and nutrition security strategies, policies and programs that are sustainable, equitable, and flexible.** CARE calls for:

- Reforms to U.S. international food aid programs to reach more people more quickly through efficient and flexible food aid during immediate and prolonged crises.
- Bipartisan food and nutrition security legislation that addresses long-term needs by requiring a comprehensive strategy, improving and codifying the Feed the Future program, and promoting sustainability, resilience, and gender equality.

Crisis Response: Modernizing U.S. International Food Aid

Since 1954, U.S. food aid programs have fed over three billion people. **In a world of growing risk, climatic stress, and increasing natural disasters, U.S. food aid programs must be as efficient and effective as possible so communities can better recover, adapt and thrive.** Reforming the U.S. food aid system will ensure that we stretch every tax dollar to reach more people.

Traditionally, the U.S. has shipped food from the U.S. to developing countries, but this process can be expensive and slow. These inefficient and costly practices are currently required by law. Currently, a legal requirement called cargo preference requires that at least 50 percent of all food aid be shipped on U.S. flag ships which cost approximately 2.7 times more than the average global shipping rate. This high-cost requirement diverts valuable resources away from purchasing food: **as much as thirty cents of every food aid dollar goes to pay for transportation, not food.**

Crises are complicated and we need flexibility to respond with the right tools. Sometimes, shipping food from the U.S. is the best option, and sometimes it is not. When markets or regional food availability are not able to respond to an emergency, U.S. food may be the best answer. However, when the U.S. can purchase food closer to a crisis, organizations like CARE can reach more people faster, without spending any more money. **Shipping U.S. food takes on average 130 days, while buying local takes 56 days, a difference of over 2 months.** Local purchase—whether by an organization for distribution or by vulnerable households with cash or vouchers in a local market—also supports local economies and small-scale food producers. Simply put, it's faster, cheaper, and contributes to long-term recovery and food security.

CARE calls for reforms to U.S. food aid programs that allow for a flexible response to emergency food needs, including the option to buy locally where appropriate and to transport food as efficiently as possible. Modernizing the U.S. food aid system is a solution for today and tomorrow.



Supporting Long-Term Food and Nutrition Security

Eradicating hunger and malnutrition also requires empowering hungry people to grow or buy adequate nutritious food themselves.

A comprehensive strategy is needed to coordinate U.S. programs that address agriculture, nutrition, climate change, natural resource management and women's empowerment. Tackling the inequality that underpins poverty and hunger, particularly for women, must also be a priority. Many small-scale producers are women, yet they frequently lack equal access with men to resources, like land, credit, and training. **Research shows that if women had equal access, global hunger could be reduced by 100 to 150 million people.**

Addressing hunger and malnutrition today and for the future also demands that programs integrate environmental considerations and build communities' capacity to adapt. Small-scale food producers, especially women, are vulnerable to a changing climate, from rising temperatures to more unpredictable rainfall patterns. By sharing knowledge, access to weather information, and sustainable agriculture practices, CARE helps build their capacity to manage uncertainty, protect natural resources, and increase yields. **Preliminary research results show that sustainable farming practices and improved crop varieties can increase yields up to 400 percent in three years.**

CARE advocates for U.S. food and nutrition security programs to adopt a comprehensive approach that empowers the world's poorest women and their families to realize their right to nutritious food and protects the planet's resources for today and years to come.

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