



ISSUE BRIEF

Food and Nutrition Security for All

Each day, almost one billion people around the world do not have enough to eat, most of whom live in rural areas, and two billion people suffer from malnutrition. Hunger and malnutrition are the number one risk to global health, killing more than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. And malnutrition—particularly in the first 1000 days from a mother’s pregnancy until her child’s second birthday—can permanently impair physical and cognitive development, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and hunger.

By 2050, the global population will grow to 9.6 billion, with most growth in the poorest countries. This growth in population will require 60% more agricultural production, along with just and sustainable ways of ensuring that everyone has enough nutritious food to eat. Feeding and nourishing the hungry and malnourished of today, as well as the billions of tomorrow, will be one of the defining challenges of the 21st century.

ISSUE IN FOCUS

Hunger is a complex problem and calls for a comprehensive approach that addresses all aspects of hunger and malnutrition, from emergency to long-term food and nutrition needs.

Small-scale farmers provide up to 80 percent of the food supply in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and 85 percent of the world’s farms are small-scale farms. But these farming families often struggle to grow or buy enough nutritious food for themselves because of poor quality soil, small plots of land, water scarcity, a lack of diverse foods available, or low incomes. Those who do produce enough can also struggle to access markets or sell their harvest at fair prices. These small-scale farmers also face the growing challenge of climate change (as traditional rainfall patterns change, water becomes scarcer or too abundant, and natural disasters become more frequent and severe) increasing the uncertainty of already tenuous livelihoods.

Women and children comprise the majority of the world’s chronically hungry people. When food is scarce, women are often last to eat and their food is the least nutritious. Poor nutrition early in a child’s life can result in irreversible “stunting” or reduced growth, impaired development and low immunity to diseases. And when the food supply is short, families spend less on other essentials—like education and medicine. Many small-scale farmers are women, and while they are often responsible for the families’ food and nutrition needs, they are frequently not given equal access as men to the resources necessary for productive, sustainable livelihoods.

U.S. international food assistance programs have embodied the compassion and generosity of the American people for sixty years. **It’s time for renewed United States leadership on global food and nutrition security that is comprehensive, equitable, sustainable, and flexible.**

Modernizing U.S. International Food Aid

Since 1954, U.S. food aid programs have fed over a billion people. Yet recent studies have revealed ways to modernize U.S. food aid to increase its effectiveness, reach millions more people without spending any extra money, and support the long-term food and nutrition security of small-scale farmers.

Modernizing food aid begins at home. Traditionally, the U.S. has shipped food from the United States to developing countries overseas, but this process can be expensive and slow. **As much as thirty cents of every dollar spent goes to pay for transportation. Sometimes, in an emergency, shipping food from the U.S. is the best option.** But when the U.S. government can purchase food closer to an emergency, humanitarian organizations like CARE can reach more people without spending any more money. Simply put, local purchase—whether by an organization, or through cash or vouchers to vulnerable households—reduces delays and stimulates local development. It's a solution for today and tomorrow.

CARE urges a robust investment in U.S. food assistance programs, including the flexibility to respond with locally-purchased food where appropriate, so more people will be reached during crises or natural disasters.

Support Long Term Food and Nutrition Security

It is easy to get the impression that outbreaks of acute hunger (sometimes serious enough to be called “famines”) are isolated calamities that simply result from crop failures, natural disasters or conflicts. In reality, there is a deeper problem underlying these events. What appear to be isolated disasters are really symptoms of a systemic crisis.

Addressing all aspects of food and nutrition security means everything from distributing food in the wake of a disaster to empowering families to buy food in local markets with vouchers; from helping producers increase their yields to educating producers about practices to conserve water to ensuring they can get fair market prices for their products.



CARE advocates for U.S. food and nutrition security programs to adopt a comprehensive approach that enables vulnerable families to sustainably increase their yields in the face of climate change, to access and protect the natural resources like land and water on which their harvests depend, to diversify their sources of income, and to work together to sell their crops in the market at fair prices.

Effective programs also must integrate nutrition to ensure the best possible development outcomes for children under two, and to help them grow into the healthiest adults possible. Strong programs pay particular attention to the challenges women face, ensuring they have access to resources that enable them to start or invest in their own small businesses.

By targeting all aspects of hunger and malnutrition—from agriculture to incomes to diverse diets to gender equality—effective, comprehensive food and nutrition security programs build families' ability to withstand and recover from natural disasters and other shocks to their livelihoods. CARE calls on Congress to support bipartisan legislation that would create a food and nutrition security strategy. By supporting and promoting **a comprehensive approach to food and nutrition security, U.S. food and nutrition programs will meet immediate needs, address underlying drivers of hunger and vulnerability, and enhance the ability of poor households to graduate out of poverty and hunger.**

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