

Food Security and Nutrition

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Family in Malawi presents food items. Photo: Julie Lunde Lillesæter, Differ Media

2.4 billion people without food security

The UN's 2nd Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) aims to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), there are 2.4 billion people living with moderate or severe food insecurity in the world today. This corresponds to approximately 29.5% of the world's population. Approximately 735 million people live in chronic hunger, which is 122 million more than before the Covid-19 pandemic (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, p. xvi).

The definition of food security is that all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. It involves a diet that satisfies nutritional needs for an active and healthy life. Based on this definition, there are four central dimensions that must be taken care of: availability, access, utilization of the food, as well as stability (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, p. 246).

It is therefore not sufficient that enough food is produced in the world. It must also be available to all people, it must be nutritious and it must be consistently available at all times. SDG 2.1 challenges the international community to ensure

that all people, especially the poor and people in vulnerable situations, have access to sufficient and safe food throughout the year. Unfortunately, there were 3.1 billion people who could not afford a nutritious diet in 2021 (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, p. xvi).

There are several reasons why so many people are malnourished or undernourished. War and conflict, poverty, diseases, skewed trade structures and climate change are some key drivers. Paradoxically, it is people in agriculture – those who produce food – who are most vulnerable to hunger.

Moderate and severe food insecurity	Chronic hunger
The term moderate food insecurity is used when people have been forced to reduce the quality and/or consumption of food during periods of the year. In severe food insecurity, one has run out of food and in the worst case has gone several days without eating.	Chronic hunger, or malnutrition as it is often referred to as, is a painful physical condition caused by insufficient food intake over time.



Farmer holds various food crops in Malawi. Photo: Julie Lunde Lillesæter, Differ Media

The road to zero hunger

Hunger and malnutrition lead to disease and death. It hinders children's development and makes it more difficult to learn at school. It becomes more difficult for adults to work and take care of their families when they do not have access to enough food, while it also hinders economic development. The right to food is a fundamental human right. It is described in the UN Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, later also in the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This means that the authorities must make arrangements for individuals and their households to have enough and safe food. The states that have signed the covenant have undertaken to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food.

To reduce hunger and malnutrition, we have to invest in small-scale agriculture. The World Bank is among the many actors who point to agriculture as the most effective way to fight hunger and poverty. According to the World Bank, growth in the agricultural sector is more than twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth in other sectors (World Bank, 2015, p. 7). This applies not only to creating development over time, but also in crisis situations: FAO points out that it is significantly more cost-effective and impactful to support farmers' food production instead of handing out food (FAO, 2023).



A farmer in his field in Ethiopia. Photo: Addis Aemero

The comprehensive study Ceres2030, published in 2020, brought together the most promising solutions to eradicate hunger by 2030. The researchers have recommended ten measures, and concluded that 33 billion dollars a year in increased funding is necessary in the period up to 2030 (Ceres2030, 2020, p. 2). Although this is a lot of money, in comparison the world spent 2,240 billion dollars on military investments in 2022 alone (SIPRI, 2023). Ceres2030 recommends a number of concrete measures for how to best utilise the funding. It suggests, among other things, facilitating the organisation of farmers, investing in vocational training programs for rural youth, scaling up social protection programmes, investing in advisory services, and promoting climate resilient plant varieties, to name a few.

Farmers must not only be able to grow climate resilient plant varieties. They must also be able to transport and sell their crops at a decent price. Authorities must combine investment in agriculture with social protection programmes to ensure that people have income and access to food even in difficult times. And relevant ministries must work together more closely: agriculture and environment, health and education, finance and development cooperation.



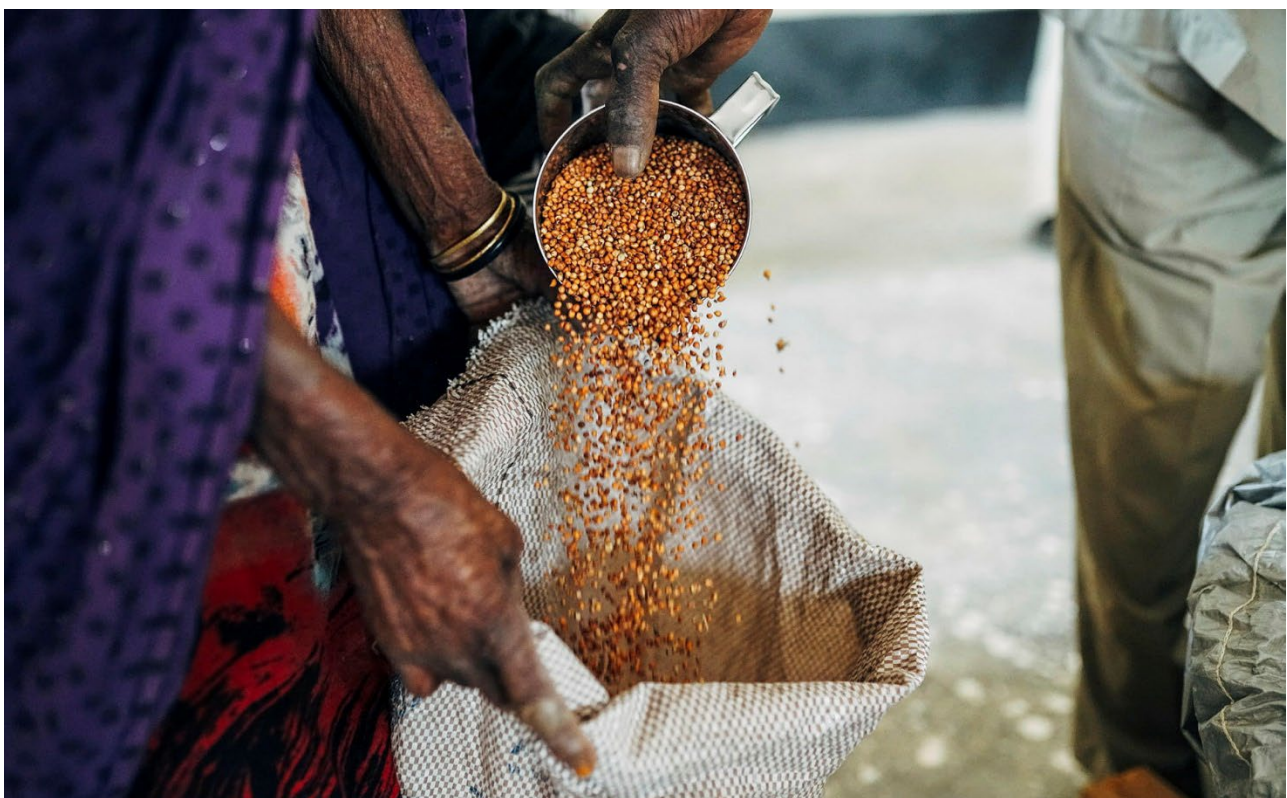
A piglet is fed in Nepal. Photo: Harald Herland

The Development Fund's work with food security and nutrition

Reduction of hunger and improved nutrition is at the core of The Development Fund's work. Our activities are also largely in line with the measures Ceres2030 recommends, and we have been working this way ever since the organisation was founded. Some examples of activities that are carried out in collaboration with local partners are:

Diversifying food production: By growing more food plants and different varieties of the most important plants, food production can be increased. This can be done through joint planting, home gardens or tunnel cultivation. In addition to reducing the vulnerability to crop loss, diversifying food production can reduce the need for inputs as the various plants can supply nutrition to each other. A more diverse food production is also important for a more varied diet.

Inputs and technology for food production: Food production depends on inputs. The Development Fund contributes by ensuring access to seeds, and by installing irrigation systems, investing in livestock etc. Investment funds alone are not enough – therefore we also follow up with training and advice to ensure that the implementations are long-lasting.



Sharing of seeds in Somalia. Photo: Kristoffer Nyborg

Training, raising awareness and sharing knowledge: One measure for better nutrition and food safety is to spread knowledge. This is done, among other measures, through courses in nutrition, hygiene, care practices for children, animal health and production, and cooking. Part of this work entails including local leaders and religious leaders in awareness programs. We also support advisers, or extension workers, who assist local farmers with guidance on farming techniques and market access.

Seed banks: Safe and stable access to seed is important for food security. The Development Fund supports the start-up and operation of seed banks where farmers can both store and borrow seed in case crops fail. In the seed banks, farmers can also keep collections of different local and traditional varieties.

Climate change adaptation: In collaboration with local partners, the Development Fund has developed methods for climate change adaptation in the local communities where we work. A climate-adaptive village makes it easier to work with agriculture under different conditions. With more robust food production, there is often more nutritious food for the farmers and their family, and the surplus can be sold on the local market. Increased income also increases the likelihood of improved food security and nutrition.

Would you like to support The Development Fund's work?

- ✦ [Here you can read about how you can get involved in our work against hunger and injustice](#)

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