

## World Disasters Report by numbers

### *World Disasters Report 2011* by numbers

**925 million** Undernourished people in the world in 2010 million, according to the FAO, more than in the early 1970s.

**178 million** Under-fives worldwide suffering from stunted growth as a result of undernutrition.

**15%** Proportion of the world's population who go to bed hungry.

**30%** Increase in FAO food-price index in the second half of 2010.

**\$68 billion** Amount spent on food stamps for 40 million hungry Americans in 2010.

**1.5 billion** Overweight people in the world.

**27%** Proportion of US adult population that is obese.

**25 billion** US agrofuel target (in gallons) for 2022.

**60%** Proportion of sub-Saharan African children who are anaemic because of poor diet.

**60%** Proportion of the world's uncultivated arable land that is in Africa.

**49%** Increase in number of calories available per head in China (the world's highest figure) in roughly the four decades to the early 2000s.

**240** Number of agencies in the European Federation of Food Banks, which rescue excess food from industry and restaurants for distribution to the poor.

**18** Number of European countries they operate in.

**10 million** Estimated maximum number of hectares of agricultural land lost yearly because of drought.

**30%** Estimate of all food crops wasted yearly.

**10%** Proportion of World Bank's development budget devoted to agriculture in 2000 (down from 26% in the 1980s).

**500%** Increase in the number of futures and options traded globally between 2002 and 2008.

**2%** Proportion of GDP African Union wants member states to commit to social protection.

## 1. The global food system

The number of undernourished people in the world in 2010 was 925 million, more than in the early 1970s, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – the majority in the Asia-Pacific region, especially the Indian subcontinent, and in sub-Saharan Africa. Most live in rural areas.

Fifteen per cent of the world's population now goes to bed hungry,

A growing number live in urban and peri-urban areas. More than four million urban poor in Kenya were classified as 'highly food insecure' in March 2009.

There are also many hungry people in high-income countries. The US Department for Agriculture reports that in 2010, US\$ 68 billion was spent on food stamps for just over 40 million people.

A staggering 1.5 billion people are overweight, including an increasing number in low- and middle-income countries.

90 per cent of humanity's calorie intake comes from just 30 crops. While some 7,000 plants have been grown or gathered as food out of an estimated 30,000 edible plants, most research has focused on just a few.

In recent years attention has shifted away from agriculture in the big development agencies, such as the World Bank, which lent about 26 per cent of its total budget to agriculture in the 1980s, but only 10 per cent in 2000

## 2. Undernutrition

Every year some nine million children across the world die before they reach their fifth birthday. About a third of these untimely deaths are attributed to undernutrition – the great majority as a result of chronic hunger, not sudden food crises.

An estimated 178 million children under the age of five suffer from stunted growth as a result of undernutrition; about 55 million are acutely undernourished.

Every year around 13 million babies are born with low birth weight.

Researchers have found that between the 1970s to the early 2000s, the number of calories available per capita had increased dramatically in every country, with the steepest increase being in China at 49 per cent.

Obesity has assumed epidemic proportions in the rich world. The US has the highest prevalence of obesity: 26.7 per cent of the adult population.

More than 240 organizations are part of the European Federation of Food Banks, which rescues excess food from industry and food establishments for distribution to the poor – the movement now operates in 18 European countries.

Between 1974 and 2004 the amount of food imported by low- and middle-income countries doubled, with the proportion of processed food rising fastest.

There are some two billion people worldwide whose diet does not provide essential vitamins and minerals:

- In sub-Saharan Africa around 60 per cent of children are anaemic.
- Vitamin A deficiency, the most common cause of blindness in poor countries, affects around 30 per cent of children there.
- More than 1.7 billion of the world's people suffer from iodine deficiency, which can lead to stunted growth and other developmental abnormalities.

In 2005 the World Bank estimated that malnutrition costs the global economy around US\$ 80 billion a year.

An estimated 60 per cent of the world's undernourished people are female, and in some countries girls are twice as likely as boys to die from malnutrition and preventable childhood diseases.

### 3. Price instability

Following the 2008 world food-price crisis, FAO estimated the number of hungry people topped one billion in 2009. Poor people who spend up to 80 per cent of their income on food were hardest hit.

New inflation in 2010–11 confirmed the world is facing a major problem of unstable agricultural markets and volatile food prices: thirteen people were killed in food riots in Mozambique and the price of food was one of the triggers that led to the 'Arab spring'.

After 18 months of relative stability, the FAO's food price index increased by more than 30 per cent in the second half of 2010. The price of cereals jumped a staggering 57 per cent over the same period.

Each year, five to ten million hectares (25 million acres) of agricultural land are lost because of degradation caused by water shortages, while the 2007 US Energy Bill almost quintupled the agrofuel target to 35 billion gallons by 2022.

Droughts, floods, and freezing weather due to climate change are expected to continue having an adverse impact on agricultural output and food security in low- and middle-income countries. In 2010, wild fires and bad harvests in Russia and other major cereal producing regions of the former Soviet Union, reduced the availability of cereals on the global market.

Global food stocks recovered slightly in 2009 and 2010, increasing to 501 and then 525 million tons, but are estimated to have since fallen to 479 million tons in 2011.

Recent deregulation, especially in the US, has stimulated speculation in agricultural futures: the number of futures and options traded globally on commodity exchanges overall increased by more than 500 per cent between 2002 and 2008.

The World Food Programme's (WFP) historic budget increase in 2008 provided for about 20 million more beneficiaries, making 100 million in total. But high food prices added another 109 million people to the ranks of the undernourished.

#### **4. Agriculture and social protection**

Forecasts suggest feeding a world population likely to grow from seven billion to more than nine billion by mid-century will require a doubling of global food production.

But nearly half the grain harvested each year is converted to biofuels or fed to livestock to produce meat or dairy products. Sustaining livestock now occupies 80 per cent of the world's agricultural land.

Additionally, an estimated 30 per cent of all the food crops are wasted, and halving waste by 2050 would cut the amount of food required by a quarter.

According to one estimate, 60 per cent of the world's uncultivated but potentially arable land is in Africa.

The proponents of the 'big-farm' solution argue that agricultural advance has failed in sub-Saharan Africa where per capita food production has only recently returned to the levels of the early 1960s; but per capita production has increased by 100 per cent in Asia and by 60 per cent in Latin America.

There is wide agreement that smallholder farming is the way forward in Africa, but higher yields are no good without marketing: in 2002, good weather and the introduction of new seeds and fertilizer produced a bumper maize crop in Ethiopia, but the result was just a glut that saw the price fall 80 per cent.

Spending on agriculture by governments in low and middle-income countries, particularly in Africa, has fallen both in absolute terms and as a percentage of state spending, often to below five per cent.

Commitments to agricultural aid by both donor governments and multilateral agencies bottomed out at 3.4 per cent of total aid, and have only recently begun to recover.

Scaling up innovations that increase the productivity of smallholders is one answer: since 2005 Malawi has raised maize yields after the distribution of fertilizer coupons that more than 1.5 million farmers use to buy two bags of fertiliser at just ten per cent of the market price.

FAO studies in the 1980s found that only five per cent of public extension services were aimed at women; only 15 per cent of extension staff were female.

The world's largest conditional cash transfer scheme, Brazil's *Bolsa Familia*, offers cash – usually to women – in return for school attendance by their children, and signing up for vaccines and prenatal care. It reaches more than 50 million people, yet costs less than 0.5 per cent of the country's GDP.

## 5. The humanitarian response

Although fewer people are dying in crises as a result of food insecurity and malnutrition, responses to humanitarian emergencies have not improved as much as might be expected. A full assessment of progress is overdue for the sector as a whole.

For many years, food security and nutrition were together the biggest single humanitarian responses in crises. But despite this, it is still often said to be too little too late, or sometimes inappropriate.

Food-security responses consisted mainly of food aid or seeds-and-tools support in farming areas. Much food aid was provided in-kind by donors and was often subject to delays in procurement and shipment.

Interventions that aimed to address malnutrition in emergencies were limited to supplementary feeding using fortified and blended foods.

In the past decade, major investments have been made in the analysis of nutrition and food security in crisis. Broadly, words like “starvation” and “hunger” have been replaced with terms like “nutrition” or “food-security crisis/emergency”.

Numerous efforts have been made over the past half-decade to improve the range of options to address food-security and nutrition crises. There are numerous options to choose from today, and most can be classified into:

- Responses that deal with the symptoms of acute food insecurity, like cash transfers in addition to food aid.
- Responses that deal specifically with malnutrition: by 2007 community-based management of severe acute malnutrition (CMAM) had been formally ratified by the international community as the most appropriate strategy for the treatment of severe malnutrition.
- Responses that support livelihoods: understanding livelihood change over time and what can be done to support changes that make at-risk populations more resilient.

Many donor countries have untied all their food aid, enabling much greater use of local and regional purchase, while others, including the US, the largest single donor, have done so partially.

## 6. A manifesto for change

Despite African governments' commitment in 2003 to allocate ten per cent of their national budgets to agriculture, fewer than ten are doing so. At the same time, only 20 per cent of the world's population have access to formal social protection.

A 2008 meeting convened by the African Union recommended that states commit to spending at least two per cent of their GDP on social protection.

Social protection is especially vital in the 20 countries of the world where 80 per cent of children whose growth has been stunted live.

But simply increasing resources is not sufficient and this is particularly true in agricultural policy. Agriculture ministries are sometimes so inefficient that increased funds can easily go to waste or are just not spent. In Uganda, for example, around one third of the agriculture budget is left unspent every year.

Corruption is also a major problem in agriculture spending: as much as a third of agriculture budgets simply goes missing in some countries.

Despite a trend over the past decade to decentralize government spending in many countries, excessive expenditure often still takes place at headquarters – more than 85 per cent in Malawi and Zambia, for example – leaving little to be spent at field level.

Mainly as a result of the food price crisis of 2008, donors have refocused their attention on agriculture. Most have now withdrawn their blanket opposition to input-subsidy schemes.

Despite years of lobbying by NGOs on the shortfalls of market-led agriculture policy, donors' fundamental belief that the private sector is the key to rural development appears unshakeable.

Added to this is the hypocrisy of massive state intervention by the EU, the US and Japan in providing huge domestic agricultural subsidies to their own farmers.

At the 2009 G8 meeting in Italy, donors pledged to provide US\$ 22 billion. But by late 2010 this had translated into just US\$ 4 billion of new funds, according to Oxfam.

More encouraging is that in the past decade, donors have begun to contribute funding to cash-transfer social-protection programmes that previously were anathema to them.

Past years have witnessed the increasing domination of a small number of very large transnational corporations in agribusiness, food processing and retail: three companies process 40 per cent of the world's cocoa, for example, while six firms account for two-thirds of the world sugar trade.

Increasingly there are signs that businesses' view of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is changing and that companies are embracing CSR not just because they want to look good, but because doing so is simply better for business.

One success comes from a partnership between Bangladeshi microfinance institution Grameen Bank and French food company, Groupe Danone. In 2006, the two organizations formed a new company, Grameen Danone Foods, which developed nutritionally fortified yoghurt costing substantially less than comparable products.

Mars is collaborating with IBM and the United States Department of Agriculture to sequence and make public the genome of the cacao tree. The rationale is that the benefits will contribute to more sustainable cocoa production and help small farmers.

Unilever teamed up with the United Nations Children's Fund and the Ghanaian National Health Service to develop and market affordable iodine-fortified salt.