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## CATASTROPHIC HUNGER LEVELS SHOW YEARS OF PROGRESS ERASED - SOFI REPORT REACTION

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IPES-FOOD (International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems)  
Media reaction  
*\*Under embargo until: 10:00 EST / 16:00 CEST Wednesday 12 July 2023\**

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### CATASTROPHIC HUNGER LEVELS SHOW YEARS OF PROGRESS ERASED

#### Food systems experts react to UN 'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World' (SOFI) report

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*Embargoed until 12 JULY 2023 10:00 EST / 16:00 CEST, New York/Brussels* — New authoritative data from the UN's State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report, published today ([12 July](#)), reveals global hunger at catastrophic levels in 2022 – a year ravaged by food price crisis, conflict, and economic and climate shocks.[1] This is a sobering wakeup call, says the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food).

The SOFI data paints a worrying picture:

- **Food insecurity has taken hold at catastrophically high levels** with no progress in sight – setting the world back 15 years.[2] 735 million people (9.2 percent of the world population) faced chronic undernourishment in 2022, and nearly 30% of the world's population experienced moderate or severe food insecurity.
- Though high global hunger levels remained relatively unchanged from 2021, 122 million more people went hungry in 2022 than before the Covid pandemic in 2019. Buffeted by the three Cs of covid, conflict and climate change, **food systems have proven to be highly vulnerable to shocks** and highly inequitable.
- Progress on hunger had already gone into reverse in the five years before the pandemic: with 50 million more undernourished people in 2019 than in 2014. Thanks to years of stagnation and deterioration, we are on course for 600 million people to remain chronically undernourished by 2030, leaving the **Sustainable Development Goals in tatters**, unless major changes are enacted.
- **Hunger continued to rise disturbingly in Africa, for the tenth year running**, hitting one in five of the continent's population. Although there was some limited progress in Asia and Latin America.
- **The cost of living crisis is taking a heavy toll, with the cost of a healthy diet** now nearly 7% higher than in 2019, and **out of reach for nearly half the world population** – showing governments and the food industry are failing to get decent, healthy food to where it is needed.
- New data from 11 African countries shows that farmers and rural populations are more exposed to food price volatility and hunger than previously thought, while consumption of processed foods is increasing in those countries even in rural areas. 33% of people in rural areas face moderate or severe food security, higher than in urban areas.

#### Jennifer Clapp, food security expert with IPES-Food and professor at the University of Waterloo, Canada, reacted:

*"The world is facing disturbingly high levels of hunger right now. Years of progress on improving food security and nutrition have been erased. Governments have failed to make food systems shock-resistant, to shield people from food price inflation, or to address the ticking time bomb of debt.*

*"We desperately need a new recipe for addressing hunger – based on the right to food, less reliance on volatile global markets, and on countries producing more food for their own people."*

#### Olivier De Schutter, co-chair of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food), and UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, reacted:

*"Once again the world is plagued by hunger. A healthy diet is unattainable for nearly half of the world's population – even while food manufacturers and giant agriculture corporations enjoy [bonanza](#) profits.*

*"Low income countries are trapped in debt, unable to invest in combating hunger, and condemned to export cash crops rather than feed their own people. To have any hope of reaching the Sustainable Development Goals a transformation is needed – with social protection schemes that guarantee the right to food for the world's poorest, debt cancellation, and investment in diverse, resilient agroecological food production."*

**Million Belay, expert with IPES-Food and coordinator of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), reacted:**

*"It's shocking that hunger has risen in Africa for ten years in a row. But our exploitative global economic system has prioritised servicing debt over feeding people, exporting cash crops over growing nutritious food for Africans, and burning fossil fuels over adapting to climate change."*

*"African countries have been left critically vulnerable to the blows of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and climate change. Our governments are starved of cash to build the sustainable food systems we need to feed ourselves. The dominant food system is reducing people's resilience to shocks and leading to perpetual debt and food dumping – this must change." [3]*

IPES-Food calls for more diverse and resilient food systems to better withstand shocks, reduce [import dependencies](#), and enable communities to feed themselves in the face of climate change; as well as urgent [debt relief](#) for heavily indebted low-income countries.

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**Notes:**

[1] The SOFI report will be published by UN agencies at 10:00 EST / 16:00 CEST Wednesday 12 July 2023 at <https://www.fao.org/publications/home/fao-flagship-publications/the-state-of-food-security-and-nutrition-in-the-world>.

With a press conference broadcast at <https://www.fao.org/new-york/events/detail/launch-of-the-state-of-food-security-and-nutrition-in-the-world-2023/en>

[2] The world last saw similar numbers of undernourished people (above 700 million) in 2006. Years of progress on reducing hunger in the early 2000s were brought to an end in 2014.

[3] Africa is today a net importer of food. The African Development Bank estimated that Africa's net food imports reached \$35 billion in 2015, and expects it to triple by 2025, reaching over \$110 billion.

Agricultural surpluses from the Global North have been dumped on African markets, inundating local markets, driven down farmers' incomes, and weakened communities and local agricultural production.

<https://www.afdb.org/en/the-high-5/feed-africa>

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Spokespersons Jennifer Clapp (Canada / EN), Olivier De Schutter (Belgium / EN, FR), Million Belay (Ethiopia / EN, AM) are available for interview.

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IPES-Food (The [International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems](#)) is an independent, expert panel shaping debates on how to transition to sustainable food systems around the world | [@ipesfood](#)



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