



Stand up, take action to free the hungry billion

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If all the food produced in the world was shared equally we would have enough to feed almost double the world's current population.¹ Yet more than a billion of us, one in six people in the world, live with constant hunger – not as a result of war or natural disaster, but just because of the way our societies and our global food system is structured.

Africa is the region of the world with the highest levels of hunger even though it is also the region with the highest proportion of working people engaged in growing food and in other areas of agriculture.² One in three people in sub-Saharan Africa never have enough food to eat – that is 218 million people.³

Food is a basic human right. Everybody deserves to have enough food to live a full and healthy life in dignity.

Hunger like apartheid and slavery is largely man-made and can therefore be prevented. If we join together we could change our food systems and the inequalities in our societies that lead to some

having more food than they need while others starve.

World Food Day on 16 October and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October are opportunities to stand up, be counted and take action to free the hungry millions in Africa.

What are we calling for?

We are calling for food and agricultural systems in Africa that are based on food sovereignty, and for governments to live up to their responsibilities under the right to food.

The right to adequate food

The right to adequate food is recognised in the 1948 *Universal declaration of human rights* and is developed further in 1966 in the *International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights*

1 Jean Ziegler, The right to food: report by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Mr. Jean Ziegler, submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/10. E/CN.4/2001/53. Geneva: OHCHR, 2001, p2 Available at www.righttofood.org/new/PDF/ECN4200153.pdf

2 FAO, "PopSTAT", FAOSTAT. Available at <http://faostat.fao.org/>

3 FAO, The special challenge for sub-Saharan Africa. How to feed the world: 2050. Rome: FAO, 2009, p2. Available at www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/docs/Issues_papers/HLEF2050_Africa.pdf



Pastoralists in Burkina Faso call for food sovereignty

and subsequent international human rights treaties. It sets out the right of

“every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, [to] have physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.”⁴

The emphasis is on the right to have access to productive resources to feed oneself, either by directly growing or gathering food or by earning money to buy food. It is only in the very last resort a right that has to do with food aid. Having access to food means not only physical access but also being able to afford food. Someone may be selling food right in front of you but if the food is priced too high for you to afford or you have no money, you cannot access it.

Having adequate food is known as **food security**. To be adequate, the quality of the food matters as well as the quantity. The food must be:

- nutritionally healthy for an active life
- safe and free from any contamination
- acceptable within a person’s culture, meeting their food preferences

It is also unacceptable if a person can only have adequate food by sacrificing other basic rights such as housing, healthcare, clothing and education.

It is of course recognised that food security cannot be achieved immediately for everyone; the right to food will have to be realised progressively. However that does not mean that governments can just ignore it. All governments that have signed the *International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights* have a responsibility to take all the necessary actions that they are capable of to achieve the right to food, and certainly should not take any actions that make the situation worse.

Governments responsibilities under the right to food fall into three parts:

- **respect:** governments must not do anything to damage people’s access to adequate food, including the means to acquire food.

- **protect:** governments must try to prevent anyone else from damaging people’s access to adequate food, including the means to acquire food
- **fulfil:** governments must take action to strengthen people’s access to adequate food, including means of acquiring it, preferably by improving their livelihoods and their ability to feed themselves

Governments’ main responsibilities are to the people of their own country, but they also have responsibilities toward people in other countries. For instance, if a transnational company based in one country starts to damage the right to food of people in another country then the governments of both countries have a responsibility to try and protect the people’s right to food.

We, the people, also have a responsibility to take action to achieve the right to food. Citizens must effectively participate in key decision making processes, and hold our governments accountable in meeting their obligations.

Food sovereignty: reaching food security

Food security is an aim that everyone supports, but there are different views on how to reach it. For the last few decades, the mainstream view has been to try and achieve food security through the market and free trade. The assumption was also that national economic growth would benefit everyone, trickling down to those living in poverty and those affected by HIV and AIDS and other forms of social exclusions. In fact, unfair trade rules and practices have pushed millions of smallscale farmers out of business. Economic growth has often been skewed, resulting into increased inequality with the benefits going only to a few.

Food sovereignty offers a wholistic approach to reaching food security. The food sovereignty approach:

- focuses on food for people rather than seeing food as just another market commodity
- democratises control of food systems – including territory, land, grazing, water, seeds, livestock and fish populations – both in policies and in practice
- values food providers and supports their livelihoods
- localises food systems, bringing providers and consumers closer together
- builds knowledge and skills, valuing local and traditional knowledge
- works with nature, using agroecological methods and supporting adaptation and resilience in the face of climate change

⁴ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General comment 12: the right to adequate food. E/C.12/1999/5. Geneva: OHCHR, 1999, p3. Available at documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G99/420/12/pdf/G9942012.pdf

What do we need to do?

Increase the quantity and quality of investment in small-scale agriculture

Agriculture is the backbone of most economies in Africa, and with increased investment it could support realisation of adequate food for the population. Around 70% of Africans depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihoods⁵ and within agriculture for food production, women make up 60-80% of the labour force.⁶ 80% of African farms are small, with less than two hectares of land.⁷

For decades agriculture was seen as a dead-end and was starved of money, particularly through implementation of Structural Adjustment

Programmes (SAPs). However mainstream thinking is now changing, realising that agriculture can lead growth and development. We need to make sure that governments give more than lipservice to this, and that they actually increase the amount of money invested in agriculture with an overwhelming focus on small-scale farmers.

In 2003 at an African Union summit in Maputo, African governments promised to invest 10% of national budgets in agriculture,⁸ which would be a significant increase upon the current average of between 2-5%.⁹ Only 7 out of 53 countries in Africa have reached their commitment to spend 10% of their national budgets on agriculture by 2008. There are almost as many states that have reduced their spending as have increased it.

Maputo Declaration: How far are countries from the 10% commitment?¹⁰			
Success! 10% or more	Some progress Between 5 and 10%	Disappointing Less than 10%	
Ethiopia	Benin	Botswana	Lesotho
Madagascar	Chad	Burundi	Liberia
Malawi	Mauritania	Cameroon	Mauritius
Mali	Nigeria	Central African Rep.	Namibia
Niger	São Tomé and Príncipe	Congo Rep.	Rwanda
Senegal	Swaziland	Congo DR	Seychelles
Zimbabwe	Uganda	Côte d'Ivoire	Sierra Leone
	Zambia	Guinea Bissau	Togo
		Kenya	

Donors have also failed to meet their part of the commitment. Half of the money for the African Union agricultural investment programme, CAADP,¹¹ is supposed to come from aid. Donors have doubled the amounts they are giving compared to 2002, but this is still only a quarter of what they promised to deliver.

What you can do

The table above on the 10% commitment is from 2007. Find out how much your government is investing in agriculture this year. If it is less than 10%, write to them and ask them why they have not yet met the Maputo Declaration commitment, and when they plan to keep this promise.



Farmland in Uganda

5 UN Economic Commission for Africa, Africa review report on agriculture and rural development. E/ECA/ACSD/5/4. Addis Ababa: UNECA, 2007, p2. Available at www.uneca.org/csd/csd5/ACSD-5ReportAgricultureSummary.pdf

6 FAO, Women, agriculture and rural development: a synthesis report of the Africa Region. Rome, FAO, 1995. Available at www.fao.org/docrep/X0250E/X0250E00.htm

7 FAO, The special challenge for sub-Saharan Africa. How to feed the world: 2050. Rome: FAO, 2009, p2. Available at www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/docs/Issues_papers/HLEF2050_Africa.pdf

8 AU, Declaration on agriculture and food security in Africa. Assembly/AU/Decl. 7. Maputo: AU, 2003.

9 UN Economic Commission for Africa, Africa review report on agriculture and rural development. E/ECA/ACSD/5/4. Addis Ababa: UNECA, 2007, p8. Available at www.uneca.org/csd/csd5/ACSD-5ReportAgricultureSummary.pdf

10 NEPAD, National compliance with 2003 African Union Maputo declaration: 2007 draft survey report. 2008

11 Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme

It is not just the quantity of investment that matters however, it is also the quality. Agricultural investment needs to:

- prioritise smallholder farmers instead of large-scale industrial agriculture
- be used to directly support small-scale farmers rather than for administration
- promote environmentally sustainable agriculture
- prioritise agriculture for food production rather than export cash crops or agro-fuels
- ensure women and men alike, including people living with HIV and AIDS, can access agricultural inputs as well as ownership and control over land
- explicitly aim to improve lives and welfare not just to lead to economic growth

What you can do

Monitor government agricultural policies, programmes and budgets. Undertake social audit of agricultural sector budgets to establish where funds are going and who is benefiting. ACORD is developing some tools and ideas to help with this that will soon be available.

Regulate trade to promote African farmers access to national markets

In the current international trading system, food from rich countries is often dumped on the market in countries in Africa and elsewhere at less than the cost of production. Industrial style agriculture in rich countries produces surpluses and governments subsidise farmers with the result that they can sell at a loss. Local small-scale farmers can never compete with this.

African governments need to be able to use trade policies to prevent dumping, but existing trade

agreements limit their ability to do this. New trade agreements like the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) will make it even harder. In addition, even when governments still have enough flexibility to be able to put in place policies to prevent dumping, they rarely do so, partly due to pressure from donor governments.

What you can do

Call on your government not to sign EPAs, either the interim frameworks or the final agreements. Pressure your government to make use of the trade policies available to them

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Page 1: KaiProd, Monique Van Es, ACORD; Page2: Raymond Bayelle; Pages 3 & 4: Jean Blaylock.



ACORD
ACK Garden House
1st Ngong Avenue
Nairobi
Kenya

info@acordinternational.org
www.acordinternational.org
+254 20 272 11 86/85/72

