



POLICY BRIEF: LOCALISATION AS A RESPONSE TO ENHANCING RESILIENCE OF THE FOOD SYSTEMS

We are still far from a globalization of the most basic of human rights. That is why world politics needs to make the effective elimination of hunger one of its foremost and imperative goals. [...] When financial speculation manipulates the price of food, treating it as just another commodity, millions of people suffer and die from hunger [...]. Hunger is criminal; food is an inalienable right." (Fratelli Tutti #189)

Purpose of the Brief: It highlights the confederation experiences and best practices on Localization as a response to enhancing resilience of the food systems and tackling food insecurity. The brief also includes policy recommendations for critical consideration at different levels.

KEY MESSAGES

- Industrial agriculture makes the global food supply vulnerable to addressing food security and ignores the millions of small-scale farmers who produce the majority of food.
- We need to move away from a focus on efficiency, and profit maximisation in the food system and instead focus on sustaining local supply chains.
- Local food systems through diversified seeds have the capacity to produce sufficient food, transform the resilience of the food system and contribute to improved food and nutrition security and decentralized supply chain.
- Call for grants to promote regenerative agriculture that is based on sustainable Agro ecological practices and not limited to chemical-monoculture agriculture. These funds should be allocated to smallholder farmers and family farms.
- Recognition of the rights-based approach used by civil society organizations to address the key drivers of food security will help coordinate efforts in a sustainable and holistic way.
- Invest more in long-term preparedness and disaster risk reduction programmes that enhance resilience and development to address severe and cyclical food insecurity crises.
- There is need for policies and programmes to consider the interrelated factors that include conflict, climate change impacts and food insecurity.

1. CONTEXT

After nearly a decade of progress, the number of hungry people has slowly increased across the globe—around 276 million people facing acute food insecurity, while 828¹ million people still going to bed hungry. The triple crisis driven by climate emergency, the impact of COVID-19, and conflicts, and now the war in Ukraine contributing to the upheaval in global food and energy markets, with soaring food and fuel prices will further put millions at risk of hunger across the world. The disruption of markets and food supply chains as already seen is significantly affecting food security in Ukraine and beyond, including hunger hotspots like Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. Right now, across the Sahel and the Horn of Africa regions, 21² millions of people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are waking up to waking each day to high levels of acute food insecurity and rising malnutrition across. Further and as warned in 2022 State of Food Security and Nutrition report, 670 million people will face hunger (8%) of world's population projected to face hunger in 2030 if current trends persist, which is the same number as when SDGs were adopted in 2015

Case example shared by Caritas Oceania

From the Oceania region, in Fiji for example, Communities are already feeling the impacts from increasing prices on food items, fuel, and gas. Since April, fuel prices have risen very high and increased from \$6 per 4 kilos of rice to \$11 dollars per 4 kilos (showing a percentage increase of 183% the last three months). The price of bread has doubled in Sudan and increased by 70% in Lebanon. In Kenya and Egypt, the cost of importing wheat has increased by 33%. In the next few months; pre-existing vulnerabilities will become more acute in times of supply chain disruptions. On a global level, closed ports have caused slowdowns and disruptions in moving the food supply around. This is of greatest concern to regions that import much of their

¹ 2022 The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the world 2022 | FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

² OCHA - Horn of Africa Drought: Regional Humanitarian Overview & Call to Action (Revised 21 September 2022) - Ethiopia | ReliefWeb

2. FOOD SECURITY AND CONFLICT

Guaranteeing food security remains a difficult challenge throughout the world, though especially in Africa and the Middle East. Many of the affected countries are often constrained with internal and external conflicts, such as civil wars and political instability, which consume most of a country's resources. Further, the increased pressure on natural resources such as land and pasture cause conflicts within the socio-economic system, leading to political instability and grave environmental consequences.

Affirming that, in the face of increasing food insecurity, conflict, terrorism, and the effects of climate change resulting in millions of displaced people in Sahelian countries, the current resources and strategies are not sufficient to contribute to adequate food security. In addition, the unfolding food crisis will exacerbate other crises that will further affect food systems.

Case Of Burkana Faso: Source: Emergency Appeal 15/2022 BURKINA FASO

As Burkina Faso faces a humanitarian crisis in its history, it must be recognized that the momentum of solidarity and commitment to the vulnerable population is beginning to wane with the onset of the Ukrainian crisis. This situation risks exacerbating the food security situation caused by the deterioration of the security situation, the decrease of the challenge of governance of the agricultural and food sector in Burkina Faso. As of September update, the prevailing insecurity in the country continues to displace thousands of families and worsen the humanitarian situation and if nothing is done, the vulnerable population will increase due to depletion of food stocks, rising food prices, and low incomes. Further the food situation of IDPs and IDP host households is being severely affected by the effects of the 2021-2022 agricultural season, disruptions in agricultural markets (characterized by supply difficulties), significant increases in food prices, and these particularly in the Sahel, North, East, Central and North Central regions of the Sahel. In addition, Agro-pastoral producers are suffering from the delay in accessing fertilizer and the lack of it. In response to this emergency, Caritas Burkina is contributing to help improve food and nutritional security to vulnerable resident households by providing Cash transfer to 2000 households; training of community-based health agents and providing nutritional support and supplements to children by distributing fortified flour. Caritas interventions are contributing to social cohesion between the host population and the IDP and social cohesion.

3. WHAT HAS BEEN CONTRIBUTING TO THE VULNERABILITY OF THE FOOD SYSTEM

- 3.1. **Dependency on imported foods and international supply chains.** The dangers of this dependency is now coming to the fore, as communities around the world are facing the prospect of hunger as highlighted in the reports³ from FAO and World Food Programmes. For example, Iraq, which used to be the breadbasket of the Middle East, gets more than 80 percent of its food from abroad while in Asia over 80%⁴ of consumers depend on imported products. On the other hand and over the past few decades, Africa's food import bill has more than tripled, reaching about US\$35 billion a year. Much of this imported food could be produced locally, creating much needed incomes for nations' smallholder farmers and youths.

Lesson from Zambia on enhancing Food Independence

Caritas Zambia and its partners have been facilitating seed fairs from local to national level to showcase the diversity of local seeds available in the communities and demonstrating that keeping seeds in farmers' hands and maintaining a high diversity of seeds is critical for building resilient food systems in the face of climate change. The National Caritas is supporting Small-scale farmers, community groups and home gardeners to help protect and restore seed diversity. This builds on the already indigenous knowledge available in the communities. To control pests and diseases, farmers are producing and using quality organic inputs like Tephrosia, LanternaCamara tree leaves as natural pest repellents. This considerably reduced their costs of production and dependence on external inputs. Combined with better crop production practices, the target farmers have been able to realize improved yield and address household food and nutrition security.

³ <https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/detail/crisis-and-conflict-are-driving-up-global-food-prices>

⁴ [Asia's food security](https://www.asiafoodsecurity.org/)

- 3.2. Dependence on chemical input industrial agriculture** that makes the global food supply vulnerable in crisis as seen now with the invasion of Ukraine. As observed, the world's food prices were already near record highs before the war, and a big question mark hangs over the next few seasons' and harvests worldwide due to the sharp rise in fertilizer prices. This will mean that farmer's especially chemical fertilizer small-scale farmers will have extremely poor yields in the coming seasons, and food and nutrition insecurity will be very high in most communities.
- 3.3. Limited involvement of farmers in the food supply chain.** For decades, governments have done little to protect small-scale farmers and food producers, but instead have pushed them out of the business by growing corporate companies⁵. Small-scale farmers have lost out in competition from large-scale competitors, as they do not have improved food supply chain mechanisms and access to markets. An important policy failure is failing to mitigate problems of well-understood market failure that depends on the external global community to address hunger and enhance food security in profound ways.

Story from Caritas Europa after a visit to Brazil

In Brazil, to enhance the social economy and contribute to food sovereignty, Caritas Brazil has been promoting Agroecology and supporting family farming in rural areas while fostering sustainability, innovation and community engagement. In a settlement in the rural area of Sobradinho, local women working on handicrafts and farming have been brought together with individual livelihood projects and working together to share knowledge and skills about growing rice, beans, corn, coffee, manioc, pepper, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes. This community is engaging parliamentarians to get an authorization to build artisan wells, essential for the continuation of their subsistence farming and for up-scaling production. Caritas Brazil has been also supporting "**Horta Girassol**" Institute, a 5,000 square meters community garden that has been recognized by the United Nations as an example of urban agricultural production fostering sustainability, innovation, community engagement and food security by producing a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, herbs, and organic products. The goal of this community is to build a restaurant and turn it into a school on farming, respect for nature, fair trade, solidarity, cooperation, and democracy.

4. CARITAS EXPERIENCE

Caritas resilience building programmes focus on localization and recognizes the several characteristics that make local knowledge and involvement superior. For example, there are many techniques applied to the fields of agriculture that small-scale farmers have found adaptive. To enhance soil nutrients, contribute to climate change mitigation and sustain indigenous agriculture, local communities working with Caritas India and Niger are maximizing the use of locally available resources such as farmyard manures, botanical pesticides and green manure. From Caritas experience, this has contributed to enhancing adaptation and mitigation. These include **Agroecology-based farming** techniques and systems that use local and natural products and practices reinforced by a context-specific approach that focuses on biodiversity protection, knowledge sharing and the socio-cultural values of food for each community.

Lesson from what Caritas India has been doing.

Caritas India is promoting Integrated Family farming (IFF) through integrated nutrition gardening among small households in the target areas. Other activities include promoting pollution free poultry farms (PFPF) and root zone Fertigation, and these innovative models have been shared with the communities through trainings and practical demonstrations. These methods have proved to be successful in improving the livelihoods of the communities while ensuring food and nutrition security. Seeing the results achieved in promoting household nutrition gardening, Government departments have come forward to promote natural farming and these activities are linking with government schemes of Agriculture Department.

5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

As concerns on the triple crisis continue, Caritas Internationalis would like to bring forward the following recommendations for critical consideration and reflection at different levels;

To the Global Community

- **Responses to enhance adaptation in the Agriculture sector must be anchored in the principles of subsidiarity** to enable local organizations lead in the implementation and coordination of activities that address food insecurity. This will require the global community to **enhance synergies and coordination** with local communities on food security initiatives that obstruct adaptive capacity and resilience strengthening.
- **Recognize the role that local seeds play in improving food and nutrition Security.** Communities have demonstrated that keeping seeds in farmers' hands and maintaining a high diversity of seeds is critical for building resilient food systems in the face of climate change and paves way for reduced costs of production and dependence on external inputs. As such, there is need for strengthened community seed systems programmes coupled with enhanced trainings and practical demonstrations.
- **States and the global community should move away from focus on attaining short-term food security and instead focus on long-term home-grown innovations that build sustainable local food systems rooted in local realities, inclusive and resilient to shocks worldwide.** This should challenge policy coherence on food security and bring in multidimensional approaches in bridging the gap in development, humanitarian, and peace efforts.

To the Donor community

- There is need for finances to be channeled to local actors and dedicated to strengthening the resilience of local food systems. Examples of these could be agricultural insurance for smallholder farmers, strengthening risk reduction and emergency response capacity, financing the shift to sustainable practices and a host of other measures that Caritas already implements in its development projects. Currently investments remain alarmingly low leaving smallholder farmers very vulnerable to shocks and price shocks.
- Fund and broadly support the transition to Agroecological practices and local innovations to build sustainable food systems. Right now, **only 1.7 per cent of climate finance – a fraction of what is needed goes to small-scale farmers in developing countries despite their disproportionate vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.**

To the National governments

- **Support farmer groups and stimulate adoption of locally driven innovations based on indigenous knowledge.** Farmer groups have proved as a strategy to sustain livelihoods of rural communities through locally identified solutions that contribute to **climate change adaptation**, improving food and nutrition security through boosted food production, farmers' empowerment, self-promotion and empowerment of the marginalized, especially women.
- **Recognize local partners' efforts and enhance partnerships.** Government need to collaborate with local organisations that compliment sustainable agriculture development programmes on the ground. These partnerships should aim at addressing the entire value-chain, strengthening

capacity and coordinated demonstration of local innovations that achieve food security, improved nutrition and promote **Agroecological practices**.

- **Keep their financial commitments towards sustainable transformation of the agricultural sector.** Additionally, repurpose the financial resources for investments in a just, resilient and sustainable manner by integrating indigenous knowledge in policy-making.