



Statement of the Global Network against Food Crises on the
release of the Global Report on Food Crises 2021

New and old challenges

Conflict, climate change and COVID-19 impacts on rising acute food insecurity

The poorest continue bearing the burden of global challenges:
How can we transform agri-food systems so that no one is left behind?

One year after COVID-19 spread across the world, the 2021 edition of the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) confirms dire projections. The pandemic and related containment measures have aggravated the impact of pre-existing drivers of fragility, notably conflict and climate change. The resulting economic hardship has widened inequalities and exposed the structural vulnerabilities of local and global food systems, hitting already fragile contexts and vulnerable groups particularly hard. This situation requires **urgent and decisive action**.

Record-breaking levels of acute food insecurity highlight that life-saving humanitarian assistance is indispensable in mitigating and containing the most severe manifestation of acute food insecurity but that it is neither sufficient nor sustainable. The crisis provides an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of the response, drawing lessons that go beyond building back better to transforming food systems to benefit all of society, especially the most vulnerable. **A system that has the most vulnerable people continuing to bear the greatest burden of global crises is broken.** We must take this opportunity to transform food systems, reduce the number of people in need of humanitarian food assistance and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and peaceful and prosperous societies.

The emerging evidence – Key data from the 2021 GRFC¹

- Roughly 155 million people were estimated to be acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) in 55 countries and territories in 2020 – an unprecedented level compared with the previous five editions of the GRFC.²
- This represents an increase of 20 million people compared to 2019's 135 million people in 55 countries and territories, which was an already record year for acute food insecurity since the GRFC was first launched in 2017.
- In the 39 countries and territories that experienced food crises across five years of GRFC publications, the population affected by high levels of acute food insecurity increased from 94 to 147 million people between 2016 and 2020. This shows an overall worrisome trend of increasing levels of acute food insecurity.
- The ten worst food crises account for 66 percent – over 103 million people – of the people estimated to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above): Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, northern Nigeria, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.
- Between 2019 and 2020, the number of people experiencing the most severe acute food insecurity indicated by Emergency and Catastrophe/Famine levels (IPC/CH Phase 4 and 5) rose from 24.5 to 28.4 million in 38 countries and territories out of 43 covered by IPC/CH analyses. This indicates an irreversible impact of protracted crises on lives and livelihoods, which can

¹ The GRFC focuses on countries and territories that requested emergency assistance and where the magnitude and severity of the food crisis exceed the capacity to respond effectively with locally available means and resources

² Some countries/territories could not be included in the report as they lacked recent and reliable data and analyses. For example, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was among the 10 largest crises in 2019, but there were no estimates available for 2020.





eventually lead to extreme consequences such as destitution and death. It also highlights an extremely critical situation in which acute malnutrition and mortality are expected to increase significantly should humanitarian interventions fail to urgently reach food insecure people and help them meet basic food needs.

- A further 208 million people in 43 countries and territories were experiencing Stressed (IPC/CH Phase 2) food security conditions and required assistance for disaster risk reduction and other interventions to protect livelihoods.
- In the 55 countries and territories covered in the GRFC 2021, around 15.7 million children under five years were wasted and 75.2 million children under five years were stunted in 2020. The 10 worst food crises alone concentrated around 7.1 million wasted and 31.9 million stunted children under five.
- The food crises profiled in the GRFC are being driven by a **combination of several drivers** that were often mutually reinforcing, creating compounded crises:
 - **Conflict** remained the main driver at the global level, with 99 million people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) in 23 countries and territories where conflict and insecurity were the primary driver, up from 77 million in 22 countries and territories in 2019.
 - **Economic shocks**, heavily related to measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, were the second most important driver, with nearly 40 million people in Crisis and worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 and above) in 17 countries; up from 24 million in eight countries in 2019.
 - **Weather extremes** were the primary driver of acute food insecurity in 15 countries with around 16 million people affected in 2020, showing a decrease from 34 million in 25 countries in 2019.

The challenge we face

Data and analyses for response planning

The GRFC, with its updates, is **the global reference** of consensus-based analysis and compiled evidence of acute food insecurity in hotspots that require the mobilization of the international community.

The GRFC is a key resource to **inform strategic planning and decision-making** to address all dimensions of food crises, from life-saving humanitarian response to longer-term resilience building as well as the transformation of agri-food systems.

The GRFC relies on **country-owned monitoring systems** and predictive analysis based on evidence and consensus. **Timely and reliable information is key** to preventing food crises. More must be done to ensure access at the country-level for data collection, but **lack of data can never be an excuse for lack of action**.

The current COVID-19 crisis has highlighted both the **limitations of existing information systems**, in particular in areas with access constraints, and **the opportunities** provided by technology, in facilitating remote data collection and monitoring.

An increasingly complex context

One year after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the outlook for 2021 and beyond is grim. Conflict, pandemic-related restrictions fuelling economic hardship and the persistent threat of adverse weather conditions will likely continue driving food crises.





The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of the global agri-food systems and the need for more equitable, sustainable and resilient systems to nutritiously and consistently feed 8.5 billion people by 2030. A radical transformation of our food systems is needed to achieve the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs).

The protracted nature of most food crises shows that long-term environmental, social and economic trends compounded by increasing conflict and insecurity are eroding the resilience of agri-food systems. **If current trends are not reversed, food crises will increase in frequency and severity.**

The situation requires urgent action at scale. By the time famine is declared many lives are already lost; the impact on child development, poverty and people's lives endures for years; and the loss of productive livelihood assets increases dependence on external assistance.

2021 as the year of global change - A collective vision for a holistic response to food crises

Addressing the root causes of today's food crises and preventing their **deterioration into famine requires the transformation of agri-food systems to be more inclusive, resilient and sustainable.** The pandemic must trigger a re-think of the functions of local food systems, recognizing the intensifying pressure on agriculture-based livelihoods from climate change, environmental degradation, conflict, population displacement and demographic changes.

Key elements of this transformation include:

- **Early action, particularly when a shock or stress is anticipated, is crucial** to protect livelihoods and food security. For example, early action in response to the desert locust upsurge in the Horn of Africa and Yemen reduced potentially devastating food losses³ that would have disrupted rural livelihoods and increased food insecurity in already fragile areas.
- **An increased focus on prevention and strengthening resilience is essential, particularly for populations experiencing recurrent and protracted crises.** This demands political will as well as urgent, scaled up, coherent, coordinated action among humanitarian, development, peace and climate actors, with associated investment in long-term, inclusive solutions.
- **Strengthened social protection systems are vital, especially in fragile states.**
- **High-level diplomatic and political commitment is needed to end conflict and violence, negotiate and sustain peace and promote adherence to UNSC Resolution 2417** on the prohibition of deliberate use of starvation in conflicts. This is vital to secure humanitarian access to those in need.
- **Concerted advocacy and political commitment, backed up with sufficient resources, are needed to rectify the overwhelming burden of climate change on the most vulnerable.** The **impacts of climate change** are spread unequally at a global and local level, with people living in already fragile settings being at greatest risk.

³ FAO estimates that the investment of around USD 200 million avoided food losses with a value of around USD 1.2 billion and prevented increased food insecurity for around 24 million people. Addressing the consequences of desert locusts after the crisis would have cost far more in terms of livelihood losses and financial resources.





**Global Network
Against Food Crises**

Integrated
actions for
lasting solutions

Our shared commitment

The members of the Global Network Against Food Crises **commit to working alongside affected populations, governments and stakeholders at national, regional and the global levels** to address all dimensions of food crises by strengthening coordinated actions across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus while promoting policy coherence and articulation with other international fora and processes. This importantly, includes greater coordination of multisectoral programming vital to combating food insecurity and preventing famine.

We look forward to the **UN Food Systems Summit** (September 2021) as an opportunity to help define an operational roadmap to achieve Agenda 2030, particularly SDG 2. The Global Network Against Food Crises commits to supporting national dialogues, particularly in countries at high risk of food crises, and elevating key priorities from national dialogues to the global level. We are equally committed to ensuring a follow-up of game-changing solutions in the aftermath of the Summit.

We will contribute consistently to the international agenda, maintaining high political engagement to fight food crises, including events such as the Convention on Biodiversity (COP 15) in May 2021 in Kunming, the Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in November 2021 in Glasgow, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in December 2021.

About the Global Network Against Food Crises

Founded by the European Commission, FAO and WFP at the first World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the **Global Network Against Food Crises** is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors committed to promoting sustainable solutions to food crises through shared analysis, strengthened coordination and collective efforts across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The *Global Network* supports efforts under the collective outcome related to SDG 2 “Ending Hunger”, which pledges to reduce needs, risks and vulnerabilities associated with acute hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

The **Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC)** is the flagship publication of the Global Network and its major achievement in terms of a global public good on food security and nutrition analysis. Since 2016, the Global Report on Food Crises has been providing a comprehensive global picture of the scale and magnitude of food crises by compiling the main global and regional food security analyses through a transparent and consensus-based process involving 16 partners facilitated by the Food Security Information Network (FSIN). This is aimed at promoting timely, independent and consensus based information on food crises.



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