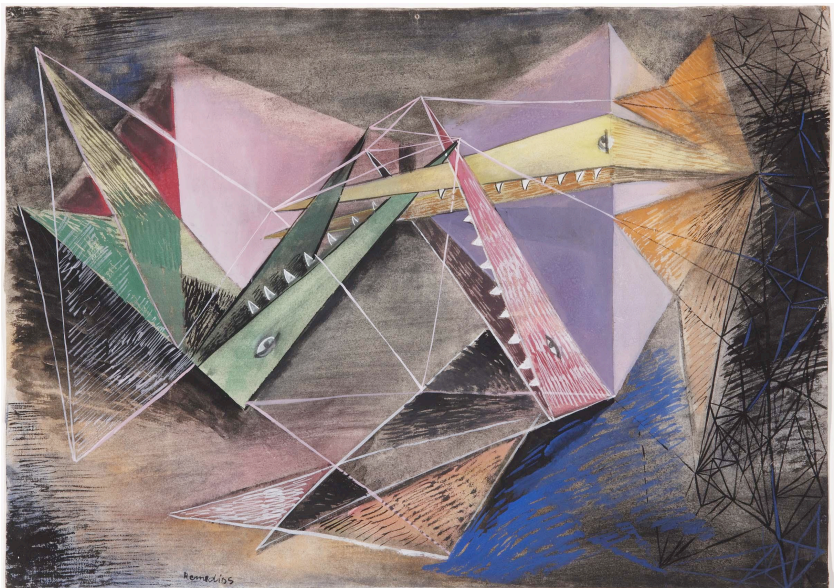


Seven principles for ending hunger sustainably

The detailed analysis of the causes of hunger, of the main food and agriculture related [issues](#), of the [stakeholders](#) who act every day to achieve their goals or those of the people they represent, as well as of the [political dimension](#) and the drivers of hunger allow to identify some principles that should guide actions to end hunger.

These principles are briefly presented here:

- [Organisation and Empowerment of the hungry](#)
- [Food for the undernourished](#)
- [Battle against wastage](#)
- [Development of research](#)
- [Protection of local agricultural systems](#)
- [Recognition and Respect of rights](#)
- [Recasting of policies and institutions](#)



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First principle: Organisation and empowerment of the hungry

Organisation of those who suffer from hunger (small farmers, landless, urban poor, women and youths) to increase their political power and economic weight and their capacity to defend their rights

Hunger is not inevitable but it is man-made. It can therefore be solved by our action. Our behaviour is guided by economic policies implemented by our governments, as illustrated by the analysis of recent food crises. These policies are the result of the political situation prevailing in our countries or group of countries (including the United Nations), as demonstrated by the analysis of the food and agricultural policy paradox.

To change the economic policies in place, there is need to modify the political balance in favour of those who are penalised by current policies and are the main victims of hunger - small farmers, landless labourers, women, youths and urban poor. By organising themselves in associations, these victims will turn into empowered stakeholders able to express their claims and with sufficient weight to influence decision-makers, conduct effective collective actions and back candidates in local and national elections to ensure that the voice of those who, today, are excluded from the political arena, will finally really and authentically express their views in all fora in the future. This is the next step in the development of the democratic management of our countries.



Moreover, the organisation of the victims of hunger in associations, groups or cooperatives, offers a series of critical advantages in the fight against hunger. Here are a few examples:

- Reduction in the cost of actions required to fight hunger (it is easier to work with associations than with individuals, grouping people reduces transaction costs)
- More effective mobilisation to defend human rights, particularly the critical rights of access to natural resources

- Increased weight of poor producers and consumers in their negotiations with traders for more favourable terms of access to food or to agricultural equipment and inputs, and the possibility to envisage direct marketing of large amounts of products to consumers
- Easier access to information and training (literacy programmes, production technologies, economics and management, market conditions, political action, etc.)
- Better access to financial services (group finance)

These organisations must become the mandatory route for development actions. Why should land be leased or sold to external investors when it can be given to rural associations or groups who then can engage in agreements with external investors if they so wish, according to legally and clearly defined modalities, designed in advance, and that protect the interests of the population?

A higher level of organisation of the rural and urban poor is the *sine qua non* condition to eradicate hunger. The organisation of consumers can also help the improvement of food quality and safety and ensure that agricultural policies are geared towards the development of an ecologically sustainable quality agriculture.

Any national budget should have an important component to fund the development of associations. Any development programme, whether funded by the government or bilateral/multilateral aid, should have a package for supporting the organisation of its beneficiaries.

A lack of support for community development and the creation of associations will make programmes less efficient and less likely to have lasting effects. Archives are full of “successful” development projects which have left no trace whatsoever in the field a few years - sometimes a few months - after their closure.

This undertaking will not be easy, as has to start in most countries from a very low level. There will be resistance as well as attempts of takeover of the associations created. This will make this effort risky and awkward. Past experience with forced organisation of agricultural producers into cooperatives has left scars in rural areas and has generated in some places a strong prejudice against any kind of group formation. This prejudice will have to be reversed.

But there are also a number of good precedents on which to build. In many poor countries, there is now experience of farmers coming together to create associations to defend their interests, to engage in learning activities (e.g. [Farmers' Field Schools](#)), to produce and market their products, and many are growing or joining larger networks as farmers come to recognise the economic and political benefits of working together. Some national farmers' unions have already succeeded in having a voice in quite a number of countries, and their networks like [ROPPA](#) (Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa) at the regional level and [La Via Campesina](#) at the international level have been able to be actively present in the debate on food and agriculture. At the global level, the reformed [Committee on World Food Security](#) (CFS) offers now a platform through which farmers' movements can contribute to global policy setting.

Second principle: Food for the undernourished

Food for the undernourished to make them able to seize opportunities to graduate out of hunger

Chronic hunger weakens the people concerned. This implies a reduction in their physical capacity to work and a greater vulnerability to disease. It also hampers the physical and intellectual development of children, thus limiting their possibility of escaping from the poverty and hunger trap.

To break the vicious circle of hunger and poverty, action is needed to ensure that the people who are in a situation of chronic hunger can enjoy an adequate diet. It is possible: the food is available locally or globally, the issue is to give access to it for those who are in need.

About 2% of the world food production (around 30 million tons of cereal every year) would be enough to feed all the people who do not eat enough in the world. The costs of such an operation can be estimated at a maximum of USD 15 to 25 billion (cost of the food and its distribution) per year. That is less than 0.2% of the world GDP, less than 2% of world military expenditure and about half of the estimated income of the tax on financial transactions implemented in the European Union countries.



As food is available and funding possible, the issue remaining is that of the best mechanism to use. For this too, there are some basic principles that should guide implementation:

- To the extent possible, give priority to the purchase of locally available food (it is less costly and logistically simple than supplying food elsewhere, generates demand for local products and the money spent is ploughed back in the local economy); only import food from outside (with priority given to purchases coming from neighbouring countries) if there is high food price inflation and/or in case of national food shortage

- Depending on conditions, several options are available to give poor families access to adequate food, including through:
 - The payment of an allowance to the beneficiaries so that they can buy food on the local market
 - The distribution of food vouchers that can be used on the local market or in approved and specialised shops
 - The sale of food at subsidised prices in approved and specialised shops
 - The distribution of food whether conditional or not (e.g. food for work programmes, food distribution in health centres, in schools, etc.)
- In cases in which schools, health centres, specialised or approved shops make local purchases, they should preferably buy from small farmer groups
- In rural areas, school feeding of children should be supported by school garden and nutrition education programmes where the children learn how to cultivate what they eat and to eat healthily.

For more information:

- FAO, [Guide for Policy and Programmatic Actions at Country Level to Address High Food Prices](#), 2011
- WFP, [Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges](#), 2008
- FAO, [School Gardens Concept Note](#), 2004
- FAO, [School feeding sourced to small farmers breaks new ground in Africa](#), 2013
- Trueba et MacMillan, [How to End Hunger in Times of Crises](#), 2013
- Graziano da Silva, Del Grossi, De França, [The Fome Zero \(Zero Hunger\) Program - The Brazilian Experience](#), 2011

Third principle: Battle against wastage

Battle against food losses and food wastage

It is now generally recognised that a large part (around one third) of the food produced in the world is lost or wasted and does not serve as food for people. The cost of this wastage is enormous:

- USD 750 billion of losses for producers (fish and shellfish excluded), i.e. the equivalent of the GDP of Switzerland or Turkey
- The volume of water used for producing the food wasted or lost is equivalent to the annual water of river Volga in Russia or three times the volume of water in Geneva lake between Switzerland and France
- 1.4 billion ha or one third of the world agricultural area sees its production lost or wasted
- Vast amounts of fossil fuels are used in producing wasted food and its decomposition also contributes to climate change through greenhouse gas production (especially methane).

More than half of the losses takes place “upstream” during production, harvesting, handling and storage, mostly in poor non-industrial countries. The rest takes place “downstream” during processing, distribution and consumption, mostly in rich industrial countries.

Reducing upstream losses requires training small farmers in poor countries and enabling them to have access to equipment, especially for drying and storage. This can help to gain around 20 to 30% of local agricultural production. This investment can certainly yield more than a chemical inputs-based intensification that would have negative effects on the environment. What would be required is:

- Equipment and training on storage of food products
- Equipment and training on harvesting.



Reducing wastage requires mainly an effort to inform and train consumers and some change in regulations and distribution practices. What would be required is:

- For consumers, information, training and incentives to:
 - Improve their purchasing behaviour and management of domestic food stocks so as not to have to throw away expired food products
 - Give priority to the purchase of food that is not excessively packaged or that has an easily degradable packaging
- For wholesale traders and retail outlets, at their own initiative or following a change in regulations imposed by the state:
 - Application of less stringent grading standards
 - Reduction of excessive and unsustainable packaging
 - Change in the mode of management of retail marketing to reduce the risk that food products reach their date of expiry (through timely donation to associations and food banks who assist the poor, whether encouraged or not by fiscal incentives)
 - More flexibility in the regulations on shelf life and “best-before” date
 - Recycling of expired food products eliminated from the food chain (for the production of energy and/or compost, etc.; possibly encouraged through tax incentives).

The possibility of establishing a global mechanisms to cut food waste and that could also serve to support anti-hunger actions in poor countries, as proposed by [Trueba and MacMillan](#), should be should be studied in the framework of the CFS and implementation steps designed.

For more information:

- [The economic and environmental cost of wasting food](#) on www.hungerexplained.org, 2013
- FAO, [Food wastage footprint - Impacts on natural resources](#), 2013
- FAO, [Toolkit - Reducing the food wastage footprint](#), 2013

Fourth principle: Development of research

Development of research on a sustainable and accessible agricultural technology

Agricultural research has been more concerned with increasing agricultural production than with finding ways in which agriculture could contribute to reducing hunger and poverty as well as slowing down the processes of climate change. .

One consequence of this orientation has been the development of technological solutions adapted to medium or large-scale farms that are able to purchase the required equipment and inputs that these solutions require, but which are out of reach for small-scale and subsistence farmers, especially to those who are in a situation of chronic hunger and poverty. These technologies have been the basis for the development of a vast industrial and chemical complex upstream from agriculture and required huge investments in infrastructure, in particular for irrigation, that benefit only to a minority of producers [\[read\]](#). These solutions produced by research have proven not to be sustainable as they have contributed to the degradation of land and water resources and a reduction of biodiversity. They also have not solved the world hunger issue and, in the countries that apply them in the most advanced way, yields have reached a maximum and even, in some cases, have started to decrease.



The question is now to reorient agricultural research and have it concentrate on the production of technical solutions accessible to all producers and that will allow a transition towards a more sustainable agriculture, while assuring an agricultural production sufficient to meet future world demand. These technical solutions will also need to help increase production in sub-optimal conditions, particularly for rainfed agriculture. Examples of such research exist, even if today they are still the exception rather than the rule. Activities that come to mind include research conducted on agroforestry, [sustainable rice intensification](#) (SRI), push-pull and integrated pest management (IPM). These developments emphasise management aspects of agriculture rather than the use of external inputs making them more accessible to poor producers while at the same time reducing pressures on natural resources. The

technologies developed are based on location-specific knowledge and propose solutions that are adapted to specific situations, not general solutions that do not respond to the diversity of ecological conditions.

The development of this type of research will require:

- A decentralised approach, close to producers and that factors in the variety of agro-climatic, social, economic and cultural conditions
- The mobilisation of public resources and institutions to ensure the financial independence of research conducted from commercial firms who understandably seek in priority to promote the greater use of their products (equipment, inputs, etc.)
- The involvement of smallholders, and particularly of women, with research organisations through their associations to ensure the relevance of research conducted to the specific constraints they face.

For more information:

- [Sustainable rice intensification](#) (SRI) (Cornell University website)
- [What is Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\)?](#) (University of California website)
- [Push-pull](#), ICIPE - African Insect Science for Food and Health
- [World Agroforestry Center](#) (ICRAF)

Fifth principle: Protection of local agricultural systems

Protection of local agricultural systems

There is a great variation of the level of protection of different types of agriculture in the world. Some producers, particularly in the rich OECD countries benefit from huge subsidies - around USD one billion *per day* - and from sophisticated and effective agricultural services, while others have to manage with virtually no subsidy and without support.

It is in those neglected agricultural systems that most of the people who are in a situation of chronic hunger are found. The little surpluses that these producers may generate are often in competition with subsidised imported commodities and sometimes even with unjustified food aid.

If there is a will to ensure that these farmers live decently from their work, they need to be protected from unfair competition:

- A tax on excessively cheap imports should be fixed at a level that will compensate for subsidies paid to producers in exporting countries (there is data available that allow setting the level of such a compensatory tax). This tax will generate financial resources that can be reinvested in agricultural development, in particular in agricultural research but also in agricultural and social services. It is clear that consumers will be penalised in the short term, but developing local agriculture, its production and productivity, should lead to a decrease of the price of locally produced commodities and the development of local value chains that will contribute to creating employment and value added that will also benefit consumers and urban dwellers. This tax should progressively be dismantled as subsidies are dismantled in exporting countries. The political feasibility of this option, like most of



the principles proposed here will depend on the implementation of the [first principle](#) i.e. organisation of those who suffer from hunger to increase their political weight.

- For those rural people engaged in the production of export agricultural commodities, protection will require challenging the principles and modalities of international trade. It will be necessary to apply [fair trade principles](#), namely: (i) payment of a fair price that covers costs of production and allows the farmers to meet their basic needs and have some capacity to save and invest; (ii) respect of the [fundamental principles and rights at work](#) as defined by the ILO; (iii) trade relations based on medium or long term contractual arrangements; (iv) the respect for the environment and (v) the simplification of value chains to increase the part of the price paid by the consumer that goes to the producer.

Protecting as suggested here these local agricultural systems will go a long way towards achieving *food sovereignty* [\[read\]](#)

These actions seem to be difficult to implement in the context of the balance of power existing currently at national and international level. Nevertheless, they appear to be indispensable if the objective of eradicating hunger is really to be achieved.

Sixth principle: Recognition and Respect of rights

Recognition and Respect of the rights of rural communities to natural resources (land, water, forests and genetic resources) and the right to food

The renewed interest in agriculture that has followed the increase of prices of agricultural commodities observed since the middle of the first decade of this century has led to a multiplication of attempts by various economic agents to take over natural resources. This has increasingly challenged the rights of rural communities (especially in relation to their rights to land, water, forests, genetic resources in particular). Land and water grabbing, forest and carbon concessions, costly access to improved seeds and the commercial use of traditional knowledge are the best known modalities of these take overs. [\[read\]](#)

These threats to the rights that gave rural communities access to the natural resources indispensable for their survival, have often led to their deprivation and have contributed to putting millions of rural people in an increasingly difficult situation. The reaction to this dangerous trend has been at best confused. On the one hand, there has been a series of more or less binding and unevenly suitable and effective conventions, guidelines and declarations, the content of which has often been criticised and found not to be adapted to the situation in the field. On the other hand, encouragement has been provided for a growing presence of private interests (multinational, regional, national or local corporations and enterprises, investment funds, etc.) that are getting more organised and engaging in operations in the field that have led to takeover of resources, marginalisation of local people and, in some cases, forced displacement of population groups.



An organised mobilisation is required as a reaction to the violation of these rights. When the rural population gets organised ([first principle](#)), it offers an effective means for assuring respect of their rights, particularly if this mobilisation it is also supported by an international campaign. The case of the [Masai of Loliondo district](#) is a good recent example. More systematically, a broader consultation involving actively all stakeholders should allow improvements in the international texts ruling the governance of natural resources. These

texts should however also become legally binding to make rights enforceable before an international court.

The **Right to Food** should not only be included in the Constitution of countries, but policies should be aligned on the right to food and practical steps should be undertaken so that an enabling environment for people to feed themselves in dignity is put in place and appropriate safety nets established for those who are unable to do so [[read](#)], in coherence with what is proposed here, particularly with principles [two](#) and [seven](#) proposed here

Finally, to take fully into account the fact that hunger is a result of human decisions and that it is not unavoidable, it should become possible to prosecute before an international court the authorities of countries where hunger persists and who do not demonstrate by facts that they have a real will to eradicate it, as is the case for those responsible for crimes against Humanity. Let it be remembered that chronic hunger kills every year around 2.5 million people, three times as many victims as the Rwanda Genocide.

Seventh principle: Recasting of policies and institutions

Recasting policies and institutions, at national, regional and global level

As hunger is a consequence of our actions, and as our actions are largely influenced by economic policies and institutions in place, to solve the issue of hunger, it will be necessary to recast policies and institutions.

Recasting economic policies

Policies can be defined by one or several objectives to be achieved by using a number of policy instruments (rules defining the mode of operation of the economy and of public action, taxes and subsidies, public investments, programmes and services)¹.

At **national level**, the objective of reducing or eradicating hunger is often mentioned in official government documents, but in reality in many cases it suffers from the counterproductive effect that actions implemented to achieve other objectives (e.g. maximising growth, increasing exports, reducing the cost of food, modernising agriculture, etc.) may have, or these other actions may be given priority in resource allocation. To give top priority to hunger reduction means ensuring that none of the policies in place act against this objective and that the maximum effort is made to mobilise the resources needed to achieve it. In a poor country where hunger affects an important part of the population, this typically means:

- Simplifying procedures for creating associations of the hungry and for their official registration ([first principle](#)) and mobilising the resources required for supporting them (training of leaders and members of associations, support their establishment and efforts for making them fully functional, etc.)
- Establishing and ensuring operations of programmes required to enable the undernourished to access adequate food ([second principle](#))
- Support investment in food harvesting and storage equipment and facilities ([third principle](#))
- Strengthen and decentralise the research system and integrate in its governance system the participation of disadvantaged population groups and their organisations. Increase public funding for programmes to develop sustainable technologies accessible to the poor ([fourth principle](#))
- Implement tariffs on imported commodities subsidised in trading partner countries and effectively enforce regulations for fairer trade, through model contracts between producers and their organisations and foreign trade partners ([fifth principle](#))
- Pass laws and related regulations for the recognition of the rights of rural communities over natural resources and the application of the right of food and ensure their effective enforcement ([sixth principle](#))
- Analyse incentive policies, subsidies and taxes on agricultural commodities, inputs and equipments to serve as a basis for recasting to favour the development of a sustainable food and agriculture system.

¹ Maetz and Balié, [Influencing Policy Processes](#), FAO 2008

Policies such as tariffs adjustments, strengthening and reorientation of agricultural research or maintenance of food security stocks can also be implemented at **regional level** in the framework of regional economic organisations. These organisations can also help to better coordinate the policies of their members.



Recasting institutions

At the **international level**, the reform of the CFS should be pursued further and it should be given greater power to coordinate and unify the recasting of national policies and anti-hunger efforts at the international level, as they are unfortunately, for the time being, rather uncoordinated [[read](#)]. Further strengthening the role of the CFS will require member countries to accept giving up some of their sovereignty, as they accepted to do in the case of the WTO at the time of creation of its Dispute Settlement Body. This will allow for smooth progress in the recasting of national policies and avoid any negative impact on their foreign trade, as it is important to avoid that these reforms cause trade diversion away from the reforming countries to those that would not accept to reform. The CFS should also have the authority to control and sanction those countries who do not respect international conventions and commitments in the area of food and agriculture.

As the content of policies is largely influenced by the institutions that guide their production, it will be indispensable at **national level** to strengthen the participation in the policy process of population groups who suffer from chronic hunger and of their organisations. Only an institutional change that gives them a stronger voice in the political debate will make sure that the recasting of policies has a long-lasting result.