



GROWING A BETTER FUTURE SUMMARY

GROW
FOOD. JUSTICE. PLANET.


OXFAM

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Oxfam was created in 1942 in response to a food crisis. Seventy years on, the world faces another—this time one that threatens us all. The emergency of 1942 was caused by World War II; today's crisis is the product of global injustice in our food system. Approximately 925 million people face hunger every day, while the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production from which they are excluded have placed us all on a collision course with our planet's environmental limits.

The warning signs are clear. We have entered an age of crisis: of food price spikes and oil price hikes; of scrambles for land and water; of growing climate disasters. The 2008 spike in food prices pushed some 100 million people into poverty. Price rises at the beginning of 2011 did the same to 44 million more.¹ These statistics mask millions of individual stories of suffering and heartbreak as families struggle to cope with deepening poverty. Households falling into debt. Children going without meals and health care. Families migrating in search of food.

¹ Eric Martin, "World's Poor 'One Shock' From Crisis as Food Prices Climb, Zoellick Says," Bloomberg News, April 16, 2011, accessed July 15, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-04-16/zoellick-says-world-economy-one-shock-away-from-food-crisis-1-.html>

This publication is a summary of the Oxfam report "Growing a Better Future: Food justice in a resource-constrained world," which outlines the basis for Oxfam's GROW campaign. The report and supporting research, case studies, and information about the GROW campaign are available at www.oxfam.org/grow.

The 2008 spike in food prices pushed some 100 million people into poverty.

Governments and companies have largely neglected the needs of poor and vulnerable populations, especially those of women, demonstrating an alarming lack of will to address the drivers of hunger, inequality, and environmental damage. Despite increases in agricultural productivity and reductions in poverty over recent decades, global hunger is on the rise. Despite an overwhelming scientific consensus regarding the causes and projected consequences of climate change, and the robust evidence of its impacts on the ground, we have failed to dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. And despite advances in women's rights and widespread acknowledgement of their key role in ensuring that families eat, women are routinely denied resources, their talents and leadership ignored.

We now risk a wholesale reversal in human development. New research commissioned by Oxfam for the report "Growing a Better Future: Food justice in a resource-constrained world" forecasts real price rises for staple grains in the range of 120 to 180 percent within the next two decades, as resource pressures mount and climate change takes hold.

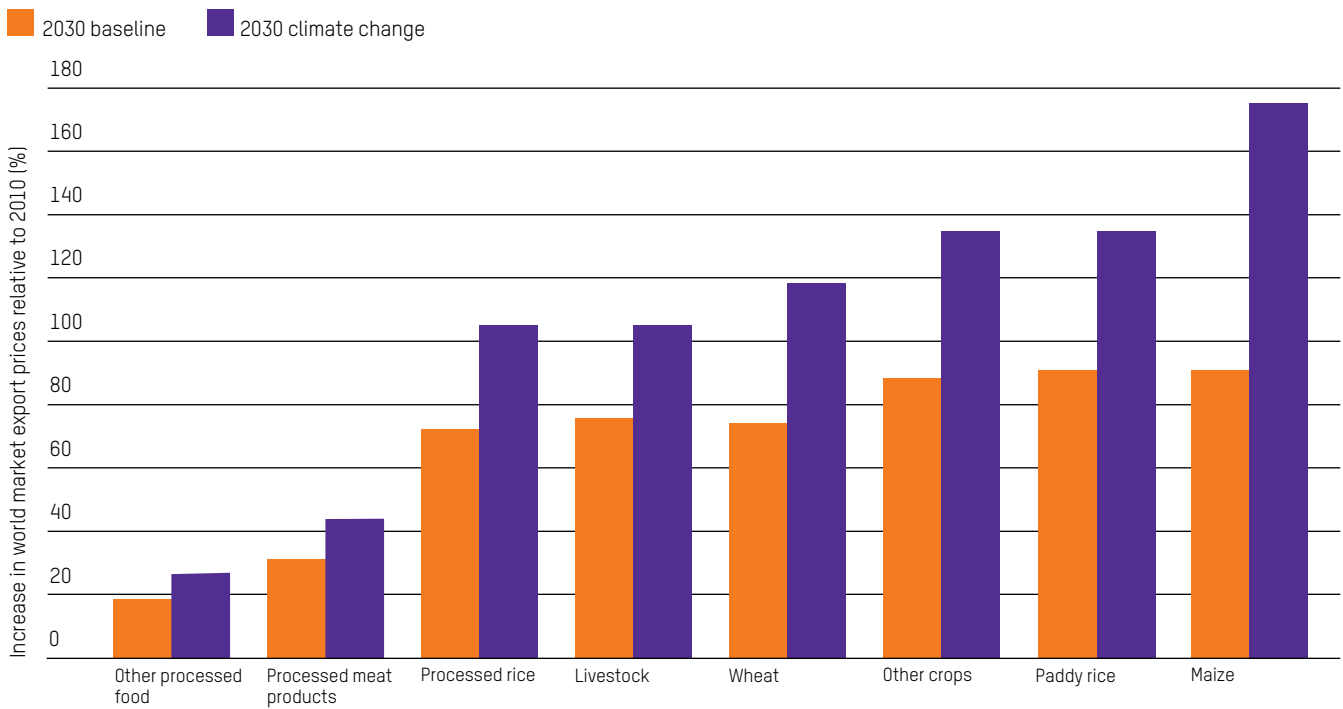
The CGIAR—a world-leading group of agricultural research centers for developing countries—has an annual budget of \$500 million, less than half the \$1.2 billion spent on research and development by the multinational company Monsanto.

Worldwide support for biofuels costs governments \$20 billion a year.

It is estimated that three agribusiness firms—Cargill, Bunge, and Archer Daniels Midland—control nearly 90% of global grain trading between them.

Compared with cheaper and more effective options, the US wastes up to 50 cents out of every dollar on food aid. Procuring freighting of US food aid on the open market could help feed an additional 3.2 million people in emergencies.

FIGURE 1: REAL FOOD PRICE CHANGES PREDICTED OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS



Source: D. Willenbockel (2011) "Exploring Food Price Scenarios Towards 2030," Oxfam and IDS

Between 1983 and 2006, the share of international development assistance to agriculture fell from 20.4% to 3.7%. During this time, rich country governments' support to their own agricultural sectors spiralled to more than \$250 billion a year—79 times their international agricultural aid.

Oxfam's GROW campaign has a simple message: Another future is possible, and we can build it together. Over the coming years, decisive action across the globe could enable hundreds of millions more people to feed their families and prevent catastrophic climate change from destroying their (and our) futures. But only if we collectively stop our sleepwalk towards ecological disaster. This campaign is Oxfam's wake-up call.

We must bring hope and opportunity to the 925 million people living in hunger today. Simultaneously, we must confront the looming disaster threatened by spiraling demand for food and an impending collision between the ecological systems that sustain life and the needs of the planet's most vulnerable people. And we must improve the international institutions and practices that are, right now, unable to protect the most vulnerable. There are three challenges we must meet.

Demand for water will increase by 30% by 2030.

THE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION CHALLENGE

The food system must be transformed. By 2050, there will be nine billion people on the planet, and demand for food will have increased by 70 percent. This demand must be met despite flatlining yields, increasing water scarcity, and growing competition for land. And food producers must rapidly adapt to a changing climate and slash agriculture's carbon footprint.

The amount of arable land per head has nearly halved since 1960.

Agriculture accounts for up to 30% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions.

Right: Nilanthi (right) alongside Kusumawathi (left) picks tea on her own land in Sri Lanka and is secretary of the Diriya Smallholder Tea Society representing 42 smallholder tea producers in the area, all of whom own less than an acre of land.

THE EQUITY CHALLENGE

We must also address the appalling inequities that plague the food system from farm to fork. Right now, we produce enough food so that everyone has enough to eat. In the rich world, we throw much of it away. In the developing world, nearly one billion of us go without.

Hunger and poverty are concentrated in rural areas. Unlocking the potential of smallholder agriculture—the backbone of the food system—represents our single biggest opportunity to increase food production, improve food security, and reduce vulnerability. Yet women and men food producers are routinely deprived of the resources they need to thrive: of water, technology, investment and credit, among others. Huge swathes of land in Africa and elsewhere are being handed over to investors at rock-bottom prices in deals that offer little to local communities.

Consumers in rich countries may waste as much as a quarter of the food they buy.

In more than half of industrialized countries, 50% or more of the population is overweight.

80% of recent land investments remain undeveloped, according to available information.

Providing women farmers with the same access to resources as men could increase their yields by 20–30%.

THE RESILIENCE CHALLENGE

The food system is increasingly fragile. Oil price shocks are transmitted to food prices through fertilizer and transport costs. Weather events are disrupting supply. Speculative capital is blowing bubbles in commodity markets. Perhaps most shocking is the role of governments in triggering, rather than averting, food price crises. Policies of narrow self-interest and zero-sum competition such as corn-based biofuel programs and export bans make a bad situation much, much worse.

We must dramatically scale up our ability to collectively manage risks and build resilience to shocks and volatility. But the institutions needed to protect the most vulnerable are often inadequate or missing.

40% of the US corn crop is devoted to ethanol production.

Four people in every five lack access to social protection of any kind.

In 2010, only 63% of UN emergency appeals were funded.



A NEW PROSPERITY

Thankfully, the vast transformation needed is already under way—led by individuals, organizations, and movements that have taken the future into their own hands. In Brazil, 20 years of activism from civil society and social movements challenged elites, expanded political horizons, and helped to elect politicians with vision and moral purpose. The result was a raft of policies to tackle hunger that delivered remarkable results. Vietnam has achieved comparable results through land reform and an ambitious program of investment in smallholder agriculture. In Canada, a concerted public campaign including Oxfam succeeded in reforming food aid. Consumers increasingly demand products that are sourced ethically and sustainably. Campaigns on climate change in developed and developing countries have helped galvanize politicians and responsible businesses, upping the pressure on companies and leaders that continue to block ambitious action.

These victories, and others like them, point the way to a **new prosperity** beyond the age of crisis. An era in which we properly value the environment and share the world's resources fairly. Where governments resist vested interests and instead direct public resources toward public goods, ensuring markets work in the interests of the many. Where businesses cannot profit from plundering our resource base, but instead find healthy returns from developing solutions to the challenges we face. Where everyone has access to the resources they need to feed themselves and their families.

The scale of the challenge is great. Substantial change is needed if we are to build the new prosperity before the planet is wrecked beyond repair. We need three big shifts: in dealing with crises, in remaking agriculture, and in coming to terms with our environment.

Vietnam achieved the first Millennium Goal—to halve hunger—five years ahead of schedule.

In 2009, the US and Europe added more energy capacity from renewables like wind and solar than from conventional sources like coal, gas, and nuclear.

In 2009, Apple and Nike publicly left the US Chamber of Commerce in protest against its refusal to back US climate legislation.

BUILD A NEW GLOBAL GOVERNANCE TO AVERT FOOD CRISES

Governments' top priority must be to tackle hunger and reduce vulnerability. They must build resilience by creating jobs, adapting to climate change, investing in disaster risk reduction, and extending social protection. We must manage trade to limit risk by building a system of food reserves; increasing transparency in commodities markets; setting rules on export restrictions; and finally putting an end to agriculture subsidies that do little to help farmers in the US and harm farmers overseas. Excessive financial speculation in commodities markets must be regulated, and support must be dismantled for biofuel production that competes with food.

And we must reform the international institutions we need to respond to shocks. Food aid must be reformed, and the international community must move to a system of 100 percent funding for emergencies via upfront "assessed contributions." A new global climate fund to finance adaptation in developing countries must be established and funded.

Hunger fell by one-third in Brazil between 2000 and 2007.

BUILD A NEW AGRICULTURAL FUTURE

The vast imbalance in public investment in agriculture must be righted, rebalancing the billions now being ploughed into unsustainable industrial farming in rich countries to meeting the needs of small-scale food producers in developing countries. For that is where the major gains in productivity, sustainable intensification, poverty reduction, and resilience can be achieved. Donors and international organizations must meet commitments to increase funding for agriculture and invest in helping farmers to build resilience to a changing climate. New agreements are needed to govern investment in land to ensure it delivers social and environmental returns. And national governments must provide public support for small-scale sustainable agriculture, while carefully regulating private investment in land and water to ensure secure access for women and men living in poverty.

Companies too must embrace the opportunities offered by smallholder agriculture: to diversify and secure supply; to meet growing demand from consumers concerned with sustainable development; and to develop new technologies. And active states must intervene where companies do not: to direct research and development toward technologies that can benefit poor women and men producers; to help them sell their produce on decent terms; to support them with training; and to provide access to finance.

BUILD A NEW ECOLOGICAL FUTURE

The race to a sustainable future is on, and there will be huge opportunities for those who get there first. National governments must intervene to speed up and direct the transition. They must invest in public goods such as research and development in clean energy. They must create incentives to guide private capital to where it is needed. They must create consequences for companies causing environmental harm—in order to direct economic activity toward desirable alternatives.

Ultimately, our success or failure in building a new ecological future will depend on political leaders agreeing to a fair and ambitious global deal on climate change.

HOW WE GET THERE

The scale of the challenge is unprecedented, but so is the prize: a sustainable future in which everyone has enough to eat. Achieving the **new prosperity** in time will take all the energy, ingenuity, and political will that humankind can muster. To build responsive governance institutions, invest in smallholder agriculture, and reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, we must first overcome the vested interests that have paralyzed the political process until now.

The new prosperity will have to be built simultaneously from the top down and from the bottom up. From the top, ambitious leaders will drive success. Political leaders will resist special interests, inspire their citizens, and mobilize support across government to protect and invest in the interests of the many. Corporate leaders will break ranks with damaging industry lobbies, strengthening the will of politicians and governments genuinely committed to change. They will seize new opportunities and embrace solutions rather than seek to undermine or water them down. They will cease to impose their social and environmental costs on others and will flourish by finding ways to make the most of scarce resources, responding to consumer demands and public pressure.

From the bottom, networks of citizens, consumers, producers, communities, social movements, and civil society organizations will demand change from governments and companies—shifting political and business incentives through the decisions they take and the choices they make. Whether through leading low-carbon lifestyles, buying fair trade goods, or demanding change in the streets or through the ballot box. Oxfam's campaign will work with these groups to amass irresistible momentum for change. Together we will challenge the current order and set a path toward a new prosperity.

ACTION FOR 2011

There is no time to waste, and 2011 provides crucial opportunities.

When the Committee on World Food Security meets in October, it must agree on a robust set of guidelines on land tenure that will prevent land-grabbing and ensure that people living in poverty have secure access to natural resources. It must also agree on an action plan to assist national governments to address food price volatility. New agreements must be reached to regulate markets in a coordinated and coherent way to protect against future food crises.

When the G20 leaders meet in November, they need to take their share of responsibility to mitigate food price increases, in particular, and volatility, in general. They must increase transparency in commodities and futures markets, agree to build food reserves, regulate excessive commodity speculation, phase out support to biofuel production that is diverting feedstocks to fuel, and agree on innovative market-based mechanisms for climate finance, such as a financial transactions tax or levies on international aviation and shipping fuels.

When the world's climate negotiators reconvene in Durban at the end of 2011, they must get the global climate fund that was agreed to in 2010 up and running, put civil society organizations and women on the fund's board, and ensure it is well financed to support farmers' efforts to build resilience to increasingly erratic and extreme weather.

As donor governments continue to renegotiate the Food Aid Convention, they must maintain a collective commitment to providing a minimum level of food assistance. They must also untie food aid, prying it from the clutches of vested interests and at a stroke increasing its efficiency, timeliness, effectiveness, and reach.

And there are actions that all governments must take today to build resilience at home and begin the transition toward a new agricultural future. In particular, governments should reduce hunger by providing women with equal access to resources; by promoting sustainable agricultural development, job creation, and inclusive growth; and by tackling vulnerability via climate adaptation, social protection, and disaster risk reduction.

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