



CFS 42 Policy Brief

Cultivating Equality: Just & Sustainable Food Systems in a Changing Climate

OVERVIEW We face a greater challenge than ever before: ending hunger and malnutrition in the face of climate change and natural resource scarcity. Success demands that we tackle inequity and gender inequality.

Introduction

Globally, 795 million people are chronically hungry; 161 million children under five are stunted. Yet we use 1.5 times the planet's resources every year, exhausting resources faster than the planet can naturally regenerate them. A fifth of cropland has been so degraded it is no longer suitable for farming, while 90 percent of fisheries are fished at or above capacity. At the same time, changes in climate in the last 30 years have already reduced global agricultural production 1 to 5 percent per decade and could reduce it by 2 percent per decade for the rest of the century. Up to 600 million more people could be at risk of hunger by 2080 as a result.

Proposed solutions to hunger in a changing climate often emphasize increasing food production. Improving yields where there is not enough food or among small-scale food producers is key. But simply increasing small-scale food producers' yields is not enough to end hunger.

Inequality shapes who has access to food and the resources to grow it and buy it. It governs who eats first and who eats worst. Inequality determines who can adapt to a changing climate. Hunger and poverty are not accidents—they are the result of social and economic injustice and inequality at all levels. The reality of inequality is no truer than for women—half the world's population, with far less than their fair share of the world's resources. To end hunger and malnutrition in a changing climate, we must address the underlying inequalities in food systems.

REALITY FOR SMALL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCERS

Small-scale producers already struggle to grow, catch, or buy enough nutritious food because of degraded soil, small land plots, depleted fish stocks, water scarcity, lack of diverse foods in the market or low incomes. They often lack access to secure land tenure or access to natural resources, financial and extension services, information about weather, post-harvest storage, and markets. Higher temperatures, shifting seasons, and erratic rainfall pose significant challenges for small-scale food producers, who are already often one bad harvest away from crisis. Climate change is a further burden they do not need.

Business as usual—increasing greenhouse gas emissions, unsustainable means of production, high levels of food waste and loss, and unequal access to resources and power—is unacceptable. It's time for a dialogue—and action—about equity.

WOMEN'S BURDEN, WOMEN'S POTENTIAL

Women comprise an average of 43 percent of the global agricultural labor force. They make up nearly 50 percent of farmers in Eastern and Southeastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and are responsible for almost 90 percent of food preparation in the household. Yet, only 10 to 20 percent of landholders are women, and they receive only five percent of extension services worldwide. Too often, women are not viewed as equal players in the household and community. So when they are not consulted on use of household income or community plans for natural resources, their knowledge is not captured, their priorities are not reflected, their needs are not addressed—and their rights are not respected.



THE INJUSTICE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change amplifies the risks already poor and marginalized people face—and the impacts are hardest on those least responsible for causing it. Climate change is expected to prolong existing and create new poverty traps, the latter particularly in urban areas and emerging hotspots of hunger. Vulnerability to climate change is shaped by an individual's, household's, community's, or country's ability to access information, resources, support and alternatives to livelihoods made less and less viable by global warming.

Without urgent and ambitious action, the world is at risk of the breakdown of local food systems, migration, increased risk of food insecurity, particularly for poorer populations, conflict, and the loss of rural livelihoods due to increased water scarcity. Small-scale food producers—and especially

women—deserve a new strategy to support their agricultural efforts in the face of climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that climate change will impact “all aspects of food security...including food access, utilization, and price stability.”

Recommendations

The cumulative reality of the challenges we face is proof that we need a new response to hunger, climate change, and poverty in which sustainability and equity are the foundation. CARE offers the following recommendations to the Committee on World Food Security. Outcomes (e.g. frameworks or principles) of the new workstreams on the Sustainable Development Goals and nutrition should

- Leverage **previous CFS agreements**, particularly the Right to Food Guidelines and the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure.
- Prioritize actions that **ensure equitable outcomes** and **respect the rights** of small-scale food producers.
- Identify policies and actions that promote **accountability of all stakeholders** to small-scale food producers and chronically hungry populations.
- Promote **capacity building** of small-scale food producers and decision-makers to collaborate across all levels and sectors.
- Recognize the need for **action across all SDGs** to end hunger and malnutrition.
- Prioritize **integration of climate change and gender**, promoting engagement of women *and* men.
- Address the **role of non-governmental stakeholders** in promoting nutrition.
- Identify actions or guidelines to monitor the **integration of nutrition outcomes** in other sectors.
- Catalyze action to deepen understanding of the **interaction among nutrition, climate change, and the environment**.

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