

# Food Insecurity in Africa

Examining contributors & consequences across sectors

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## Executive Summary

*Natasha Louis*

Food insecurity is intermingled with every arduous issue facing the African continent: poor governance, undiversified investments, conflict, and climate change, to name the most pervasive. Exacerbating the situation is the war in Ukraine, destabilising crucial imports to Africa and raising the cost of food. Roughly [44 per cent](#) of Africa's wheat is imported from Russia and Ukraine. In May 2022, Executive Director David Beasley of the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) stated, "Acute hunger is soaring to unprecedented levels and the global situation just keeps on getting worse. Conflict, the climate crisis, Covid-19 and surging food and fuel costs have created a perfect storm — and now we've got the war in Ukraine piling catastrophe on top of catastrophe."

While issues of inflation, climate change, and food insecurity are impacting nations throughout the world, no one is experiencing the severity more than African countries. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the African Union (AU), approximately [346 million Africans](#) are affected by food insecurity with [146 million](#) suffering severe hunger. "By mid-2022, the population facing the three highest phases of acute food insecurity was greater than at any point in the six-year history of the Global Report on Food Crises." Between 2021 and 2022, seven countries in the world saw an increase of over [1 million people](#) facing severe food crises. Six of these are African nations. Somalia and South Sudan are two out of the four countries who are enduring a food insecurity "catastrophe" - with [7.76 million](#) South Sudanese (two-thirds of the population) facing acute food insecurity and [7 million](#) Somalis at risk of famine this year.

This report aims to analyse some of the most pertinent drivers of food insecurity throughout Africa. This collection is by no means exhaustive but provides insight into key areas that not only impact the African continent but also their ripple effects on a global scale. By examining complexities within the sectors of agriculture, economics, politics, and human security, this report attempts to present a broad picture of food insecurity consequences and their impact worldwide.



# Agriculture

*Princess Ncube*

Since the twentieth century, [global agricultural trends](#) show an increase in the adoption of motorised mechanisation and automation to improve efficiency and productivity in food production. While the adoption varies from one country to the next, a [study](#) on agriculture mechanisation in 11 sub-Saharan African countries confirms that small, hand-held agriculture tools are the principal machinery used in the region. In contrast, Northern Africa has a more advanced adoption and usage of tractors and other related agricultural machinery. The slow adoption of machinery in sub-Saharan Africa and other countries is because of a lack of financial support, poor rural infrastructure, and an absence of an environment that permits skills development. This background demonstrates why agricultural production and productivity in Africa lag far behind the rest of the world.

According to the 2022 World Bank Africa Pulse [report](#), the number of people estimated to be food insecure in sub-Saharan Africa has surpassed 2021 estimates by an additional 20 million, affecting approximately 140 million people. Despite having the largest amount of [arable land](#) that is not being used, food insecurity is anticipated to rise across Africa. This begs the question of why African nations do not significantly invest in agriculture.

## Lack of Investment

Some contributing factors include excessive exploitation and foreign investment in minerals. The scramble for mineral and oil exploration licences in Africa is perpetuating the neglect of other sectors. A recent [report](#) on Angola highlights an overreliance on the extractive sector, with 95 per cent of the country's exports being crude oil. However, the incumbent President João Lourenço's government has been working on redirecting investments to other sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing, in order to reduce Angola's overdependence on oil.

Notwithstanding the natural resource endowment and extraction argument, other factors that have perpetuated the neglect of the agriculture sector in Africa include the limited fiscal space for most African governments. The rising debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio dampens any prospects for countries to allocate a higher budget for funding the agricultural sector. These increasing lending costs and declining [public savings](#) further tighten the fiscal space to invest in agriculture and other related high-return sectors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased debt levels, from 4.1 per cent of GDP in 2019 to 6.3 per cent in 2022, as governments intensified spending to support vulnerable people and [affected firms](#). Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increase in debt levels was already a challenge for most African countries because of a shift towards non-traditional creditors, such as China and private [lenders](#). While traditional lenders offer lower interest



rates and longer repayment debt structures, China and private lenders attach significantly fewer requirements for accessing credit. Therefore, debt levels have been on the rise. However, Africa's increased access to credit with fewer repayment conditions has not improved the food insecurity challenge because of [decades of neglect](#) of the agricultural sector, coupled with increased borrowing costs, overdependence on natural resource extraction, and depleting public savings. As a result, millions of people in Africa are food insecure. The World Bank Pulse report recommends that governments ought to halt “[misdirected subsidies](#)” and reallocate public spending towards sectors that have a high return on investment, such as health and agriculture. With rising food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa, countries acknowledge the urgent need to attain zero hunger, especially now that there is an increased occurrence of severe droughts due to global warming.

## Global Warming

Global warming is an [attribute](#) of climate change; mainly referring to the increase in global heat because of increased emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, whereas climate change is a long-term change in both [temperature and weather](#) patterns, mainly due to the burning of fossil fuels. Over the last four decades, global annual temperatures have been increasing by [0.18 degrees](#) Celsius per decade, a rate that has more than [doubled](#) since 1981. Five of the [hottest](#) years on record have occurred in the last 20 years.

The continent of Africa is [food insecure](#) because the agricultural sector is highly exposed to disruptive climate-related weather events. A sizable portion of the continent's population relies heavily on agriculture as a source of income and a primary means of subsistence. Global warming has an impact on agriculture in the form of [extended dry seasons](#) and erratic rainfall patterns, which cause water shortages. Africa is at risk of experiencing a food shortage because of [rising temperatures](#) - staple crops like wheat, maize, sorghum, and millet only require moderate heat and regular rain patterns. The effects of warming on agriculture are anticipated to exacerbate Africa's already-existing concerns about food insecurity.

The Horn of Africa, which consists of Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea, first experienced the [worst famine](#) in more than 60 years in 2011. Somalia was hardest hit by a simultaneous drought and conflict and, as a result, half of the 250,000 people who died from extreme hunger were children under the [age of five](#). After 10 years, famine looms once again in [Somalia](#), Kenya, and Northern Ethiopia. Since the beginning of 2022, over 500,000 Somali children have experienced extreme hunger. Meanwhile, in Kenya, a severe drought has left over 3.5 million people in a dire need of food. The East Africa region is already suffering the worst effects of climate-related droughts.

Extreme temperatures are likely to exacerbate [vermin and disease](#) outbreaks. The World Health Organization (WHO) [finds](#) that Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda documented 39 climate-related health crises and floods in 2022. This is



the largest number of outbreaks reported in a single year over the last 22 years. Diseases, such as anthrax, measles, yellow fever, chikungunya, and meningitis, make up 80 per cent of the reported severe public health events, whereas floods and other related catastrophes account for 18 per cent. This presents a potential resource strain for African countries and increases their risk of exposure to severe food shortages. With the rising incidence of pandemics and disease outbreaks, global warming will probably disrupt the agricultural sector globally by affecting labour availability and food supply chains. The first stringent COVID-19 lockdowns greatly disrupted supply chains. On account of this, African countries that rely heavily on food imports are more likely to face acute food shortages if the countries they import from also face an increased likelihood of agricultural sector disruptions or food shortages. As a result, African countries must act quickly to reduce their reliance on food imports while also fully utilising the abundant arable land by increasing food production and implementing climate-friendly agriculture.

## Deforestation Consequences

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) [report](#), about 4 million hectares (1 hectare = 10,000 square metres) of trees are cut down in Africa each year, which is near twice the global average rate of deforestation. Agriculture and livestock production is responsible for [80 per cent](#) of global deforestation. The increasing [global demand](#) for palm oil and cocoa compounds the rising deforestation in Africa. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon produce more than half the world's cocoa output. The cultivation of cocoa requires vast tracts of land. The [World Cocoa Foundation](#) (WCF) and Mighty Earth highlight that one-quarter of Côte d'Ivoire's trees and 10 per cent of Ghana's forests were cut down between 2001 to 2014 due to cocoa cultivation. This type of agricultural growth regrettably worsens food insecurity challenges in Africa because rapid deforestation increases soil erosion, reduces soil fertility, increases air pollution, heightens evaporation, and, as a result, increases water shortages. The latter is demonstrated by the disappearing forest cover in the Congo Basin and West Africa (Guinea forests) that is impairing country-level [ecosystems](#).

Other factors that are accelerating deforestation in the continent include charcoal burning, settlement construction due to population growth, and commercial timber harvesting. Illegal logging is particularly prevalent in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the leadership often issues "[illegal industrial forest concessions](#)". Illegal mining and cocoa cultivation in Ghana have accelerated the loss of tree cover by 60 per cent, while in Côte d'Ivoire, 26 per cent of the tree cover has been lost. This constant pursuit of cash crop farming and illegal mining threatens to maintain the existing situation of severe food shortages. This occurs in nations like the DRC that are rife with violence and where [26.4 million people](#) are anticipated to experience extreme hunger in the first half of 2023.



Massive deforestation has also been a [longstanding](#) challenge in Kenya, to an extent that it is interfering with sustainable agriculture. About 10 per cent of the country was sheltered by forests in 1963. By 2009, this number had [decreased](#) to 6 per cent due to “charcoal, timber production, agriculture expansion, unregulated logging, and urbanisation”. Forests in Kenya serve as primary “[water towers](#)” as they hold innumerable springs and streams that are reservoirs of large rivers. In attempts to tackle deforestation, Kenya’s colonial government first introduced the much-contested Shamba system in [1910](#). This entails farmers nursing tree seedlings on state land in exchange for being allowed to [grow crops](#) amongst trees until the trees are fully grown. The inter-cropping programme worked well in the early stages but later destroyed natural forests. Hence, a moratorium was first placed on the Shamba system in 1986. Since then, former President Mwai Kibaki lifted the ban in 1994 and later reinstated it in 2003. Recently, Kenya’s new government under President William Ruto announced the reinstatement of the Shamba system. The unbanning of the Shamba system will probably increase tensions between environmentalists and pastoralists versus illegal settlers and crop farmers. Environmentalists and pastoralists regard the Shamba system as a “forest grabbing” programme that will result in the continued destruction of natural forests and destruction of grazing land.

Yet, crop farmers view the reinstatement of the Shamba system as an opportunity to ensure food security for Kenya. Forests serve as “[carbon sinks](#)” that reduce exposure to the long-term warming of the planet. Second to oceans, trees produce reliable rainfall and are the most effective source of [precipitation](#). Therefore, the future of agriculture in Africa is partially anchored in the protection of natural forests, especially with the rising impacts of climate-related erratic rain patterns, extreme heat, floods, and famines. However, the reinstatement of highly contested afforestation programmes, such as the Shamba system in Kenya, is less likely to result in the reduction of food imports as evidenced by the failure of previous attempts.

## **Food Importation**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) imports about [85 per cent](#) of its wheat from [outside the continent](#). A Brookings [report](#) that disaggregates SSA agricultural trade performance by country and type finds that Nigeria, Angola, the DRC, and Somalia account for most of SSA’s [net agricultural imports](#). These countries are characterised by either a high reliance on oil exports to fund the food import bill or governance challenges. The rapid development of their oil sectors gives rise to the underdevelopment of other sectors.

SSA imports the majority of its [staple](#) foods, mainly [wheat](#), palm oil, and rice, from Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil, and [Europe](#). Africa’s local production is lagging behind local demand and population [growth](#), which is increasing food imports from the global north. The [SSA](#) import bill has increased to \$35.7 billion over the last 25 years. There is a 30 per cent increase in





demand for cereals and a 20 per cent increase in demand for vegetable oils and fats. Comparatively, intra-African trade in agricultural commodities accounts for less than [20 per cent](#). Twenty-five African countries import more than a third of their wheat from [Ukraine and Russia](#). Similar to the SSA region, North African countries are also largely dependent on food imports, particularly wheat imports from these two countries. For example, Tunisia imports [50 per cent](#) of its cereals to meet local consumption and [60 per cent](#) for stock feed purposes. Whereas Algeria imports 75 per cent of its food because only [17.4 per cent](#) of its predominantly desert land is cultivated for food production. Lastly, Egypt, the world's largest buyer of wheat, purchases [85 per cent](#) of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine.

The downside of overdependence on food imports is increased exposure to international economic and political instabilities. A media [report](#) indicated that by mid-May 2022, about 20 million metric tons of grain were stuck in Ukraine because of Russia's insistent blockade of the Black Sea port, thereby cutting food access to Africa. The Russian government blamed sanctions imposed by the West and allies (Japan and New Zealand) for the failure to deliver grains to Africa. However, the US government has disputed claims that its sanctions are responsible for blocking any grain and fertiliser deliveries into the global market. Instead, they argue that Russia is responsible for shutting off the [Black Sea](#) grain route to Africa. This is problematic because Russia is the largest producer of fertiliser in the world; thus, the reduction of fertiliser supply directly results in increasing prices for agricultural inputs and, by default, increases inflation for the African countries that have a chronic dependence on food and fertiliser imports.

Enduring organised violence and conflict is another crucial contributor to food insecurity, perpetuating displacement in Somalia, Northern Ethiopia, DRC, and Nigeria to cite a few. The lack of political will to end conflict and wars in Africa is compounding the food insecurity problem. Another problem emanating from the man-made humanitarian crisis of food shortages is increasing migration. This is likely going to be a critical issue for other African countries and the international community, hence the world ought to prioritise dealing with permanent conflict resolution in conflict-plagued nations so as to create a stable environment that can attract private investments into agriculture and other related sectors.

Africa's rising reliance on food imports warrants additional serious reform, considering that the continent has the fastest-growing agricultural sector globally. According to Professor Thomas Jayne from Michigan State University, Africa's agricultural sector has been growing at 4.3 per cent annually, whereas the global average is at 2.75 per cent. There are over 12 African countries that are "net exporters" of agricultural products and are surpassing their local demand in food output. Despite this latter growth, the [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development](#) forecasts that Africa will likely increase its food imports from the current figure of \$35 billion to \$110 billion by 2025. Why? African countries trade the least with each other. Furthermore, additional pressure from rapid growth in urbanisation and changes in [dietary needs](#) have increased the demand for wheat and rice. Traditionally, SSA





has been the leading cultivator of commercial crops such as coffee, cocoa, tea, and cotton. The recorded agricultural growth in SSA is in fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables.

In the long term, the [United Nations](#) projects that Africa will experience the biggest share of global population growth by 2050. The expected upsurge in population will result in further rapid urbanisation. It is estimated that in the next two decades, more than half of the African citizenry will relocate to cities, which will increase the overall food demand due to changes in dietary preferences. For example, in Kenya, rural communities have time to prepare their traditional maize meal dish called ugali. However, those who relocate to work in cities as general employees will have limited time to prepare traditional dishes. Hence, their diets tend to transition because they purchase takeaways en route to work and are more likely to order chapati or sausages and eggs, which are often seen as the least costly meals. Chapati is a dish made from imported wheat flour, whereas ugali is made from locally produced maize meal. This illustrates the changing dietary needs as a result of rapid urbanisation and population growth. Collectively, African countries do not have the best climate and soils to cultivate wheat that can meet local needs. Therefore, this will increase imports of wheat and wheat-based products.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Poor agricultural sector investment and local development, together with a rise in the frequency of droughts and floods brought on by climate change, as well as ongoing conflicts that displace communities, are all contributing factors to Africa's growing food insecurity problem. Because of extractive-oriented government policies that favour industries like mining, African countries do not devote enough resources to expand the agriculture sector. Given the rise in unfavourable resource-backed foreign loan arrangements and diminishing public savings, African governments have little financial room to expand the agricultural sector in a way that solves food shortages and undue reliance on food imports from abroad.

On rising foreign debt, African countries need to re-think the terms and conditions of resource-based foreign loans from China. Governments must be transparent and disclose the contractual debt repayment terms and conditions before taking on any foreign debt. Also, a cost-risk and debt maintenance assessment must be introduced to guide the government's decision-making before signing any debt agreements with foreign lenders.

To address food insecurity and high reliance on food imports, African countries should go beyond the African Union's [Maputo Declaration](#), which was signed in 2003 and committed governments to increase public spending on agriculture by at least 10 per cent. The minimum public expenditure on agriculture should be increased to keep pace with population and urbanisation growth. If African governments do not increase public spending on agriculture by at least 10 per cent above the Maputo Declaration threshold, the continent will continue to face acute food shortages, particularly in conflict-laden and drought-prone countries.



Increased government spending and financing for smallholder farmers will boost African agricultural productivity. While there is no mandatory way to compel African governments to increase public spending, in the past, African governments have generally acceded to countless agreements aimed at eradicating extreme hunger. Still, implementation has lagged behind a growing urbanising population whose dietary needs are shifting toward import-based foodstuffs, such as rice and wheat. The rising demand for rice and wheat-based import products makes it highly unlikely that Africans will switch to traditional foods, especially in urban areas, where cooking time is limited due to work commitments. Rice and wheat-based foods take less time to prepare than traditional meals such as samp (crushed maize). Therefore, African governments ought to maximise the cultivation of crops that grow well in African climates to match the anticipated rise in food demands.

Equally important is the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area [agreement](#) (ACFTA) to leverage existing African markets for African products. Governments need to learn about local African demands to match them with local agricultural production. Without the implementation of the much-needed reforms in the agricultural sector throughout Africa, food insecurity will be an enduring challenge for the continent as it burdens conflict-ridden and climate-vulnerable countries with an increased prevalence of extreme droughts and floods.

The food insecurity problem in Africa is not only an African problem, it is a world problem. Conflicts exacerbate food shortages, which can lead to further conflicts and rapid migration. The growing numbers of economic and war migrants present a resource pressure for stable nations, especially in the current political climate where there is an increase in nationalistic politics that is inward-looking. Therefore, the international community ought to encourage and commit to the development and investment in Africa's agricultural sector to reduce long-term resource pressure from rapid migration. In terms of business, Africa's agriculture sector represents an untapped investment opportunity for private investors. It provides an opportunity for the continent to not only achieve food security but also to feed the rest of the world by maximising output through leveraging the continent's 60 per cent arable land.



## Economics

*Caleb Adegbola, Arthur Ddamulira & Natasha Louis*

The global economy is experiencing turbulent times, largely as a result of the [pandemic](#) and the Russian-Ukrainian [war](#), which has seen mass supply shortages and reduced economic activity worldwide. Coupled with high levels of national debt and natural disasters, this has contributed to worsening [food insecurity](#) in Africa. The state of the global economy has a correlation with the level of aid and investment sent to Africa, which can be used to reduce food insecurity. Food insecurity is also exacerbated by significant financing and investment constraints. Limited financial resources for food production coupled with limited investments in the necessary technology have hampered the strength of African systems to fight food insecurity.

Addressing the economic factors that drive a rise in food prices, create scarcity of essential food items, and limit harvests across the continent is crucial in understanding instabilities. While not an exhaustive list of drivers, analysing some aspects that have a causal effect on other economic forces provides a full narrative on food insecurity. The combination of these will usually require a significant international collaboration on financial policy and investment decisions to address food scarcity.

## Inflation Impacts

The conflict in Ukraine has directly impacted food insecurity through the [export of wheat](#) and grain to Africa; the blow being felt most by countries in the Horn of Africa. Between 2021 and 2022, Egypt was the major importer of [Ukrainian wheat](#), “having purchased about 2.82mn t, followed by Tunisia and Morocco with 634,000t and 596,000t.” These figures show the magnitude of Africa’s wheat dependency and how significantly they have been impacted by the war. The rising prices of corn have also had a large impact on food insecurity, as the commodity remains a [staple](#) for millions of African households. These foods are extremely resourceful and can be found in the majority of foods consumed by low-income households at risk of food insecurity.

Food price inflation has been extraordinarily high with staple food prices reaching their highest since [2008](#) in sub-Saharan Africa. This means that the price of food has been comparatively higher in most African nations. Simultaneously, gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecasts for African giants, such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Ghana, have been lower than expected, worsening the already fragile economic situation.



Inflation has been disastrous in Africa to the extent that many nations find themselves struggling to pay their debts and are [seeking bailouts](#) from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). For example, the IMF has approved a \$1.3 billion bailout out of the \$8.4 billion Zambia owes in order to recover its economy. Food security updates from 2022 show that food inflation has risen above the level of standard inflation. [World Bank](#) data from August to November shows that the top two countries experiencing real food inflation in the world are both African, namely, Zimbabwe and Rwanda. Inflation in Africa is standing at almost [twice the number](#) of pre-pandemic times and key food prices, like maize, are continuing to rise since 2019. Due to inflation, the price of imports has significantly soared and the weakening of many African currencies, such as the [Naira](#) in Nigeria, has only worsened this effect. Regarding imports, it is important to note that Africa relies on significant volumes of [imports](#) to cover shortfalls for their citizens and many people trade the imported foods as wholesalers or retailers. Subsequently, higher prices of imports make the costs of operation higher for businesses and the imported food more expensive for consumers. With people unable to afford these basic foodstuffs, the situation deteriorates further for intra-regional trade and for food security internally within countries.

The situation has deteriorated to the extent that the IMF has warned about severe hunger in the region. [Twelve per cent](#) of sub-Saharan Africa is reported to be experiencing food insecurity according to the IMF's 2022 [regional outlook](#). The region is still suffering as incomes have not bounced back from the pandemic. Instead of developing domestic infrastructure, it is commonplace for African nations to export their resources to the Western world, where the production process takes place. Finished products are then imported at exorbitant prices, considering the original resources come from African countries. Investments in the much-needed food production infrastructure have been lacking due to the high level of corruption, as the redirection of funds has been taken away from infrastructure projects and instead put in the pockets of politicians. [Political instability](#) caused by conflict and civil wars also makes the development of infrastructure difficult. Investors are deterred due to mass uncertainty and projects are paused or destroyed due to the instability. Consequently, there is additional pressure on the domestic food market, which exacerbates food insecurity.

## **Foreign Investment**

Foreign investment is a key solution to solving the worsening food insecurity in Africa. Yet, its absence and gradual reduction worsen the crisis when long-term solutions are devised with the view to their financing coming from foreign donors. Foreign investment links to funds from abroad, usually Western countries which provide aid to be used in agricultural and food systems. A familiar example of such funding is the International Fund for Agriculture Development ([IFAD](#)). The fund seeks to reduce food insecurity by boosting both food



production and agricultural productivity. They invest in rural people, empowering them to increase their food security, improve the nutrition of their families, and increase their incomes. Such funding and support, therefore, become essential for tackling food insecurity. Furthermore, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)) estimates that there was a \$260 billion differential between current investment in Africa and the levels of investment needed to address the food insecurity challenges on the continent. This gives an idea of the current deficit in provisions which can be solved in order to build resilience, expand businesses, and enable Africans to take charge of their own development.

However, this deficit is not representative of the effort of those providing aid. In late August 2022, the United Kingdom announced a donation of [£37.65 million](#) to help with provisions of food and water. The disparity is to such an extent that the UK minister for Africa, MP [Vicky Ford](#), has called for a coordinated international effort to prevent a “humanitarian catastrophe”. As many as 20 million people were projected to be in urgent need of aid by the end of 2022. However, the £37.65 million was targeted to support close to 1 million people from the Sahel and Lake Chad regions.

Unfortunately, in 2020, the pandemic marked a [drastic slowdown](#) in foreign investment in Africa as nations looked to secure their domestic economies. Many were forced to choose between foreign aid and prioritising their own nations due to the crippling effects the pandemic had on production capabilities and health systems globally. This significantly increased the costs related to tackling the pandemic, through personal protection equipment and vaccine research, among other factors, and reduced the funding available for other countries. This has had a greater impact on countries that are dependent on commodities. Following a decline of [16 per cent](#) in 2020, foreign investment has begun to approach pre-pandemic levels recently. While initially focused on Ukraine as it faced an unexpected modern-day war, foreign investment in Africa has been on the rise amidst numerous warning signs. The World Bank announced a [\\$2.3 billion](#) program targeted at Eastern and Southern Africa. According to the [World Investment Report](#), foreign direct investment in Africa also hit a record \$83 billion in 2021. The Food Systems Resilience Program ([FSRP](#)) will “enhance inter-agency food crisis response strategies — including strengthening early-warning systems and rapid-response planning”. Additionally, the FSRP will increase support for emergencies and “provide emergency trade measures and food reserves.” [Hafez Ghanem](#), former Vice President of the World Bank, stated a similar project is coming for Central Africa.

The 2022 [Global Hunger Index](#) has exposed the impact of a range of recent catastrophes that have led to the stagnation of global hunger progress with food systems too weak to deal with the current demand. The war in Ukraine further increased global food, fuel, and fertiliser prices and has the potential to significantly worsen hunger in 2023 and beyond. According to the Food Price Index of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), global food prices reached the highest levels measured since 1990. Then, with the onset of the war



in Ukraine, the Food Price Index set another record, jumping 13 per cent from February to March 2022. In Africa, current food systems remain inadequate to address these challenges and end hunger. The report from the World Bank importantly notes that sub-Saharan Africa has recently experienced the highest levels of child mortality and undernourishment. Some parts of East Africa are experiencing one of the most severe droughts of the past 40 years, threatening the survival of millions.

Investment issues in Africa are evidenced by a lack of developed agricultural infrastructure among other factors. Access to credit and [land grabbing](#) also pose a prominent issue and have detrimental effects on food insecurity, such as a limited ability to produce food as farmers are unable to purchase items like seeds and fertiliser. Land grabbing also means limited farming space, which can cause food shortages. This then puts pressure on food prices, further increasing the difficulty for the average family to attain adequate nutrition.

Additionally, there is a disconnect concerning access to finance and markets. For example, many small farmers do not have the capability to access funds because of a lack of collateral needed to secure loans and grants, which would allow them to invest in farms and subsequently increase output. This is particularly important as a recent study states that sub-Saharan farmers provide food for roughly [80 per cent](#) of the continent. Farmers are unable to develop the necessary productivity that would allow them to support their local economies efficiently. This, in turn, has adverse effects and thus describes how investment issues contribute to food insecurity.

In situations where farmers may be able to access the necessary financing through family, friends, or microfinancing institutions, they are likely to suffer from a lack of access to markets. This means that even farmers who are able to produce a sufficient quantity of crops cannot sell their products. Several factors contribute to this, such as [terrorism](#) and the previously mentioned lack of infrastructure. Africa still suffers from the proper infrastructure needed to bridge the producer and consumer divide. It is hard to transport food from farms to markets and harder still to get to markets for many living in rural areas. [Poor roads](#) make it laborious to travel to locations where farmers would be able to sell their products and consumers to buy them.

## **Strains on Donor Funding**

The primary institutions that donate towards reducing food insecurity are the World Bank, IMF, and the United Nations, with [top donor nations](#) being the US and China. In 2020, sub-Saharan Africa had a total [external debt stock](#) of \$702.4 billion while the amount owed to multilateral lenders, governments, and government agencies was \$258 billion. Between 2000 and 2012, China undertook more than 1,700 projects amounting to upwards of \$75 billion





while the US committed \$90 billion in the same period. This does not account for other NGOs and philanthropic organisations that also donate funds to Africa.

Africa has long drawn donations and aid from all around the world. For decades, the continent has been widely viewed as behind its Western counterparts across sectors. Thus, funding is crucial for the development of states and will fuel efforts to confront rising food insecurity. Foreign aid can significantly reduce the impact of food shortages, as influxes of cash can help provide food supplies in the short term and fund agricultural development in the longer term.

Much like foreign investments, major international donors have been forced to reduce funds in order to address their own crises, despite the rise in demand for aid. For example, in the UK, aid fell by 21 per cent between [2020 and 2021](#). This has been attributed to the effects of the [pandemic](#) on the nation's finances and economic situation. The impact has been to such an extent that aid spending is not expected to return to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) target until at least 2027. This was announced as part of the 2022 [autumn budget](#) by Chancellor Jeremy Hunt. A recent [research briefing](#) from the House of Commons also references the amount being spent as a result of the conflict in Ukraine. In 2021, UK aid donations reduced by 21 per cent in comparison to the previous year, standing at £11.4 billion. "The fall reflected the Government's decision to reduce aid spending from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) as a "temporary measure" in response to the pandemic's effects on the UK's public finances and economy."

Funds that would be typically allocated for reducing food insecurity in Africa are instead diverted to deal with the various climate-related emergencies. An [Oxfam report](#) from June 2022 found that money needed for humanitarian appeals is eight times higher than the amount needed 20 years ago. Although it is difficult to predict what will continue to cause strains on donor funding in the future, the climate change agenda seems to be here to stay. Major donors have committed to ambitious climate change goals which will require significant amounts of funding and pertain to long-term projects. The major focus remains on reducing emissions and achieving Net-Zero targets in Africa.

Future strains on donor funding will also be impacted by natural disasters, such as floods and wildfires. A report from the World Meteorological Organization discusses 20 different natural disasters that cost at least \$1 billion each, totalling [\\$145 billion](#). Contrary to previous years, there has been an extended range of natural disasters in the US. Disaster-related deaths have more than doubled, reaching the highest total seen since 2011. The recent [earthquake disaster](#) in Turkey and Syria is further evidence of sudden natural events that will place added stress on prominent donors and likely divert funds away from Africa.





## Education

The impacts of food insecurity often extend to education with a lack of nutrition affecting students in their growth, development, and, essentially, level of education. Undernourishment and poor diet composition, especially during childhood, can have negative effects on [cognitive development](#), leading to limited educational attainment and lifelong earning potential. This, in turn, perpetuates inequality by keeping people in a poverty trap. [According](#) to Jean-Noel Gentile, the deputy Senegal country director of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), "on empty stomachs, they become easily distracted and have problems concentrating on their schoolwork. They become better students when their bodies are well-nourished and healthy. The incentive of getting a meal also reduces absenteeism. Most significantly, performance improves and drop-out rates decrease."

Gentile aptly captures the education-related problems associated with food insecurity and then some. Limited food options and increasing rationing of food in schools and homesteads will result in a lack of focus from students. This often means students may become more indisciplined and demonstrate a rebellious attitude towards studying within schools and a general lack of interest in education. High levels of illiteracy [continue](#) to be the main force behind poverty in African nations while also hampering economic development and the emergence of strong governance systems. Furthermore, Gentile's statement highlights the inherent value in ensuring sufficient and sustainable food supplies for educational institutions in Africa by the institutions themselves or, in some rare cases, by the government. The result would be a highly educated populace well-equipped to drive economic growth and tackle the challenges of climate and politically induced food insecurity.

However, this is not the case. Malnutrition continues to rise in Africa and is known to negatively impact the cognitive development of those affected. Complications, such as illness, also make it increasingly difficult as students miss school days and without a healthy diet face prolonged recovery. Education also has an impact on [infant mortality rates](#) on the continent. In sub-Saharan Africa, children born to mothers with no education are almost three times more likely to die before they are five years old than those born to mothers with secondary education.

Another way food insecurity can impact education is through the increased pressure on those of schooling age. With worsening food insecurity, children may have to take up larger roles in the household by looking for work or gathering food rather than remaining in school. In other situations, the rising price of food may keep children out of school as many institutions in Africa require regular school fees. In circumstances where finances are severely strained, children may be withdrawn from school to work and earn an income that helps sustain themselves and their families. Subsequently, children experience a lower level and standard of education, synonymous with reduced opportunities.



## Business

A recent [IMF report](#) looks at the link between food insecurity and the business cycle, mentioning how citizens absorb price shocks by altering their diet composition which can impact businesses on a varying scale. Due to a lack of enough food to feed Africa's essential labour force and the risk that this shortage of food may increase, businesses are likely to experience staff shortages and reduced productivity. This is expected to lead to lesser profit and operational activity. The pandemic had a shocking effect on the food and nutrition security of [workers](#) throughout food supply chains in Africa as well as businesses that could not afford the running costs of maintaining their labour.

Businesses reliant on consumer spending, including many of Africa's markets, will also be severely impacted by the rise in food insecurity. Consumer spending is likely to be reduced and be more focused towards food to sustain themselves and their families, creating a knock-on effect. Even those businesses that deal primarily in food products may see their costs increase and may not be able to pass the full burden onto the already struggling consumer. This is to try and circumvent a lack of nourishment in diets which is often the beginning of a road that ends with social unrest that also impacts businesses negatively. The report also investigates the link between GDP which represents the overall output of an economy and undernourishment. The researchers conclude that in the long term, the two maintain a non-linear relationship.

In analysing the relationship between business cycles and food security, it is important to consider that positive business cycles result in economic growth - a [critical driver](#) of food security in African countries. A 1 per cent increase in GDP per capita can cut the share of the undernourished population by 0.75 per cent. Furthermore, short-term oscillations of economic activity affect the average amount of calories consumed, average diet composition, and diet quality, which affects how businesses can meet demand since labour productivity relies on such metrics. The [research](#) indicates that when the economy is hit by a recession, diet reallocation towards cheaper calories serves as a first buffer to prevent a descent into undernourishment. When considering social protection against food insecurity, it is therefore important for actors to ensure that such food items are readily available in times of crisis. In order to preserve the purchasing power of the most vulnerable and preserve food security, governments ought to utilise in-kind transfers as an alternative to, or, in combination with, cash to offer insurance against commodities price fluctuations.

## Concluding Remarks

The state of food insecurity in Africa is closely interrelated to global economic dynamics and national policies. The COVID-19 crisis and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have disrupted



investment flows to the continent and dramatically raised inflation, causing food shortages and putting pressure on food prices. Inadequate economic policies and the endemic corruption of African governments also compound the lack of international funding. It is crucial for global and local stakeholders to develop new financial policies and strategic investment decisions to address these obstacles as the challenges experienced today by the continent could repeat themselves or increase in the future. The protracted war in Ukraine, multiplying climate change-related disasters, the African youth bulge, and other global crises are likely to complicate efforts to tackle food insecurity.

In particular, the youth bulge comprises a complicated paradigm. The youthful population allows for greater productivity, accelerating growth, and ensuring the continent has the manpower to tackle the food crisis. Yet, such a large population in the developing world may lead to economic strains on the food reserves and government efforts to address the crisis. Holistic and strategic actions need to be taken by African governments and international institutions to improve the current situation of food scarcity on the continent. But actors also need to anticipate future threats which could significantly affect the population's access to basic necessities. Good governance will remain essential to such efforts and the next few years promise significant changes to deliver on this mandate. With elections in 2023 and 2024, systemic changes are crucially needed that will drive a strong fight against food insecurity in Africa.



## Politics

*Hugo Claus, Paloma Lier, Natasha Louis & Camille Victor*

Governments have an important role to play in mediating the state of food insecurity. The policies required to improve the African situation, ranging from agricultural to welfare regulations, have been identified and are commonly acknowledged across the continent. Technological innovations, such as hybrid seeds and digital platforms, are also multiplying to help counter the negative consequences of climate change for Africa's farming production. Despite the necessity for reform and the range of potential solutions, most African governments have failed to implement adequate policies to improve food insecurity in Africa. In a number of cases, governments were directly responsible for worsening the situation and their citizens' access to food.

The recent wave of coups across the continent and the impact of the Covid pandemic have modified African political dynamics. However, the problem of food insecurity remains the same with [140 million](#) people in Africa still facing acute food insecurity, according to the 2022 Global Report on Food Crises. Understanding the impact of politics on food insecurity requires uncovering how governments can influence the state of food insecurity in Africa and also why they are not undertaking the necessary policies.

## Small-Scale Farmers

One of the most significant challenges with current policymaking is the condition of small-scale farmers and their production, especially since the [majority](#) of sub-Saharan African countries rely on them. Recent studies by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) show smallholder farms produce [70 per cent](#) of the food supply in the region with up to 90 per cent in some countries.

The first issue faced by farmers is financing production as they lack access to, and knowledge of, available resources. Smallholders would be able to increase their production by investing in [diversified crops](#) and higher inputs, such as fertiliser and pesticides. However, farmers often lack the primary investments to be able to upgrade their inputs. It is also the case that their revenues would not increase due to the high cost of inputs and low price of outputs in Africa, thus making the risk of investment too high compared to the potential benefits. African governments can have a significant influence on smallholders' production by providing initial funding for the improvement of their [inputs](#), such as a [package](#) of inputs and credit, but also by developing [risk-mitigating measures](#) for farmers, such as crop insurance or welfare plans. Private firms can also support smallholders' efforts in modernization.



Micro-financing institutions, such as [Musoni](#) in Kenya which uses the popular M-Pesa system, have developed solutions tailored to the needs of farmers. This illustrates the need for the private sector to find financing solutions to support smallholder farmers, often unable to access traditional resources.

Another necessary measure to support small farms' production is the provision of technical advice and information on innovative agricultural practices and their local implementation. A [research consortium](#), reviewing more than 100,000 articles in Nature Research journals, has found that smallholders are more likely to successfully adopt new and sustainable farming practices when they are provided with “extension services,” including technical guidance, suggestions, and ideas. However, public extension services do not receive enough [funding](#) in Africa and the lack of technical support for farmers is directly impeding food production. In addition, farmers' educational programs need to be supported by continuous [scientific research](#) on small farm agricultural practices. Technological research and innovation need to be tailored to the unique needs of smallholders, who receive less scholarly attention than larger farms due to a lack of interest and funding. It is therefore necessary for African governments and international institutions to direct research towards the specific requirements of smallholder farms and to train local farmers on new practices.

African governments can also support the production of smallholders by improving their access to [markets](#), as farmers receive only a small portion of the retail price of their food produced. This can take the form of “[farmer aggregation](#),” such as [cooperatives](#) and other organisations bringing small farmers together to share transportation and storage spaces, or “[outgrower schemes](#),” linking networks of unorganised smallholder farmers and local and foreign customers. For instance, Morocco's [Plan Maroc Vert](#) has promoted the model of “nucleus farms” where the government leases an agricultural estate to a large farmer who commits to working with smallholders. This allows small farmers to benefit from more accessible inputs but also to receive technical knowledge from commercial farmers.

## Climate Adaptation

According to Brookings' [Foresight Africa 2022](#) report, “A 3°C warming trajectory will cause catastrophic disruption to African food systems within the next 30 years.” Mitigating the impact of climate change has arisen as a significant challenge for policymakers. Changing [weather patterns](#) and extreme [climate events](#) are posing a great threat to food security in Africa. Governments have the capacity to reduce the impact of climate change by investing in adequate infrastructures and by promoting climate-resilient agriculture. Yet, many challenges remain when trying to successfully implement such policies.



Climate-resilient infrastructures are crucial to protect both food production and distribution in Africa. The [International Monetary Fund](#) (IMF) highlights the role of irrigation systems with erosion and flood protection to enhance the resistance of crops to changing weather conditions. Infrastructures, such as [roads and crop-storage](#) facilities, adapted to climate change are also necessary to ensure good stocking and distribution of food. For instance, the Land Husbandry, Water Harvesting and Irrigation projects in Rwanda have enabled maize yields to increase by [2.5 times](#) between 2009 and 2018.

However, Africa would need to invest around [\\$170 billion](#) per year to develop the necessary infrastructures and the continent already presents a \$100 billion annual funding deficit. Overall, it is estimated that the total cost of implementing African national climate plans would require [\\$2.8 trillion](#) between 2020 and 2030. External funds from [multilateral development banks](#) and private investors are still insufficient to fill that investment gap and national governments focus too little of their GDP on climate-resilient technologies. For example, Kenya spends less than 3 per cent of its budget on agriculture despite being a signatory of the [Maputo declaration](#), which requires a dedication of 10 per cent.

Regarding global emissions, Africa has contributed little but is inordinately impacted by climate change. Climate finance investments will be crucial in order for Africa to limit global warming and its growing burdens. Infrastructure investments would deliver benefits both short and long-term for African countries. A significant increase in scale and quality of investments is required in three pivotal areas: “energy transitions and related investments in sustainable infrastructure; investments in climate change adaptation and resilience; and restoration of natural capital (through agriculture, food and land use practices) and biodiversity.” Anticipating rather than responding to the impact of climate change would save around \$175 billion per year for governments, whilst such investments would also incentivize the inflow of [private](#) capital and spark the creation of new jobs.

“How Africa develops will also be critical to future emissions given that its energy use is projected to grow rapidly to meet its development needs, with its share of the world’s population projected to increase from 17 per cent to 40 per cent by 2100”. CO2 emissions, along with rising temperatures and toxin levels, have reduced the edibility of food staples by [10 to 14 per cent](#) in sub-Saharan Africa. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in [2021](#) stated that the world’s ‘carbon budget’ for keeping global warming at the 1.5°C target is quickly diminishing. At the current emission rate of 35 gigatons of carbon dioxide per year, this gives the world about a decade unless rates start to decline. According to the IPCC, “There is also an approximately one-in-six chance that the remaining carbon budget for 1.5C has already been exceeded.”

A solution to covering the exorbitant cost of climate resilient infrastructure is to implement ‘[debt-for-climate swaps](#)’. Such measures could significantly alleviate debt stress and climate



crises simultaneously. “The match between financing needs and addressing the environmental externality is imperfect at best.” Yet, countries that have provided such debt could tie in conditionalities in order to ensure that debt forgiveness is allocated to climate adaptation measures. While a “Green Brady Deal” is not a miracle elixir, it could be a significant solution for low-income countries that are dealing with crushing debts and consequences of climate change, allowing them to address both issues instead of one.

## Corruption

Corruption, or “[Africa’s undeclared pandemic](#)”, is another lasting factor that considerably impacts food security across the continent. In a [2022 report](#), Transparency International mentions the various ways food insecurity may be exacerbated by corruption. It can influence food availability (for instance, by lowering the capacity of small farmers to produce food) or force households to spend money on bribes that would otherwise be allocated for food. Depending on the kind of food product and the circumstances surrounding its manufacture, storage, distribution, and delivery, various corruption risks might arise at various stages along the food value chain. Land and water, two of the most vital resources for producing food, present many corruption threats such as theft, land grabbing, and sextortion. Important corruption risks can also hinder government help and subsidy programmes from reaching individuals who need them.

Government officials across Africa have been accused of corruption which directly impacts the food security of local populations, often worsening already existing patterns of food insecurity. In 2020, during South Africa’s extended lockdown, [local councillors](#) in eight provinces were accused of diverting aid to themselves and their supporters. The officials allegedly asked for food parcel donations from businessmen which never made it to the intended beneficiaries. In some localities, destitute residents were required to pay R5 in order to get food supplies. A similar opportunistic manipulation during the Covid-19 pandemic occurred in [Uganda](#) that same year. Government officials were arrested for inflating Covid-19 relief food prices, which cost the government about \$528,000.

Corruption may also have [indirect consequences](#) on a nation’s access to food, such as through the potential to shift funding away from social assistance and education programmes that affect food security. If public funds are misappropriated and end up in private wallets, there will be less money available to support social protection programmes that put food on the tables. Malawi’s ‘cashgate’ scandal is a good example of this. Known as the [biggest corruption scandal](#) in Malawi’s history, government officials were accused of using a systemic flaw to steal millions from government coffers. Up to \$250 million, including millions from taxpayer money, may have been lost as a result of allegedly illegal payments made to businesspeople for services that were never provided. Residents in Malawi’s cities





believed that ‘cashgate’ was tied to increasing food costs, loss of earnings from casual labour, and loss of charity remittances, consequently affecting their livelihoods and food security.

Corruption may also impede actions for climate adaptation and mitigation that target farming and other systems that produce food. [Farmers in Benin](#), for instance, changed the government-proposed climate change adaptation strategies because of their mistrust of the local administration. According to a [study](#) conducted in Kenya, farmers believed that government corruption was to blame for agricultural production issues rather than soil erosion. As a result, they did not take the National Soil and Water Conservation Program's implementation seriously because they perceived it to be corrupt.

[Research](#) on gendered forms of corruption and food insecurity shows that women in Africa are particularly affected by both. Since there are still significant gender disparities in agriculture, rural women are among those most affected by food insecurity and corruption has the potential to make their precarious position even worse. Women are particularly susceptible to particular sorts of corruption because of their social positions and gender conventions. They typically lack access to knowledge about their rights and are less informed. Sextortion, a form of sexual coercive corruption in which someone exploits their authority to demand an unwelcome sexual action in return for something, also has a disproportionately negative impact on women. Sex becomes the medium of transaction rather than cash.

For instance, [widows](#) in Ghana's Upper East Region are particularly impacted by the cultural customs of the area. When their husband passes away, they typically lose all or the majority of their land, giving the widows few options for continuing to feed and house their children. As a result, many of them are forced to bribe traditional rulers or wed the relatives of their late husbands. The shame associated with widowhood in the region encourages corrupt behaviour whilst rendering them landless and preventing them from being able to provide for their children. Sextortion and other gendered types of corruption have also been recorded in the distribution of food aid. For example, there were allegations of women in Mozambique being [sexually exploited](#) in return for charity and food in the wake of Cyclone Idai.

Corruption has also been recognised as an annex issue with a consequential effect on the state of food security. Often, corruption plays a role in the decision-making process, promoting individual rather than public interests. In 2001, the Malawi government's [National Food Reserves Agency](#) (NFRA) sold off its entire strategic grain reserves. It is estimated that government officials involved in this sale made a 500 per cent profit. The drought in the subsequent year caused a famine and the government was unable to rely on its grain reserves, therefore worsening the humanitarian crisis. It is estimated that between [500 and 1,000](#) people died in the southern and central regions of Malawi. The crisis in Malawi is one of the



many examples that highlight the necessity to make policy-making more accountable and transparent in order to improve outcomes in terms of food security.

Transparency International says that efficiently combating corruption may improve food security by [20 per cent](#), making it a key challenge for the current food crisis. A universal anti-corruption strategy or policy does not exist. Anti-corruption tactics should be adapted to the particular industry, the nation, and even the circumstances of a particular region within a nation. A crucial first step in limiting the potential for corruption is to understand the risks that occur at various phases as well as in various industries and nations. To create and implement effective anti-corruption measures, it is crucial to evaluate the operation's corruption risk. To further curb corruption, Transparency International mentions the crucial role of initiatives which include promoting good governance, improving oversight and checks and balances in aid projects, and enhancing local participation to help hold the government accountable while providing oversight for the implementation of policies and tracking of agricultural projects.

## **Partisan Food Aid Distribution**

Food aid is an emergency resource, used in times of crisis when people can only access necessary food through governmental or humanitarian services. However, the distribution of food involves a complex network of actors, from village leaders to international organisations, which multiply potential interferences in the supply of populations in need. Those challenges [vary widely](#) between African countries as the organisation of food distribution is not the same. Two main factors impede the adequate provision of food across the continent: corruption at different organisational levels, leading to nepotism and partisan distribution of food, and inadequate coordination of public services.

Partisan distribution of food aid has been a recurrent phenomenon in Africa, with examples from [Zimbabwe](#), [Angola](#), [Uganda](#), and [Kenya](#). Generally, in the run-off to elections, governments divert aid to regions that would benefit their party. If partisan distribution can deprive members of the opposition of food, as was seen in Zimbabwe, it can also favour regions of the opposition with the aim of overturning political allegiance.

In Zimbabwe, President Mugabe has been accused of using food as a political weapon in multiple elections. In 2008, he [prohibited](#) international organisations, such as Care which feeds about 110,000 people in Zimbabwe, to distribute aid in the country. Mugabe argued that NGOs were utilised by Western administrations as a means of distributing money to the opposition. [Human Rights Watch](#) had already warned of partisan manipulation of food by the Zimbabwean government in 2003. As Peter Takirambudde, Executive Director of the Africa



division of Human Rights Watch reminds us, “This is a human rights violation as serious as arbitrary imprisonment or torture.”

If it is organised at a national level, the exclusion of non-party members is also carried out by regional and [local authorities](#). The Zimbabwean ruling party’s local branches are used as the only communicative channel for food aid-related information. Only villagers attending the party’s meetings, and thus party members, know about the dates for beneficiary selection and distribution. This exclusionary practice is then reinforced by the selection of food aid beneficiaries, which is also decided by village leaders according to personal politics and party affiliations. The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) reported villagers not being included on the [list of beneficiaries](#) and thus being denied food as they were members of the opposition party. This local partisan distribution mostly happens with government-subsidised aid but can also take place when NGOs rely on local administrations for the selection and distribution of food, which will sometimes be portrayed by village leaders as aid from the ruling party. Therefore, in some [Zimbabwean](#) villages, the majority of the opposition party’s members will not have access to food aid or will be forced to hide or change their political support.

If partisan distribution can be used to punish groups of the opposition party, a contrary phenomenon is also visible where members of the opposition are favoured by food aid to overturn political support. In [Uganda](#), control over food aid allowed the government to prioritise distribution to opposition regions and notably politically influential communities to gather support for the government. For instance, the Ugandan president’s party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), has directed food aid to taxi operators in the opposition region of Greater Kampala to influence their votes, leaving vulnerable people without essential support.

To manipulate aid for political interests, African governments also imposed rules to maintain a monopoly on the food distribution process, forbidding other political parties from administering aid. This phenomenon gained importance during the Covid pandemic, which allowed for political control in the form of health and safety measures. In 2020, a year before the Ugandan national elections, the ruling [government](#) imposed regulations on food distribution, justified as social distancing measures. The National Task Force on COVID-19, linked with local administrations, became the only legal organisation to distribute food aid. Meanwhile, police forces were given the order to arrest illegitimate distributors - namely other politicians - who would be prosecuted. In Uganda, the political representative Francis Zaake was arrested and tortured by the authorities after distributing food to his constituencies. The government accused him of breaking Covid distancing rules, but some of the government's officials have continued to distribute food without being [prosecuted](#). Francis Zaake has filed a charge in the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the conditions of his detention, and the government has been charged by the High Court in Kampala to pay a compensation of [Shs75m](#) (\$20,300) to the representative, representing an average yearly



salary in Uganda. Covid [measures](#) have also been used in Zimbabwe to arrest Regai Tsunga, a representative of the opposition party, prosecuted for distributing food and resolving local complaints about the political distribution of government-subsidised meals. The political manipulation of food aid is a clear violation of human rights and access to basic necessities should not be linked with party affiliation.

Finally, the manipulation of food distribution for political purposes can take the more extreme form as a military weapon against entire regions. The [conflict](#) between government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has led to [4.6 million](#) people in Tigray being food-insecure, and 2 million of them "severely" so, according to the latest UN assessment. This dramatic humanitarian crisis was aggravated by a government [blockade](#) on the Tigray region, preventing aid distribution in order to weaken the opposition group. [UN-backed investigators](#) have accused the government's forces of using starvation as a weapon of war, which was denied by the authorities. Humanitarian agencies have been able to access the region with food aid for the first time in November 2022 after a [ceasefire agreement](#) was signed. Although an extreme case, the Ethiopian civil war is an example of food aid manipulation for political and military purposes.

Food distribution requires the coordination of numerous actors at different scales, which increases the risk of corruption, food aid diversion, or exploitation for personal purposes. In its 2008 report on corruption in humanitarian assistance, [Transparency International](#) stated, "From the way in which the resource itself is allocated, to procurement and shipment, to local warehousing and secondary transportation, to targeting, registration, and distribution, and even to post-distribution dynamics, food aid processes are rife with risks for diversion and corruption."

Indeed, food aid has increasingly been the target of corruption in recent years, despite being a [low-value good](#) subject to monitoring. As food assistance is distributed in situations of emergency, it often takes place in countries which are more prone to [weak institutions](#), high needs, and endemic inequalities; therefore, more vulnerable to corruption. Government officials can take advantage of aid by negotiating with the providers of food packages at higher prices than necessary in return for financial compensation. National representatives and village leaders can also [divert](#) a part of the aid to their families. At the local level, cases of sale and [bribes](#) for food packages have also been reported. For instance, the [Zimbabwe Peace project](#) reported that some village leaders have asked locals to pay ZWL50, equivalent to 10 cents, to receive their food allocation. The leaders justified this price in terms of transport costs to people who cannot pay for their basic needs, although the food was distributed by government vehicles.

The extent of [corruption](#), especially when it is not financial, is hard to assess and regulate. Whilst it is difficult to infer the responsibility of officials, weak judicial systems of certain



countries may also prevent prosecution. However, multiple pathways exist to hold government officials accountable. In [South Africa](#), a local NGO fighting corruption has developed a radio program for people to report aid diversion, supported by the South African President allowing COVID-19-related corruption to be investigated by the Special Investigating Unit (SIU). Other initiatives from civil society and national mechanisms to monitor and prosecute corruption have emerged across Africa. In 2017, two [Nigerian](#) representatives were sentenced to prison for selling international food aid by Nigeria's anti-corruption agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Failure to provide adequate food aid may also result from a lack of administrative organisation and public funding, hindering the efficiency of both stocking and distribution. Although different amongst African countries, the organisation and implementation of food distribution require national planning implemented at the regional and local levels. However, many countries on the continent suffer from a lack of clear division of administrative responsibilities in food distribution and stock.

For instance, the city of [Abidjan](#), located in Côte d'Ivoire, is governed through a decentralised system and suffers from technical, operational, and financial weaknesses, which hinder the stock and distribution of food aid. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) took the matter into hand and undertook an [initiative](#) in 2021 to help create and reform its members' national planning, creating a set of good practices and a legislative framework for the stocking and distribution of food aid across Africa. This initiative aimed at improving both the physical stocks and financial reserves of West African countries while also developing its institutions and governance tools.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The improvement of the food distribution process in Africa is based on two areas: political/personal diversion of aid and national planning/coordination. African countries need to develop national plans, with clear divisions of the different administrative responsibilities and an emphasis on food stocks in [cases of crisis](#). Problems of corruption and nepotism are more endemic and difficult to solve. International agencies recommend better [transparency](#), monitoring, accountability, and a functioning judiciary system. However, these recommendations must be integrated into a more comprehensive food security system.

Agricultural policies play a determining role in the state of food security. The challenge resides in identifying the issues impacting food security to better address them. States should work with other actors, whether it is the farmers or the private sector, and develop a systems approach to their policies against food insecurity. In a region with limited financial and



material resources, policymakers should focus on the durability and effectiveness of their policies to improve the state of food security.

In a 2020 [study](#) titled *Climate Change Policies in 16 West African Countries: A Systematic Review of Adaptation with a Focus on Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition*, it was found that in the policies of 16 West African nations examined, “Nutrition and food security challenges and adaptation were not highlighted as key points. They were seldom mentioned as an independent goal and most often under the umbrella of other sectors or areas, such as health, agriculture, and climate-resilient systems.”

While African countries may have a “plethora of proposed adaptation solutions” on the books, it is apparent that implementation is lacking. Accountability is inadequate in Africa and some critics question whether aid is more harmful than good. Back in 2007, [William Easterly](#), economist and co-director of NYU's Development Research Institution, stated that “[...]money meant for the most desperate people in the world is simply not reaching them: \$600 billion in aid to Africa over the past 45 years, and over that time period there has basically been no rise in living standards.” Agricultural, climate, and energy infrastructure investments in Africa are critically needed. However, it is questionable as to whether many African leaders can properly allocate aid if provided, or continue the practice of [stealing](#) it for themselves and their favourites. Such investments and policy implementations to reduce food insecurity are beneficial to not only Africans but also to other regions. Foreign aid and relations should continue despite corruption hurdles. Yet, it appears mutually beneficial to include conditions and demand accountability in order for food aid to reach the hands of those who need it most.





# Human Security

*Camille Victor*

Human security is a paradigm for assessing global vulnerabilities, with advocates arguing that the correct reference for security should be at the human level rather than the state. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) [1994](#) Human Development Report is regarded as a seminal publication on the topic of human security, arguing that guaranteeing "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" for all people is the best way to address global insecurity.

So how does food insecurity affect human security in Africa? These two concepts are interrelated in many ways. Various communities across the continent - notably the poorest - face limited access to food. Over the past decades, food insecurity in Africa has catalysed rebellions and thus exposed civilians to harm and violence. Questions such as whether food insecurity could lead to more coups or growing positive sentiment towards terrorist groups are increasingly relevant today and need to be explored in an attempt to counter such occurrences from taking place. Food insecurity has also considerably impacted the continent's ongoing migration crisis, as well as the health of millions of individuals, and its influence will continue to be felt unless drastic measures are taken in the near future.

## Limited Access to Food

Recent reports by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the African Union (AU) indicated that an estimated [346 million](#) people in Africa are affected by the food crisis. However, considerable disparities exist between the regional, national, and subnational levels across the African continent regarding who is hit the hardest by the rising levels of food insecurity. In its most recent report on food security and nutrition in the world in 2022, the FAO took a closer look at variations at the [subnational level](#), identifying a clear contrast in the proportion of the population affected by hunger in Northern Africa in 2021 (6.9 per cent), compared to the percentage in almost all subregions of sub-Saharan Africa (9.2 per cent). This division highly correlates with varying levels of poverty in both regions. The majority of [poverty](#) in Africa is centred in sub-Saharan Africa: Central Africa has the highest rate of extreme poverty (54.8 per cent), followed by Southern Africa (45.1 per cent), Western Africa (36.8 per cent), and Eastern Africa (33.8 per cent). These proportions [highly contrast](#) with North Africa achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) objective of a poverty rate of less than 3 per cent in 2019. The poverty rates of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Seychelles and Mauritius were below [1 per cent](#) in 2019. Various factors can be attributed to this success. This includes an [excessive reliance](#) on natural resources, as opposed to agricultural and rural





development, which account for the livelihoods of 85 per cent of Africans. Other factors, such as lower asset ownership, limited access to public services, and greater baseline poverty levels, all make it challenging for people to benefit from growth.

Not only can the correlation between limited access to food and poverty be seen at the regional level, but variations at the national and subnational levels also highlight this as well. Within East Africa, for instance, about [82 per cent](#) of the population of South Sudan lives on less than \$1.90 a day and food insecurity in the country has reached its highest level since independence in 2011, affecting [75 per cent](#). In neighbouring Kenya, however, [35.8 per cent](#) live under the international poverty line and about [14 per cent](#) of Kenyans faced food insecurity in 2021. This pattern becomes even more evident when looking at the subnational level. Those facing food insecurity usually live in rural areas, are poor, and rely on daily agricultural labour for income. In Kenya, for example, the Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) [region](#) is typically the most food insecure given its high levels of poverty, sensitivity to environmental stresses and disasters, and the aridity and unpredictability of the terrain.

Recent events have shown how food insecurity that Africa's poorest and most vulnerable populations face is exacerbated by crises. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine are prime examples. COVID-19 has had the [greatest impact](#) on Low-Income Countries (LICs) and Lower-Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), disproportionately affecting disadvantaged subgroups, such as women, youth, low-skilled workers, and individuals working in the informal sector. This was especially evident in Africa, where [46 million](#) faced hunger as a result of the pandemic between 2019 and 2020. Additionally, the Russian invasion of Ukraine had significant impacts on the continent. As [donors reallocate](#) money, aid organisations have reduced their assistance. This is despite the fact that food price inflation has weakened people's purchasing power and communities' ability to help those most in need. Furthermore, Russia and Ukraine produce [one-quarter](#) of the world's wheat and grains, with exportation being severely affected by the war. Some of the [countries hit hardest](#) by the ongoing food insecurity crisis are those relying the most on wheat from the two countries, such as Somalia (over 90 per cent dependent), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (over 80 per cent dependent) and Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Sudan (all between approximately 20-45 per cent dependent).

## **Catalyst for Rebellion**

Africa has frequently been marked by political instability via coups, civil conflicts, and terrorism. More than [40 coups d'états](#) have occurred since 2010, often successfully resulting in swift political change. Simultaneously, the fall of democracy in Africa has resulted in civil conflicts and forms of protest, as well as the emergence of terrorist groups across the



continent with linkages to international terrorist organisations, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Military coups are not a novelty in Africa, with [45](#) of the continent's 54 nations experiencing at least one coup attempt since 1950. Yet, over the last [20 years](#), the number of coups in Africa were declining. On average, there had been [fewer than one](#) successful coup each year in the preceding 10 years, as of 2021. However, the [recent increase](#) of military-led coups on the African continent, including those in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan, calls for a deeper examination of the phenomena, especially considering that this evolution risks being aggravated by the rise of food insecurity across the continent and notably in sub-Saharan Africa. In this region with the [highest levels](#) of food insecurity, poverty, and conflict in the world, growing domestic food consumption is matched by increased urbanisation and international demands for the region's natural resources. Because of these pressures, significant advances in both food production and market access are required to avoid major rising food price pressures and the related risk of socio-political upheaval. However, this is not what has been seen in the region lately. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), sub-Saharan Africa's staple food prices increased by an average of [23.9 per cent](#) between 2020 and 2022, a surge which had not been seen in the region since the global financial crisis of 2008. [Wheat prices](#) increased by a dramatic 60 per cent throughout the continent in 2022 due to disruptions in exports caused by the Russia-Ukraine war.

The unprecedented food emergency in Africa has been met with a surge of unrest and social mobilizations, which may further destabilise already politically unstable states. In Nairobi, [street protests](#) have taken place since May 2022 denouncing higher food prices, with locals using the hashtags #LowerFoodPrices and #Njaa-Revolution — meaning “hunger” revolution in Swahili. According to Amnesty International, six activists were [arrested](#) in Uganda for protesting against the rising cost of food at the end of May 2022. In September, hundreds of [Tunisians protested](#) in the capital against poverty, high prices, and food shortages, putting pressure on President Kais Saied's government as the country faces economic and political crises.

Food insecurity increases social grievances and as unrest grows across Africa, insurgent groups, like terrorists, benefit from the situation. Combined with rising socio-economic and political inequalities, these grievances are likely to be directed against the government if it fails to secure food for the population in the face of rising global food prices. As a result, terrorist groups may benefit from the situation, as it might help them mobilise disaffected civilians to join their organisation. By joining these groups that address collective action problems, civilians are enabled to channel their grievances against the state. Furthermore, food insecurity can and has been used as a “[weapon of war](#).” For instance, the strategy of [preventing](#) humanitarian access has been used on multiple occasions by organisations, such as al-Shabaab in Somalia, [Boko Haram](#) in Nigeria, and commanders in South Sudan.



Although furthering food insecurity could create additional grievances and therefore incentives for affected civilians to join, this strategy has proven counterproductive for terrorist groups, such as al-Shabaab, whose image was severely damaged after blocking food aid in [2011](#). However, the organisation has since then shifted its approach towards food assistance, distributing food to drought-affected locals in Somalia in 2017 in what appeared to be a bid to win support.

Rising instability and insecurity as a result of food insecurity in Africa is not only an issue for the local populations. Although such trends are taking place in Africa, they can affect the security of people living thousands of kilometres away. As stated by the European Union's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP), [Josep Borell](#), in October 2022, Europe and Africa face severe common threats that they need to tackle together, which include terrorism and extremism. Borell wrote that peace and security were pillars of the Euro-African partnership because “instability and insecurity in Africa inevitably have an impact on Europe”, such as through the rise of radicalisation and terrorism across the European continent over recent years.

## Migration Crisis

Africa's [migrant crisis](#) represents the worst one the world has known since the end of World War I. Home to around [30 million](#) internally displaced people, refugees, and asylum seekers, the continent accounts for nearly one-third of the world's refugee population and the situation is deteriorating. In 2021, Africa had the newest [internal displacements](#) as war and violence erupted in numerous nations throughout the continent. Increasing instability and human rights violations have resulted in millions of additional displacements in the DRC, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and Nigeria. Not only is displacement largely caused by conflicts and communal land disputes, [environmental disasters](#), including floods, soil erosion, and droughts, have exacerbated the situation. Additionally, although most African migration remains on the continent (ie. [80 per cent](#) of migrants stayed in Africa in 2020), other regions of the world - namely Europe - have seen an influx of migrants and asylum seekers over the past years.

The migrant crisis and food insecurity in Africa are inextricably linked as one increases the other. For example, in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border region of Mali, [80 per cent](#) of cultivable land has been lost in more than 100 villages due to crop destruction and forced migration. In the northern regions of Burkina Faso, between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of [cultivable land](#) has been lost due to insecurity. Meanwhile, in Niger, hundreds of thousands of people's livelihoods have been disrupted as agricultural land has become inaccessible when entire villages have been internally displaced due to the threat of violence by terrorist groups. Additionally, when people are forced to relocate, they become [highly vulnerable](#). Since they



can no longer use their land for agriculture or pastoralism, whole communities become reliant on aid - particularly for food and water - to survive. The situation is especially concerning for millions of people across the continent who are still trapped in locations inaccessible to assistance agencies owing to instability. This has been seen recently in several towns in Burkina Faso where displaced civilians were [confined](#) to increasingly cramped quarters and unable to evacuate, consequently facing a major food crisis on their own.

A major cause of internal displacement and migration is the rising food scarcity and insecurity caused by climate change and the higher rate of natural disasters Africa is facing compared to any other part of the world. In 2021, climate-related catastrophes displaced [2.6 million people](#) in sub-Saharan Africa. In Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya, over 16 million people lack access to safe water and 20.5 million experience extreme food poverty and growing malnutrition. More than a million Somalis have been displaced, most of them being women and children. Should this severe situation persist, food insecurity will only continue to exacerbate the migrant crisis. The World Bank predicts there will be [86 million](#) climate change migrants in Africa by 2050. Some of Africa's 18 million seasonal migrant workers may lose their employment in agriculture, mining, and fishing, thereby increasing the likelihood of permanent migration in pursuit of new economic possibilities.

In the face of this upward trend in climate-related migration, organisations like the [Mayors Migration Council](#) (MMC), the United Nations (UN), and the IKEA Foundation's Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees (GCF), have sought to address the current and future effects of climate hazards. For instance, the GCF announced in November 2022 a commitment of [\\$1.2 million](#) to issue direct financial and technical support to six African cities handling the needs of those impacted by the climate crisis. Whilst such initiatives definitely represent a move in the right direction, much more assistance is required. According to the [World Economic Forum](#) in 2021, sub-Saharan Africa alone would need \$30-50 million a year to finance climate adaptation, pointing to the need for the international community to take action if it hopes to reduce climate migration in the region.

Not only has the migrant crisis added to instability in Africa, it has also been a [contentious](#) issue in Europe over the last couple of years, considerably impacting policymaking and public opinion on the matter. Various [deals](#) have been made in recent years between countries in Africa and European states aiming to restrict South-to-North migration. For instance, the [Khartoum Process](#) set up in 2014 involved sending funds from the EU and the UK to governments in the Horn of Africa to essentially outsource European border management, which many observers claim resulted in a large-scale violation of human rights. Migrants have also faced [severe abuses](#) and even death when attempting to migrate to Europe. In November 2022, UN rights experts [condemned](#) the “stark dehumanisation of African migrants”, as many who had left the continent from Moroccan soil were killed in June during violent encounters with security forces in Melilla, Spain.



Such actions reflect the racism, racial discrimination, and [xenophobia](#) that have been observed to varying degrees across European nations over the past years, with some countries being more hostile than others on the issue of immigration from Africa. As a result, the European Commission noted in 2016 that the political discourse on the issue had become [increasingly negative](#) and connected to racialised perceptions of migrants. This not only [impacted the levels](#) of racist violence aimed at the latter, it also led to discriminatory policies and practices that limit their access to the labour market. A recent example of this is the UK's [initiative](#) to send some migrants who arrive in the country to Rwanda, where their asylum claims would be processed. This, according to the [government](#), will discourage individuals from entering the UK by "illegal, dangerous, or unnecessary methods", using small boats to cross the English Channel, for instance. As mindful as this may sound, Rwanda is well known for its political repression, lack of freedom of speech, and other [human rights abuses](#) that make it an unsafe destination for migrants. With its lack of respect for the rule of law and low regard for refugees under international law, the [Rwandan government](#) has abused refugees and even kidnapped Rwandan refugees from outside nations for them to face trial and ill-treatment. Sending asylum seekers to Rwanda would thus make them face a dangerous environment and will likely lead to a second migration, worsening the continent's crisis.

However, Europe's [demographic decline](#) means that within the next thirty years, the EU and UK may experience an economic collapse due to a lack of labour. As [people in Europe](#) are living longer and having fewer children, the working-age population diminishes and the number of retirees is going up, putting strains on welfare systems and the social safety net. [Economic growth](#) and prosperity for all will also be considerably affected. Views about immigration and attitudes towards migrants coming to work in Europe must therefore [change](#) to prevent such a scenario from occurring, which would simultaneously relieve the worsening employment crisis that young people face in Africa. Even if racial prejudice or anti-immigration sentiments are overcome by the overwhelming case for labour migration in the face of demographic decline, a utilitarian approach runs the risk of viewing potential African [migrants as resources](#) that Europe can use rather than as unique individuals with their own goals and aspirations. It would be a positive step for European governments to cease treating immigrants as [political scapegoats](#) or a bargaining chip and to start recognizing that they could need Africans just as much as they have always imagined Africans need them.

## Health

Food insecurity is a key source of [malnutrition](#) and is linked to a variety of negative health consequences in Africa. In the Horn of Africa, more than [37 million people](#) suffer from acute hunger, with roughly 7 million children under the age of five suffering from severe malnutrition. In Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania, malnutrition affects an estimated



[10.5 million people](#), in great part caused by high levels of food insecurity in these countries. Another [6 million children](#) are suffering from life-threatening severe acute malnutrition in West and Central Africa. This is due to multiple factors including limited access to basic food staples and critical services, land and agricultural degradation, recurrent droughts and weather-related shocks, poverty, and population increase. In South Sudan, the main hospital in Tonj town has seen a doubling in daily malnutrition cases in recent months, largely caused by [price inflation](#). If food insecurity and malnutrition rates keep growing the way they currently are in Africa, significant numbers of people are at risk of developing illnesses, chronic health issues, and even death in the years to come. Furthermore, the number of malnourished people has the potential to rise in the near future, since the continent's population is expected to [double by 2050](#), adding to the strain on food security.

In addition to malnutrition, food insecurity is directly related to a wide range of diseases and other negative physical health consequences in Africa. For example, food insecurity has been associated with [stunted child growth](#), developmental deficits, disability, and chronic illness. Moreover, as individuals leave their homes in search of food, they [lose access](#) to health care and become more vulnerable to disease outbreaks. If they end up in refugee camps, those displaced people risk contracting diseases in overcrowded complexes where health assistance is limited and hygiene conditions are poor. This has recently been seen in [Kenya](#) since January 2022, which saw a significant increase in the number of individuals coming to the country to escape drought, starvation, and violence. In Kenya's Dadaab Refugee Complex, where 233,000 refugees currently live in three overcrowded camps, residents face a high risk of contracting measles and cholera as thousands of new refugees arrive from Somalia where the diseases are circulating. Furthermore, according to data collected from over 112,000 individuals in six African states, living in food-insecure homes increased women's risk of [contracting HIV](#). Women who were food hungry also [reported greater rates](#) of transactional sex, early sexual debut (before the age of 15), rape, and intercourse with considerably older men, increasing their risk by not using condoms with HIV-positive or unknown partners.

Not only does food insecurity negatively impact people's physical health, but it has also been speculated to have a negative influence on [mental health](#); a stigmatised area of health in Africa where care is frequently unavailable. Studies on the relationship between food insecurity and mental health found that the former was linked to moderate cognitive impairment, depression and anxiety, postnatal depression, dangerous drinking and suicide risk, multiple chronic illnesses, and perceived stress in [South Africa](#). In [Tanzania](#), food insecurity provoked stressful reactions and anxiety among women. Some studies found that women had [poorer mental health](#) outcomes as a result of food insecurity than men in studies in various countries, such as South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, and Ghana. Moreover, food insecurity has been identified as causing [psychosocial stresses](#), such as uncertainty about acquiring food, social stigma from using undesirable means of obtaining food, loneliness, shame and guilt, and conflict within homes as a result of failure to provide food for one's





family. Untreated mental health can have dire consequences that [jeopardise](#) a country's socio economic development.

Across Africa, official support for mandating policies to drive change is insufficient. According to the World Economic Forum, most African countries spend less than [1 per cent](#) of their expenditures on mental health services. Therefore, the combination of rising food insecurity and inadequate state response to the associated growing mental health issues is likely to lead to increased inequalities amongst the population and further hinder economic development.

## Concluding Remarks

A wide range of crises impacting countries across the African continent have been considerably affected by rising food insecurity. Poverty, terrorism, migration, and health issues are not only the problems of local populations and national governments; they also greatly concern the international community. Terrorism, for instance, creates instability which not only affects the everyday life of local populations but also has consequences on a global scale. First, is the increased threat to human life abroad when terrorism becomes exported from Africa to other parts of the globe. Beyond the threat to the life and basic human rights of people in Africa and elsewhere, terrorism highly disrupts the countries' development and ability to trade with the rest of the world. This in turn can have significant impacts on the access of foreign countries to [precious resources](#), such as minerals for technology, weaponry, oil, and parts for electronics including cell phones. The relationship between food insecurity and terrorism impacts the lives of people in other parts of the world who are dependent on such resources, despite their unawareness.

Taking another example, migration caused by food insecurity not only negatively affects local economies, but it also creates uncertainty for foreign states importing resources, such as food and manufactured goods, from countries in Africa. If people are increasingly losing their [employment](#) in particular sectors (such as agriculture, mining, and fishing) and migrating within the continent in search of stability, the production and trade of these goods will increasingly be disrupted and create unpredictability for foreign countries. As a result, the latter and their populations will be at greater risk of facing negative economic consequences and shortages in food and goods, affecting their quality of life. Other than these economic repercussions, failing to address migration caused or exacerbated by food insecurity will most likely lead to a surge in migration towards Europe, which, if not addressed properly, will only worsen the tensions and [human rights violations](#) we are already witnessing.

In addition to these abuses, a [UN report](#) published in January 2023 states that weather-related disasters, which displace millions of people, have become one of the primary reasons for





human trafficking. The study, conducted by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, found that climate change makes individuals more vulnerable to trafficking, using data collected from 141 countries over the period of 2017-2020, as well as analysis of 800 court cases. It found that as climate change causes certain regions to become uninhabitable, it disproportionately affects poor communities that rely on agriculture or fishing, forcing them to flee their communities and making them easy prey for traffickers.

As the effects of food insecurity on both the African continent and the rest of the world become clear, so does the urgency of taking necessary action by cooperating to tackle the shared issues that will worsen in the years to come if nothing is done. Foreign states and African countries need to work together to address issues that affect them both, specifically the exacerbated impacts of food insecurity on human security in Africa and across the globe. The international community thus needs to take action and help ensure that people in Africa have the same level of human security as people in other parts of the world.



## Recommendations

*Arthur Ddamulira & Natasha Louis*

### Respond with Hybrid Economics

Dealing with any of the causes of food insecurity will require a concerted financial effort from various stakeholders, including governments, private institutions, and NGOs. This can be attributed to the [significant impact](#) of climate-driven food scarcity on low-income households, the cost of dealing with severe droughts over a sustained period of time, and the human security aspects of food crises. Additionally, it is often the case that when a large climate shock hits and depresses agricultural production, rural households' food consumption [declines rapidly](#) which would require a strong effort to combat.

An optimal economic response to resolving the food insecurity crisis requires a balance of fiscal, financial, and monetary actions alongside significant investment in the necessary infrastructure to facilitate sustainable food security. Fiscal policies focused on social assistance and efficient public infrastructure investment can improve the overall response to the crisis Africa is facing. This has already been effective through ongoing partnerships across the continent. For instance, in 2006, African Union member states committed to contributing up to [10 per cent](#) of aggregate public spending on agricultural development with a focus on improving crop yields. While they have not all met this target, there is always the opportunity to review through ongoing stakeholder engagement and revision of targets. This actually highlights a significant challenge that arises where targets are set but not actioned. Because it risks derailing efforts, we recommend that there is a preliminary review of any existing commitments before new pens are set to ensure that there is consistency and effectiveness in tackling these problems. Subsequently, accelerating these investments can make a [tangible difference](#) to poorer households by improving their access to affordable food, facilitating the expansion of climate-resilient and green agricultural production, and supporting quicker recovery from adverse climate events.

Practical steps to accommodate such support will include [restructuring subsidy programs](#) to increase their accessibility to those that need them most. Moreover, by ensuring that the most vulnerable communities receive those subsidies, governments are likely to reduce their high costs. Furthermore, such a redesign of programs would include gradually implementing [international prices](#) of fertiliser, seeds, and other inputs to consumers and protecting the most vulnerable households. Through targeted cash transfers and clearly defined [objectives](#), the program's efficiency and cost-effectiveness can be accurately assessed for maximum impact.



Financial sector policy is also essential to increasing food affordability and availability across the continent. It is crucial to improve [access to finance](#) as this will tremendously increase private investment in agricultural resilience and improve the food purchasing power of poorer rural and urban households. Basic economics dictates that in high inflation environments, tighter monetary policy will also lead to lower prices of food and key amenities. Private financing and investment efforts can be bolstered through [micro financing](#) initiatives or public development bank financing. This can also involve capacity development to support farms and agri-businesses in their establishment which will lead to credible track records of financial performance and demonstrate investment readiness.

[Public-private partnerships](#) have often been at the heart of the project and social welfare development through leveraging private sector expertise and government funding and power. These would be another effective solution provided they are accompanied by appropriate regulatory, accounting, and governance frameworks that may reduce risks for private sector investment and hold government power to account. Corruption continues to be the bane of development in Africa after all.

Attracting [impact investment](#) can be another approach towards harmonising financial resources with the fight against food insecurity. This has been spurred by the emergence of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) consideration as a theme and prominent investment criteria globally. Through utilising impact investment, stakeholders can [channel private investment](#) toward the development sector and address social or environmental needs by directing resources to microfinance, agriculture, and forestry. Considering the challenges associated with equity investment or hybrid investment structures, it may be increasingly more practical to encourage higher access to finance through [credit markets](#). This would enable private investment in agricultural resilience and productivity while also improving monetary policy communication. While access to finance from private markets can play a powerful role in social assistance, there are obvious [challenges](#). Raising these funds requires developing financial markets, which can take time. In the interim, micro-finance or public-private partnerships may be the most effective way to provide credit to people who do not have access to banks.

Greater regional trade integration may be combined with resilient storage and transport infrastructure, such as better quality of roads, train lines, and ports, to [facilitate sales](#) of one country's bumper harvests to a neighbouring country facing shortfalls. The resulting knowledge transfers, such as adopting new ways of optimising drought-resistant crops, best-suited equipment for a given terrain, and energy-efficient agricultural practices as well as the competition, could [boost productivity](#) within specific regions. Once again, there is evident progress being made on this front. The Africa Continental Free Trade [Agreement](#) is a positive step forward with a potential market size of \$3.5 trillion in GDP and 1.3 billion people. This agreement is a significant milestone described as helping "African countries establish trade



corridors for essential goods, reduce duties on essential products, establish regional value chains, reconfigure supply chains, establish local pharmaceutical production facilities, and increase access to medication.” In addition to this, advancing [exchange rate flexibility](#) that boosts competitiveness can support food availability, affordability, and quality. More competitive exports and international reserves of food can increase incomes, purchasing power, and facilitate added food imports when domestic production is affected.

Finally, the International Monetary Fund ([IMF](#)) has considered extensively the role that the international community can play through financial assistance within key infrastructure areas, capacity development, and facilitating transfers of technology. It is important to bolster the recommendations above, which are significantly African-driven solutions, to the challenges of food insecurity. Since efficient food production and distribution require climate-resilient infrastructure, any type of foreign investment could create jobs and lead to advancements, such as solar power technologies that can facilitate irrigation and temperature control for food production and flood barriers that protect ports and roads critical to food distribution.

## Negotiate Chinese Debt Relief

Fifty per cent of the world’s poorest require [immediate debt relief](#) in order to “avert [a] major systemic development crisis”, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). *Avoiding ‘Too Little Too Late’ on International Debt Relief*, UNDP’s [report](#) published in October 2022, stated that 54 countries significantly need debt relief; many of them belonging to Africa. As part of its Belt Road Initiative, China has become the largest creditor in the world to some of the poorest countries, even bypassing the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Debt restructuring initiatives have become more complex since the 1990s when lower-income countries had the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative ([HIPC](#)). From May 2020 to December 2021, the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) provided [\\$12.9 billion](#) in debt-service suspension. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine are exacerbating debt hurdles. “Spurred by low interest rates, high investment needs, limited progress raising additional domestic revenue and stretched systems for managing public finances, the debt ratios of DSSI countries have [increased](#), partly reversing a decline seen in the early 2000s.”

Additionally, Africa’s first debt-restructuring negotiations post-COVID are currently taking place in [Zambia](#). With many lacking optimism for a positive result, negotiations between Zambia and China could produce an omen for the rest of Africa in regard to the future of their debts. Despite pressure from the IMF and the US government for China to significantly alleviate African debt, it is unlikely that China will trim much.



State-contingent debt instruments (SCDIs) may be able to assist in debt management. “While SCDIs will not be attractive/preferred instruments for all countries and cannot substitute for sound fiscal management and reform, they have the potential to improve public debt management, especially in countries with high exposures to external shocks, such as from trade, financial flows or natural disasters and climate change.”

Effective debt restructuring is crucial, not only for African countries, but on a global scale. Due to enduring massive debt burdens, developing countries are unable to finance energy transitions. "Electricity is the fundamental driving variable of development. But as it stands, many developing countries are likely to struggle to supply sufficient energy of any sort in the coming decades, let alone from renewable sources," stated UNDP administrator Achim Steiner. [Jason Bordoff](#), director of the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, stated this January that there are COVID pandemic accelerated clean energy initiatives in many parts of the world but that he fears it is a different story in the developing world. “That is where most of the growth in carbon emissions from this point forward are going to come from”, Bordoff commented. Due to many African countries not investing in clean energy and agriculture, either from inability or ineptitude, Chinese debt burdens will no doubt impact climate change and, therefore, further instability in food security. As author Dave Lawler aptly states: “The global debt crisis is becoming a climate crisis.”

While the prevention of this domino effect lies in the hands of China, the international community needs to continue pressure on debt restructuring negotiations. This will hopefully influence China to not only alleviate Africa’s burden significantly, but also refrain from such creditor activity in the future. Yet, this does not negate the accountability that needs to be held with African leaders. Politicians must see past what will benefit them during their ‘elected’ terms and look at what will be most beneficial for their constituents in the long term. Ceasing a rising debt-to-GDP ratio will assist in states’ ability to allocate more of the budget towards the agricultural and energy sectors. Thus, allowing them to invest in endeavours that will reduce the mutual causality of global warming and food insecurity, which Africa will suffer from the most.

## **Invest in Smallholder Wheat Production**

Despite Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa growing significant amounts of [wheat](#), they are unable to produce enough to meet the increasing demand. Between 2021 and 2022, the entire continent of Africa imported approximately [55,860,000 metric tons](#) of wheat. “Africa requires a minimum of [\\$28.5bn](#) a year to achieve its aim of feeding its 1.4 billion people. Currently, Africa spends some \$75bn a year on its total food imports.” Russia, France, and Ukraine are the [main suppliers](#) of wheat to the continent, showing the magnitude of their vulnerability in regard to the Russia-Ukraine war.



In order to meet the rising demand for wheat, international scientists have established partnerships in sub-Saharan Africa to assist local wheat farming. Since 2016, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) has implemented projects in Rwanda and Zambia, assisting smallholder farmers in “technical and institutional support, better links to markets, and the sharing of successful practices across regions and borders.”

CIMMYT is showing success in not only wheat production, but also by producing [varieties](#) that can “withstand infertile soils, drought, pests and diseases.” According to Batischeba Tembo, a wheat breeder at the Zambian Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI), “Developing and disseminating varieties resistant to these diseases is a priority in the wheat breeding program at Mt. Makulu Agricultural Research Center. We’re also promoting appropriate mechanization for smallholder farmers, to improve wheat production and reduce the enormous drudgery of preparing the soil with hand hoes.” With an expected [50 per cent](#) increase in wheat demand, collaborative projects like those implemented by CIMMYT are crucial. “Growing more wheat where it makes sense to do so can help safeguard food security for people who prefer wheat and reduce dependence on risky wheat grain markets,” stated CIMMYT’s socio-economist Moti Jaleta.

[Zimbabwe](#) appears to be leading by example as they aimed to ensure “self-sufficiency at all costs” and were able to produce their largest wheat harvest in history last year. The country is focused on increasing wheat production in order to build its strategic reserve. Last April, the president of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, referred to the Ukrainian war as a “wake-up call” and gained success by harnessing small-scale farmers. Deputy Agriculture Minister Vangelis Haritatos believes that the answer lies in the empowerment of local farmers. This venture “included roping in hundreds of small-scale, rural farmers to start growing a crop that was traditionally reserved for large-scale commercial farmers, improving water supply infrastructure and distributing fertilizers to small-scale farmers as well as increasing private-sector participation. The crop was introduced for the first time to areas and farmers who had never grown wheat before.” While Zimbabwean farmers face hurdles, such as time restraints and brush fires, prioritising small-scale farming endeavours may be the key for Africa to become self-reliant and mitigate the risks of food insecurity.

Hope is on the horizon. Thanks to the efforts of the African Development Bank’s Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT), 12 million farmers have been provided with new farming techniques and enhanced seeds over the last three years. Depending on local needs, millions of farmers throughout Africa have received maize varieties that are either drought-tolerant or heat-tolerant. As of today, Sudan is able to produce half of the country’s wheat needs and is on track to becoming wheat self-sufficient by 2025. Ethiopia was able to acquire wheat self-sufficiency last year with an “over tenfold increase in lowland acreage planted to wheat”.



Additionally, sustainable models like [Regenerative Design](#) are assisting farmers who are suffering from drought. “Regenerative Design is a low-tech method of working with nature, and borrows from principles of agroecology, agroforestry, permaculture, and passive water harvesting.” The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is assisting farmers in rural Sudan by redesigning the landscape around farmers’ homes in order to collect rainwater and distribute it into the soil with a natural flow. In essence, these designs aid farmers by “Planting the Rain” via storing “moisture so that it can be accessed by trees and plants even during the dry months.”

Africa’s road to lessening its reliance on food imports and assisting farmers in their battle against climate change is no doubt challenging, but these efforts are already proving to be significantly successful. Continued and increased investments in smallholder farms, along with the processing and storage infrastructure needed, can not only turn around food insecurity on the continent but may also lead to Africa becoming a major contributor to ending world hunger.

## **Dismantle the Shamba System & Others Like It**

While investing in local farmers appears to be a crucial and successful endeavour, it should be done strategically in order to not destroy forest lands and neglect other impacted populations. [Conflicts](#) between farmers and pastoralists are common throughout Africa; not only ending in bloodshed but also the displacement of many. Several factors contribute to farmer-herder conflicts but one of the most crucial, and perhaps preventable, is the competitive overuse of resources, such as forests.

Newly instated President William Ruto of Kenya has sparked controversy over statements that he will reinstate the [Shamba system](#). The system permits a multitude of destructive behaviours, from damaging the ecosystem through the plantation of harmful, exotic trees to illegal settlers claiming areas of protected forest. Former Deputy Minister of the Environment and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Prof. [Wangari Maathai](#) argued that corruption permitted farmers to abuse the system and take large areas of indigenous forests for farming, "destroying local biodiversity and greatly reducing the capacity of the forests to be effective water reservoirs". The forests have also become a haven for illegal loggers, drug lords, and poachers.

Kenyan “pastoralists complain that their grazing spaces in parts of the [Mau Forest](#) complex have been converted into farmlands under the guise of the *shamba* system, consequently creating tensions between them and the farmers.” Farmers have also been known to use pesticides, harming the health of children and animals. When the three-year period given under the system ended, farmers practised vindictive behaviours that left forests devastated.





These included [cutting down trees](#), pouring saltwater over new seedlings so they would die, and uprooting and replanting young trees in order to weaken the root structure. Additionally, local citizens were so angered that outsiders were benefitting from the Shamba system that they also invaded the forest, furthering its destruction.

While supporters and farmers who were previously evicted during the previous ban believe the Shamba system will provide food security, the scientific community has warned of an environmental catastrophe and improbability of Kenya increasing its forest cover should the system be reintroduced. Additionally, the system has “endangered wildlife species and interfered with wildlife corridors”, as well as put six indigenous forests under threat, which the country depends on for water. Environmental activist George Ochieng stated, “We need indigenous forests for our water given the fact that Kenya is a water stress country. We need them to keep our rivers flowing for irrigation and electricity generation. We need indigenous forests to act as carbon sinks.”

According to agricultural economist Job Shiundu, the path to food security can only be achieved through protecting indigenous forests, not allocating them for farming. “We do not need to farm in forests to increase food production. It will only benefit a few individuals and not the whole country.” Adopting new farming methods previously discussed is the proper route in order to obtain food security. Additionally, African governments need to understand the complexities that stand between farmers and pastoralists without favouring one over the other. Systems like the Shamba will only lead to environmental destruction, and conflict, and exacerbate food instability.

## **Demand Good Governance**

Possibly the most crucial aspect that impacts all areas of food insecurity, amongst other African affairs, is the need for real political leadership. The continent is at a critical point throughout 2023 and 2024 as dozens of African countries will hold [presidential elections](#). Unfortunately, significant success in regard to democracy is not expected. Voter buyouts, voter and opposition oppression, and electoral violence (usually initiated by political groups) will continue to be pervasive. According to the [2022 Ibrahim Index of African Governance](#), “overall governance on the continent has flatlined since 2019” and Africa is experiencing “widespread democratic backsliding”.

As we have seen in this report, corruption is prevalent in all areas of governance, including the agricultural sector, and leads to overlapping crises. The [2022 Corruption Perception Index](#) reported that sub-Saharan Africa remains the most corrupt region in the world. “The [majority](#) of the countries in Africa (precisely 44 out of 49) in this year’s index fall below the midpoint of the CPI scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).” Corruption generates the



deterioration of stability, creating a domino effect resulting in food insecurity that then furthers overall instability, creating an endless loop. Terrorism has risen over [300 per cent](#) in the last decade, with Africa becoming a major hostile territory. One example is taking place in Somalia, where NGO work has continually been impacted by al-Shabaab activity over the years. Notably, [food aid](#) is frequently diverted from those most in need with the help of corrupt contractors. Approximately [7.1 million](#) people, over half of the population, are facing food insecurity. The combination of threats by al-Shabaab and drought has driven [165,000](#) refugees to flee since early 2021. As the main obstacle in providing aid during a famine is “[war and weak governance](#),” NGOs will continue to have their operations significantly challenged, if not diminished.

While the threat of attacks from terrorist and rebel groups is predominantly localised, further destabilisation in Africa has global consequences. This report has covered multiple aspects that have ripple effects around the world. The West has seen in recent years how African crises exacerbate each other and the spillover effects, such as the migrant crisis. Overall stability is reliant on the mutual dependency of good leadership and security. As poor leaders continue to reign in Africa, the consequences will not be contained by borders.

Despite that widespread democratic progress is not expected through 2024, many Africans are fighting for democracy. “This is particularly evident in the dynamic role that [youth](#) are playing in many of these elections—a reminder that 70 per cent of Africa’s population is under the age of 30.” Africa has the [youngest population](#) in the world and will continue to claim that status as the population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to [double](#) by 2050 - accounting for more than half of the entire world’s population growth. It is understandable that many are concerned that growing tensions will lead to further instability in the region, as upset between poor leadership and citizens lead to an increase in [coups](#). Pessimistic outlooks regarding the youth bulge are substantiated by concerns surrounding an increased likelihood of violent protests and questioning how the continent will be able to provide resources and jobs for such a large demographic in low-income countries.

However, there is hope to be had as [rebellious young people](#) are the driver for democracy. “Behind the scenes, youth protest movements are laying the groundwork for eventual transitions, prioritizing the long, hard work of building support for democracy.” In regard to education and employment, the needs of the young are not being met. Africa is experiencing a major youth bulge – both now and in the coming decades – and leaders will need to look past their own objectives and meet the demands of the young. Not only to gain and maintain power, but in order to progress their nations.

The continent of Africa is in a precarious time. If the needs of the young are not met, unrest may swell to epic proportions. The understandable anger of many is particularly fragile as it teeters between becoming productive or turning into violence. “Ultimately, these popular pressures should initiate a bottom-up process of democratization, one that deepens the



shallow electoral systems born of previous eras of popular unrest and leads to genuine democracy.” Rooting out authoritarian leaders is easier said than done. Yet, it will be up to the youth of Africa to demand democratic reform and thus change the continent’s path toward obtaining overall security and, therefore, eliminate food insecurity.



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