

SOFI2020 Report: The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020

Summary brief for business

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) "[The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World](#)" (SOFI2020) report, launched on 13 July 2020, is an annual report that estimates worldwide hunger levels and provides a spotlight on the diet quality around the world. In addition to providing updated hunger numbers and hunger and nutrition projections for the coming years, this year's report provides analysis linking hunger and undernourishment levels to the affordability and availability of healthy diets around the world, by region and by different development contexts. This summary brief highlights the main points relevant to businesses.

The SOFI2020 report shows that the world is not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, Zero Hunger, by 2030 – currently 690 million people or roughly 8,9% of the world

population go to bed hungry each day. This is an increase of 10 million from the year before and the projections show that if this trend continues, this number will rise to 840 million in 2030. Food insecurity is also showing an upward trend. In 2019, nearly 1 in 10 people, or around 740 million, were food insecure and considering the population of [those suffering to moderate or severe food insecurity](#), 2 billion people did not have regular [access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food](#).

All this is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been referred to as the "[hunger virus](#)" by several NGOs. COVID-19 has highlighted the weaknesses in our food systems globally and is currently hitting the [most vulnerable the hardest](#). The SOFI2020 report estimates that the pandemic will add 83 to 132 million people to the total number

of undernourished in the world in 2020, depending on the economic crisis scenario.

The urgent case for action has never been clearer. [Business has a key role to play](#) and will need to step up to support access to diets that are nutritious, safe, healthy, sustainable, and most importantly, as outlined by this report, affordable to all people. We will need to promote investments in food system innovations to make sure we reach Zero Hunger by 2030. The UN Food Systems Summit, hosted in 2021, will be a key event to ensure a food system transformation towards "healthy people and healthy planet" is part of the international agenda. The Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit, most likely taking place in December next year, will bring forward strong commitments from the private sector.

Headlines you need to know from the report

- After decades-long decline, for the past five years, **the Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU)**, which is the underlying metric of how FAO estimates hunger in the world, **has been on the rise**. Much of underlying causes of food insecurity can be traced to increased numbers of conflicts, often exacerbated by climate-related shocks. Economic slowdowns especially challenge food and nutrition accessibility for the poor and job insecure.
- **Food insecurity worsens diet quality and increases various forms of malnutrition.** Availability of staple foods for the world has remained stable between 2000 and 2017. Asia and upper-middle income countries are the only places where there are enough fruits and vegetables available for human consumption to meet the FAO/WHO recommended consumption minimum of 400g of fruits and vegetables per person per day.
- By conservative estimates, **healthy diets are unaffordable for more than 3 billion people in the world.** Healthy diets are on average five times more expensive than diets that meet only dietary energy needs and the cost of a healthy diet exceeds the international poverty line (USD \$1.90 PPP/day/person) in all regions of the world. In the Global South, the cost of a healthy diet exceeds average food expenditures for most countries: approximately 57% of the population cannot afford a healthy diet.
- **Adult obesity is on the rise** from 11.8% (2012) to 13.1% (2016). If current trends continue, adult obesity will reach 40% in 2025.
- Under current food consumption patterns, diet-related health costs linked to mortality and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are projected to exceed USD \$1.3 trillion per year by 2030. Direct costs associated with expenses related to treating diet-related diseases account for 57% and 43% accounts for indirect costs, including losses in labor productivity (11%) and informal care (32%).
- Alternative (flexitarian, pescatarian, vegetarian, vegan) **diets reduce diet-related health costs dramatically, by USD \$1.2 to \$1.3 trillion,** representing an average **95% reduction in diet-related health expenditures worldwide.**
- Under current food consumption patterns, the diet-related social cost of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are projected to be around 21-37% of the total anthropogenic GHG emissions worldwide by 2030. Adoption of the four alternative diets (flexitarian, pescatarian, vegetarian, vegan) could potentially contribute to significant reductions of the social costs of GHG emissions, ranging from USD \$0.7 to \$1.3 trillion (41-74%) in 2030.
- Lower-income countries where populations suffer from nutrient deficiencies may need to increase their carbon footprint to first meet recommended dietary needs and nutrition targets before implementing shifts to healthy diets. Upper-middle-income and high-income countries and countries where people consume more animal-source foods than required, will need major changes in dietary practices and system-wide changes in food production, food environments, and trade to meet the SDG goals.

Creating the enabling environment for change

COVID-19 has highlighted the fragility of the current food supply chains; it has prompted a reimagining of the current global food system, shifting conversations from increasing efficiencies and profitability within the system to thinking about how to build resiliency and longevity into the system. These conversations have spanned from understanding how to better share value creation along the entire food supply chain to ensure

players like smallholder farmers are not disproportionately adversely affected by events like COVID, and that all people have access to nutritious, safe, and affordable diets.

- During the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021, governments and the private sector can come together to reset the global agenda for redesigning a food system that works for all. With only a decade

remaining to deliver the development agenda, we will need to scale up multi-stakeholder partnerships and increase investments in food system transformation. The Food and Land Use (FOLU) coalition's "[Growing Better](#)" report shows that investing 0.5% of global GDP in food system transformation will not only deliver a more resilient and sustainable food system, but also **create new business opportunities worth up to USD \$4.5 trillion a year by 2030.**

What can business do?

The report shows clearly that business as usual is no longer possible. Without any action, COVID-19 and the way our food system currently operates will result in around 840 million people going to bed hungry by 2030. Three billion people are not able to access or cannot afford a healthy diet. Businesses everywhere depend on a healthy workforce and a healthy diet is key in this.

We need to increase investments in affordable, healthy, accessible, safe, and sustainable foods. **WBCSD's "CEO Guide to Food System Transformation"** outlines four pathways where business can lead and three key enablers to mitigate barriers and support scaling up key initiatives. One pathway focuses on supporting consumers to make healthy and sustainable dietary choices, while shaping demand through new product formulations and effective marketing. Food loss also plays a key factor driving food availability and affordability.

The CEO Guide outlines action on minimizing food loss by reducing supply chain inefficiencies, and investments in irrigation innovations or in cold-chain infrastructure, for example, could strengthen capacity for all-season healthy food production.

A shift to integrated food and agriculture policies will be a key driver in transforming our food systems. Businesses can help make affordable, delicious and nutritious foods that feature healthy reductions in fat, sugar, and salt content, and support education and the promotion of health diets that include sustainability considerations. The [Responsible Business Pledge for Better Nutrition](#) shows that companies in any sector and at any stage of the value chain can take progressive collective and individual SMART (specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, time-bounded) commitments

to make better nutrition a long-term and board-level priority. In addition to making nutrition a core priority for their companies, signatories to this pledge will advance at least three SMART commitments in relation to the following thematic areas: nutrition-smart agriculture, product (re)formulation and innovation for improved nutrition, business model innovation for improved nutrition, responsible marketing, promoting healthy eating, workforce nutrition, and finance and investment for improved nutrition. WBCSD will facilitate the development of collective commitments within the context of this framework. But business cannot do this alone and a multi-stakeholder approach will be critical. We will need the support of governments to rebalance agricultural policies and incentives towards producing more healthy and sustainable foods.

WBCSD in action

WBCSD and our members are responding to the COVID-19 crisis through three new projects: Vital Supply Chains Resilience, Return-to-"New Normal" Scenarios, and Long-Term Impacts. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.

The [WBCSD COVID-19 Vital Supply Chains project](#) builds on the [CEO Guide to Food System Transformation](#), published in October 2019, to inform the development of a Recovery Blueprint, which will bring together steps for companies to take to respond to the COVID crisis and how to further take collective action to build back a more resilient food system.

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Peter Bakker, President & CEO of WBCSD, has been [appointed to the Food Systems Summit Advisory Committee](#). In his role he will represent the global voice of the business community during the preparations of the Food System Summit hosted in 2021. Diane Holdorf, Managing Director of the Food & Nature program at WBCSD, sits on the [Advisory Council](#) for the Nutrition for Growth Summit to show our strong engagement in supporting the private sector to make ambitious commitments to further food system transformation.

WBCSD's Food Reform for Sustainability and Health ([FReSH](#)) and [Scaling Positive Agriculture](#) bring together a powerful coalition of food value chain companies working jointly on a pre-competitive basis to provide healthy, enjoyable diets for all, produced responsibly within planetary boundaries.

On 28 May, WBCSD, GAIN, IFBA, FIA, CGF and ATNF jointly launched the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) [Responsible Business Pledge for Better Nutrition](#), a framework for generating ambitious private sector commitments in the lead up to the Tokyo 2021 N4G Summit.

Working together to deliver solutions

WBCSD is working with members on solution areas to create and mobilize a collective voice of business and create solutions to deliver against these challenges through the [Food & Nature Program](#) which includes projects such as [Scaling Positive Agriculture \(SPA\)](#), Food Reform for Sustainability and Health ([FReSH](#)),

[True Value of Food](#), and the [Global Agribusiness Alliance](#). WBCSD also participates in multi-stakeholder initiatives like the [Food System Dialogues](#), the [Food Action Alliance](#) and the [Food and Land Use Coalition \(FOLU\)](#).

Additional resources

Download the full State of Food Security and Nutrition Report [here](#).

WBCSD has published business summary briefs of other important reports. Please see the [EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health](#) with the business summary [here](#); [FOLU Growing Better Report](#) with the business summary [here](#).

About the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

WBCSD is a global, CEO-led organization of over 200 leading businesses working together to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world. We help make our member companies more successful and sustainable by focusing on the maximum positive impact for shareholders, the environment and societies.

Our member companies come from all business sectors and all major economies, representing a combined revenue of more than USD \$8.5 trillion and 19 million employees. Our global network of almost 70 national business councils gives our members unparalleled reach across the globe. Since 1995, WBCSD has been uniquely positioned to work with member companies along and across value chains to deliver impactful business solutions to the most challenging sustainability issues.

Together, we are the leading voice of business for sustainability: united by our vision of a world where more than 9 billion people are all living well and within the boundaries of our planet, by 2050.

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