

## THE GLOBAL FOOD INSECURITY: A DYSTOPIAN REALITY

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Global Food Crisis is a dystopian reality that lies ahead of us, with countless lives in peril, the stakes could not be greater. It is a dreadful impending doom that all countries fear, impending but not inescapable. According to UN estimates, the global food crisis may result in 132 million people going hungry due to disparities in access to food.

Food security accounts for more than 3.1 million deaths worldwide (FAO;UN, 2021), a number that is expected to treble within the foreseeable future if the world does not band together to combat these catastrophic repercussions. By the time you finish reading this article, a startling 117 children would have already died directly from hunger or causes related to hunger.

With the Russian-Ukrainian war driving the global food industry's demise, the stage is set for a new global leader in food production, and all eyes are on India to deliver.

Despite significant progress towards securing food availability and accessibility through imperative reforms, more effort is required to ensure that the country is competent and capable of tackling the consequences of nutritional insecurity within its own boundaries prior to contributing to the global cause of food security.

To address the increasing demand for food security and accessibility, the world must properly analyse areas that require radical improvement, which can only be accomplished if all countries work together to properly investigate practical strategies to reduce the reliance of low income nations from the developed to boost global food production and security, thus saving the global food system from the brink of collapse.

**KEYWORDS:** Global Food Crisis, Food Safety, Food Insecurity, Global Hunger, Nutritional Security, Finland, Syria, India, Access Poverty, Innovative Agriculture, Localization, Globalization.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The war against hunger appears to be both inevitable and existential. Addressing global food security is imperative, considering the annual loss of millions of lives to hunger. However, it presents a formidable challenge. Up to 828 million people's lives are at stake in 2022 as a result of conflicts, COVID, the climate crisis, rising prices, and a growing population (FAO, 2022). The prevalence of food insecurity is a tell-tale sign of how poorly the current food system has been functioning.

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The food system is becoming more unstable, and we are currently experiencing the second food crisis in ten years, a serious crisis with numerous issues that can only be resolved by fixing the entire food system.

Whether we should focus entirely on long-term or short-term solutions when addressing food safety and security is a persistent question. Should we prioritise addressing current food-system issues over finding a solution to feed 9 billion people by 2050?

It is necessary for society to strike an equilibrium between providing sufficient nutrition for the population while also enhancing the food system to safeguard food security.

However, it is critical to acknowledge the interrelation between food security and food safety. Food Security exists when individuals consistently have both the physical and financial means to obtain a sufficient, safe, and nourishing supply of food that meets their dietary requirements and preferences, enabling them to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle (IFPRI, 2020). Alternatively, Food Safety pertains to the protocols implemented during the manipulation, treatment, and distribution of food, with the aim of preventing the presence of contaminants that may lead to foodborne illnesses. (Njunina, 2021).

Food safety and security are critical components of the food system for establishing a healthy population. Food safety and food security are two complementary aspects that keep the nutritional framework running. In the realm of food security, the emphasis is consistently placed on ensuring food safety, taking precedence over the pursuit of a nutritionally balanced diet. The safety and security of our food must work in tandem to ensure a healthy, sustainable food production and food system, resulting in the development of an effective solution to overcome hunger and poverty. (Interrelated of food safety, food security and sustainable food production, 2021).

If the food system collapses, those who cannot afford to eat will simply go hungry, thereby increasing the risk of mass starvation, extending to several hundred million people in impoverished countries.

David Malpass<sup>3</sup> issues a dire warning that the world is on the verge of a "human catastrophe" as a result of the escalating crisis in the pricing of food triggered by the upheaval in Ukraine. (INDERDEEP BAINS; DAILY MAIL, 2022). The war merely accelerated what was already

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<sup>3</sup> *David R. Malpass* On April 5, 2019, He assumed the position of the 13th President of the World Bank Group, appointed by its Board of Executive Directors. During the year 2018, Mr. Malpass championed the augmentation of capital for the IBRD and IFC, aligning with a reform agenda that emphasized sustainable lending practices, optimal capital utilization, and a dedicated effort to enhance living standards in impoverished nations. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/meetings/splash/spring/speaker-detail/6846> , (last seen: 20 September 2022)

transpiring. At a recent UN meeting, Antonio Guterres<sup>4</sup> warned that if the growing food crisis is not addressed, it could last decades (UN, 2022).

It is evident that tackling the pressing issue of food security and ensuring the stability of the worldwide food system is an immediate and existential challenge. By prioritizing both immediate and enduring resolutions, such as the UN's SDG 2 goals<sup>5</sup>, and by addressing the interconnected concerns of food security, food safety, and sustainable food production, we can strive for a more resilient and secure worldwide food network.

The worldwide food crisis affects both advanced and emerging nations, yet their respective influences vary significantly.

## 2. FOOD SAFETY AND SECURITY IS A MAJOR CONCERN IN DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED NATIONS.

Food insecurity is a looming crisis that haunts countries all across the spectrum; whether developed, developing, or underdeveloped nations, the problem is unequally prevalent. Since populations in less developed countries have been associated with poverty and hunger, significant international funding and projects have been devoted to addressing these problems there. Several goals and initiatives were made to combat poverty and hunger in less developed and developed nations.

While underdeveloped nations were receiving tons of attention and support from many developed nations, they themselves failed to notice the vast number of people suffering from “hidden hunger<sup>6</sup>” within their own borders. This prevalence of food insecurity went largely unnoticed and unreported due to the failure of routine measurements and the use of non-comparable measures (Nyambayo, 2015). In developed nations, varying levels of food insecurity and insufficiency became apparent, marked by a rise in the utilization of food assistance among numerous

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<sup>4</sup> *António Guterres, assumed the role of the United Nations' ninth Secretary-General on January 1, 2017. Leveraging his dedication to the UN Charter, he has rallied support, initiated measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, tackled the climate crisis, promoted gender equality, and pursued modern reforms to strengthen the UN's crucial work in securing peace, sustainable development, human rights, and humanitarian aid* <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/biography>, (last seen: 20 September 2022)

<sup>5</sup> The objective of the **United Nations' SDG 2 (zero hunger)** focuses on eradicating hunger, to eliminate all forms of malnutrition by the year 2030 through increasing agricultural productivity, ensuring access to nutritious food, promoting sustainable food systems, and supporting local and national institutions. This includes increasing investment in rural infrastructure and agriculture, correcting and preventing trade restrictions, and adopting measures to limit extreme food price volatility. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/> (last seen: 23 September 2022)

<sup>6</sup> *Hidden hunger, referred to as micronutrient deficiencies, impacts over 2 billion individuals, equivalent to one-third of the global population. (FAO 2013). The consequences are severe, causing cognitive impairment, deteriorating health, diminished productivity, and, in some cases, fatalities.* [https://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/ghi/2014/feature\\_1818.html](https://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/ghi/2014/feature_1818.html) (last seen: 23 September 2022)

demographic segments. This trend was notable in countries such as the United States and Canada, where monitoring household food insecurity is a routine practice. (Nyambayo, 2015).

The uncertainty surrounding the availability of food is a concern for all nations. "There are only nine meals standing between humanity and anarchy," as Alfred Henry Lewis famously put in 1906. The same holds obvious today as it did back then. With society just 3 meals away from chaos and 9 away from anarchy, the already burdened authorities will struggle more to maintain order, which is what is essential for peace and prosperity.

Despite the fact that developed and developing countries are affected by this dire issue, the hawk's eye is exclusively fixated on underdeveloped countries, as they are typically ill-equipped to handle a sudden crisis due to their lack of reserves to feed their population.

### **3. CAN WE ELIMINATE THE INEQUALITY OF ACCESS BETWEEN WEALTHY AND UNDERDEVELOPED NATIONS?**

The issue of hunger is a widespread and severe problem, impacting millions of individuals globally with approximately 9 million deaths each year as a result of hunger and related diseases (WFP & UN). This is a staggering number, and it is even more alarming when compared to the number of deaths caused by other major diseases such as AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, which combined do not come close to the number of deaths caused by hunger.

But the impact of hunger goes beyond just the number of deaths it causes. Every 10 seconds, a child dies from hunger (WFP & UN). These are young lives that are cut short; their potentials never fully realized. This is by far the worst hunger crisis we have seen in less than a decade, and it is one that requires urgent attention. It is not just a problem for those who are directly affected by hunger, but for all of us.

But how is this possible when there has never been more food produced?

The global food production is sufficient to nourish a population of 12 billion individuals worldwide, but about 821 million people still go hungry (Erdman, 2018). Therefore, it is not a matter of producing or not producing enough food; THIS IS ACCESS POVERTY<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> *The absence of adequate access to fundamental necessities and socio-economic services significantly impacts the foundational aspects of life. Insufficient access to healthcare leads to enduring health issues, potential child mortality, and the heightened risk of widespread epidemics. Inadequate access to clean water further exacerbates health concerns. Similarly, a lack of access to education implies that future generations may encounter the same challenges as their parents. Moreover, the absence of access to markets restricts the potential for marketing products, limiting overall opportunities. (ILO, 2022) [https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS\\_099614/lang--en/index.html](https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_099614/lang--en/index.html) (last seen: 28 September 2022)*

Approximately one-third of the total food intended for human consumption is lost or wasted, while 822 million individuals continue to grapple with undernourishment. (WFP & UN). When comparing the 2007-08 food crisis to the current one, access is far more a pressing concern than availability (Golay, 2010); meaning the world has enough food to go around (food production) but the issue is with mere mismanagement and the absence of a more equitable and sustainable distribution, resulting in an even more flawed global food system.

COVID significantly impacted the global supply and distribution networks. Despite having an abundance of food on their farms, the farmers were unable to transport it to the stores. However, getting that from the farm to the fork is a difficult, time-consuming process that involves a plethora of players, various trade issues, and, on top of all that, rising commodity prices due to inflation make the process nearly impossible to overcome.

#### **4. IS IT POSSIBLE TO REDUCE THE RELIANCE OF LOW INCOME NATIONS ON THE WEALTHY NATIONS?**

One thing the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has opened our eyes to, is the instability and fragility of our food system and the potentially devastating effects of depending on one country for the needs of millions of people. Reducing the reliance of low income nations on the wealthy by returning to our roots and gardens through localization could secure these countries from starvation, thus, possibly saving the food system from the brink of collapse!

Thus, Relying on the clutches of globalism and capitalism is quite riskier than it appears. Burning large amounts of fuel to ship our food all throughout the world is extremely destructive to our planet. Additionally, it leads to fragile dependencies that create devastating famines for the low income nations when the system collapses (UN, 2018). Even in the face of severe, life-threatening drought, some of the famine-stricken nations 'MUST' invest in their capacity for food production. But unfortunately, it is challenging to achieve this due to "dependency theory<sup>8</sup>," numerous wars that destabilize these countries, corruption, climate change, and so on.

Education is crucial in order for the populace to realize, develop, and sustain themselves in their own countries. The way we frame the problem determines the kind of solutions we get; if we don't teach them to fish, they'll always have to rely on someone else to feed them, which puts them in a very vulnerable position, where the problem will never be rectified.

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<sup>8</sup> **Dependency theory** posits that there is a flow of resources from economically disadvantaged and underdeveloped states, referred to as the "periphery," to economically prosperous states, known as the "core." According to this theory, the enrichment of wealthy states occurs at the cost of the impoverishment of poorer states. At its core, dependency theory argues that the integration of economically disadvantaged states into the "world system" contributes to the wealth of affluent states and the poverty of less prosperous ones, <https://www.ineteconomics.org/uploads/downloads/Dependency-theory-e-book-online.pdf> (last seen: 5 October 2022).

However, in today's technologically driven world, where globalization is inevitable, resorting to localization is nearly impossible, with factors such as climate change and soil erosion influencing the process. Therefore, localization, in the pure sense, cannot exist.

#### **4.1. TO WHAT EXTENT?**

##### **4.1.1 THE POINT WHERE LOCALIZATION & GLOBALIZATION MEET: THE BALANCE**

In essence, localization is a process of decentralization that returns economic control back to the hands of small businesses rather than consolidating it in an ever-shrinking number of mega-corporations. Food produced for local and regional consumption is known as "local food." Because of this, "food miles" are generally low, which significantly lowers the use of fossil fuels and pollution, adding to environmental advantages (Norberg-Hodge, 2010). And on the other hand, globalization denotes the global flow and interchange encompassing individuals, commodities, financial resources, concepts, and cultural traditions. It fosters and enhances connections among diverse communities and geographical areas across the globe.

Global trade should exist because today's world cannot be completely deprived of it. Complete localization or globalization, however, is both undesirable and unrealistic. In practice, localization is nearly impossible as this technological world is too globalized for people to stick to only local produce. Those nations that do completely rely on developed nations for their basic needs are also left with nothing as they've been coddled all this while.

This proposed theory serves as a safety net for those developing and underdeveloped nations, where if you localize to a point, you can store sufficient reserves to ensure that the country can sustain itself and its people even in the event of a global trade collapse.

There's a harmonious balance between localization and globalization; helping countries build their foundations through a journey of self-reliance while at the same time being able to reap the fruits of globalization. Its primary aim is to reduce, and not eliminate, the dependence of low income nations on developed nations in order to mitigate the consequences of a destabilization in world exports.

As opposed to adhering to either end of the spectrum, this theory proposes great stability between the two systems through carefully curated policies that help underdeveloped nations advocate for equity rather than equality. Achieving this balance however may not be easy, and will likely require careful consideration and the development of policies and practices that take into account the unique challenges and opportunities faced by each country. However, with the right approach, it may be possible to create a more sustainable and equitable global economy that benefits all countries.

Some nations, like Israel, do manage to strike a healthy balance between localization and globalization, with a reliable local food industry that could keep the nation going even in the unfortunate scenario of a disintegrating global food system.

#### 4.1.2. INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURE IN ISRAEL

Israel's agriculture sector has achieved success despite the challenges posed by the country's geography and climate. This sector is a major exporter of fresh produce and a global pioneer in agricultural technologies, producing 95% of its own food needs while augmenting it with imports.

With tons of research, innovation, and discovery leading to the maximization of the very few resources made available to them, they teach the world how to feed itself. Israel's agriculture is very high tech and uses a combination of "net houses"<sup>9</sup>, greenhouses, and tunnels to produce food for more than 80 million people. It is notable for utilizing cutting-edge techniques that maximize the three essential components for growth —soil, water, and sunlight<sup>10</sup>. Even with no freshwater resources available, Israeli farmers dig a mile deep to obtain salty water and learn to utilize it on the fields; the topsoil here is something that almost nothing grows on, but even then, there are a plethora of date farms, grapefruits, peppers, tomatoes, and all kinds of foods that don't belong in this place. This is all made possible by farmers bringing soil from other parts of Israel and layering it above the topsoil that already exists. This is how Israel maintains its reputation as a "flourishing green desert".

To feed the projected global population of 10 billion by 2050, it will be necessary for other countries, including those in Africa, to adopt similar strategies to maximize their production and access to resources. The African continent has a large amount of arable land and promising yield prospects, but what they lack is: 'Reform' to restructure and commercialize its agricultural sector.

To address this, it will be important to provide African countries with the financing and resources they need to become more independent, improve infrastructure, and create better policies that involve the entire agricultural system. By doing so, these countries can reduce their reliance on wealthier nations and ensure that their people have the means to stabilize themselves.

## 5. COMPARATIVE STUDY ON:

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<sup>9</sup> A **Shade house** A shade house is a construction enveloped by agricultural nets or similar woven materials, designed to permit the passage of essential sunlight, moisture, and air through its openings. This structure establishes an optimal microclimate that fosters plant growth. Marco A. Ciobo, Xavier Rizos, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/nz/Documents/primary/nz-en-Lessons-from-Israeli-AgriTech-Aug-2018.pdf> , (last seen: 10 October, 2022)

<sup>10</sup> *Israel is well known for having Sunlight all year round.*

## FINLAND (THE WORLD'S MOST FOOD SECURE) & SYRIA (THE WORLD'S MOST FOOD INSECURE)

The GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY INDEX (GFSI) analyses and evaluates the contributing factors of food security in 113 countries, based on affordability, availability, quality and safety, sustainability and adaptation as well as determining how resilient nations are in protecting their natural resources in order to continue producing food now and in the future.

It examines several distinct food security identifiers, including Nutritional Standards, Urban Absorption Capacity, Food loss, Protein Quality, Corruption, Food Safety and Actions required to accelerate progress toward the 'UN SDG of Zero Hunger by 2030'.

### 5.1. FINLAND

In a global context, Finland is a very high-income country where food security is not a concern. It has been ranked first in the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) published by The Economist for 2022 (GFSI, 2022).

Rank (113 countries)	Overall score	Affordability	Availability	Quality and Safety	Sustainability and Adaptation
1 <sup>st</sup> Finland	83.7	91.9	70.5	88.4	82.6

(Figure 1: Data adapted from, The Economist Impact, <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/>, (12 October, 2022))

Finland boasts a highly advanced and effective agricultural industry, capable of generating a diverse range of food products for both domestic use and international trade. The country also has a strong and reliable food distribution system that ensures that food is available and accessible to all parts of the population. Finland has been able to regulate food costs over the past ten years while also combating social disparities and maintaining a safety net. Agriculture has experienced a significant increase and has been able to reduce food loss, aiding in the provision of enough nutritious food.

Finland maintains low poverty rates attributed to its elevated quality of life, rooted in a robust welfare system. This system encompasses a top-notch education system, elevated healthcare standards, and other factors, collectively contributing to help keep hunger at bay. (DeLorenzo, 2017).





(Figure 2: Data adapted from, The Economist Impact, <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/>, (12 October, 2022))

Finland has consistently supported efforts made by developing nations to improve their food security and encourage the wise use of their natural resources. Finland supports farmers' organizations and encourages agricultural research. Investments in the food processing industries are done to enhance the standard and safety of food. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland).

In developing nations, inadequate hygiene poses a significant health threat. Finland actively supports its partners in the creation of reliable water and sanitation systems. The country is at the forefront of promoting community-led strategies, as reflected in its impressive levels of ownership, cost efficiency, and sustainability (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland).

## 5.2. SYRIA

As Syria enters the twelfth year of ongoing strife,<sup>11</sup> its turmoil has caused profound repercussions on Syrian folks and their economy an almost unfathomable amount of loss and destruction (World Bank, 2022). Over 6.7 million individuals, constituting more than half of the nation's population before the conflict, have been displaced within the country, with the remaining population seeking refuge in neighbouring nations. Additionally, high food prices, a fuel crisis, the sharp depreciation of the national currency, ongoing conflict, and the conflict in Ukraine during the initial months of 2022 has inflicted severe consequences on the numerous impoverished civilians in Syria.

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<sup>11</sup>In March 2011, Syria encountered an unparalleled threat to its governance under President Bashar al-Assad as widespread pro-democracy demonstrations unfolded. These protests, spanning the entire nation, called for an end to the authoritative measures employed by the Assad regime, which had persisted since the presidency of Bashar's father, Hafiz al-Assad, beginning in 1971. Responding to the unrest, the Syrian government employed force, deploying police, military, and paramilitary units to quell the demonstrations. As a consequence, opposition militias emerged in 2011, and the situation escalated into a full-scale civil war by, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War>, (last seen: 12 October 2023)

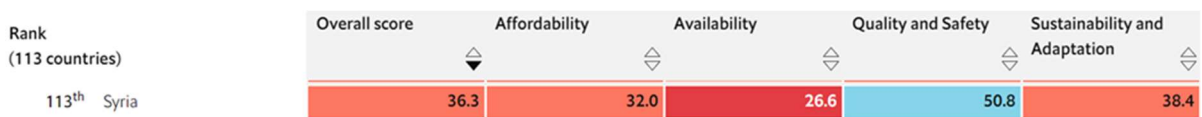
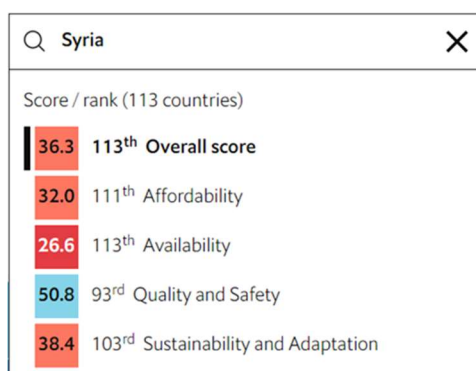


Figure 3: Data adapted from, The Economist Impact, <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/>, (12 October, 2022))

The number of Syrians at risk of going hungry has risen to record-high levels, with 12 million people experiencing food insecurity (WFP, 2022). Agriculture and farming, which were crucial to the nation's economy before the conflict, were severely disrupted. With COVID lockdowns playing a major role, families are forced to choose between purchasing food, sending their children to school, and other necessities as they are unable to afford them all. The World Food Program (WFP) provides food to 5.6 million people in Syria each month, but the Due to financial constraints and disruptions in the supply chain, the World Food Program (WFP) had to progressively decrease the quantity of food distributed to uphold its food assistance efforts, (WFP, 2022) which further contributed to the region's becoming one of the world's biggest hunger hotspots.



(Figure 4: Data adapted from, The Economist Impact, <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/>, (12 October, 2022))

According to the WFP, the persisting turmoil in Syria has disrupted agriculture and the food supply chain, leading to widespread hunger and malnutrition. The conflict has also damaged critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and irrigation systems, which has further hindered food distribution and access. Economic sanctions and other restrictions on the country have also limited the ability to import food, further constraining food availability.

The FAO reports that these factors have contributed to the significant level of food insecurity in Syria. In response to this crisis, a number of organizations have been working to provide food assistance and support to people in need, including the WFP, FAO, and other international and local humanitarian organizations. However, these efforts have been hampered by the ongoing conflict and other challenges, and the situation remains dire for many people in Syria.

**COMPARISONS**

S.No.	TOPICS	FINLAND	SYRIA
1)	<b>RANKED</b>	RANKED 1ST IN THE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY INDEX 2022 (THE ECONOMIST) (GFSI, 2022) <b>(MOST FOOD SECURE)</b>	RANKED 113TH IN THE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY INDEX 2022 (GFSI, 2022) (THE ECONOMIST) <b>(MOST FOOD INSECURE)</b>
2)	<b>EDUCATION</b>	Education has been proven to decrease the likelihood of poverty, and this is still true in Finland where the quality and accessibility of the system are both high. (DeLorenzo, 2017). With high literacy rates and low dropout rates, the education system emphasises on equity and equal opportunities for all students thus performing well on international education rankings.	Since the beginning of the conflict, 2 million children have been kept out of school, and access to shelter, employment opportunities, education, water, and sanitation have all deteriorated exponentially. The education sector has been severely affected by the crisis in Syria, leading to the damage or destruction of more than 7,000 schools (UNICEF, 2018)
3)	<b>HEALTH-CARE</b>	Finland provides free healthcare to all of its citizens. The central focus of healthcare strategies in Finland has traditionally centred on preventing illnesses and promoting various aspects of well-being. This has improved population health and led to the eradication of some communicable diseases. Finland's level of care is among the highest in the OECD. (DeLorenzo, 2017)	The continuous 12-year conflict has resulted in the widespread destruction of hospitals across the country. The healthcare system has been significantly compromised as a consequence of the shortage of replacement parts, maintenance issues affecting medical equipment, and the scarcity of pharmaceuticals.

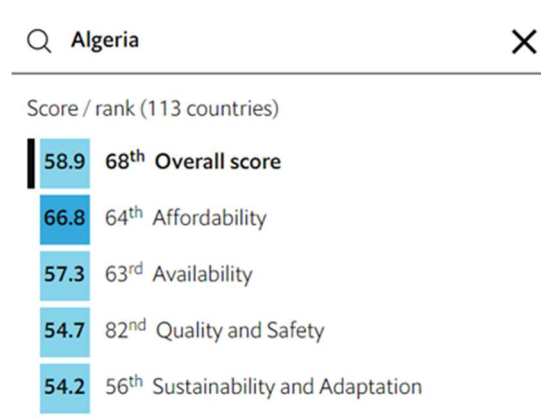
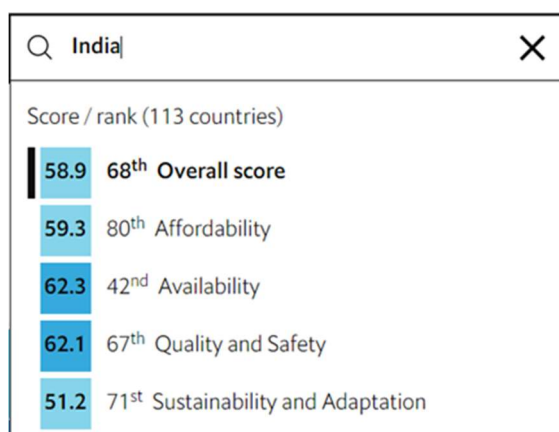
4)	<b>POVERTY</b>	According to a report, Finland has the 2nd lowest poverty rate in the world. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is essentially almost no hunger in the nation. Only 2.5% of Finns experienced undernourishment in 2019, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators. Furthermore, Finland wants to eradicate hunger worldwide (WFP)	More than 80% of Syrians experience food insecurity and nearly 90% of them live in poverty. To meet their basic needs, families are cutting back on their meals and eating less to be able to afford. Before the onset of the conflict, Syria experienced minimal extreme poverty, with less than half of the population living on \$1.90 2011 PPP per day. It now affects more than half of the population.
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## 6. INTERNAL LOOK AT INDIA

### 6.1. INDIA

Securing a total score of 58.9, India attained the 68th position among 113 countries in the GFSI (GFSI, 2022). However, the nation continues to lag behind its neighbours, Pakistan (75th) and Sri Lanka (74th) in terms of food affordability, with India holding the 80th spot, according to the report. (GFSI, 2022)

India now shares the 68th spot with Algeria in the 2022 report, moving up two spots from the previous year. Even so, India has outperformed Algeria in the availability as well as quality and safety sectors.



(Figure 5: Data adapted from, The Economist Impact, <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/>, (12 October, 2022))

India's overall score has increased from 57.2 in 2021 to 58.9 in 2022, but only by 1.7 points. According to the report, India fared better than its neighbours, with Pakistan ranking from 75th (2021) to 84th (2022) and Sri Lanka from 77th (2021) to 79th (2022) plummeting significantly lower on the Food Security Index, while Nepal from 79th (2021) to 74th (2022) and Bangladesh from 84th (2021) to 80th (2022) advanced to better positions. But, however, India continues to significantly lag behind China from 34th (2021) to 25th (2022) in respect to all sectors (GFSDI, 2022)<sup>12</sup>. China has recognised the significance of tying agriculture and nutrition together and is making serious efforts to promote more nutrient-dense and diverse crops. Increased availability of non-staple foods like fruits and vegetables, fisheries, and livestock has been made possible in the diet due to a synergistic effects of agricultural research and public policies, which has a positive impact on nutrition. Due to this, China has been able to improve the nutritional and physical health of its citizens; which India must also learn from (Achieving Nutritional Security in India Vision 2030., 2020).

## 6.2. INTERNAL LOOK AT INDIA'S OWN FOOD SECURITY

While India achieved self-sufficiency in food grain production two decades post-independence, a disproportionately high percentage of people living in certain regions of the country experience food insecurity. India bears 23.8% of the global burden of malnutrition, with an estimated 224.3 million (2021) malnourished<sup>13</sup> people. As per the Global Food Policy Report 2022 from the International Food Policy Research Institute, it is projected that the count of Indians facing the threat of hunger is anticipated to increase to 73.9 million by 2030 (Mishra, 2022). According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-(III), anaemia impacts more than half of Indian women (55%). India has a higher prevalence of anaemia than any other nation (times Of India; TOI, 2022).

Despite slight advancement over time, India still has unacceptable high levels of stunting, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5. Between 2019-21, nearly one-third (32.1%) of children below the age of five experienced underweight conditions, while 35.5% faced stunted growth. Economic growth is slower when health and education aren't adequately funded (Shoba Suri; News18, 2021).

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<sup>12</sup> The Economist Impact, <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/>, (Last seen: 12 October, 2022))

<sup>13</sup>The Hindu, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/number-of-undernourished-people-in-india-declines-to-2243-million-obesity-among-adults-on-the-rise-un-report/article65611180.ece>, July 07, 2022, (last seen: 20 October, 2022)

In India, a substantial chunk of the population struggles with food and nutrition insecurity; the worst affected are landless households in rural areas, individuals with low-wage occupations, and seasonal temporary workers in urban settings (2022).

### 6.3. INDIA'S MOST FOOD INSECURE STATES

The poor, underdeveloped and backward states with high rates of poverty in India are particularly prone to food insecurity. The majority of individuals facing food insecurity reside in regions such as Uttar Pradesh, particularly in its eastern and south-eastern areas, as well as in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and certain areas of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra (2022).

### 6.4. CHALLENGES

For a nation with its size and economic progress, the conundrum of producing more and continuously for the exponentially rising population is becoming increasingly challenging. Even though there may be enough food for everyone in India, many families, lack access to food due to financial difficulties. This is the main reason as to why there are millions of malnourished people in India.

In a recent statement, the government stated its intention to achieve a food grain production of 328 million tonnes (mt) for the crop year 2022-2023 (July-June). This target reflects a 4% increase compared to the previous year's record output of 315.7 mt. (Sandip Das , 2022).

It is crucial to understand that achieving food security requires more than just being self-sufficient in food production and having enough food available for everyone in the nation.

To reduce the consequences of malnutrition, a nutritious diet must be accessible and affordable to all the citizens of the nation.

In India, the situation with regard to food security underwent a significant change in the 1960s with the introduction of the Green Revolution. It drastically increased agricultural output and production supporting India's overall economy while also simultaneously lowering poverty and food insecurity rates across the country (Avashia Aditi JLSR, 2021).

For the Indian government, achieving food security is of paramount concern since it affects people's fundamental rights<sup>14</sup>. The Parliament enacted the National Food Security Act in 2013 with

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<sup>14</sup> The Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights grants individuals the right to enjoy an acceptable standard of living, safeguarding their health and well-being. This encompasses provisions for clothing, housing, food, and medical care. Similarly, in Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which pertains to Fundamental Rights, there is an assurance of protection for an individual's life. Furthermore, Article 47 under the Directive Principles of State Policy mandates the State's foremost responsibility to enhance nutrition levels, elevate standards of living, and

the objective of ensuring the right to food for all citizens of the country. This legislation seeks to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two-thirds of India's 1.33 billion population through initiatives such as the Public Distribution Systems, Midday Meal Scheme, and Integrated Child Development Services schemes (NFSA, 2013)

However, this Act is not devoid of drawbacks.

### 6.5. DRAWBACKS

- The National Food Security Act is surrounded by unethical and corrupt practices, such as selling low-quality goods to the poor.
- Challenges emerge due to inadequate execution and collaboration among various ministries and governmental entities at the federal, state, and local tiers.
- Meal initiatives targeting women and children involves the implementation of unsanitary methods and a lack of oversight.
- Farmers in India face a number of challenges, including a low minimum support price.
- Climate change has an impact on agriculture, and as a result, the purchase, storage, and distribution of food grains. (Avashia Aditi JLSR, 2021)

### 6.6. RIGHT TO FOOD IS NOT EQUIVALENT TO RIGHT TO NUTRITION

The NFSA, 2013, just discusses the issue of hunger and refuses to acknowledge the equally substantial but crucial issue of undernutrition and its eradication. In the coming years, India should prioritize its focus on ensuring nutritional security; transitioning its emphasis from diet quantity to diet quality. For India to achieve nutritional security in addition to food security, the objectives and implementation strategy of the nation must be changed. (CRTITICAL ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT, 2013, 2017)

Nutritional security calls for the consumption of a variety of foods that provide the essential nutrients for a human being, whereas food security indicates presence of food and individuals' capacity to obtain it (FAO).An intergenerational cycle of undernutrition and deprivation could result from the neglect to address the issue of undernutrition. According to studies, due to prenatal nutritional deprivation brought on by the poor nutrition conditions provided to the mothers, one-third of the children born are undernourished (UNICEF).

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*promote public health, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>, (last seen:23 October 2022)*

We are mishandling hunger. We're constantly doing the same things over and over again with hopes of getting a different outcome. Because of the cycle we've established, individuals find themselves compelled to turn to food banks every month, seeking sustenance that often lacks balance and unquestionably falls short of providing a nourishing, wholesome meal (The Guardian, 2015).

Establishing and guaranteeing adequate supply of food should not be the exclusive task; food quality is also essential since it results in the contentment of a person's dietary requirements; however, the primary concern regarding India's nutritional security stems from the insufficient consumption of micronutrients and proteins, falling below the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) (2022); the consumption of which is more likely capable of resolving the pressing concern of rising numbers of anaemic women and growth stunted children as mentioned earlier in India.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) suggests that adults should intake 0.8 to 1 gram of protein per kilogram of body weight daily. On the contrary, statistics also reveals that the typical adult in India only ingests about 0.6g of protein daily, falling short of the recommended amount. (2022)

It is necessary to raise nutritional awareness towards affordable and accessible yet nutritious food options to take the first real step toward eradicating hunger in India.

## **7. IS THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS INEVITABLE?**

With all the uncertainty lying around the topic of food insecurity and crisis, there's a never-ending discussion. But this is where we must separate fact from fiction, and the fact is that the global food crisis is real and we're already witnessing the devastating effects of it first hand and it's only bound to get worse from here on.

Currently we are in a stage where we can see the effects of the global food crisis starting to hit many underdeveloped and unfortunate countries all across the world, and with the fear of a recession right around the corner, it is only a question of time until the food crisis spreads across the world like a disease, depriving millions, if not billions of people from access to food and costing a staggering amount of lives.

In nearly all low- and middle-income nations, there is a notable increase in domestic food prices (WorldBank). That means that even in places where food is plentiful, it is difficult for people to afford it. From Peru to Burundi, people are paying more for basic necessities. The World Food Programme estimates that an unprecedented 49 million individuals across 46 nations may experience famine or "famine-like conditions" as a result of the current food crisis. (FAO, WFP, 2022).

Looking back at the past, we must be wise to learn from our mistakes and not let the same story play out twice, only this time, the outcome will be much worse.



Following the financial crisis of 2008, the world saw significant increases in global food prices, which had a particularly significant impact on underdeveloped nations (Mittal, 2009) and resulting in the impoverishment of 105 million individuals in low-income nations. (World Bank, 2013).

The food crisis in short will be inevitable if not stopped at this stage. However, overcoming the crisis will require the collective and cooperative efforts of countries and their people<sup>15</sup>.

But then, how do we feed two billion more people by 2050 is a question that constantly keeps coming up. The solution is quite straightforward: “just increase food production” and doing so without overwhelming the planet is actually quite nearly impossible. One thing to bear in mind is that 2050 is so much further off in the future that we are unable envision it or even relate to it. More importantly, if the world keeps acting as it currently is, contributing to the devastating effects of climate change, conflicts, and other factors, it will strike us much ahead of time.

While the United Nations' efforts with Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) aiming to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2030 though prevalent, is still too early to determine the overall effectiveness of it, given the goal has a deadline of ‘2030’. While some progress has been made, such as reducing global hunger and boosting agricultural productivity, there are still significant obstacles to attaining the objective, such as high levels of malnutrition, food waste, and the influence of climate change on food production. Ending hunger and malnutrition by 2030 will necessitate a continuous commitment on the part of governments, organisations, and individuals. Hunger is therefore not an issue of scarcity, but rather a vicious circle of inability to innovate. Thus, we don't have a substantial amount of time to figure this out. We must change the laws, we must implement new regulations and, most urgently, alter our attitudes and behaviours towards our planet.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Many nations around the world have been watching the global crisis unfold with trepidation. The entire system is collapsing as a result of a combination of factors, especially becoming worse at the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian War due to which food insecurity has been a growing global concern since the beginning of 2022.

It is certainly true that there can be no localized issue in a globalized world, and that is exactly why the balance of localization and globalization must take place to reduce the reliance of low income nations on the developed. The developed countries must contribute to do their part to implement changes in the low income nations which will in turn stabilise the food system.

However, India is in the spotlight due to its position as one of the leading global wheat producers (WeForum2022) and is anticipated to perform well on a global scale. However, India cannot reach

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<sup>15</sup> (Nations must act together,urgently and with solidarity' to end crisis of food insecurity, 2022)

its full potential unless its internal problems, which affect an estimated 189 million people in India, are resolved.

As in the words of Frances Moore Lappé<sup>16</sup>, “HUNGER ISNT CAUSED BY SCARCITY OF FOOD, BUT A SCARCITY OF DEMOCRACY.”

Despite India taking a significant step by ensuring access to food through the National Food Security Act of 2013, it should not be the only one. It requires restructuring and the inclusion of “nutritional security”, better infrastructure and adequate staff to manage food safety is necessary in order to realize its goals and thus contribute to the much needed stability of the global food system.

When it comes to solving hunger, “there is no one answer, fits all” scenario but what we do know is that, millions upon millions of people's insufficient nutrition puts the entire global order in jeopardy. This goes beyond the present day. Changing the narrative and the way we approach the problem of hunger is not an easy task. It is a collective problem that necessitates the formation of a collective corporation in order to repair the broken global food system.

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<sup>16</sup> Frances Moore Lappé is an American researcher and author in the area of food and democracy policy. She has co-founded three organizations that explore the roots of hunger, poverty, and environmental crises, as well as solutions now emerging worldwide through what she calls Living Democracy, <https://academicinfluence.com/people/frances-moore-lappe>, (last seen: 23 October 2023)

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