

Supporting Small-Scale Farming in Africa

FACT: Sub-Saharan Africa, with 16 of the world's 18 most undernourished countries, is the only region where per-capita food production continues to worsen.¹

THE PROBLEM

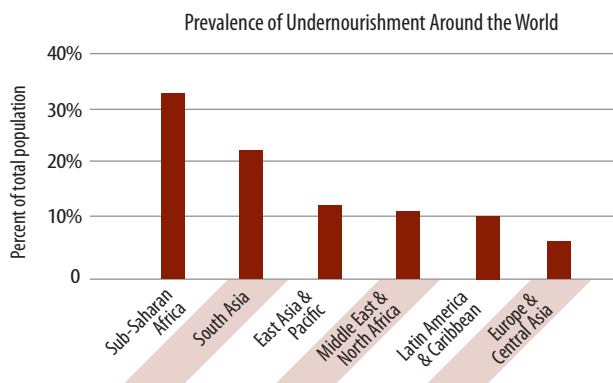
Sub-Saharan African countries continue to be woefully dependent on food imports and food aid, making the population – one in three of whom is hungry² – more vulnerable to price increases and crop failures. Take Niger, for example, where 80 percent of agriculture relies on subsistence farming, yet less than 30 percent of those farmers produce enough to meet their own needs. When food prices spike – jumping 80 percent from 2005 to 2008 – or when a drought kills the crops, families do not have enough income to feed themselves. They sell what they can, and usually it's the source of their livelihood, like livestock. Then the market for these goods collapses as other families do the same.

Women comprise the majority – 60 to 80 percent – of African farm labor and face additional obstacles. They simultaneously raise families and have little access to credit and education to expand beyond subsistence, sometimes with no right to own land and typically unable to produce enough for their families to eat.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Donors who want to improve agricultural productivity in Africa can:

- **Support research into agricultural productivity.** Several university centers are investigating methods to improve agricultural tools and methods and institutional development in Africa. Research



Source: FAOSTAT, <http://faostat.fao.org>, 2006.

1. Rockefeller Foundation, "Africa's Turn: A New Green Revolution for the 21st Century," July 2006, http://www.rockfound.org/library/africas_turn.pdf.
2. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2006: Eradicating World Hunger – Taking Stock Ten Years After the World Food Summit," 2006, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0750e/a0750e00.htm>.
3. "Medium Term Perspective: Africa to Import More Food," UN FAO Food Outlook, No. 1, June 2006, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/j7927e/j7927e12.htm>; "FAO's strategy to enhance food security in Africa," UN FAONewsroom, April 2, 2004, <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2004/39947/index.html>.
4. Christian Webersik, "Call for Action on African Food Security," Our World, 2.0, July 22, 2008, <http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/2008/07/22/call-for-action-on-african-food-security>.

WHY NOW?

Sub-Saharan African countries were hardest hit by the global food crisis. Africa is a net importer of food and more than 45 percent of the population lives on less than \$1 a day.³ While household spending on food accounts for just 10 to 20 percent of income in developed countries like the United States, it accounts for more than 60 percent of income in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴

areas include developing drought- and pest-resistant crop varieties and better soil and water management, as well as understanding the effects of land reform and improving market infrastructure.

- **Increase access to capital and support programs and develop tools designed for women.** Donors can invest in microfinance programs that provide greater access to capital for African women farmers, organizations that develop women-friendly tools and programs that provide professional training, entrepreneurial education and assistance managing family responsibilities.
- **Focus on partners who understand local conditions.** Because of weak institutions, varied local conditions and the need for decentralized implementation, it is essential to have grassroots knowledge and the ability to build community-based capacity, whether through nonprofit organizations, universities or think tanks.
- **Support advocacy to increase awareness of the impact of developed countries' agricultural and relief policies on world hunger.** Subsidies, tariffs and imported food aid distort food production and decrease the ability of developing countries' farmers to compete on a level playing field. Campaigns run by individuals like rock star-activist Bono are trying to increase public awareness of these detrimental policies and exert pressure on politicians to initiate reform.

Additional Resources

- The **2008 World Bank Development Report** focuses on agriculture for development and highlights ways to improve agricultural productivity and economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2008/Resources/WDR_00_book.pdf).
- The **International Food Policy Research Institute** focuses on finding sustainable solutions for ending poverty and hunger. It has produced a report on ending hunger in Africa and increasing the prospects for small farmers (<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/ib/ib16.pdf>).
- The **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the United Nations leads international efforts to address hunger and provides information on problems and solutions related to food insecurity (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0750e/a0750e00.htm>).