

13th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) 2021

How to Feed the World in Times of Pandemics and Climate Change?

The **number of people suffering from hunger** as determined by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in its current SOFI report is alarming: Almost 690 million people worldwide did not have enough to eat in 2019, up from 680 million people in 2018. This is the fifth consecutive year that the number of starving people has risen worldwide. This development could be further exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report thus forecasts that the pandemic will lead to an additional number of 83 to 132 million people suffering from hunger in 2020. The Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres warns of the effects and economic consequences of the pandemic on food security. Moreover, climate change resulting in extreme weather events is increasingly jeopardising a secure global food supply. Against this background, the question arises how to ensure the global supply of food to safeguard a balanced diet for the growing world population.

While the **COVID-19 pandemic** has revealed the systemic relevance of food systems, it has also highlighted their interdependencies and the importance of their resilience. Restrictions on the cross-border movement of goods and people and in public life can make cultivation and harvesting difficult, leaving millions of farming families and workers without income. They endanger the functioning of local, regional and global supply chains and thus the supply of food and other essential goods to people. It became clear that functioning supply chains and transparency on world markets guarantee price stability, notably in times of crisis. In order to prevent the repercussions of the pandemic, in conjunction with advancing climate change, from leading to a further increase in the number of starving people and exacerbating rural poverty, joint action is needed worldwide right now. At the same time, it is vital to learn the necessary lessons to be better prepared for the risks of a continuation of the pandemic and for comparable events.

Joint action is required to **avoid the occurrence of new pandemics and their negative effects in the future as far as possible**. Scientific studies indicate an increase in the incidence of emerging infectious diseases due to transmission from animals to humans. The emergence of diseases up to the scale of a pandemic cannot be ruled out either for the future. 70 percent

of the new infectious agents that have appeared in humans in the last 30 years come from animals. For this reason, approaches to effectively contain zoonoses should be discussed along the same lines as and in conjunction with the approach to curbing antibiotic resistance. This will include in particular the cooperation with the relevant international organisations such as the FAO, World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). What is crucial in this context is the "One Health" approach, which examines the complex interrelationships between animal, human and environmental health in order to take effective action on this basis.

Global food security is increasingly under threat from **climate change**. Farmers are affected particularly severely by the negative consequences of climate change, as production takes place both in nature and with nature. Desertification, water shortages, the loss of sensitive biotopes and genetic resources, and the increase in extreme weather events such as droughts, storms and floods are causing considerable harvest losses and threaten the livelihoods of millions of people - especially smallholder farmers in developing countries. We must therefore strengthen the **climate resilience** of the agricultural sector through extensive adaptation measures as a matter of urgency. International cooperation in research, development and policy-making as well as effective financing mechanisms are required to counter climate-induced falls in production in a more effective manner.

We can only safeguard the foundations of agricultural production on a lasting basis if we succeed in achieving the **climate change mitigation goals**. While zero-emission agricultural production will not be possible, the potential for curbing emissions must be better exploited than before. According to the 2019 Special Report on Land Use by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), about a quarter of man-made greenhouse gas emissions comes from land use, especially from deforestation and agriculture. In order to reduce these emissions without jeopardising global food supplies, we must find climate-friendly and, at the same time, economically viable solutions for food systems around the globe.

Against this backdrop, representatives from politics, industry, science and the civil society are to jointly discuss four key questions at the **2021 GFFA**:

1. How can food systems emerge strengthened from the **COVID-19 pandemic**?
2. How can the agricultural sector contribute to **preventing further pandemics**?
3. How can food systems become more **climate-resilient**?
4. How can food systems contribute to **climate change mitigation** better than before?