



ODUMUNC 2025 Issue Brief
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)



Financing solutions to combat food insecurity in Least Developed Countries

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Introduction

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the *Least Developed Countries* (LDCs) are defined as the sovereign UN Member States ranking lowest on all scales of socioeconomic development. There are 45 officially designated LDCs, listed in the *Annex* to this issue brief. People in these countries face severe impediments to their personal economic security and sustainable development. They are highly vulnerable to

economic and environmental shocks. They have low levels of human assets or wealth, often surviving day-to-day.¹

The LDCs are home to many of the world's most vulnerable populations, most likely to suffer from poverty, malnutrition and disease, most likely to be harmed by weather and climate, most likely to find themselves in the crossfire of internal war, most likely to become refugees or emigrate.

As of August 2024, the UN officially recognizes 45 countries as LDCs. These countries are entitled to preferential market access, aid, special technical assistance, and capacity-building on technology, among other concessions. The international community has long recognized that as the most vulnerable, their problems are everybody's problem.

In an era of unprecedented food production capacity, the persistence of global hunger and food insecurity remains a profound challenge. Despite the world producing enough food to feed its population, millions still face hunger each day, a reality that highlights deep systemic inequalities. In 2023, an estimated 733 million people globally experienced hunger—a marked increase from pre pandemic levels, when hunger affected 577 million in 2019.

1. UNCTAD. *Least Developed Countries*. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. <https://unctad.org/topic/least-developed-countries/list>.



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With projections from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) indicating that 600 million people may face chronic undernourishment by 2030, the situation is critical. Almost half of those affected are expected to reside in Africa, where food

Food insecurity is a complex issue that affects approximately 2.33 billion of the world's total of 8.5 billion people worldwide, spanning from moderate to severe levels of vulnerability. At the extreme end, 864 million people live with severe food insecurity, where entire days may pass without food. High food prices and economic inequality hinder 2.8 billion people from affording nutritious diets, with affordability challenges particularly acute in low-income countries.

These statistics highlight the need for innovative, collaborative action to address the root causes of food insecurity, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and conflict-prone regions where systemic vulnerabilities are most acute.³

The World Food Program (WFP), established in 1961, is the UN's leading agency for emergency food assistance and global food security. As the largest organization dedicated to combating hunger, WFP's mission is to save lives in emergencies and use food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability, and prosperity with operations in over 80 countries, WFP's \$8 billion annual budget, funded by voluntary

insecurity is exacerbated by economic instability, conflict, and climate-related disruptions. Across the continent, severe hunger now impacts 20.4 percent of the population, illustrating a dire need for effective, sustained solutions.²

contributions, supports rapid crisis response through food aid, cash-based support, and school meal programs.⁴ While WFP's extensive logistics allow swift emergency relief, its short-term focus limits its ability to tackle hunger's root causes. It relies on partnerships with other agencies, such as the FAO, for long-term food security solutions.

Furthermore, another agency that has been big on the issue of food insecurity is the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established in 1945, coordinates international efforts to address food insecurity and sustainable development. Tasked with "promoting international economic and social cooperation," ECOSOC fosters collaboration across UN agencies, member states, and organizations to address complex issues like hunger and climate change.

ECOSOC's forums, such as the High-Level Political Forum, bring global leaders together to set priorities and mobilize resources, with particular attention to Sustainable Development Goal 2: ending hunger. However, one of the key limitations of ECOSOC is it serves mainly as a policy coordination body, not a direct implementer of food aid. Its impact depends on

2. World Health Organization. "UN Report: Global Hunger numbers rose to as many as 828 million in 2021." 6 July 2022, <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2022-un-report--global-hunger-numbers-rose-to-as-many-as-828-million-in-2021>; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *FAO Publications Catalogue* 2024. <https://www.fao.org/fsnforum/resources/fao-flagships/fao-publications-catalogue-2024>.

3. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "Hunger Numbers Stubbornly High for Three Consecutive Years as Global Crises Deepen: UN Report." 24 July 2024. <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/hunger-numbers-stubbornly-high-for-three-consecutive-years-as-global-crises-deepen-un-report/en>.

4. World Food Programme. *Our Mission and Work*. 2023. <https://www.wfp.org>.



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effective partnerships to convert policy goals into concrete actions, leveraging agencies like WFP and FAO.⁵

Furthermore, ECOSOC recognizes that the drivers of food insecurity—climate change, political instability, economic shocks, and supply chain disruptions—are increasingly complex and interconnected. Climate events like droughts and floods drastically reduce agricultural productivity in vulnerable regions, while conflicts displace populations and undermine local economies, further compounding food scarcity.

Recent global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have highlighted the fragility of food systems, driving up costs of essential imports like wheat and fertilizers. These impacts are particularly severe in LDCs, where many countries depend heavily on imported goods and have limited domestic resilience against such shocks.⁶

As the global food crisis continues to deepen, ECOSOC remains at the forefront of mobilizing the international community to invest in food security, diversified financing, sustainable agriculture, and resilience-building. ECOSOC strives to ensure that all nations, particularly the most vulnerable, can progress toward a future free from hunger. In partnership with supportive nations and organizations, it is committed to fostering a balanced, cooperative approach to food security, aligning national interests with international development goals to secure lasting change for millions.

Background

Food insecurity remains a pervasive challenge, disproportionately affecting low-income countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic triggered significant economic downturns, leading to income losses and heightened poverty levels in Low Income Countries (LICs). As these nations began to recover, they encountered surging global food prices, reaching record highs due to disruptions in commodity markets and the conflict in Ukraine.

This conflict not only disrupted food supplies but also caused volatility in global food prices, affecting the affordability and availability of staple foods in Low Income Countries. In these countries, food consumption accounts for approximately 45% of household expenditure, making them particularly susceptible to price shocks. Wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine constitute about 14 percent of total caloric intake in a median LIC, compared to just 3 percent in emerging markets and developing economies. Disruptions in these imports have profoundly impacted food security, slowing economic growth and increasing extreme poverty.⁸

Agricultural production in LICs faces numerous challenges, further tightening food supply and exacerbating food insecurity. Many LICs have experienced worsening drought conditions and erratic rainfall, leading to planting delays and reduced agricultural yields. The war in Ukraine has also disrupted the global supply of

5. United Nations. *Economic and Social Council*. 2023. <https://www.un.org/ecosoc>

6. World Health Organization. "UN Report: Global Hunger Numbers Rose to as Many as 828 Million in 2021." Last modified July 2022, <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2022-un-report-global-hunger-numbers-rose-to-as-many-as-828-million-in-2021>.

7. FAO. "ECOSOC Side-Event on Urgent Need to Address Famine Risks and Acute Food Insecurity." [FAO.org](https://www.fao.org).

8. FAO. "Hunger Numbers Stubbornly High for Three Consecutive Years as Global Crises Deepen: UN Report." [FAO.org](https://www.fao.org).



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fertilizers, making it difficult for farmers in LICs to access essential agricultural inputs.

This has led to widespread, low-productivity subsistence farming, rendering Low Income Countries' food systems more vulnerable to shocks. Climate change compounds these challenges, depressing productivity in farming and increasing the frequency and severity of climate-related disasters. In many LICs, higher grain prices have limited farmers' ability to purchase enough seeds for new planting seasons and feed for livestock, creating a cycle of low productivity and high vulnerability to food insecurity.⁹

The high cost of food and fuel, coupled with subdued economic growth and stretched public finances, hampers LIC governments' ability to cushion vulnerable populations from soaring prices. This has led to worsening hunger, malnutrition, and extreme poverty. Long-term consequences of food insecurity include adverse effects on human capital, social unrest, and increased borrowing costs due to high levels of public debt. In an environment of high inflation, deteriorating living standards could exacerbate social unrest, especially in countries suffering from high levels of insecurity and violence.¹⁰

Addressing food insecurity in Low Income Countries requires a concerted global effort. Key measures include substantially increasing financing for LICs' food systems, targeting farming, nutrition, social protection, water, and irrigation. Implementing globally coordinated debt relief efforts is essential to mitigate financial crises in LICs. Expanding vaccination rates and bolstering pandemic preparedness are critical to improving health outcomes and

resilience. Investing in green projects and policies to reduce the economic, health, and social costs of climate change is necessary to make LICs more resilient to climate shocks.

The role of ECOSOC in global food security governance and the severe impact of economic and geopolitical challenges on food insecurity in LICs highlight the need for a coordinated international response. By addressing the root causes of food insecurity and implementing comprehensive policy measures, the international community can help LICs achieve sustainable development and improve the well-being of their populations. The urgency of these actions cannot be overstated, as the future stability and prosperity of LICs depend on the global community's ability to respond effectively to this growing crisis.

Current Challenges

As of 2024, the global food insecurity situation remains critical, with nearly 282 million people facing acute hunger across 59 countries. This represents a growing crisis, as the number of people affected has increased by 24 million since 2023, reflecting both expanded data coverage and an alarming deterioration in regions like the Gaza Strip and Sudan. Conflict remains the primary driver, affecting over 135 million people across 20 countries. Sudan, in particular, saw a sharp increase in food insecurity due to ongoing violence, resulting in

9. United Nations. "Economic and Social Council Focuses on Recurrent Crises, Food Insecurity, Displacement, in Lead Up to Humanitarian Affairs Segment." <https://press.un.org/en/2022/ecosoc7089.doc.htm>.

10. ECOSOC Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development: Building Resilience and Addressing Rising Food Insecurity and Displacement, 20 June 2022." *ReliefWeb*. [ReliefWeb](https://reliefweb.int/)



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8.6 million additional people facing high levels of acute hunger compared to previous years.¹¹

Extreme weather events have exacerbated the crisis, impacting 77 million people in 18 countries as climate-related shocks such as droughts, floods, and extreme heat disrupt agriculture and food supply chains. Economic instability, particularly in countries dependent on food imports, has also played a significant role, affecting 75 million people due to inflation, currency devaluation, and high levels of national debt. These compounded issues have led to food insecurity at emergency levels for over one million people across 39 countries and have pushed 705,000 people into the Catastrophe phase, with the Gaza Strip alone accounting for 80 percent of those at imminent risk of starvation.¹²

Organizations like ECOSOC and the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) are working toward a transformative approach to address these persistent food crises. Their strategy emphasizes integrated peacebuilding, economic resilience, and long-term agricultural support to strengthen food systems. In response to funding limitations that have restricted humanitarian interventions, ECOSOC, in partnership with initiatives such as the G7 and

G20, is advocating for enhanced global commitments to provide critical support in food crisis zones, focusing on both emergency aid and sustainable development.¹³

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11. UNICEF USA. "2024 Global Report on Food Crises." <https://www.unicefusa.org/media-hub/reports/2024-Global-Report-Food-Crises>
12. Food Security Information Network. *Global Report on Food Crises 2024*. April 2024. <https://www.fsinplatform.org/report/global-report-food-crises-2024/>; World Food Programme. "Global Report on Food Crises: Acute Hunger Remains Persistently High in 59 Countries with 1 in 5 People in Need.." <https://www.wfp.org/news/global-report-food-crises-acute-hunger-remains-persistently-high-59-countries-1-5-people>.
13. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "ECOSOC HAS Side-Event on The Urgent Need to Address Famine Risks and Acute Food Insecurity: How Can We Rapidly Avert and Prevent

- Current and Future Food Crises?" <https://www.fao.org/new-york/fao-statements/detail/ecosoc-has-side-event-on-the-urgent-need-to-address-famine-risks-and-acute-food-insecurity--how-can-we-rapidly-avert-and-prevent-current-and-future-food-crises/en>.
14. United Nations. "Goal 2: Zero Hunger - United Nations Sustainable Development." <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>.
15. United Nations. "Goal 2: Zero Hunger - United Nations Sustainable Development." <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>.



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Landmark UN Resolutions

The United Nations has enacted several landmark resolutions that provide a structured framework to address food insecurity and support sustainable development, especially within Least Developed Countries (LDCs). These resolutions are vital in setting a global agenda that not only aims to combat hunger but also promotes sustainable agricultural practices, nutrition improvement, and resilience against climate challenges. Each resolution emphasizes different aspects of food security and sustainable development, reflecting the multidimensional challenges that food insecurity presents.¹⁶

Resolution 73/239 (2018): Implementing the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027), highlights poverty eradication as fundamental to achieving sustainable development. This resolution, launched as part of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, emphasizes that hunger and malnutrition are severe barriers to growth, particularly in LDCs. Economic hardship is often coupled with limited access to health, food, and environmental resources, creating a cycle of poverty that can be difficult to break without intervention.

Resolution 73/239 thus calls for a comprehensive, global strategy to dismantle these barriers through international cooperation, increased investment, and reform policies tailored to support agricultural sectors in LDCs. Its focus on building robust agricultural

infrastructure aligns with SDG 2, which aims to eliminate hunger and foster sustainable agriculture. By targeting structural poverty in LDCs, this resolution promotes a foundational approach to food security and socioeconomic stability.¹⁷

Resolution 70/1 (2015): Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, marked a transformative shift in the global approach to development with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among these, SDG 2 explicitly targets ending hunger, achieving food security, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

This resolution lays out a detailed roadmap for countries to follow, emphasizing that food security requires more than just food distribution; it necessitates systemic changes in agricultural practices, economic policy, and social infrastructure. The 2030 Agenda prioritizes building resilient food systems, an approach essential for LDCs that face heightened risks from economic and environmental shocks.

By integrating food security into the broader SDGs, Resolution 70/1 encourages member states to align their national policies with global efforts to reduce poverty and hunger. Its framework of accountability, progress tracking, and international cooperation provides a structured path for nations to build sustainable agricultural systems that can adapt to climate change and economic pressures.¹⁸

16. Food Security Information Network (FSIN). "Joint Analysis for Better Decisions: Global Report on Food Crises 2023." <https://www.fsinplatform.org/report/global-report-food-crises-2023/>.

17. United Nations General Assembly. "Implementation of the 3rd United Nations Decade for the Eradication of

Poverty (2018-2027): Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly." 73rd session, 2018-2019. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1661592>.

18. United Nations General Assembly. "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly." 70th session, 2015-2016. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3923923>.

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Resolution 76/264 (2022): Food Systems Summit Follow-up. Following the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021, Resolution 76/264 focuses on transforming food systems to promote equity, sustainability, and resilience. This resolution recognizes that food systems must be inclusive and capable of withstanding both environmental and economic shocks, especially for LDCs where food systems are particularly vulnerable.

Resolution 76/264 emphasizes the importance of developing food systems that can support sustainable agriculture while addressing the disparities caused by global inequalities. It calls for targeted support in LDCs to implement climate-resilient agricultural practices, as these countries face disproportionate impacts from climate change, including increased frequency of droughts, floods, and extreme weather events. The resolution advocates for leveraging innovative technologies and partnerships to help LDCs adopt sustainable agriculture that supports vulnerable populations in accessing nutritious food.¹⁹

19. ¹⁹United Nations, Secretary-General, and World Food Programme. "Annual Performance Report of the World Food Programme for 2020: Note by the Secretary-General." <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3959228>

Resolution 77/274 (2023): International Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025), reinforces the global commitment to address malnutrition in all its forms by the end of the International Decade of Action on Nutrition in 2025. Nutrition, as highlighted in this resolution, is a fundamental aspect of human development, impacting health, productivity, and cognitive function. Malnutrition remains a critical challenge in LDCs, where high rates of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity present a complex public health issue.

The resolution calls for increased investments in public health, education, and food systems that prioritize nutrition. This includes support for initiatives that improve dietary quality, accessibility, and affordability of nutritious food, especially for vulnerable groups in LDCs. Resolution 77/274 also emphasizes that improved nutrition has far-reaching economic benefits, including increased labor productivity and reduced healthcare costs. By focusing on nutrition as a cornerstone of development, the resolution pushes member states to address a critical factor in achieving overall well-being and development.²⁰

Resolution 78/292 (2024): Financing for Food Security. The most recent UN resolution, 78/292, highlights the urgent need for increased financial support to combat food insecurity and build resilient food systems, particularly in LDCs. The *2024 State of Food Security and Nutrition* report, which informed this resolution, revealed critical funding shortfalls that impede progress toward ending hunger. Resolution 78/292 calls for diversified financing strategies, encouraging both public and private investments

20. ²⁰World Health Organization. "United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025): Report by the Director-General." <https://www.who.int/initiatives/food-systems-for-nutrition-decade>.

in sustainable agriculture and food distribution infrastructure.

Acknowledging that financial constraints severely limit LDCs' ability to build resilient food systems, this resolution advocates for innovative funding mechanisms, such as climate finance and social impact bonds. It also urges LDCs to mobilize domestic resources while seeking international aid to meet food security and nutrition goals. The focus on sustainable financing is crucial, as it ensures that resources are allocated not only for immediate food aid but also for long-term investments in agriculture that can withstand climate challenges. Resolution 78/292 thus represents a commitment to ending hunger by addressing one of the largest obstacles—sustainable financing for food security.²¹

Country and Bloc Positions

China's development strategy in agriculture is centred on funding large-scale projects through loans provided by Chinese state-owned and private banks. By channelling resources into substantial agricultural infrastructure and technology, China aims to enhance agricultural productivity on a scale that benefits the entire local farming economy. Projects are typically overseen by Chinese firms and personnel, who bring technical expertise and experience, which can improve yield outputs and optimize farming practices.²² For local farmers, this direct involvement often translates to access to advanced agricultural technologies, including mechanized tools and efficient irrigation

systems, which may otherwise be cost-prohibitive.

Moreover, Chinese-led projects in agriculture tend to create jobs and provide training opportunities for local farmers, allowing them to learn improved agricultural techniques that increase their productivity over the long term.²³ These projects also open market opportunities by connecting local produce with Chinese and global supply chains, fostering economic stability for farming communities. As China prioritizes agricultural investment in regions with untapped potential, local farmers benefit from infrastructure like roads and storage facilities, which helps reduce post-harvest losses and makes it easier to transport products to markets. This partnership model ultimately creates a ripple effect of economic growth, as increased productivity and market access enable farmers to generate higher incomes and contribute to food security on both a local and regional level.²⁴

European Union. In contrast, the European Union's approach to foreign aid reflects its commitment to humanitarian values and sustainable local development. EU aid is predominantly channelled through NGOs and local organizations that focus on direct aid to individuals, especially vulnerable populations like small farmers and marginalized communities. This individual-centered approach not only addresses immediate needs but also seeks to support sustainable, grassroots-driven development by strengthening smallholder

21. United Nations. *Resolutions of the 78th Session – United Nations General Assembly*, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/78/resolutions.shtml>.

22. Brautigam, Deborah. *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*. Oxford University Press, 2009. Oxford Academic.

23. Moyo, Dambisa. *Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What It Means for the World*. Basic Books, 2012. Basic Books.

24. Lin, Justin Yifu, and Yan Wang. *Going Beyond Aid: Development Cooperation for Structural Transformation*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.



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agriculture.²⁵ A central goal for the EU is transparency and corruption prevention: EU-funded projects are closely monitored, with strict oversight mechanisms to ensure funds are directed toward intended beneficiaries. Such oversight extends to addressing inefficiencies like inflated administrative costs or disproportionate fees charged by intermediaries. This preference for NGO-based implementation also reflects the EU's intent to foster community resilience, reduce reliance on external aid, and support a localized development framework that empowers local actors.²⁶ This approach underscores the EU's dedication to transparency and long-term developmental impact over immediate economic gains.

India's approach to global food security emphasizes self-sufficiency, sustainable agriculture, and support for smallholder farmers. Domestically, India has implemented policies like the National Food Security Act (NFSA) of 2013, which aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two-thirds of the population, ensuring access to adequate quantities of quality food at affordable prices.²⁷

In international forums such as the United Nations and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), India advocates for the right to food as a fundamental human right and emphasizes the importance of food sovereignty. It supports policies that allow countries to determine their own food security strategies, tailored to their unique socio-economic contexts.

India often highlights the need for equitable distribution of resources and technology to enhance agricultural productivity in developing nations. India has also been proactive in addressing climate change's impact on agriculture. The government has introduced initiatives to develop and distribute climate-resilient seed varieties to help farmers adapt to changing weather patterns.²⁸ Additionally, India has increased the minimum support price for wheat to encourage farmers to expand the sowing area and reduce the need for imports.²⁹

India tends to oppose international policies that may undermine its agricultural sector's interests or compromise its food security objectives. It is cautious about trade agreements that could lead to an influx of subsidized agricultural products, potentially harming local farmers. India also advocates for the protection of smallholder farmers and resists policies that may favor large-scale industrial agriculture at the expense of traditional farming communities.

Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) adopts a unique perspective on foreign aid and investment, driven by its historical foundation in postcolonial solidarity and sovereignty preservation. While NAM countries are generally open to various forms of foreign aid, they consistently stress the importance of recipient country control over both financial allocation and oversight. This stance reflects the NAM's collective wariness of dependency dynamics, where donor countries

25. Carbone, Maurizio. *The European Union and International Development: The Politics of Foreign Aid*. Routledge, 2013. Routledge.

26. Delputte, Sarah, and Jan Orbie. *The European Union's International Development Policy*. Routledge, 2014. Routledge.

27. United Nations in India. "Nutrition and Food Security." <https://india.un.org/en/171969-nutrition-and-food-security>.

28. In India, Warming Climate Pressures Scientists to Keep Developing Tougher Seeds." *Associated Press*, 5

October 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/climate-change-resilient-seeds-agriculture-india-drought-rains-587cf822c3000072584ba58562d2a321>.

29. India Raises Wheat Purchase Price by 6.6% to Boost Output." *Reuters*, 16 October 2024. https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/india-raises-wheat-purchase-price-by-66-boost-output-2024-10-16/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.



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exert influence over recipient states through conditionalities or project control. For NAM countries, maximizing local oversight ensures that aid aligns with national priorities and is implemented without interference, preserving autonomy and reducing risks of external leverage over domestic policies.³⁰ This demand for full spending and supervisory control also mitigates concerns around neocolonial tendencies and dependency, fostering an environment where aid serves as a tool for empowerment rather than subjugation.³¹ Consequently, NAM countries advocate for a model where aid is tailored to the local context, with minimal strings attached and maximal freedom in utilization, challenging traditional donor-recipient power dynamics.

Russia's approach to global food security is characterized by a focus on self-sufficiency, strategic use of agricultural exports, and a preference for bilateral agreements that respect national sovereignty. Domestically, Russia emphasizes achieving high levels of food self-sufficiency, as outlined in its Food Security Doctrine. The 2020 revision of this doctrine set self-sufficiency targets for various food products, including grains, sugar, vegetable oil, meat, milk, fish, and potatoes, aiming to reduce dependence on imports and enhance national food security.³²

In international forums such as the United Nations and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Russia advocates for the recognition of food security as a fundamental aspect of national sovereignty. It supports

policies that allow countries to determine their own food security strategies without external interference. Russia often emphasizes the importance of stable and fair international trade in agricultural products and opposes sanctions or trade restrictions that could disrupt global food supply chains.

Russia's agricultural export strategy has evolved to leverage its position as a major grain producer. In recent years, Russia has implemented measures to control grain exports to stabilize domestic prices and ensure food security. For instance, in October 2024, Russia set a minimum price for wheat exports to international buyers to curb the outflow of wheat and control domestic inflation. Additionally, Russia has increased export taxes and set unofficial minimum export prices, leading to higher costs for importers.³³ Russia tends to oppose international policies that it perceives as infringing on national sovereignty or imposing external standards on domestic agricultural practices. It is cautious about initiatives that could lead to dependency on foreign aid or undermine its agricultural sector's competitiveness. Russia also resists policies that promote genetically modified organisms (GMOs), maintaining strict regulations on GMO cultivation and imports to protect its agricultural integrity.

The United States addresses global food insecurity with a focus on market-driven solutions, technological innovation, and private sector involvement. Central to its strategy is the

30. Prashad, Vijay. *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*. The New Press, 2007. The New Press.

31. Alden, Chris. *China in Africa: Partner, Competitor, or Hegemon?* Zed Books, 2008. Zed Books.

32. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service. "Russia: New Food Security Doctrine Adopted." 7 February

2020. <https://fas.usda.gov/data/russia-new-food-security-doctrine-adopted>.

33. Russia sets price floor for wheat at international tenders, sources say." *Reuters*, 11 October 2024.



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promotion of genetically modified crops and advanced agricultural technology to boost yields and resilience, believing these approaches improve efficiency and economic growth in food-insecure regions (Clapp, 2012). Through programs like Food for Peace, the U.S. provides American-grown food aid, often distributed via NGOs to ensure direct access for vulnerable populations while supporting U.S. agribusiness interests.³⁴

In international forums, the U.S. champions trade liberalization, pushing for reduced barriers to agricultural exports. The U.S. typically opposes government subsidies that distort agricultural markets and resists foreign policy approaches that emphasize large public food distribution networks, advocating instead for market-based solutions and economic self-sufficiency in recipient countries. Additionally, the U.S. is cautious about policies that heavily regulate genetically modified crops, often clashing with regions, such as the EU, that restrict GMO use.³⁵

Some Proposal for Action

Commission a UN Secretary-General Report on the issues to be overcome and possible solutions. When the UN is unable to agree on action, often the best the Member States can do is to authorize a report. This keeps everybody engaged, it is relatively uncontroversial, and it is cheap. There still can be controversy. A report commissioned from the Secretary-General still requires guidance. Who are the authors? Usually it is a committee of *Government Experts*, appointed by the Member States. This ensures they have influence over the outcome.

The alternative is a *Group of Experts* picked by the Secretary-General. This usually ensures a better document, but Member States may worry about being forced to accept conclusions they do not like. Also important for the report are the *Terms of Reference*, the goals, priorities and schedule guiding the authors. Those must be specified, so they know what to do. Agreeing on Terms of reference, what the authors emphasize and what they are allowed or prevented from covering.

Private-Investment Only Approach. Member States could prioritize an investment climate conducive to private-sector-driven agricultural development in food-insecure regions. By establishing frameworks that attract foreign investment through tax incentives and public-private partnerships, this approach would support infrastructure growth, supply chains, and climate-adaptive farming techniques.

A huge advantage for the UN is private investment by companies or private investment banks is cheap for governments. It does not require donor sacrifices or recipient country shifting money. But everybody loses control over where the money comes from and how it is used. Banks may favor big agricultural companies, which employ local staff but don't directly relieve risks of famine. Development experts often prefer to invest in micro-loans for small farmers. These are politically popular but hard to finance, since returns (earnings) for banks tend to be low and often never happen.

Private investment may require the ECOSOC to work with major financial institutions such as the World Bank to guarantee financing and loan guarantees. As always, the most difficult question often is who pays? The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement will be suspicious,

34. ³⁴U.S. Agency for International Development. Office of Food for Peace. <https://www.usaid.gov/office-food-peace> ; <https://www.usaid.gov/office-food-peace>

35. ³⁵Holt-Giménez, E. (2017). *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*. Monthly Review Press.



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worried about processes they do not control, and about loan risks their governments may have to repay.

Elimination of Agricultural Import Barriers in Wealthy Nations. Alternatively, the Assembly may wish to focus on levelling the playing field by calling upon wealthy nations to remove import tariffs and subsidies that hinder fair competition for smallholder farmers from food-insecure countries. Such trade liberalization would expand market access, fostering economic growth and food security for developing nations. Nothing could accelerate agriculture in LDCs as fast as opening export opportunities. Production would expand rapidly. But export-led growth probably will not directly help their own vulnerable populations, people who lack the income to reliably feed themselves.

This option will be especially popular with the LDCs and the NAM. It is easy to see who will be opposed, Countries in Asia, Europe and North America struggling to protect their own farmers. Even in countries where agriculture is controlled by corporations, the farm vote often is politically important, dangerous to fight. These governments want to protect their rural populations and agricultural workers. Their subsidy systems can be expensive, but politically untouchable.

Enhanced Authority for the Secretary-General in Crisis Response. As a contingency in cases where consensus cannot be reached on action, Member States could empower the UN Secretary-General with temporary authority to coordinate emergency food interventions in

regions experiencing acute food crises. This could involve mobilizing food reserves, coordinating logistics, and rallying international support in cases of famine, natural disasters, or conflict-related shortages.

This is a relatively uncontroversial option, likely to be popular with everybody. It is not cheap, and will require government funding to set up new emergency institutions, or expand older ones like the UN's World Food Programme. And it does not address the underlying causes of food insecurity.

Create Regional Emergency Food Reserves. In collaboration with regional bodies, the UN could support the establishment of emergency food reserves in food-insecure areas to stabilize food access during crises. Managed with the help of WFP and FAO, these reserves could facilitate immediate relief in times of need. But they would require investment in facilities for storage, stocks would have to be rotated to ensure quality.

Member States can be expected to argue about how to finance this. Who pays? And who supplies stored food? Countries—including NAM members and the LDCs themselves—can be expected to favor their own agricultural suppliers. Finally, the question of when and how to release and distribute food reserves must be resolved. For example, will aid go to UN agencies for distribution, or will host country governments be in control? Once Member States begin to stress their distinct national interests, even good ideas require difficult negotiation.



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Annex: the 45 official LDCs



The 45 official Least Developed Countries (LDCs):

Africa 33, Asia 8, Caribbean 1, Pacific 3.

Source: United Nations