



Be fruitful ENDING GLOBAL HUNGER

The creation account shows God's unconditional care and love for humanity, reminding us of our dependence on God and how connected we are with all of God's handiwork. In the midst of bountiful resources, 795 million people—one in nine people—do not have food. The planet suffers as a result of humanity's irresponsible stewardship, contrary to the divine mandate (Genesis 1:26, 28–30).

The blessing of God for humanity to be productive and have access to food (Genesis 1:28–29) implies that it is both a gift from God and a fundamental right of every person. Food is an indispensable human need and a human right.

Despite the fact that our world is richly endowed with resources by the eternal Creator, far too many people suffer from a lack of a stable food supply and agricultural economic injustice.

This issue of the *Washington Memo* shares the stories of Mennonite Central Committee's work in influencing global food and hunger policies to make them more sustainable, with minimal impact on the environment and life-giving for all. ✨

In the rural township of Koti, Burkina Faso, MCC assists the Office of Development of Evangelical Churches to help improve nutrition and income for poor households in 11 villages. Through a community vegetable gardening project, basic dietary needs are met by improving the quality of meals, and income is generated through the sale of vegetables.

James Souder/MCC

Food security and the global challenge to ending

by Charles Kwuelum

“Food security” essentially refers to enough food being available and accessible. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines it as “people at all times having physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meet their dietary needs and food preferences for active and healthy life.” More than just having enough food to eat, food security requires having the variety of foods necessary for a healthy diet to prevent malnutrition.

But ensuring that all people are “food secure” is a major challenge. Both natural and human factors lead to food insecurity. In addition to drought, climate change and other

disasters, factors such as greed, income inequality, mismanagement, trade policies that favor farmers in wealthy countries, and a lack of political will to ensure that all have enough to eat have all contributed to extreme impoverishment and hunger. Human structures and systems are largely to blame for this situation.

An additional factor is food waste. According to the FAO, rich countries waste almost as much food (222 million tons) as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (230 million tons). Annually, 1.3 billion tons of food are lost or wasted, one third of all the food produced for human consumption.

U.S policy

The U.S. government has contributed toward combating hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity globally. In the current session of Congress, two bipartisan food security bills were introduced, the Global Food Security Act and the Food for Peace Reform Act.

The Global Food Security Act was signed into law in July. The law provides increased funding for food security, but relies largely on partnerships with multinational corporations as part of an overall framework of profit-oriented trade. In the past this type of approach has often increased unfair advantages for multinational corporations over smallholder farmers, through land grabs and other practices.

The Food for Peace Reform Act, which is unlikely to pass in the current Congress, would reform U.S. food assistance programs to make them more efficient and effective. It would allow more food to be purchased locally and regionally, greatly reducing the delivery time and more importantly, supporting local farmers. It also would allow food assistance to be shipped on non-U.S. vessels, significantly increasing the reach

Drought, flooding and food (in)security in Nicaragua

Climate uncertainty is creating food insecurity across Nicaragua. Following two years of drought in the western dry corridor, smallholder farmers are increasingly vulnerable. Traditionally, there are two planting seasons for farmers. In the past two years the drought has meant minimal harvesting from the first planting, leaving many farmers with limited food and seeds for the second planting.

In 2015, there was just enough rain in the second planting season for a harvest. Up to 60 percent of surface water sources and 50 percent of underground water sources have either dried up or are too polluted to use.

In the east, however, recent flooding has turned into a serious risk, contributing to contaminated water sources, damaged crops and flooded latrines, also impacting food security. In some cases, communities must be evacuated as rivers rise.

Farmers in Nicaragua struggle with a tragic combination of the effects of El Niño, global climate change, deforestation, and a failure to protect environmental resources. As farmers look ahead, they must decide whether to risk planting or, given climate uncertainty, move elsewhere.

In response, MCC works with local partners on conservation agriculture efforts to improve yields in dry years and on emergency responses to drought. MCC is also in conversation with church partners about how to help mitigate flood damage.

Derrick Charles is the MCC representative in Nicaragua.

Corn in northern Nicaragua planted using drought-resistant techniques.



Derrick Charles/MCC

hunger

of various food programs to millions more people at no additional cost.

Some have opposed the bill, contending that it would lead to an end to the purchase of U.S. farmers' agricultural commodities for the Food for Peace Program. Some also fear it would put mariners of U.S.-flagged ships out of work and therefore undermine U.S. national security by reducing our domestic sealift capacity.

The common good

But there is much more that the U.S. and others in the international community can do, including greater recognition of each person's fundamental right to food. A person's right to food is cultural, moral and non-negotiable. For us as Christians, it is also basic to our faith (see, for example, Ezekiel 18:7, Isaiah 58:10, Matthew 25:35).

Many factors affect food accessibility, including the opportunity for meaningful work, responsible management and leadership and equitable distribution. Ensuring the right to food and access to food for every person is an obligation and moral responsibility of everyone, including stakeholders, governments, structures and institutions. It will require taking steps to protect and enhance livelihoods, particularly in rural areas. It will increase the access of small-scale and local farmers (including women) to land, economic resources, and markets.

When stakeholders show indifference or, even worse, play politics with life-saving policies to protect the common good, unjust food systems result. A healthy food system integrates nutrition, a balanced consumption chain, agricultural resources, methodologies and nature. In light of emerging and changing circumstances, it sets new priorities based on



Ted Oswald/MCC

Sixty Haitian peanut farmers in Kabay give a “thumbs down” to the planned USDA peanuts shipment.

ethics and inspired by the common good—the interest or benefit of all (Proverbs 31:8–9).

An agro-ecological approach

A food system that is based on the common good builds on traditional knowledge and ethical research and technology. An agro-ecological approach helps to create a more resilient and sustainable food system by conserving natural resources like soil and water, thereby ensuring that communities have access to adequate nutritious bio-diverse food and food sources. It seeks to empower small farmers, including women.

Such an approach combines knowledge of soil and food production with good governance, development assistance, economic growth, functioning healthy markets and supply chains and increased domestic and private sector investment oriented toward the common good. Agro-ecology helps communities to attain local food sovereignty, with access to and control of local resources like land, water and seeds.

In October 2015 the governments of the United Nations pledged to work toward “zero hunger” by 2030 as one of the Sustainable Development Goals. The UN General Assembly has also declared a Decade of Action on Nutrition. These commitments are important and achievable, if individuals, corporations, governments and institutions work together toward the common good. ✪

The politics of “free” peanuts for Haiti

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently decided to send surplus U.S. peanuts to a country where peanuts already sustain many livelihoods, it caused a stir.

Peanuts represent an important industry in Haiti where 150,000 farmers produce roughly 70,000 metric tons of peanuts each year. A thriving peanut processing sector employs an estimated 500,000 Haitians.

The USDA's move was meant to supplement existing school feeding programs while dealing with a market surplus in the U.S. But it was planned without consideration of its potential effects.

More than 60 groups, including MCC, signed a letter to the USDA in June opposing the shipment. They were concerned the free peanuts could undermine Haitian producers. Though Haiti is affected by drought, dumping surplus peanuts does not address food insecurity in a sustainable way. Food aid, when needed, should be purchased locally to support the domestic economy. Local purchasing has become a tenet of MCC's own disaster response programs.

The peanut dumping plan received attention in the media and the USDA has since cancelled a second delivery of peanuts. While the first shipment is still looming, the cancellation of subsequent shipments was met with approval and relief by the many Haitian and international groups who advocate for more friendly policies to Haitian farmers.

Katharine Oswald is a policy analyst and advocacy coordinator for MCC in Haiti. Charissa Zehr is a Legislative Associate in the MCC U.S. Washington Office.

Hunger for justice

All worship resources below are from *Hunger for Justice: A Worship Resource for World Food Day 2016* by Canadian Foodgrains Bank. To view the complete set of worship materials, visit foodgrainsbank.ca.

World Food Day is October 16 but your congregation may choose to use these materials at Thanksgiving or any other time during the year.

Suggested Scripture readings

Luke 18:1–8 Persisting in prayer
Jeremiah 31:27–34 A new covenant written on our hearts
Psalm 119:97–104 The law of the Lord
2 Timothy 3:14–4:5 Hold fast to what you have learned

Opening prayer

God of love and justice,
we gather together to worship you:
to offer our thanks and praise
and to proclaim your goodness and mercy.

Meet us here.
Breathe your Word into our souls;
engrave your covenant of love upon
our hearts.
Teach us faithfulness and compassion
so that our lives may reflect
your love and justice to the world.
Amen.

Praise litany (based on Psalm 146)

Come! Sing praise to God!
*We will praise God as long as
we live!*

Blessed are those
who have the God of Israel as their
helper,
whose hope is in the Most High—
Creator of heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them.

Come! Sing praise to God!
*We will praise God as long as
we live!*

God keeps every promise forever.
God gives justice to the oppressed,
and food to those who hunger.

Come! Sing praise to God!
*We will praise God as long as
we live!*

God frees the prisoners,
opens the eyes of the blind,
and lifts the burdens of those bowed
down.

God watches over the refugee,
and upholds the orphan and widow.

Come! Sing praise to God!
*We will praise God as long as
we live!*

Our God loves those who do right,
but deliberately thwarts those who
do evil.

Come! Sing praise to God!
*We will praise God as long as
we live!*

Prayer for the offering

Generous God,
through your Son, Jesus Christ,
you have shown us what it means
to love.
And you call us to follow Your
example—
to love our neighbors as we love
ourselves.

Continue to write your law of love
on our hearts.
Give us an unwavering passion for
justice,
and a tenacious faith that will not
rest
until the hungry are fed,
the oppressed find relief,
and the outsider finds a welcome.
Amen

IMPORTANT ADDRESSES

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3121
senate.gov

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 224-3121
house.gov

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
(202) 456-1111
president@whitehouse.gov

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UPCOMING EVENTS

November 8, 2016

Election day
mcc.org/election2016

January 27, 2017

High school essay contest deadline
washington.mcc.org

April 21–24, 2017

Ecumenical Advocacy Days
Washington, D.C.
advocacydays.org

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All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

Facts about global food and hunger



3.1 million

Children under 5 who die each year due to malnutrition

7.3 billion
World population today

9.1 billion

Projected population by 2050

795 million

People who do not have enough to eat



James Souder/MCC



James Souder/MCC

230 million tons

Food produced annually in sub-Saharan Africa

222 million tons

Food wasted each year in rich countries

Sources: United Nations Population Fund; World Food Programme; Food and Agriculture Organization

POLICY PRINCIPLES

U.S. global food policies should...

1 Support small farmers.

The U.S. should enact laws and policies that empower small-scale producers of food in developing countries and regions of the world, including support for agro-ecological methods. This includes implementing trade policies that do not undercut small-holder farmers by importing subsidized agricultural commodities from the United States.

2 Reform U.S. food aid programs.

Congress should pass the Food for Peace Reform Act, which would allow food aid programs to reach more of the world's most vulnerable children and families, without additional cost to the U.S. taxpayer. The proposed reforms include purchasing more food locally and regionally and allowing food aid to be shipped on non-U.S. vessels.

3 Increase funding levels.

Congress should increase funding levels for existing global food security programs, in light of increased conflicts and natural disasters. Programs to fight hunger and malnutrition coordinated by the U.S. Agency for International Development include: the Food for Peace Program, the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, and the Emergency Food Security Program.

4 Be environmentally sustainable.

In order to improve food security, promote a healthy environment and bring about sustainable life-saving results, **Congress should prioritize agricultural policies and laws that protect and care for the environment**. The impact of climate change on agriculture also continues to increase, requiring a greater investment in climate adaptation and mitigation.



Resources for learning more

MCC U.S. Washington Office
washingtonmemo.org/food-security

USAID (Food assistance)
usaid.gov/foodaidreform

Matthew Sawatzky/MCC