

FOOD, FARMING, HUNGER

FACTS TO MOTIVATE ACTION

THE CHALLENGE

Hunger: For each of us, the world produces 2,900 calories a day, one-fifth more than were available 50 years ago.¹ Yet, 800 million+ people go hungry, and those facing high levels of food insecurity has more than doubled since 2020.² One in five children is stunted by malnutrition, causing multiple, enduring harms.³

Meat Heart Hazard: In 2015, the World Health Organization declared red meat a probable carcinogen and processed meat a carcinogen. The latter—bacon, cold cuts, and hot dogs—are a fifth of the meat Americans eat.⁴

Ultra-Processed Food Health Hazard: Almost 60 percent of calories Americans eat now come from ultra-processed food. They are loaded with sugar and salt but offer little nutrition, and they expose us to “up to 5,000—mostly untested—food additives.”⁵

Diabetes Worsening: Diabetes is predicted to afflict one in three Americans by 2050.⁶ Processed food, with sugar and fat, is a major risk factor, along with being overweight.⁷ Among youth, the U.S. has the world’s highest diabetes rate.⁸

Climate Crisis & Food: Largely because of the shift to corporate-chemical practices and a heavy reliance on meat, our food systems globally could generate 37 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.⁹



THE CHALLENGE

Farming Inequity: “In 1920, 14 percent of U.S. farmers were Black, but endemic racism has reduced that share to just over 1 percent today.”¹⁰

Farming & Water Pollution: Nitrogen runoff from fields seeps into streams and rivers, into the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. There, the run-off has created a “dead zone” the size of Massachusetts, killing marine life.”¹¹

Water Cost of Meat: Producing one pound of beef uses 1,800 gallons of water—nearly 50 times more than for a pound of vegetables and roughly 9 times more than for grain.¹²

Harm to Farmworkers from Pesticide Exposure: About “44 percent of farmers, farmworkers, and pesticide applicators experience at least one incident of acute pesticide poisoning on the job every year.” Eleven thousand die yearly from “accidental pesticide poisoning.”¹³

Waste of Farmland: We devote 77 percent of agricultural land to livestock that provide only 18 percent of our calories.¹⁴

Deforestation: Cattle ranching causes 80 percent of deforestation in virtually every Amazon country.¹⁵



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SOLUTIONS ARISING

Health: “Centering our eating in the plant world could cut the incidence of type 2 diabetes by up to 41 percent.”¹⁶

Plant-Centered Diets: Plant-centered diets are reducing greenhouse gases. Making a “societal shift toward plant-based diets” could “reduce greenhouse gas emissions from farming by as much as 70 percent by 2050—and by even more if we cut food loss and waste,” predict University of Minnesota scholars.¹⁷

Organic Acres Are Growing: “Over just one decade in the United States (2005 to 2015), organically farmed acres almost doubled.”¹⁸

Organic Food Sales Are Up: “Rising at more than twice the rate of food sales in general, organic-food sales hit \$50 billion in 2019.”¹⁹

Community Supported Agriculture: The number of Community Supported Agriculture groups (CSAs) is increasing. “Since their birth in the 1980s, CSAs have grown to include 13,000 farms,” says the Department of Agriculture.²⁰



SOLUTIONS ARISING

Agroforestry Is Spreading: Mixing trees and crops—restoring the soil while absorbing carbon—is spreading. In western Africa, an area the size of Texas has converted to agroforestry.²¹

Community Gardens Are Spreading: More than 29,000 community gardens enrich lives across the country. Garden plots in city parks have increased by almost half since 2012, and the 100 largest U.S. cities have more than 29,000 plots in city parks.²²

More Americans Are Gardening: More than half of Americans garden, and the COVID-19 pandemic created 18.3 million new gardeners, largely millennials.²³

Alternatives to Dairy Foods Gain Popularity: Oat and soy milk are gaining market share over dairy.²⁴ Even Philadelphia Cream Cheese is offering a non-dairy version.²⁵

More Americans Are Composting Food Waste. Community composting has more than doubled since 2016.²⁶

Small Farms: Small farms produce a third of the world's food on a quarter of the land.²⁷ But the number of small farms is declining, and solutions require reversing the trend.

For sources, please email info@smallplanet.org



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FOOD, FARMING, HUNGER SOURCES

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