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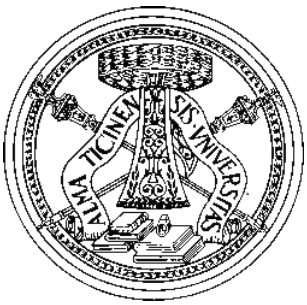

The Right to Food and Climate Change: How the UN System Is Addressing New Food Vulnerabilities

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To those whose days begin and end in hunger,
whose strength is spent in the quiet struggle for dignity.
May your courage guide our conscience, may the world finally listen, may your suffering never remain unseen,
and may the right to food become a reality for all.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AA	Anticipatory Action
ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
ASIS	Agricultural Stress Index System
ASTA	Agrifood Systems Transformation Accelerator
CARI	Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CfW	Cash for Work
CL-Hub	Climate and Land Hub
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CRC	Convention on the Right of the Child
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DLEWS	Desert Locust Early Warning System
DLU	Desert Locust Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FAOSTAT	Food and Agriculture Organisation Corporate Statistical Database
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
FRA	Global Forest Resources Assessments
FSC	Food Security Cluster
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GHI	Global Hunger Index
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning Systems on Food and Agriculture
GLEAM	Global Livestock Environmental Assessment Model
HRC	Human Rights Committee

IACS	Inter-Agency Stranding Committee
IAFPs	Integrated Agro-Industrial Food Parks
ICCPR	International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGWG	Intergovernmental Working Group
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPC	Integrated food security Phase Classification
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JCGP	Joint Consultative Group on Policy
LARA	Assets Resilience Academy
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LKDF	Learning and Knowledge Development Facility
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPs	National Adaptation Plans
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
ESCR	Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
PoU	Prevalence of Undernourishment
RBAs	Rome-Based Agencies
RTCs	Rural Transformation Centres
SAFE	Safe Access to Fuel and Energy
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SoDMA	Somalia Disaster Management Agency
SO	Strategic Objective
SOFI	State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World
SRHCP	Shock-Responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHRC	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNHRD	United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNIDO	United National Indusrial Development Programme
UNTF	United Nations Task Force
VSLAs	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit
ZHC	Zero Hunger Challenge

Introduction

Food is one of mankind's most fundamental needs. It is a human right and malnutrition, in all its forms, is a violation of the right to be free from hunger, which is intrinsic of the right to life. Having access to nutritious food is a crucial matter of daily concern to improve people's living conditions, global health and the environmental sustainability of the planet. Yet, hunger is currently menacing the security of humanity, as the total number of hungry people in the world is continuing to rise. The problem of food insecurity has always been one of the main threats facing humanity and unfortunately, it continues to show negative trends, leading to ever-increasing inequality in access to food. Whilst hunger has been declining for decades, this movement shifted direction and, since 2016, the reduction in global hunger has been minimal as estimates demonstrate that, in 2025, nearly 318 million people in the world faced chronic food deprivation. This lack of progress makes the prospect of achieving the *Zero Hunger* goal by 2030 increasingly remote[1]. The problem of hunger, malnutrition, and poverty is in fact a rampant question of global order, especially due to its social implications. Food insecurity has become a universal problem, affecting all countries, all regions of the world, all ages and genders. Hunger is not an inevitability but a consequence of political choices, and combating it is more than a moral duty: in many states, it is a legally binding human rights obligation[2].

The causes of hunger are complex and interconnected. They include wars, conflicts and disasters, economic and financial crises, poor governance, unfair land distribution, social exclusion from international trade, and, most critically, climate change. The Covid-19 pandemic and the armed hostilities in Ukraine have led to additional inflation, food price increases, and higher agricultural inputs costs, depriving those who are already impoverished of some of their income options. This crisis is deeply unequal in its geographic distribution: Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most severely affected region, with over two thirds of its population experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity. Moreover, nearly 80% of the stunting and wasting children lives in low and lower-middle income countries[3].

People living in poverty are the most exposed to food insecurity, as they lack the resources needed to buy food or the means to produce it. Most of those suffering from hunger live in rural areas and depend on land and natural resources for their livelihoods. Limited access to land, water, markets, and education often prevents rural populations from producing or selling enough food, thus limiting their economic opportunities as well. Within this context, vulnerability is further shaped by social and economic conditions, with particular groups facing higher exposure to hunger: indigenous peoples, women, and children.

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[1] Scherer S.F., Wecker K., & Others, *Indice Globale della Fame. 20 anni di monitoraggio dei progressi: è tempo di rinnovare l'impegno per l'obiettivo fame zero,* Welt Hunger Life, Concern World Wide & IFHV, (2025), p. 5.

[2] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, p. 1 & SDG 2 Advocacy Hub, *Open Letter and Policy Recommendations to United Nations' Member States on the global hunger crisis,* SDG 2 Advocacy Hub.

[3] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025,* (2025), pp. 10-11.

Indigenous people are particularly vulnerable due to their long history of marginalisation and their relationships with their ancestral lands. Their right to food is closely related to their cultural traditions and their access to natural resources, which they use for farming, fishing, hunting, and gathering. The degradation of their lands as a consequence of climate change directly undermines their ability to exercise this right[4].

Women play a central role in food production but are disproportionately affected by hunger and malnutrition due to gender inequality in accessing land, credit, education, and employment, and are frequently paid less than men or employed in precarious conditions. These inequalities reduce their ability to secure food for themselves and their families, while social norms may also lead to women and girls receiving less food within households[5].

Children require adequate nutrition for physical and mental development, yet nearly six million children die yearly from malnutrition or related diseases – that is one child every five seconds[6]. Undernutrition during childhood contributed significantly to child mortality and long-term health problems[7].

At the heart of this thesis lies the relationship between climate change and food insecurity. Extreme weather events disrupt food systems with increasing intensity: droughts, floods, and storms are growing more frequent and severe, and they spread food insecurity across regions with disproportionate impacts on communities already facing structural vulnerabilities[8]. The climate crisis is no longer a sporadic phenomenon but has become a constant threat to global agriculture and fisheries. For instance, a drought caused by El Niño led to a 30 to 50% drop in cereal production across six Southern African countries. Forecasts then indicate an 80% probability that at least one year between 2025 and 2029 will surpass 2024 as the hottest on record, increasing the likelihood of heatwaves, floods, and storms and consequently altering the cycles of agriculture and livestock feed. Regions already under extreme stress, such as parts of East Africa, are likely to face intense and recurring climate shocks[9]. No other sector of the economy is as dependent on climate conditions as agriculture.

Today, 318 million people in 68 countries around the world are facing acute hunger[10]. Among them, 41 million people are in emergency levels of acute food insecurity (IPC phase 4+)[11], but most alarming is the surge in the number of people facing catastrophic levels of hunger, reaching an unprecedented peak in this century[12]. In 2025, hunger levels remained relatively stable, but with different trends that varied across different regions in the world,

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[4] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, pp. 10-17.

[5] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, pp. 10-17.

[6] Ziegler J., *What is the Right to Food?,* Right to Food.

[7] *Ibidem.*

[8] WFP, *WFP 2026 Global Outlook. Hunger and hope: Innovative solutions to address food insecurity,* (2025), p. 4.

[9] Scherer S.F., Wecker K., & Others, *Indice Globale della Fame. 20 anni di monitoraggio dei progressi: è tempo di rinnovare l'impegno per l'obiettivo fame zero,* Welt Hunger Life, Concern World Wide & IFHV, (2025), p. 7.

[10] WFP, *A global food crisis,* World Food Programme.

[11] WFP, *WFP 2026 Global Outlook. Hunger and hope: Innovative solutions to address food insecurity,* (2025), p. 3.

[12] *Ivi*, p. 5.

with Asia and Africa as the most affected[13]. The World Food Programme (WFP) and FAO have identified 16 hunger hotspots where food insecurity is expected to deteriorate in 2026, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Syria, and Somalia. Population growth, soil degradation, water scarcity, and reduced global cooperation represent compounding threats to the right to food of every individual[14]. Additionally, hunger is not just a humanitarian crisis, but it is a silent destabiliser that erodes governance, fuels conflict, undermines global security, and contributes to political instability and migration. Indeed, if left unchecked, it could become a strategic threat with ripple effects across borders. Therefore, eradicating hunger and malnutrition and reducing poverty is not exclusively a humanitarian imperative, but represent a prerequisite for economic growth and prosperity[15].

In response to this crisis, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development urgently calls for action by all countries – developed and developing ones – within a global partnership. It acknowledges that ending poverty and hunger must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while tackling climate change[16]. A collaborative and coordinated effort across governments, international organisations, financial institutions, the private sector, and other partners is fundamental and indispensable to put an end to the global food crisis. In this context, the United Nations play a central role, not only in delivering emergency relief but also in strengthening food systems and promoting resilience, laying the foundations for a more stable and food-secure future[17].

The world is gradually moving further away from achieving the *Zero Hunger* goal by 2030, not for lack of warning signs, but because of a collective failure to act. Progress in reducing hunger is slowing and the commitment to ending hunger is declining just when it is needed more than ever. And yet it is still possible to change course. Between 2000 and 2016, global hunger fell significantly, proving that coordinated action can deliver tangible results[18]. These achievements were no accident: they were made possible by sustained investment and political will. Today, those same tools are still within reach. Government can renew their commitment to actions that have proven effective – such as expanding school meal programmes – whilst investing in policies that support sustainable food systems in the face of overlapping crises, particularly in response to the climate emergency. Donors who once made nutrition a priority can do so again.

Somalia will serve as the central case study of this thesis, illustrating both the devastating convergence of climate shock, conflict, and structural vulnerability, and the extent to which targeted international intervention can drive meaningful, if fragile, progress[19]. It represents one of the most acute and enduring cases of food insecurity in the world, and as such it

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[13] *Ibidem*.
[14] UNIDO, *Food Security and Climate Change – A 2023 update,* Sustainable Development Goals, (2023), p. 2.
[15] WFP, *WFP 2026 Global Outlook. Hunger and hope: Innovative solutions to address food insecurity,* (2025), p. 3.
[16] United Nations, *The 17 Goals,* Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
[17] WFP, *A global food crisis,* World Food Programme.
[18] Scherer S.F., Wecker K., & Others, *Indice Globale della Fame. 20 anni di monitoraggio dei progressi: è tempo di rinnovare l'impegno per l'obiettivo fame zero,* Welt Hunger Life, Concern World Wide & IFHV, (2025), p. 19.
[19] Global Hunger Index report, *20 years of tracking progress: time to recommit to zero hunger,* Global Hunger Index, (2025) & Scherer S.F., Wecker K., & Others, *Indice Globale della Fame. 20 anni di monitoraggio dei progressi: è tempo di rinnovare l'impegno per l'obiettivo fame zero,* Welt Hunger Life, Concern World Wide & IFHV, (2025), p. 5.

offers a critical lens through which to examine the limitations and possibilities of the international response.

This thesis examines the right to food as a fundamental and legally binding norm of international law, and analyses how climate change is emerging as one of the most severe and structurally distinctive threats to its realisation. Drawing on a methodology that combined doctrinal legal analysis of the relevant international instruments – principally Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and General Comment 12 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – with empirical and humanitarian data on food insecurity trends, this work seeks to answer three interconnected questions: which is the normative content of the right to food and what obligations does it impose on states; how has climate change altered the nature and scale of food vulnerability in ways that existing legal frameworks struggle to fully capture; and how has the UN system – through institutions such as the FAO, the WFP, and IFAD – responded to these compounding challenges, with what results and with what limitations. The thesis argues that while the international legal framework on the right to food is normatively robust and the UN system's institutional response has produced meaningful progress, significant gaps persist – especially in funding and in the capacity of existing mechanisms to keep pace with the accelerating impacts of climate change. The case of Somalia is illustrated as a critical illustration of this dynamic, demonstrating how the convergence of recurring climate shocks, structural vulnerability, and protracted conflict produces some of the most acute food insecurity conditions in the world, while also revealing the extent to which sustained and coordinated international intervention can drive fragile but tangible progress.

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 establishes the conceptual and legal foundations of the right to food in international law. Chapter 2 analyses the relationship between climate change and food vulnerability, mapping both the systemic impacts on food systems and the structural factors that concentrate risk among the most marginalised populations. Chapter 3 examined the institutional response of the UN system, assessing the mandates, strategies, and outcomes of the principal agencies involved. Chapter 4 presents the Somalia case study in depth. The thesis concluded with a reflection on the distance between existing legal commitments and the reality on the ground, and on what meaningful progress would require.

The international community and national governments have repeatedly failed to prioritise the wellbeing of the world's most vulnerable populations, allowing political and economic interests to take precedence. Despite numerous promises made by political leaders, conditions on the ground have changed far too little. World leaders are urged to act immediately by delivering the funding necessary to reach 50 million people on the brink of starvation, while simultaneously helping vulnerable countries and communities build resilience and preparing for future crises[20]. There is no acceptable place for famine in the 21st century, and the lives of millions of women, men, and children depend on the bold

[20] SDG 2 Advocacy Hub, *Open Letter and Policy Recommendations to United Nations' Member States on the global hunger crisis,* SDG 2 Advocacy Hub.

decisions taken – or neglected – in the period ahead. Based on current data and the measures presently in place, the world will not achieve the goal of ending global hunger by 2030. However, this ambition remains vitally important and achievable in the long term, if countries commit themselves to act upon the multiple obligations and recommendations already enshrined in international law[21].

[21] *Ibidem*.

Chapter One
The Right to Food in International Law: Conceptual Foundations and Regulatory Development

1.1. Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition: Conceptual Clarifications

Hunger is commonly defined as the immediate, painful physical sensation caused by insufficient food intake and the accompanying desire to eat. Its academic and political definition, however, is significantly more rigorous: it does not simply describe the temporary discomfort of a missed meal, but rather a persistent and debilitating state in which individuals or entire groups suffer from a chronic lack of both quantity and quality in their diet. Hunger is rarely a standalone phenomenon; rather, it is the devastating byproduct of conflict, systemic inequality, economic and political instability, and the climate emergency. Each of these elements, even when acting alone, has the power to trigger a food crisis that devastates entire populations. War remains the most aggressive and common driver of acute hunger. In 2025, conflict fuelled food crises for approximately 140 million people across 20 countries, reaching critical levels in regions like the Gaza Strip and Sudan, where security constraints block humanitarian aid and assistance. Currently, 69% of the acutely food-insecure population around the world – roughly 129 million people – live in conflict zones[22]. Wars do not simply destroy crops and infrastructures but take advantage of starvation sometimes using it as a deliberate military tactic, a practice condemned by UN Security Council Resolution 2417, as well as by international humanitarian and criminal law[23]. Hunger is also rooted in structural inequality: inequalities in accessing land, education, and healthcare exponentially increase malnutrition risks. The direct link between sanitation and nutrition is particularly strong: the WHO estimates that 50% of child malnutrition cases are caused by a lack of clean water and hygiene. Consequently, achieving SDG 6 (Clean Water) is a fundamental pillar in the global fight against hunger. Climate change is the second largest driver of hunger, particularly relevant nowadays. Disasters like cyclones, floods, and droughts – as the 2023-2024 El Niño event – ruin harvests and livelihoods, forcing millions to turn into "climate refugees", often triggering secondary conflicts when scarce resources must be shared among growing populations. By 2025, climate shocks impacted 96 million people across 18 nations[24].

Although closely linked to hunger, food insecurity is a completely different concept. *Food insecurity* occurs when the fundamental criteria for food security are missing – namely, the condition where all people maintain consistent access to the safe, nutritious food required for normal growth, development, and a healthy and active life. Beyond being a policy goal, food security is a moral imperative, rooted in the idea that every human being

[22] WFP, *A global food crisis,* World Food Programme & WFP, *WFP 2026 Global Outlook. Hunger and hope: Innovative solutions to address food insecurity,* (2025), p. 3.

[23] Article 54 of the Additional Protocol I and Article 14 of the Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions prohibit the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare or combat. Moreover, Article 8 of the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court defined as war crime the intentional use of starvation as a method of warfare.

[24] WFP, *WFP 2025 Global Outlook*, World Food Programme, (2024), p 6.

deserves unrestricted access to nourishment[25]. It is a needs-based concept, which establishes a goal to be reached through programmes and policies. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) specifies that food security is achieved only when "*all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life*"[26]. Consequently, food insecurity is best understood as a structural failure to sustain these conditions over time, leaving populations to struggle for their basic survival[27].

To evaluate food security and the stability of a food system, scholars and policy makers generally analyse four critical dimensions: availability, access, use, and stability[28].

- Availability refers to the physical supply of sufficient food, regardless of whether is produced domestically, imported, or provided through food assistance or humanitarian aid. According to FAO, global production is currently sufficient to feed the world's population. Therefore, hunger and malnutrition are rarely a problem of lack of enough food, but rather a crisis of distribution of available resources and systemic inequality.
- Access relates to the practical economic and physical ability of individuals to obtain food. Given the sufficiency of global food production to feed the world's population, hunger persists because many people cannot access available food due to prices that are too high, poor infrastructure, or limited access to the market. However, even when food is available in markets, people may be unable to reach it because of armed conflict, displacement, discrimination, or natural disasters. Food must be affordable and accessible to all, including those living in situations of vulnerability[29].
- Use, or utilisation, looks at the ways in which the body processes nutrients and relates to the nutritional adequacy of food. It is deeply interconnected with non-food factors. The simple consume of calories is not sufficient to guarantee a right use; an individual must also have access to clean water, healthcare, sanitation., and the necessary nutrients to conduct a healthy life. Without these, disease or poor absorption can lead to malnutrition regardless of food intake, particularly among children.
- Stability is the temporal dimension, a cross-cutting requirement which demands that the previous three pillars remain consistent over time. Unexpected shocks – such as economic crises, extreme weather events or conflicts – can instantly jeopardise an otherwise stable and functioning system, and push a stable population into a state of acute food insecurity.

Food insecurity is therefore a systemic and multidimensional condition, extending beyond the mere absence of calories defined by "hunger"[30]. Closely related to this concept is

[25] Anthem P., *Food security – what it means and why it matters,* World Food Programme, (2025).
[26] FAO, *The right to food within the international framework of human rights and country constitutions – Right to Food Handbooks,* (2014), Rome, p. 9.
[27] WFP, *Ending hunger*, World Food Programme.
[28] Anthem P., *Food security – what it means and why it matters,* World Food Programme, (2025).
[29] FAO, *Right to food. All human beings are born with the right to adequate food,* (2026).
[30] Anthem P., *Food security – what it means and why it matters,* World Food Programme, (2025).

malnutrition. *Malnutrition* refers to excesses, deficiencies, or imbalances in the intake of energy and nutrients of a person. It encompasses the entire spectrum of nutritional failure, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overnutrition (obesity). If, on one side, hunger reflects insufficient food intake, malnutrition, on the other side, concerns the physiological and health consequences of prolonged inadequate diet quality and nutrient absorption. This physiological decline, if left unchecked and uncontrolled, weakens the immune system, rendering individuals increasingly vulnerable to other forms of diseases, eventually culminating into death. In its most extreme form, this collapse manifests as *famine.* Famine represents the most catastrophic manifestation of food crisis defined by widespread acute malnutrition, mass mortality, and the total disintegration of social structures[31]. It is defined as "extreme food deprivation", and a formal declaration of famine occurs when a community crosses three horrific thresholds: a daily death rate of at least 2 per 10.000 people, acute malnutrition in 30% of children, and extreme food shortages for a fifth of all households[32].

In short, hunger can be viewed as the symptom, food insecurity as the structural condition or systemic failure, and malnutrition as the health outcome or biological result. While these definitions highlight the socio-economic and physiological dimensions of the crisis, addressing them requires more than just policy objectives; it demands a robust legal response. By moving from a "needs-based" approach to a "rights-based" framework, the right to food provides the normative framework required to hold states accountable for the eradication of hunger and the systemic failures of food insecurity. So, while food security makes reference to the practical condition in which individuals enjoy stable physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, the right to food is a legally recognised human right that obliges government to ensure access to adequate food: it is a legal entitlement. It transforms people in rights-holders and governments into duty-bearers, providing the necessary accountability to dismantle the causes of malnutrition and ensure a life of dignity for all. The right to food is the legal framework addressing them all: hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition.

1.2. The Right to Food: Legal Definition and Regulatory Content

All human beings are born with the right to adequate food. "*The right to food is a universal human right. Everyone has the right to be free from hunger and to have an adequate standard of living, including food*"[33]. The right to food transforms the moral necessity of nourishment into a binding legal entitlement. It is an inherent human right, essential to every person for the preservation of human dignity and the right to life itself. Adequate nutrition is necessary not only for survival, but also for the physical and mental development of individuals. This right protects the ability of all people to live free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. Importantly, the right to food is not a right to charity; rather, it protects the right of individuals to feed themselves with dignity, whether through autonomous production or

[31] Ziegler J., *What is the Right to Food?,* Right to Food & WFP, *Ending hunger*, World Food Programme.
[32] WFP, *Understanding famine: what it is, how you can act,* World Food Programme, (2025).
[33] FAO, *Right to food,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

participation in the labour market[34]. The right to food is an inclusive right: it does not limit to the right to a minimum quantity of calories, proteins and other nutrients, but extends as a right that encompasses all nutritional elements required for a healthy and active life, as well as the resources necessary to obtain them. Indeed, while the concept of the human right to food is often immediately associated with the quantitative goal of being free from hunger and malnutrition – frequently categorised under the umbrella of food security – a rights-based perspective demands a much broader interpretation. True realisation of this right is contingent not only on the quantity of food available but also on its quality; it is only fulfilled when individuals have access to food that is safe and nutritionally adequate for their health. Within the human rights framework, therefore, food safety (quality) and food security (quantity) are not distinct policy goals, but rather two inseparable dimensions of a single fundamental right, the right to food[35]. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food provides a comprehensive definition: it is the right to regular, permanent and unrestricted access to food, either produced directly or by means of financial purchases, that is quantitively and qualitatively sufficient, reflects cultural traditions, and ensures a life free from fear and full of dignity[36]. While international law acknowledges that the full realisation of this right may be achieved progressively based on a state's available resources, governments are strictly obliged to take immediate, non-discriminatory steps toward the fulfilment of this goal.

The right to food Is also closely associated with the principles of dignity and entitlement. Dignity because this right is not only associate with survival, but also with what makes us who we are: our relationships, our culture, our health. Entitlement because we are talking about a fundamental human right, something we have the right to demand, and that states are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil[37]. The right to food is not a privilege: we all have the right to safe and nutritious food for the development of a healthy and dignified life.

It Is vital to distinguish between food security and the right to food. Although closely related as it is often viewed as a precondition for the fulfilment of the right to adequate food, the concept of food security differs from the right to food in nature and function. While they overlap, they function differently. Food security is primarily a policy objective, based on the goal of ensuring sufficient food supply and access, not focused on individual and collective binding legal obligations for duty bearers or public accountability mechanisms. By contrast, the right to food is a legal norm that creates mandatory obligations for states and corresponding rights for individuals. On one side, food security policies aim to improve conditions of access to food while on the other, the right to food creates mechanisms of accountability and allows individuals to refer to judicial or quasi-judicial

[34] Ziegler J., *What is the Right to Food?,* Right to Food.

[35] Security and Safety are strictly interrelated since EXPO 2015 and later integrated in the SDGs (Agenda 2030). Corcione E., Talpo E., & Perez I., *"Il diritto umano al cibo: se non è sicuro, non è cibo",* Laboratorio di Sostenibilità ed Economia Circolare, Università degli Studi di Scienze Gastronomiche di Pollenzo, (2024).

[36] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, p. 2.

[37] Echanove J., *All human being are born with the right to adequate food,* FAO.

procedures to challenge any possible violation[38]. Moreover, food security is often measured by the technical aspects of availability and access, but it frequently remains silent on the methods of production or the identity of the producers. In contrast, the right to food is highly interconnected to the broader spectrum of human dignity, giving individuals, particularly the most marginalised, the power to make informed decisions about their own nutrition and the allocation of resources. Ultimately, the right to food is not an isolated entitlement but a fundamental safeguard against the broader experience of inhuman treatment[39].

Furthermore, the concept of food sovereignty adds a political dimension to this discourse and, in the definition of the right to food, it is important to understand the difference between food security and food sovereignty. The former refers to the availability of food for both current and future generations, while the latter emphasises the power of people to define their own food and agricultural systems, usually deciding to prioritise food that is produced locally as it results as culturally appropriate and is generated through sustainable methods, defending the interests of the next generation[40]. Food is a basic human right, and according to the growing movement of farm workers, peasants, farm and indigenous people, *La Via Campesina*, this right can only be realised in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed[41].

Ultimately, the right to food serves as the overarching legal framework. It mandates that everyone – especially those in marginalised or vulnerable positions – must have the continuous physical and economic means to sustain themselves through adequate, safe, and culturally relevant nutrition. Each individual in the planet has the right to food, but some individuals or groups face more obstacles than others to see this right protected.

It is true that these definitions establish the modern scope and legal nature of the right to food, but its current status as a cornerstone of human rights law is the result of a long normative evolution that lasted decades. It is necessary to trace the historical trajectory of the right to food, beginning with its first formal recognition in the mid-20th century, in order to understand how these obligations became binding upon states.

1.3. Origin and Evolution of the Right to Food in International Law

Since the end of the Second World War, the global agenda has increasingly highlighted the urgent need to combat malnutrition.

The first international instrument to formally recognise the human right to adequate food in international law was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Article 25(1) situates the right to food as a fundamental component of the right to an adequate standard of living, asserting that "*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate*

[38] Mechlem K., *Food Security and the Right to Food in the Discourse of the United Nations*, European Law Journal, (2004), Oxford, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 643-644.

[39] Albani L., & Others, *Diritto al cibo – Lo sviluppo sostenibile a partire dai sistemi alimentari,* GCAP Italia, (2019).

[40] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner., p. 4 & Via Campesina, *What is Food Sovereignty?,* (2025).

[41] See the 6 principles of food sovereignty from Kroff F. & Flores A.C., *Right to Adequate Food and nutrition, and to Food Sovereignty,* FIAN international & FIAN Belgium, (2020), pp. 7-8.

for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."[42]. The UDHR set the moral stage but, importantly, it lacked the status of a binding treaty. Since then, significant attention has been paid to the right to food in an increasing way, which has been progressively incorporated into numerous international conventions, regional agreements, and national constitutions. In international law, instruments governing the right to food are generally divided between two categories: binding and non-binding instruments.

- Binding legal instruments take the form of treaties, covenants or conventions. When a state ratifies these documents, it assumes a legal obligation to enforce their provisions at the national level. Among the binding instruments related to the right to food, emerge the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 (CEDAW), the Convention on the Right of the Child of 1989 (CRC), the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and a number of regional human rights instruments.
- Non-binding international instruments take the form of declarations, recommendations or resolutions. While they do not carry the force of law, they impose significant moral obligations on signatory states and guide the development of international norms and national policies. However, the states are not legally bound by their provisions. Among the non-binding instruments related to the right to food there are the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition (1974), the Rome Declaration on World Food Security (1996), and the Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security (2004).

Given the fact the UDHR did not have the legal status of a treaty, it has been subsequently implemented through two covenants, binding on ratifying states: the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The right to food is embedded in the second one.

The human right to food is named twice in the ICESCR: within the fundamental right to be free from hunger and within the right to adequate food. The right to be free from hunger is closely linked to the right to life and it is considered an absolute and immediate standard. It represents the minimum threshold that every state must guarantee, regardless of its level of economic development. General Comment No. 6 of the Human Rights Committee reinforces this by stating that "*the protection of the right to life requires that States adopt positive measures"* and considers that states should take all possible measures "*to reduce infant mortality*

[42] FAO, *The right to food within the international framework of human rights and country constitutions – Right to Food Handbooks,* (2014), Rome, p. 2 & Bourke-Martignoni J., Dugard & other, *The right to food,* in *Research handbook on economic, social and cultural rights as human rights*, (2020), p. 140 & General Assembly of the United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, United Nations, (1948).

and to increase life expectancy, especially in adopting measures to eliminate malnutrition and epidemics"[43]. *The* right to adequate food is a much broader concept, a relative one, as it requires states to create the social, economic, and political conditions to allow individuals to achieve food security autonomously. Article 11 explicitly mandates that states take both individual and collective action to ensure these rights are realised[44]. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reads as follows:

"(1) The State Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

(2) The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually or through international cooperation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:

a) *To improve the methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;*
b) *Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.*"[45].

This paragraph does not explicitly define the right to food but instead focuses on the mechanisms through which it might be achieved.

The evolution of these norms and of international efforts to mitigate hunger has often been a response to acute humanitarian crisis. A pivotal example is the 1974 Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, adopted during the World Food Conference, which emerged as a direct response to the catastrophic famines across Africa, Asia, and South America in the early 1970s. It shifted the international focus toward a "world food security system" designed to stabilise supply and pricing against political volatility and climate variability. Notably, it also proposed the establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a UN financial institution targeting the needs of rural populations.

While global efforts since the Second World War targeted eradicating hunger and guaranteeing world food security, these activities were not taken within the framework of human rights principles. These decades of advocacy by civil society paved the way for the

[43] Human Rights Committee, CCPR General Comment No. 6: Article 6 (Right to Life), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, (1982), para. 5 & Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, pp. 14-15.

[44] Bourke-Martignoni J., Dugard & other, *The right to food,* in *Research handbook on economic, social and cultural rights as human rights,* (2020), p. 141.

[45] FAO, *The right to food within the international framework of human rights and country constitutions – Right to Food Handbooks,* (2014), Rome, p. 4.

landmark 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) in Rome, where the right to food was finally integrated into the global policy mainstream.

The World Food Summit clearly set the fundamental target to eradicate hunger with the aim to halve the number of undernourished people by 2015 – a goal that eventually became the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[46]. In order to achieve their goals, States drafted the WFS Plan of Action containing commitments and objectives, among them the call for a clearer definition of the right to food contained in Article 11 of ICESCR "*as a means of achieving food security for all"* (objective 7.4 of the World Food Summit Plan of Action)[47]. Since then, the right to food has received increasing attentions at the global, regional and national level. In response to the general demand to better define the right to food, two documents emerged: the General Comment No. 12 and the Right to Food Voluntary Guidelines.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) adopted, in 1999, its General Comment No. 12: *The Right to Adequate Food.* This document serves as the primary interpretative framework for the right, clarifying its core components and the specific legal obligations of states and other duty-bearers to ensure its complete achievement. The decision of the Committee to elaborate this legal guidance was moved by several factors: the mandate established by the WFS, continuous requests from civil society for conceptual clarity, and the observation that state reports submitted since 1979 lacked sufficient detail to identify barriers to implementation[48]. According to General Comment 12, "*The right to adequate food is realised when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement. The right to adequate food shall therefore not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with a minimum package of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients. The right to food will have to be realised progressively.*"[49]. Crucially, the Committee rejects a minimalist interpretation; the right is not merely a "survival package" of calories, but a standard that must be achieved progressively. The CESCR defined this right through several interrelated pillars: availability, accessibility, adequacy, stability and sustainability. First, availability implies that food must be present in sufficient quantity and quality to satisfy dietary requirements, remain free from harmful contaminants, and align with cultural preferences. This necessitates a robust system where food is reachable either through direct production (land and natural resources) or efficient market and distribution networks able to transport food from where is produced to where is demanded. Whether through cultivation, farming, fishing, or hunting, the quantity available must support a healthy and active life[50]. Second, accessibility encompasses three

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[46] And later, in 2015, the priority of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Agenda 2030. FAO, *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security - Adopted by the 127th session of the FAO Council November 2004,* (2024), p. 1.

[47] Mechlem K., *Food Security and the Right to Food in the Discourse of the United Nations*, European Law Journal, (2004), Oxford, Vol. 10, No. 5, p. 632.

[48] Bourke-Martignoni J., Dugard & other, *The right to food,* in *Research handbook on economic, social and cultural rights as human rights,* (2020), p. 142.

[49] *Ibidem.*

[50] Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999) Commissioner & OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, pp. 2-3.

critical dimensions: non-discrimination, economic and physical accessibility. It requires the cost of food to be fair, meaning never implying individuals to trade-off food with other vital needs like housing, education, or healthcare. Food must be accessible and physically reachable for all, with special protections for marginalised or vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, women, and those in conflict zones. Access should be universal, free from any form of prohibited discrimination that impede a specific part of the population to have access to food[51]. In most contexts, individuals fulfil their right to food through their own labour and resources. Therefore, hunger is frequently a result of inequitable resource distribution rather than a global lack of food. As noted by the Special Rapporteur, the solution lies less in increasing aggregate production and more in improving resource access for the impoverished: "*it is clear that reducing hunger does not mean increasing the production of food ... but rather finding ways of increasing access to resources for the poor ...*"[52].
Availability and accessibility concern the means through which food is produced or acquired, and these should be stable over time at all places. Indeed, stability of food supply is fundamental. Duty-bearers are responsible for dismantling structural obstacles that might hinder a stable food supply for specific groups, both in the present and the future[53]. Third, adequacy dictates that food must be suitable for the specific context of a community, accounting for social, economic, and ecological conditions. Diets must be nutritionally balanced to meet physiological needs based on age, gender, living condition, health, and occupation, while remaining culturally appropriate. Food must meet individual nutritional needs while adhering to cultural norms and safety and quality standards. This includes maintaining rigorous hygiene and preventing contamination throughout the entire supply chain[54]. Lastly, sustainability requires states to implement regulations and measures that safeguard the long-term availability and accessibility of food for future generations. Thus, food must be quantitatively sufficient to satisfy nutritional needs, qualitatively free from toxic or adverse substances, and culturally appropriate for the group to which the individual belongs.

General Comment No. 12 underscores that the right to food is inseparable from social justice and inextricably linked to the broader spectrum of human rights. "*Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent*; *they are also interrelated without any right taking precedence over another*"[55]. Because human rights are universal and mutually reinforcing, improvements in nutrition and health often catalyse progress in civil liberties and the rule of law. Conversely, freedoms of expression and association are vital for ensuring that policies protecting food security are transparent and effective. The full realisation of the right to food – being

[51] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, p. 2.
[52] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, p. 15.
[53] Bourke-Martignoni J., Dugard & other, *The right to food,* in *Research handbook on economic, social and cultural rights as human rights,* (2020), p. 150.
[54] FAO, *The right to food within the international framework of human rights and country constitutions – Right to Food Handbooks,* (2014), Rome, p. 5 & Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para 10.
[55] *Ibi*, p. 7.

multidimensional in nature – cannot occur in isolation; it is deeply connected to the progress of several other rights:

- The right to water is essential for both direct consumption and the production/preparation of food.
- The right to property (land and natural resources) and housing, because secure access to land is necessary for production, while adequate housing provides the infrastructure for safe food storage and preparation[56].
- The right to health and life, as proper nutrition is a prerequisite for biological health; without the correct nutrition, the right to life is constantly under threat.
- The right to work and education: employment provides the economic means to acquire basic needs, food above all, while education ensures individuals have the knowledge to maintain healthy diets and the skills necessary to produce food locally[57].
- Civil liberties: freedom of information, association, and participation allow marginalised groups to influence food policy by making their voices heard and ensure their needs are taken into consideration.
- Freedom from torture: denying food to detainees can constate a form of cruel and inhumane treatment.

These and other human rights are indispensable for achieving the right to adequate food. Understanding how they are connected can guide governments with scarce resources in deciding what actions to prioritise and can also empower individuals to support and advance both the right to food and other fundamental rights[58].

Indeed, while General Comment No. 12 is technically considered a "soft law" instrument, it carries an important moral value, and it functions as the authoritative legal manual for the ICESCR. It does not represent a simple set of suggestions, but as the definitive interpretative framework that transforms the broad language of Article 11 into precise obligations for states. Without it, the treaty's language on the right to food would be too vague to enforce. The General Comment takes those broad goals and turns them into a concrete legal map which defines exactly what states must do in terms of availability, accessibility, and adequacy. Ultimately, its real weight comes from its ability to bridge the gap between abstract diplomacy and actual accountability, making it the definitive standard for what the right to food looks like in the real world.

Following the reaffirmation in the Rome Declaration in 2002 of the statements made in the WFS, the FAO Council established an Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG). Its mandate was to move beyond abstract theory and create a set of Voluntary Guidelines

[56] The rights to land and resources are placed at the centre of the right to food and food sovereignty agenda within the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) and in the UN Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People. Bourke-Martignoni J., Dugard & other, *The right to food,* in *Research handbook on economic, social and cultural rights as human rights,* (2020), p. 150.

[57] For more information about these rights, visit this link: https://www.escr-net.org/our-resources/what-are-escr/the-right-to-food/

[58] Vidar M., *The interrelationships between the right to food and other human rights,* in *Food and human rights in development,* Vol. 1, Legal and institutional dimensions and selected topics, pp. 141-159, 2005, Belgium.

to support Member States achieve the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food as a concern of national food security[59]. The Right to Food Guidelines, also known as the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realisation of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security,* were elaborated in 2004. While many States initially resisted a legally binding code of conduct, the resulting guidelines became the first major international attempt to translate economic and social right into a series of recommended actions to be undertaken at the national level with the aim to achieve the goal stated at the WFS. Though categorised as "soft law" – meaning they do not create new legal obligations or modify existing treaties – these guidelines carry significant political weight. Guidelines 5, 7, 17 and 18, for example, offer states practical guidance for developing effective institutional and legal frameworks to guarantee the right to adequate food and for establishing independent mechanisms to monitor the implementation of these Guidelines towards the realisation of this right[60]. This document represents a global consensus on how states should design legislation, strategies, and institutions to ensure people can feed themselves with dignity and to establish appropriate safety nets for those who are not able to "protect" themselves in these ways. By providing a framework for cross-sectoral coordination and by translating human rights principles into concrete recommendations for action covering all necessary elements of a good food security strategy, they allow governments to move from theoretical commitments to practical implementation of the right to food. Moreover, they provide a basis for advocating for more equitable policies and programmes.
The Right to Food Guidelines 8.1 further states that:

"*States should facilitate sustainable, non-discriminatory and secure access and utilisation of resources consistent with their national law and with international law and protect the assets that are important for people's livelihoods. States should respect and protect the rights of individuals with respect to resources such as land, water, forests, fisheries and livestock without any discrimination. Where necessary and appropriate, States should carry out land reforms and other policy reforms consistent with their human rights obligations and in accordance with the rule of law in order to secure efficient and equitable access to land and to strengthen proport growth. Special attention may be given to groups such as pastoralists and indigenous people and their relation to natural resources."*[61].

The Voluntary Guidelines are structured Into three key sections: the first one represents the foundations, and it covers the historical context and the legal basis of the right, as well as the obligations of States to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate food; the second section writes the 19 Guidelines, the core recommendations for gradual domestic implementation; the third and last section recognises the importance of international cooperation, meaning the measures for global support.

[59] FAO, *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security - Adopted by the 127th session of the FAO Council November 2004,* (2024).
[60] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, pp. 11-12.
[61] Ziegler J., *What is the Right to Food?,* Right to Food.

The Guidelines form a comprehensive architecture for governance and social justice, and can be summarised as follows:

1. Guideline 1 establishes the normative foundation of the framework. It affirms that democracy, good governance, the rule of law, transparency, accountability and respect for human rights are essential for the realisation of the right to adequate food. It also stresses that food must never be used as a tool of political or economic pressure.
2. Guideline 2 focuses on economic development policies. It calls for coordinated and sustainable economic growth that supports national strategies of food security, promotes agricultural development, and addresses poverty and hunger through fair policies without discrimination.
3. Guideline 3 encourages the adoption of human rights-based strategies for the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food at the national level. These strategies should include clear objectives, monitoring mechanisms and special attention to vulnerable groups in order not to leave them excluded or behind.
4. Guideline 4 addresses market systems. It promotes non-discriminatory and competitive markets, also recognising that markets alone are insufficient to guarantee food security and must be complemented by social protection measures, as consumer protection and responsible trade policies.
5. Guideline 5 concerns institutions. It calls for effective, transparent and coordinated public institutions capable of implementing, monitoring and evaluating food security policies, including measures to combat corruption.
6. Guideline 6 promotes stakeholder participation. It encourages a multi-stakeholder approach involving civil society, the private sector and vulnerable groups in the design and implementation of food security policies.
7. Guideline 7 deals with the legal framework. It invites States to consider recognising the right to adequate food in domestic law, including constitutional or legislative provisions, and to ensure access to effective remedies.
8. Guideline 8 establishes principles on access to resources and assets. It requires States to ensure secure and non-discriminatory access to land, water, forests, fisheries and other productive resources, with special attention to women, indigenous peoples and marginalised groups.
9. Guideline 9 focuses on food safety and consumer protection. It requires food control systems, adherence to international standards and protection against unsafe food practices.
10. Guideline 10 addresses nutrition. It promotes dietary diversity, prevention of malnutrition and obesity, support for breastfeeding and respect for cultural food practices.
11. Guideline 11 calls for investment in education, literacy, agricultural training and human rights awareness to strengthen individuals' ability to claim and realise the right to food.
12. Guideline 12 concerns national financial resources. It encourages adequate budget allocations for food security, transparency in public spending and protection of social programmes for vulnerable groups.

13. Guideline 13 requires identification of food-insecure and vulnerable populations through monitoring systems and the adoption of targeted measures.
14. Guideline 14 establishes the importance of social and food safety nets to protect those unable to provide for themselves, ensuring nutritional adequacy and cultural appropriateness.
15. Guideline 15 addresses international food aid. It emphasises that food aid should support national strategies, avoid creating dependency, respect local markets and comply with international standards.
16. Guideline 16 concerns natural and human-made disasters. It reaffirms that starvation of civilians is prohibited under international humanitarian law and calls for emergency preparedness, early warning systems and safe humanitarian access.
17. Guideline 17 emphasises monitoring, indicators and benchmarks. It encourages States to develop measurable indicators, conduct impact assessments and monitor progress in realising the right to adequate food.
18. Guideline 18 highlights the role of national human rights institutions. It invites States to empower independent bodies to oversee and promote the implementation of the right to adequate food.
19. Guideline 19 underlines the importance of international cooperation to support national efforts in achieving food security and progressively realising the right to adequate food.

Together, these nineteen Guidelines form a coherent framework linking any sector of the right to food, from governance, law, and economic development to resource access, sustainability, social protection, monitoring and international cooperation in the pursuit of the right to adequate food for all[62]. Through the Voluntary Guidelines, states succeeded, for the first time, to prepare and adopt an international set of rules to achieve food security and a world without hunger on a multilateral level[63]. In summary, while the Voluntary Guidelines are not judicially enforceable, they serve as an essential political and practical tool.

To implement the right to food effectively, the FAO's PANTHER framework provides a set of guiding principles: Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Transparency, Human dignity, Empowerment, and Rule of law. Such principles ought to inform every aspect of decision-making, from its initial phase of policy design and legislation to executing administrative action[64].

Meaningful and active participation allows individuals to make their voice heard and influence decisions that relate to their livelihoods, consequently strengthening transparency and accountability. Accountability guarantees the responsibility of governments for their decisions and their respecting impacts. Non-discrimination may require tailored approaches for groups facing unequal circumstances. Transparency means that information about policies, laws, budget and the procedures followed are available, accessible, and easy to

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[62] FAO, *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security - Adopted by the 127th session of the FAO Council November 2004,* (2024), pp. 8-31.

[63] Söllner S., *The "Breakthrough" of the Right to Food: The Meaning of General Comment No. 12 and the Voluntary Guidelines for the Interpretation of the Human Right to Food,* pp. 410-415.

[64] FAO, *The Human Right of Adequate Food in the Global Strategic Framework For Food Security and Nutrition – A Global Consensus,* Rome, (2013), p. 14.

understand for everyone. Human dignity demands respectful implementation of measures that affect livelihoods. Empowerment means that individuals can influence decisions impacting their ability to secure food and lastly, the rule of law urges authorities to operate solely based on publicly available laws and due process, ensuring true access to justice and respect for human rights. These principles also serve as a foundation for the integration of the right to food into national legislation: food policies are not just top-down mandates but are developed with the active involvement and respect for the people they affect[65].

The legal landscape for the right to food has been further strengthened by several instruments at the international, regional, and national levels.

When looking back at the historical milestones in the fight against global hunger, the Millennium Summit marked a definite shift in how the international community addressed systemic deprivation. Held in New York in September 2000, it gathered an unprecedented number of world leaders together to sign the Millennium Declaration. This wasn't just a symbolic gesture, but it represented a commitment to liberate humanity from extreme poverty. This vision was operationalised through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – eight specific objectives who achievement was foreseen for 2015. At the forefront was MDG1, which explicitly aimed to halve the global population living with less than a dollar per day and those suffering from chronic hunger. Beyond logistical targets, the Declaration emphasised a collective moral duty to protect human dignity and equity, particularly for children and the most marginalised populations[66].

The MDGs successfully placed poverty and hunger at the centre of the global political agenda, but their limitations became increasingly apparent as 2015 approached, proving to be too narrow and without effective results, as it applied primarily to developing nations rather than being a truly global responsibility. The 2012 Zero Hunger Challenge (ZHC) served as the vital conceptual bridge for this evolution. It fundamentally raised the bar: the goal shifted from merely "halving hunger" to its total elimination. This ambition laid the groundwork for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically SDG2: *Zero Hunger*. Formally adopted in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a non-binding but universally accepted roadmap for the planet. Unlike their predecessors, the 17 SDGs and 169 targets apply to all nations – developed and developing alike – and integrate three vital dimensions: economic prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. This framework recognises that food security is not an isolated issue, but it is interconnected with other sectors. According to the FAO, the eradication of hunger is both a prerequisite for and a result of progress in other goals areas, such as climate action, education, reduced inequality, and health improvement: "*Without rapid progress in reducing and eliminating hunger and malnutrition by 2030, the full range of SDGs cannot be achieved. At the same time, reaching other SDGs will pave the way for ending hunger and extreme poverty*."[67]. The goals are integrated and indivisible; they acknowledge that national priorities vary, but the underlying principle remains the same: leave no one behind. Ultimately, SDG2 moves the conversation

[65] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, p. 29.
[66] Millennium Declaration, para. 19.
[67] FAO, *FAO and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals,* (2015).

beyond traditional food aid. It calls for a systemic transformation – a complete overhaul of the ways we produce, distribute, and consume food to ensure long-term sustainability and nutritional health for everyone: "*end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*"[6869].

However, turning these global development goals into practical results demands more than political commitment, but a strong legal framework that ensures accountability – a role fulfilled by the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR. The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR), which came into force in 2013, strengthens accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the right to food. The Protocol allows individuals to bring complaints regarding food right violations directly to CESCR, once domestic remedies have been exhausted[70].

Beyond the normative framework set out at Art. 11 ICESCR, the Human Rights Committee has linked the right to food to the right to life in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In its General Comment No. 36, the Committee highlighted that access without delay to "*essential services such as food*" as well as the restitution of land for indigenous peoples fall within the necessary measures to protect life[71]. The Human Right Committee also interpreted the traditional hunting and fishing practices of indigenous and minority groups as cultural rights that are protected under article 27 of the ICCPR, and considered the deprivation of food as a cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment[72].

The right to food Is also reiterated in international treaties that promote and protect the rights of specific groups, as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) sets out the State obligations to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to food. Within this context, the Convention also sets out an obligation for States parties to ensure a special protection regarding adequate nutrition for women during pregnancy and lactation (art. 12), as well as the right of rural women to equal access to land, water, adequate living conditions and other services (art. 14), but it fails to incorporate guidance specifically addressing women's right to adequate food and nutrition. Although women produce and provide food, they are often

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[68] *Obiettivo 2: Porre fine alla fame, raggiungere la sicurezza alimentare, migliorare la nutrizione e promuovere un'agricoltura sostenibile*, Nazioni Unite, (2019).

[69] United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,* Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

[70] To date, the Committee has adopted views on social security contributions that tangentially concern the right to food, but it has not issued any jurisprudence that directly addresses obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food. General Assembly of the United Nations, *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, A/RES/63/117, (2008) & Bourke-Martignoni J., Dugard & other, *The right to food,* in *Research handbook on economic, social and cultural rights as human rights,* (2020), p. 143.

[71] Committee on Civil and Political Rights, *General Comment No. 36: Article 6* (CCPR/C/GC/36/), UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (2019).

[72] Committee on Civil and Political Rights, *General Comment No. 36: Article 6* (CPR/C/GC/36/), (2018) & Söllner S., *The "Breakthrough" of the Right to Food: The Meaning of General Comment No. 12 and the Voluntary Guidelines for the Interpretation of the Human Right to Food,* p. 398.

the last in line in terms of access to food to consume themselves. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), "*inequalities between men and women in their access to productive resources, services and opportunities are one of the causes of underperformance in the agriculture sector, and contribute to deficiencies in food and nutrition security, economic growth and overall development*"[73]. Similarly, article 24 and 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirm that children are entitled to an adequate standard of living, including sufficient food, and to the highest attainable standard of health[74]. In a similar vein, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises the right to an adequate standard of living, including food (Art. 28(1)) [75], and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, while not explicitly recognising the right to adequate food, ensures access to food through public relief and rationing systems (Arts. 20 and 23).

Various international humanitarian law instruments, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Geneva Conventions with its Additional Protocols, provide for protections against the deprivation of food and the means for its production, as well as prohibitions on and sanctions for impeding relief supplies and the use of starvation as a method of warfare. Practically, the Geneva Conventions forbid attacking "objects indispensable to survival" – like grain silos and water systems – and the Rome Statute – in its Article 8 – criminalises the intentional use of starvation as a war crime.

The Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights, further contributed to the development of policies and monitoring of the right to food. Of significant relevance, the Commission on Human Rights (UNHRC) has adopted resolution 2000/10, which created the role of Special Rapporteur on the right to food "*in order to respond fully to the necessity for an integrated and coordinated approach in the promotion and protection of the right to food*"[76]: the Commission has appointed Jean Ziegler as Special Rapporteur[77]. In March 2006, the Human Rights Council replaced the Commission

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[73] FAO, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: A Tool for Gender-sensitive Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Programme Formulation* (2013), p. 1.

[74] Knuth L. & Vidar M., *Constitutional and Legal Protection of the Right to Food around the World,* The Right to Food Studies, FAO, (2011), Rome, p. 9.

[75] "*States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities and their families to a standard of living adequate for their needs, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of their living conditions, and shall take appropriate measures to protect and promote the exercise of this right without any discrimination on the basis of disability*".

[76] Human Rights Commission, *Resolution 2000/10: The right to food,* Office of High Commissioner Of Human Rights, E/C N.4/RES/2000/10, (2000).

[77] The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food include:

a. promote the full realisation of the right to food and the adoption of measures at the national, regional and international levels;
b. examine ways to overcome existing and emerging obstacles to the realisation of the right to food;
c. mainstream a gender perspective and an age dimensions in the realisation of the right to food;
d. submit proposals for the realisation of millennium development foals No. 1 (to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) and the right to food, in particular, taking into account the role of international assistance and cooperation;
e. present recommendations on possible steps to achieve progressively the full realisation of the right to food;
f. work in close cooperation with all States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, the CESCE, as well as with other relevant actors;
g. participate in and contribute to relevant international conferences and events.

and extended the right to food mandate. The means used by the Special Rapporteur to implement the mandate include the preparation of annual thematic studies that are adopted by the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, country visits, responding to individual communications alleging violations of the right to food and participation in dialogue with relevant actors working in the areas of food and nutrition[78]. The role of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food continues to be vital in monitoring violations and promoting integrated policy approaches.

At the regional level, the need to protect and guarantee the right to food is recognised by a multitude of human rights instruments. Instruments like the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child (1990) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) are clear examples. Also, the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (2013) recognises the right to adequate and affordable food, freedom from hunger and access to safe and nutritious food[79].

At the national level, a number of states have adopted specific Articles on the right to food in their national constitutions, while other countries have enacted constitutional provisions that mention the right to food within broader principles as the right to adequate standards of living, the right to life or the right to minimum subsistence[80]. Then, since the Right to Food Guidelines were agreed upon in 2004, many countries have enacted national framework laws on the right to food.

Other instruments contain guarantee of the right to food, even if not directly but through the right to life, health and development, but it will not be possible to go deeper on these regional and national instruments in this thesis.

Given its widespread recognition in both domestic constitutions and international treaties, and States' commitments through soft-law instruments, there is a strong argument that freedom from hunger has attained the status of international customary law, making it a

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Today, there have been four UN Special Rapporteurs on the right to food: Jean Ziegler, Olivier De Schutter, Hilal Elver, and Michael Fakhri. Cohen A.J. & Lambek N.C.S., *When crits go to the UN: conversations with Olivier De Schutter, Hilal Elver and Michael Fakhri about the right to food,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* Ch. 26, Peace Palace Library and Radboud University Nijmegen, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham (UK) and Northampton (USA), p. 537-538.

[78] Bourke-Martignoni J., Dugard & other, *The right to food,* in *Research handbook on economic, social and cultural rights as human rights,* (2020), pp. 144-145 & OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, pp. 37-38.

[79] See, in particular:

- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: Art. 14(2) mandates states to ensure adequate nutrition and safe drinking water.
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol): Art. 15 guarantees women the right to nutritious and adequate food.
- the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration: Art. 28(a) enshrines the right to an adequate standard of living, specifically including "adequate, affordable, safe and nutritious food" and the freedom from hunger.

[80] Countries that have adopted the right to food into constitutions include: South Africa, Bolivia, Ecuador, Kenya, Mexico, and Nepal. Countries where the right to food (or elements of it) is recognised in legislation include: Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Cabo Verde, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Cohen A.J. & Lambek N.C.S., *When crits go to the UN: conversations with Olivier De Schutter, Hilal Elver and Michael Fakhri about the right to food,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* Ch. 26, Peace Palace Library and Radboud University Nijmegen, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham (UK) and Northampton (USA), p. 535.

binding obligation for all states regardless of specific treaty ratifications[81]. Alternatively, given its presence in the vast majority of domestic legal systems, the right to food may be regarded as a general principle of law recognised by civilised nations under Article 38(1) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice – the bible of international law.

The International legal framework and principles outlined above do not merely exist as abstract ideals; rather, they establish a rigorous set of States obligations that transform these human rights standards into binding domestic mandates.

1.4. The Architecture of Responsibility: States' Obligations, Judicial Enforcement, and the Role of Non-State Actors

Human rights are fundamentally intrinsic to all individuals, possessed by virtue of their shared humanity and centred on the preservation of inherent dignity and equality. Within the international legal framework, individuals act as right-holders, while the primary duty-bearers are the States Parties to human rights conventions. Consequently, every right of an individual corresponds to a set of obligations for states. These rights serve to limit the arbitrary exercise of state power, and they mandate that governments take proactive, positive measures to foster an environment where such rights can be fully realised[82]. In the specific context of the right to food, states are required to implement a multifaceted series of steps – ranging from domestic legislation to international cooperation – to ensure the progressive realisation of this right for all, without any kind of discrimination.

The right to food Is a legally binding commitment for the 160 States Parties to the ICESCR. The primary challenge, however, lies in moving from the adherence to the treaty to concrete national implementation and ensure that public authorities would be held accountable for their actions. In the process of integrating this right into national policy, states must adopt a rights-based approach that guarantees equitable resource access and fair representation in governance, as well as judicial remedies or other mechanism of redressal if rights are not implemented[83]. The right to adequate food should be incorporated at the domestic level through multiple steps, which in the short term contribute to progressive realisation while eventually leading to full realisation. In General Comment 12 the CESCR clarifies that "*States have a core obligation to take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger*"[84]. States are required to identify and redress discrimination in access to food, and to develop – both individually and through international cooperation – a range of measures of production, conservation, and distribution of food to ensure that everyone is able to access enough food to be free from hunger and malnutrition[85]. The progressive realisation of the

[81] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, p. 9.
[82] OHCHR, *Human Rights: Handbook for Parliamentarians*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), (2005), Geneva, p. 1.
[83] The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), *Transforming Food Systems, Turning Wrongs into Rights,* UN Food Systems Summit +4, (2025), p. 7.
[84] Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999).
[85] ESCR, *The Right to Food – What are Economic, Social and Cultural Rights?,* ESCR-Net.

right to adequate food urges States to meet their obligations under international human rights law.

Article 2 of the ICESCR, further elucidated by General Comment No. 3 and No. 12, defines the legal obligations states must undertake to implement the right to adequate food at the national level. The general obligation of the State Party reads as follows:

"(1) … take steps, individually and though international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the rights recognised in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.
(2) The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." (art. 2 ICESCR)[86].

These obligations are categorised into three operational pillars:

- Taking steps: full realisation of the right to food may be achieved over time, but the process must begin immediately upon treaty ratification. These steps must be "deliberate, concrete, and targeted", involving legislative reforms, economic strategies, and the establishment of institutional monitoring mechanisms[87]. It is up to each State Party to decide what kind of measures will be the most appropriate to ensure the realisation of the right to food for the persons under its jurisdiction. This flexibility acknowledges the many cultural, historical, legal and economic differences between States Parties having the same legal obligations.
- Maximum available resources: States are required to prioritise the right to food in their budgeting, ensuring that funds are not mismanaged, lost to corruption, or unnecessarily diverted. Even in resource-scarce environments, the state remains responsible for the equitable allocation of what is available: it doesn't mean that governments must spend all the resources they have on satisfying the right to food[88].
- Progressive realisation and minimum core: it is true that the ICESCR acknowledges that full implementation requires time, but it also imposes an immediate, non-negotiable duty to ensure a "minimum essential level" of food security without discrimination[89].

The CESCR has adopted an analytical framework describing the obligations of States and other actors towards the realisation of the right to food. To clarify the specific nature

[86] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, p. 2.
[87] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, p. 21 & Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para 17.
[88] Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para. 17.
[89] Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para. 14.

of state obligations and to assists States Parties in their implementation at the national level, GC 12 highlights that the right to food, like any other human rights, imposes three types of obligations: States are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil (facilitate and provide) the right to food of individuals[90]. In general, while the obligation to protect and fulfil the right to food are certainly positive obligations that require positive actions from States, the obligation to respect is effectively a negative obligation, meaning that States must not take any action that interferes with people's access to food – such as destroying their crops or displacing them from their land or means of subsistence.

The obligation to respect requires states to refrain from any action that interferes with existing access to food. This includes avoiding policies that displace people from their land or destroy means of subsistence. Moreover, States should regularly review and update their national policies and respective programmes related to food in order to ensure that they effectively respect the equal right of everyone to food in contemporary contexts[91].

The obligation to protect requires States to adopt specific measure to regulate third parties – such as corporations or individuals – to prevent them from undermining the right to food of any sector of the population. This includes enforcing food safety standards and ensuring fair market practices to prevent exploitation.

The obligation to fulfil refers to both an obligation to facilitate and an obligation to provide and it requires proactive governance. States should enact adequate legislative and administrative rules to facilitate the right by strengthening people's ability to feed themselves through sustainable livelihoods. When individuals are unable to provide for themselves due to circumstances beyond their control (as natural disasters or systemic poverty), the state has an obligation to provide food directly to ensure freedom from hunger. Moreover, the obligation to fulfil include the obligation for state to promote knowledge of human rights among state agents and officials as well as the private sector: to promote awareness of human rights[92].

Governments have ethical and legal responsibilities to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to food. Furthermore, governments must ensure that information regarding activities, policies, and budgets within the framework of the right to food is published in a language that is understandable and accessible to the public, and that is disseminated through appropriate media. Individuals have the right to know the measures and policies taken by their government related to their human rights. In addition, individuals and groups can freely and actively participate in decisions that affect their lives, including the ability to feed themselves, and states are obliged to respect this principle. Such governmental measures affecting the livelihood and well-being of people, as well as their ability to exercise the right to food, must respect the absolute value of the person, simply because they are human being

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[90] Knuth L. & Vidar M., *Constitutional and Legal Protection of the Right to Food around the World,* The Right to Food Studies, FAO, (2011), Rome, p. 10.

[91] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, p. 18.

[92] Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para. 15 & Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, p. 25.

and not on the basis of their social status[93]. This leads to another core obligation: non-discrimination.

The principle of non-discrimination is an immediate duty and is not subject to the constraints of progressive realisation. It implies that no individual may be restricted from exercising their right to food based on race, gender, religion, sex, language, age, or social status (ICESCR, art. 2(2)).

Gender equality is particularly central to this mandate since the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations in 1945[94]. International instruments like CEDAW and the Right to Food Guidelines call for the removal of barriers that prevent women from inheriting land, accessing credit, or controlling productive resources. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires States Parties to recognise the important economic and social contribution of women to the family and to society as a whole. It also expressly recognises the need for a change in attitudes through education of both men and women, to accept equality of rights and responsibilities and to overcome prejudices and practices based on stereotyped roles. The Right to Food Guidelines also underline the need to eliminate discrimination specifically against women, inviting states to "*promote women's full and equal participation in the economy and, for this purpose, introduce, where it does not exist, and implement gender-sensitive legislation providing women with the right to inherit and possess land and other property. States should also provide women with secure and equal access to, control over, and benefits from productive resources, including credit, land, water and appropriate technologies"* (Guideline 8.7)[95]. Notwithstanding this, in its General Comment 18 on non-discrimination, the Human Rights Committee recognises that "*not every differentiation of treatment will constitute discrimination, if the criteria for such differentiation are reasonable and objective and if the aim is to achieve a purpose which is legitimate under the Covenant*"[96].

However, achieving true equality requires more than "formal law"; it requires addressing *de facto* discrimination rooted in cultural stereotypes, religious practices, customary norms, and social prejudices.

Particularly in contexts where customary practices heavily influence everyday life, eliminating de facto discrimination requires transforming harmful social and behavioural norms, not merely enacting legislation. International law, therefore, compels states to actively transform social patterns and customary practices that hinder the rights of marginalised groups, particularly women and children. The CEDAW obliges states to change harmful social and cultural stereotypes and practices that sustain gender inequality; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa similarly requires states to eliminate harmful cultural and traditional practices

[93] FAO, *The right to food within the international framework of human rights and country constitutions – Right to Food Handbooks,* (2014), Rome, p. 8 & Söllner S., *The "Breakthrough" of the Right to Food: The Meaning of General Comment No. 12 and the Voluntary Guidelines for the Interpretation of the Human Right to Food, p. 397.*

[94] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food: integrating a gender perspective in the right to food,* A/HRC/31/51, Human Rights Council, (2015).

[95] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, p. 22.

[96] *Ibi*, p. 23.

through education and communication; the Convention on the Rights of the Child calls on states to abolish traditional practices harmful to children's health[97].
Together, these instruments show that achieving equality—and rights like the right to food—requires actively transforming discriminatory social norms and practices, not only passing laws.

Finally, the realisation of the right to food extends beyond national borders. Under Articles 2(1) and 11 of the ICESCR, as well as in paragraph 36 of the GC 12, states are obliged to cooperate internationally. This involves refraining from unilateral measures – such as trade embargoes or political pressure – that jeopardise food security in other nations and that are not in line with international law. Food shall never be used to exert political pressure nor shall food aid be contingent upon economic or political issues, under no circumstances. Trade embargoes that prevent food from reaching another country shall be prohibited and no sanctions should be imposed that affect the supply of food to the people. It also requires states to provide technical, financial, or humanitarian assistance to countries facing resource limitations or emergencies according to their available resources, and to seek international aid from other states when domestic resources are insufficient to prevent famine[98]. Indeed, states, international organisations, civil society, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and other actors should promote partnerships and coordinate action, including through programmes and capacity development efforts, with a view to lead to the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.

The General Comment further highlights the justiciability of the right to food at both the national and international levels and encourages states to incorporate the provisions of the ICESCR into their domestic legal systems to improve the scope and efficacy of remedial mechanisms. While international law provides the overarching framework, it does not mandate a literal incorporation of the ICESCR into domestic constitutions. Instead, each State Party possesses the discretion to determine the specific legal status and domestic positioning of the right to food within its own jurisdictional hierarchy. However, the Right to Food Guidelines serve as a bridge between theoretical human rights and practical governance. By moving beyond abstract principles, these Guidelines recommend actions to be undertaken at the national level and offer a cross-sectoral plan for creating an

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[97] Art. 5(a) of CEDAW requires States "*to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women*".
Art. 2(2) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol: "*States Parties shall commit themselves to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men through public education, information, education and communication strategies, with a view to achieving the elimination of harmful cultural and traditional practices and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for women and men*".
Art 24(3) of CRC: "*States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children*".

[98] FAO, *The right to food within the international framework of human rights and country constitutions – Right to Food Handbooks,* (2014), Rome, pp. 6-7 & Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5)*,* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para. 17 & 37-38 & OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, p. 23.

environment where individuals can feed themselves with dignity. Although voluntary, because they arise from a consensus among FAO member countries the Guidelines can have a significant influence on state policies, and can help governments design appropriate policies, strategies and legislation.

To operationalise these goals, the FAO identified a seven-step implementation process for states:

1. Identifying and targeting vulnerable populations;
2. Assessing existing legal and institutional gaps;
3. Formulating a comprehensive food security strategy;
4. Drafting a national framework law;
5. Clarifying institutional roles and responsibilities;
6. Benchmarking and monitoring progress in access to food;
7. Establishing clear recourse mechanisms for victims[99].

Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur emphasises the need for immediate interventions to address malnutrition, such as nutritional education (emphasising the importance of micronutrient and calories), universal school lunch programs focusing on food distribution, the protection of breastfeeding practices to combat malnutrition in babies, and the promotion of family gardens for the rural poor to develop a food local security. These programs will be better described in the following chapters.

A robust legal strategy to Implement the right to food at the national level typically rests on three pillars:

1. Constitutional recognition, which provides the strongest form of legal protection since constitutions are the supreme law of a state.
2. Adopting a framework law on the right to food to translate broad constitutional principles into defined duties and institutions.
3. Sectoral legislative review to ensure that laws governing trade, land, and safety do not inadvertently hinder the right to food[100].

Indeed, how international treaties become part of domestic law varies from country to country. Depending on a state's legal and constitutional system, the international treaty's provisions can become domestic law either by automatic incorporation, whereby they have the force of law directly and immediately, or by legislative incorporation, whereby the treaty provisions must be implemented by national legislation to have binding effect. In some other states, domestic implementation of a ratified international treaty occurs through the method of transformation – that is, by amending relevant domestic laws to make them consistent with treaty obligations. Whenever the right to food is a protected human right under the national constitutions of countries, it acquires a strong legal protection as the constitution is considered as the fundamental or supreme law of a nation. The recognition of the right to food as a constitutional human right would guide and constrain government action. However, individuals States enjoy some form of flexibility with regard to

[99] Knuth L. & Vidar M., *Constitutional and Legal Protection of the Right to Food around the World,* The Right to Food Studies, FAO, (2011), Rome, p. 10.

[100] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, pp. 3-4.

implementation strategies, as they have the ability to determine how best to implement treaty obligations within the framework of domestic law-making procedures and constitutional constraints. Article 2(1) of the ICESCR supports this flexible position. Notwithstanding this, GC 3 of CESCR also considers that in many instances legislation is highly desirable or even indispensable to give effect to the rights guaranteed in the ICESCR. This is especially true for the right to food, whose obligations are mostly non-self-executing and require national laws to be enforceable. Given the complexity and cross-cutting nature of the right to food, legislative action strengthens protection by allowing individuals to claim remedies before courts or administrative bodies when their right to adequate, available, and accessible food is violated. However, while legislation is essential, it is not enough on its own. The efficacy of legal rules also depends on the institutions that implement them; by promoting transparency and inclusivity in governance and strengthening the justice sector, it is possible to ensure fair land dispute resolution, protect food systems during shocks, and prevent those who produce food from facing hunger[101]. The full realisation of the right to food also requires effective policies, programmes, and broader social, economic, and political measures beyond legal incorporation alone.

Within this context, while states have the liberty to design their own food security strategies to best suit the national context, they are also obliged respect some minimum requirements to make a right-to-food policy out of a food security policy. Crucially, all states are bound by a minimum core obligation to ensure, at the very least, a basic level of food security that protects individuals from starvation. While the broader realisation of this right is progressive and contingent on available resources and while the ICESCR do not impose an obligation to advance at a certain pace and with specific deadlines, as specified earlier, the principle of non-regression acts as a vital legal guarantee. This principle dictates that once a certain level of protection and food security is achieved, the government is prohibited from adopting regressive policies that would diminish current access to food[102].

As already explained, embedding the right to food within a national constitution provides the highest level of legal protection, transforming it into a supreme interpretive guide for all government action; it transforms a moral ideal into a legal reality, allowing people to hold their governments accountable in court. However, because constitutional language is often broad, framework laws are essential. These acts translate high-level principles into specific duties, institutionalise coordination between government sectors (such as agriculture, health, and trade), and establish a legal basis for individuals to claim remedies. Framework laws lay down general principles and obligations, and leave it to the competent authorities to determine specific measures to be taken so as to realise such obligations, possibly within a given time limit. These acts also establish a right to remedy, clarify the role of human rights institutions and provide the basis for a subsidiary

[101] IDLO, *Rule of Law for Food Systems Transformation – Policy Brief,* Creating a Culture of Justice – International Development Law Organization, pp. 16-19.
[102] Ziegler J., *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – The Right to Food, UN* Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/2002/58, para 42-43.

legislation[103]. Framework law strengthens government accountability by providing for better monitoring, access to courts and administrative recourse mechanisms, and by helping government officials to have a better understanding of their role. Existing framework laws tend to define the right to food and establish institutional arrangements for food security, frequently with the participation of civil society[104].

The integration of an international treaty into domestic law is supported by several foundational principles of international law, most notably good faith and effectiveness. The principle of good faith suggests that a state should act in compliance and with the intent to respect with specific principles and that a state's failure to integrate the right to food into its internal legal order could be interpreted as a breach of its international commitments. If a state ratifies a treaty but provides no domestic mechanism to uphold it, the treaty's purpose is undermined. Complementing this is the principle of effectiveness, or *effect utile,* which dictates that international treaties must be interpreted and applied in a way that makes their provisions meaningfully functional rather than purely theoretical[105]. It means to actually implement principles in practice, without leaving them at the theoretical level. In a democratic system governed by the rule of law, domestic courts are the most legitimate and accessible institutions for enforcing human rights. For the right to food to be effective from an international perspective, individuals must have the possibility to invoke it directly before local courts which indeed means that states should implement the right to food at the domestic level. This necessitates a robust right to remedy. An implementation strategy Is only as strong as its enforcement: if an incorporation strategy does not provide for constitutional or judicial remedies, it may be considered inappropriate and ineffective under international law. This is particularly critical because violations of the right to food are frequently the result of faulty domestic legislation or administrative neglect, requiring a high-level legal pathway – such as a constitutional recourse – to provide an enforceable remedy for the affected individuals. Indeed, for the right to food to be more than a voluntary aspiration, it must be justiciable, meaning that individuals must have the legal standing to bring grievances before a judicial or administrative body to seek effective remedies, including restitution or compensation, with the aim to protect the right and prevent future violations[106]. The CESCR, in its General Comment 12, requires that: "*Any person or group who is a victim of a violation of the right to adequate food should have access to effective judicial or other appropriate remedies at both national and international levels. All victims of such violations are entitled to adequate reparation, which may take the form of restitution, compensation, satisfaction or guarantees of non-repetition …"*[107].

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[103] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, p. 4 and pp. 53-54.

[104] Knuth L. & Vidar M., *Constitutional and Legal Protection of the Right to Food around the World,* The Right to Food Studies, FAO, (2011), Rome, pp. 30-31.

[105] United Nations, *Vienna Convention on the Law of the Treaties,* Vienna, (1969).

[106] Ziegler J., *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – The Right to Food, UN* Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/2002/58, para 30 & FAO, *Right to food. Turning legal commitments into action: access to justice for the right to food,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2026).

[107] Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para. 32.

Although there appears to be widespread agreement on the importance of the right to food, there are a number of factors that continue to limit the development of measures for its effective implementation. Notwithstanding robust national and international legal frameworks, many communities still face persistent obstacles in their search for justice about violations of the right to food. These challenges encompass low levels of rights awareness, the physical remoteness of rural communities from formal courts, structural socioeconomic constraints, and obstacles in collecting and presenting evidence. Data from sources such as the FAO highlight the persistence of, and even increases in, hunger and malnutrition among particular groups of people in many regions. To guarantee the practical realisation of the right to food and to maintain stability in regions facing food insecurity, the FAO recognised the fundamental importance of enhancing knowledge and develop the capacity of justice actors in order to adjudicate on the right to food and effectively enforce decisions, conferring rights-holders the power to maintain their rights respected[108].

Currently, victims cannot ordinarily bring a case on violations of the right to food before an international tribunal without first exhausting all available domestic remedies. Indeed, the right is not fully justiciable as a standalone right at the regional and international level. However, this does not mean it lacks legal protection; enforcement mechanisms exist, but they have historically been and continue to be less direct for economic, social and cultural rights than for civil and political rights. In practice, the right to food is increasingly protected through indirect or derivative justiciability, where regional courts uphold food security as an essential component of other rights, such as the right to life or the right to development[109].

Nationally, around twenty constitutions explicitly recognise the right to food or related norms in their texts. The Constitution of South Africa remains a global example. By making socio-economic rights explicitly justiciable, South African courts – most notably in the Grootboom case – have developed a "reasonableness" test to evaluate whether state measures are adequate and inclusive. Enforcement in South Africa is further strengthened by institutional monitoring of the South African Human Rights Commission, entitled to annually report on the realisation of socio-economic rights, including the right to food. Having the capacity to demand information from government and make recommendations, it allows for the creation of a structured accountability system combining judicial review with administrative monitoring. Similarly, the Supreme Court of India has transformed food security from a policy goal into a judicial mandate, while Switzerland has recognised a justiciable right to the basic conditions of existence, including food. These cases illustrate that the right to food can be judicially enforceable in practice[110].

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[108] FAO, *Right to food. Turning legal commitments into action: access to justice for the right to food,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2026).

[109] See, for example, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in *Social and Economic Rights Action Centre* (SERAC) and *Another v. Nigeria* (2001), where the Commission recognised that the right to food is inextricably linked to the dignity of the human person and the right to health. Similarly, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has interpreted the right to life to encompass the right to adequate food and water, notably in *Xákmok Kásek Indigenous Community v. Paraguay* (2010).

[110] Ziegler J., *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – The Right to Food, UN* Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/2002/58, para 51-58.

The landscape of international accountability shifted significantly with the 2013 entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR. This allows individuals to submit complaints directly to the CESCR after exhausting domestic remedies, finally bringing economic and social rights closer to the level of protection enjoyed by civil and political rights. The Protocol also provides for an inquiry procedure in cases of grave or systemic violations. However, limitations remain. The Optional Protocol applies only to states that have ratified it specifically: actually only 31 of the States Parties to the ICESCR[111]. Moreover, the Committee's views on individual petitions, while authoritative and increasingly influential, are not formally binding in the same way as judgements of an international court. Implementation therefore depends on State cooperation and political will[112].

In an increasingly globalised world, the State's duty to protect requires regulating non-state actors who influence food systems. States are the main subject responsible under those legal obligations, but not the only ones, even if with a different degree that it is proportionate to the power they have to impose and modify the reality of others. Indeed, also non-state actors have responsibilities and obligations to promote and protect human rights, and consequently to contribute to the realisation of the right to adequate food, albeit at a different level of responsibility: all members of civil society and therefore individuals, families, local communities, IOs, NGOs and private business sectors, but also, universities and schools[113]. It is essential to clarify, however, that this attribution of responsibility exists alongside an ongoing complex debate regarding the legal subjectivity of private entities within the international legal order; while the normative expectation for accountability is growing, the status of private actors as direct, independent bearer of international obligations remains a subject of intense academic and jurisprudential contention.

Agencies like the FAO, WFP, and IFAD play a critical role in providing technical expertise and coordinating international aid, ensuring that global policies align with human rights standards, with a focus on the right to food[114]. The UN General Assembly and Human Right Security Council have requested all international organisations to "*promote policies and projects that have a positive impact on the right to food, to ensure that partners respect the right to food in the implementation of common projects, to support strategies of Member States aimed at the fulfilment of the right to food and to avoid any actions that could have a negative impact on the realisation of the right to food*"[115]. In particular, as the specialised agency of the UN dedicated to food and agriculture, the FAO holds a central mandate: to elevate nutritional standards, enhance agricultural efficiency, and improve the quality of life for rural communities. By pursuing these objectives, the FAO plays a vital role in safeguarding humanity's collective freedom from hunger.

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111 See https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?Treaty=CESCR-OP

112 *Ibi*, para 68-71 & General Assembly of the United Nations, *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, A/RES/63/117, (2008).

113 Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para. 20.

114 Other IOs: WHO, OECD, UNCTAD, WTO, ILO, WIPO, UNDROP.

115 OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, pp. 23-25.

The private sector also plays an important role for the protection of the right to adequate food. Because the vast majority of food is produced, processed, and sold by private entities, their impact is immense. While they provide essential employment, unregulated corporate activity can lead to land displacement, environmental contamination, or the marketing of unsafe food. Consequently, states must ensure that private actors respect human rights and are held accountable for infringements[116]. However, the private sector has formulated a number of self-regulatory codes establishing safety and quality parameters for specific products, operating alongside the public legislation.

Ultimately, the realisation of the right to food as a universal reality depends upon a cohesive synergy between a multitude of actors. Through cooperation and collaboration between states, international organisations, civil society, the private sector, and individual right-holders, the global community can dismantle the systemic barriers to food security and uphold the inherent right of every human being to adequate nutrition[117].

The legal architecture for a rights-based approach to food is robust, but it still faces significant obstacles. Socio-economic inequality, armed conflict, and the climate crisis continue to test the resilience of these legal protections. Moving forward, the challenge lies in closing the gap between the "law on the books" and the "lived reality" of the world's most food-insecure populations. Indeed, while the preceding analysis has established the robust legal and normative architecture of the right to food, the practical realisation of these protections is increasingly threatened by global environmental shifts; consequently, the following chapter will examine how the escalating impacts of climate change undermine these legal guarantees and necessitates a re-evaluation of state obligations in the face of ecological instability.

[116] *Ibidem*.

[117] FAO, *Right to food. All human beings are born with the right to adequate food,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2026).

Chapter Two
Climate Change and Its Impacts on the Right to Food

2.1. Climate Change and the Right to Food: General Framework

"*The impacts of climate change will fall disproportionately upon developing countries and the poor persons within all countries, and thereby exacerbate inequities in health status and access to adequate food, clean water, and other resources. Populations in developing countries are generally exposed to relatively high risks of adverse impacts from climate change. In addition, poverty and other factors create conditions of low adaptive capacity in most developing countries.*"

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2001

Climate change represents one of the most significant challenges to the effective realisation of the right to food today. Rising temperatures, extreme weather, and unpredictable climate patterns are disrupting agriculture and making food more expensive and scarcer. Although this right has been progressively recognised and developed in international law, its concrete implementation is increasingly undermined by the environmental, economic, and social impacts of climate change. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as a human-induced alteration of the global atmosphere – a transformation that has become a primary engine of global poverty[118]. The World Bank estimated that by 2030, climate extremes could push 132 million people more into extreme poverty, directly jeopardising the ability of the most vulnerable communities to secure basic adequate nutrition[119]. Immediate action is necessary, otherwise food systems in already precarious regions will face total destabilisation. This crisis does not concern only crop yields; it disrupts the livelihoods of millions of rural workers, triggers forced migration, and threatens to derail from the realisation of the UN SDGs. The 2018 edition of The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) cites the changing climate as the main cause of the dramatic growth in the number of people facing hunger and malnutrition worldwide[120]. In its 2019 Special Report on Climate Change and Land, the IPCC states with high confidence that "*observed climate change is already affecting food security through increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and greater frequency of some extreme events*"[121], and that climate change will lead to increasing pressure on food production and access, thereby undermining food security and nutrition[122]. Indeed, recent reports indicate that climate volatility is now the leading driver behind the global resurgence of hunger and malnutrition.

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[118] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), art. 1, para. 2.
[119] World Vision, *How climate change affects food security. Extreme weather is leaving more children without food.*
[120] up 17 million to 821 million in 2017. FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, FAO, (2018), p. 5.
[121] Jensen L. & Hourdin C., *Climate change impacts on food security in the European Union,* European Parliamentary Research Service EPRS, (2025), p. 2.
[122] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/53/47, Human Rights Council, (2023), p. 2.

The link between climate stability and the protection of human rights has evolved from a scientific observation into a foundational legal principle. Two specific interpretative developments by the UN Committees reinforce the legal weight of these connections. First, the Human Rights Committee (HRC) on the Right to Life: in its recent jurisprudence and General Comment No. 36, the HRC has expanded the definition of right to life beyond mere survival and the narrow absence of physical violence, now encompassing the right to live with dignity, which requires States to address environmental degradation and climate change as "*the most pressing and serious threats to the ability of present and future generations to enjoy the right to life*"[123]. Second, the CESCR on Land and Economic Rights: in General Comment No. 26, the Committee has highlighted that the right to food is inextricably tied to land rights. As climate change alters land use and triggers displacement, States have an obligation to protect the relationship between local communities and their ancestral territories, adhering to the no harm principles even across international borders[124]. For decades, human rights law was primarily interpreted through the lens of direct, individual abuses perpetrated by state actors. Recently, climate inaction has been framed as a breach of a state's positive obligation to protect its citizens. This transformation was possible thanks to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 76/300, which recognised the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a universal human right[125]. While this resolution is not a treaty with a mandatory effect, it serves as a powerful normative instrument that influences constitutional interpretations and judicial reasoning across the globe, thus holding a significant weight. In fact, courts are increasingly holding governments accountable by interpreting climate targets as legal requirements rather than political premises. Landmark rulings, such as the *Urgenda* case[126] in the Netherlands and the more recent *KlimaSeniorinnen* case[127] concerning a Swiss woman, demonstrate how failing to implement sufficient climate mitigation measures constitutes a violation of the right to privacy and family life, thus a failure to protect the human rights of its inhabitants[128]. By framing climate change through these legal lenses, it becomes clear that environmental policy is not a discretionary political choice for governments, but a core component of their existing human rights obligations. Within this context, the Advisory Opinion on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2025) confirmed the urgency and the obligation of States to act affirmatively to prevent and respond to climate change and its effects. Moreover, as part of this enhanced obligation, states must formulate, implement and monitor climate change policies and design them incorporating a human rights perspective and taking into consideration their impact on persons and groups in a situation of vulnerability. The Court underscored critical principles that should guide all climate

[123] Committee on Civil and Political Rights, *General Comment No. 36: Article 6* (CCPR/C/GC/36/), (2019), para. 62.
[124] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 26 on land and economic, social, and cultural rights,* E/C.12/GC/26, (2022),
[125] General Assembly of the United Nations, *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment,* A/RES/76/300, (2022).
[126] https://www.climatecasechart.com/document/urgenda-foundation-v-state-of-the-netherlands_3297
[127] https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-233206%22]}
[128] Dupuy P.M & Viñuales J.E., *International Environmental Law,* Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, (2018), United Kingdom.

action, including intergenerational equity, the differentiated responsibilities of states in relations to the causes and consequences of climate change, and the importance of international and good faith cooperation. States should also ensure an equitable distribution of the burden of climate action and climate impacts, considering their contribution to the causes of climate change and their respective capabilities[129]. In fact, States are entitled with the territorial duty to adapt to climate change, meaning that they are obliged to protect populations, infrastructure, and ecosystems from the unavoidable impacts of a warming planet. The Court recognised the new right to a healthy climate to protect the interest of present and future generations in preserving the well-being and the equilibrium in the climate system. The Court reaffirmed the general mitigation and adaptation measures claiming that these should be guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equality and take into consideration climate change's dire impact on specific individuals and groups. Lastly, the Court placed heavy emphasis on the role of business enterprises in addressing climate change. It mandated states to adopt legislative and other measures to prevent, investigate, and punish human rights violations committed by public and private enterprises[130]. States are also obliged to adopt measures and take positive steps to guarantee the protection, restoration and regeneration of ecosystems, recognising nature as a subject of rights. States have a duty to guarantee the effective participation of all persons in decision-making and policies concerning climate change, in an equitable, meaningful and transparent manner. It also acknowledged the importance of access to information for individuals to exercise their rights to participation and other rights in the realm of climate change, as well as the right to access justice.

Additionally, in its resolution 50/9, the HRC calls for States to enhance international cooperation and assistance to assist developing countries. It urges States to strengthen and implement policies aimed at realising the right to food for all, consistent with efforts to combat climate change, by addressing inequalities in food distribution and access, and employing equitable, predictable, transparent and human rights enhancing forms of food systems governance[131]. Climate- and food-related policy and finance should be guided by relevant human rights obligations and international law, including principles of solidarity, climate justice, polluter pays and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, considering historical responsibilities[132]. These principles require that climate change mitigation measures address entrenched injustices, inequalities and discrimination, past and present[133]. Indeed, States must urgently ensure that human rights are fully integrated throughout their economic systems and socioeconomic policies.

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[129] Celorio R., *Advisory Opinion 32/25 on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights: The Inter-American Court of Human Rights Meets the Moment,* Volume 25, Issue 14, Insights, American Society of International Law, (2025), p. 3.
[130] *Ivi*, p. 4.
[131] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 July 2022,* A/HRC/RES/50/9, Human Rights Council, (2022).
[132] Dupuy P.M & Viñuales J.E., *International Environmental Law,* Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, (2018), United Kingdom, pp. 81-85.
[133] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Measures for minimizing the adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/55/37, Human Rights Council, (2024).

Climate change poses a threat to the ability of entire regions to feed themselves, by increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather disasters. It is making it harder for people to get enough food, affecting how food is grown, making it more expensive and limiting access to healthy meals. Climate change directly reduces the global supply of food by altering the physical conditions necessary for agriculture and fisheries. Climate change act as a threat multiplier, compromising every pillar of the right to food and food security:

- Availability: altered meteorological patterns – such as expanding droughts, warming waters, and ocean acidification – directly reduce the availability of crop yields and fish stocks, while desertification renders previously fertile land uncultivable. Although tolerance of different crops to changes in temperature and water availability may vary considerably, it is estimated that by 2050 global crop yields could drop by more than 5%[134]. Furthermore, rising sea levels and the spread of new agricultural pests are complicating the entire distribution and storage chain. Indeed, climate change affects availability by reducing production and disrupting storage, processing, and distribution systems[135].
- Accessibility: even when food is available on a global scale, climate change creates barriers that block or restrict from accessing it. Disasters destroy infrastructures as roads, storage facilities, and markets necessary for food distribution, and decreases agricultural productivity which depresses agricultural supply, leading to price increases. It is a cycle. This volatility disproportionately hits the poor hardest, the less responsible, whose income mainly depend on such activities. Socially vulnerable groups may have to alter their diet, forcing a transition to lower-quality, less nutritious food which leads to higher diet-related mortality in low-income regions[136]. Accessibility is weakened as reduced yields and supply disruptions contribute to higher and more volatile food prices, making food less affordable[137].
- Utilisation and Adequacy: the quality of food is declining alongside its quantity. These elements are impacted through declining nutritional quality, increased food safety risks, and health challenges. Increased CO2 levels in the atmosphere have been shown to reduce the nutritional value of staples like rice and wheat, reducing essential minerals like zinc and iron. Additionally, warmer and more humid environments facilitate the spread of water-borne and vector-borne diseases, which prevent the human body from properly absorbing nutrients even when food is consumed[138]. Indeed, available food is not anymore adequate for human's health.
- Stability and Sustainability: the loss of predictability in cropping seasons means that even if food is available today, its future supply it no longer guaranteed. Climate change undermines the long-term stability of food systems, making it difficult for

[134] Elver H., *T'he Adverse Impact of Climate Change on the Right to Food,* (2015), A/70/287, para. 7.
[135] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Food Security,* in *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, (2019), p. 452.
[136] *Ibi*, *p. 462.*
[137] IDLO, *Rule of Law for Food Systems Transformation – Policy Brief,* Creating a Culture of Justice – International Development Law Organization.
[138] EFSA, *Climate change and food safety,* European Food Safety Authority.

farmers to plan for the future and for governments to ensure year-round food security[139].

The Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC concluded with high confidence that climate change will have a substantial negative impact on food production and food nutritional quality[140]. This cascade of impacts threatens the realisation of the right to adequate food.

The assessment of how climate change impacts the right to food primarily relies on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Paris Agreement, and the National Communications submitted by member states of the UNFCCC. National Communications consist in self-reports of states on compliance with their commitment under the UNFCCC and, if ratified, under the Kyoto Protocol. Those commitments differ for developed countries and developing countries based on responsibilities, and reporting obligations vary along with those differences. Despite the clear link between climate and hunger, a significant knowledge gap persists. Most high-quality scientific data is generated in developed nations, where there is sufficient funding to carry out research, leaving the most vulnerable regions – such as the Sahel or the Horn of Africa – with insufficient localised data to inform adaptation strategies[141]. This lack of data creates a secondary layer of vulnerability: there regions lack both the financial means to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and the empirical data required to secure international funding or policy tools. The reporting mechanisms under the UNFCCC further reflect this imbalance: "Annex-1" (developed) countries have stricter mitigation and reporting duties due to their historical responsibility for global emissions. As a consequence, Annex I countries are not particularly interested to assess how climate change affects food security within their borders and how to prevent right to food violations. Conversely, "Non-Annex 1" (developing) countries are highly encouraged and motivated to report on food vulnerability but often lack the financial and technological resources to conduct evidence-based assessments[142]. To solve this problem, a stronger partnership between the IPCC and the FAO is fundamental to refine assessment tools that specifically capture climate shifts and emerging food insecurity.

Climate change is not a neutral phenomenon equally affecting the entire global population, but its impacts vary based on geography, gender, and socio-economic status. It was responsible, at least in part, for the rise of multiple forms of malnutrition across various regions, from both insufficient and excessive nutrient intake to obesity. It has also increased vulnerability to disease, particularly among women, expectant mothers, children, low-income communities, indigenous populations, and small-scale farmers[143]. Escalating climate extremes serve as primary catalysts for widespread undernutrition. Projections indicate that by the mid-21st century, between 8 million and 80 million additional individuals will

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[139] Bruno F., *Climate change issues in international food law,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* Ch. 21, Peace Palace Library and Radboud University Nijmegen, pp. 428-430.
[140] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/53/47, Human Rights Council, (2023), para. 7.
[141] Caesens E. & Rodríguez M.P., *Climate Change and the Right to Food - A comprehensive Study,* Columbia Law School – Human Rights Institute, 2009, volume 8, pp. 16-17.
[142] *Ibidem.*
[143] The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), *Transforming Food Systems, Turning Wrongs into Rights,* UN Food Systems Summit +4, (2025), p. 4.

experience food insecurity, with the greatest vulnerabilities concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Central America[144]. Climate change is undermining and negatively impacting the realisation of the right to food, with disproportionate impacts on those who have contributed least to global warming and are most vulnerable to its harmful effects because dependent on the physical environment for survival – the Global South[145]. Vulnerability is particularly acute in developing countries for two main reasons: first, many of these nations are located in tropical or arid zones where environmental shifts are most extreme, and second, a majority of the world's poor reside in rural areas and depend directly on subsistence agriculture or small-scale fishing. For these populations, a failed harvest is not just an economic loss, but a direct threat to survival. Unfortunately, these same populations are ill-equipped to stop climate threats to their food supplies as their social protection systems are not sufficiently robust to respond to climate-induced food insecurity, and they are generally not even the ones most responsible for present climatic changes. Many of these populations lack the financial and technological means to adapt to rapidly changing weather patterns[146]. Consequently, the Advisory Opinion on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights suggested that high-income States should support adaptation and mitigation in developing countries by contributing to financing and cooperating in good faith in the establishment of global responses to climate-related loss and damage with the aim to help the most vulnerable population to face these challenges[147].

Urgent action must be taken to prevent climate change from intensifying, to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to its unavoidable effects. The international community's response has gradually evolved from a purely technical focus on emissions to a rights-based approach that priorities human dignity. The 2015 Paris Agreement (COP21) serves as a historical turning point. Unlike previous summits – often characterised by the rigid dichotomy between developed and developing countries, as in the Kyoto Protocol[148] – the Paris Agreement established a universal approach. This shift allowed for the consolidation of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, reinterpreting it not as a static or binary separation of obligations, but as a dynamic framework in which all States are required to contribute to climate action. In this context, climate justice translated into the modulation of commitments: while all countries are required to submit Nationally Determined Contributions, the level of ambition and the nature of these contributions reflect the varying historical responsibilities and specific

[144] IPCC, WHO, UNEP, *Fact Sheet – Food and Water. Climate Change Impacts and Risks,* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (2022), p. 2.
[145] OHCHR, *The impact of climate change on the right to food – OHCHR and climate change,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, (2023).
[146] Caesens E. & Rodríguez M.P., *Climate Change and the Right to Food - A comprehensive Study,* Columbia Law School – Human Rights Institute, 2009, volume 8, pp. 26-27
[147] Celorio R., *Advisory Opinion 32/25 on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights: The Inter-American Court of Human Rights Meets the Moment,* Volume 25, Issue 14, Insights, American Society of International Law, (2025) & General Assembly of the United Nations, *Measures for minimizing the adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/55/37, Human Rights Council, (2024), para. 17.
[148] Dupuy P.M & Viñuales J.E., *International Environmental Law,* Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, (2018), United Kingdom, pp. 181-182.

economic and technological capacities of each, thereby balancing the universality of the obligation with the substantive equity required by the individual developmental conditions of each States[149]. Following this, COP22 in Marrakech shifted the focus toward mobilisation and implementation, aiming to translate the Paris goals into actionable adaptation strategies[150].

The interdependence of the right to food and the right to a healthy environment is now undeniable. The OHCHR has underscored that climate change is not merely an environmental issue but a systemic threat to the right to life, adequate food, health, and self-determination[151]. States must adopt targeted measures that protect food systems from climate shocks, address "Loss and Damage" in vulnerable nations, and reduce the carbon footprint of industrial agriculture without harming the rights of small-scale producers in order to prevent the outbreak of a global humanitarian catastrophe[152]. In fact, scholars have estimated that, without the right approach, hunger could rise by 20% by 2050[153]. However, despite the recognition of this urgency and respective obligations, global emissions continue to rise, and this is mainly given by the continuous occurrence of both slow-onset events (like sea-level rise) and sudden disasters as a consequence of inadequate mitigation efforts, which push the limits of human adaptation. Without a radical commitment to climate justice, the environmental crisis will continue to erode the human rights of those in the most precarious situations, including the ones to food and nutrition[154].

To fully grasp how these legal and human rights are being eroded, it is necessary to transition from the normative framework to a material analysis of the physical impacts currently destabilising the global food system.

2.2. Impacts of Climate Change on Food System

The global food system is currently facing an unprecedented era of instability. Climate change has passed from being a distant environmental concern to represent an immediate risk multiplier, fundamentally altering the parameters upon which agriculture depends. Acting as a destabiliser of the environment, climate change does more than just reduce yields; it automatically undermines the ability of individuals to feed themselves in dignity, thereby threatening their fundamental right to food. The increasing frequency and intensity of weather extremes, coupled with rising sea levels and decreasing water supplies, directly undermine food security, and is pushing the global community further away from the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goal 2: *Zero Hunger*[155].

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[149] United Nations, *Paris Agreement,* Department of Economic and Social Affairs, art. 4(4).
[150] Yobom O., *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Sahel,* Economics and Finance Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté, HAL Open Science, (2020), p. 33.
[151] Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the relationship between climate change and human rights, A/HRC/10/61, (2009), para. 20.
[152] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Measures for minimizing the adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/55/37, Human Rights Council, (2024), para. 5.
[153] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, FAO, (2018).
[154] *Ibi*, para. 8.
[155] UNIDO, *Food Security and Climate Change – A 2023 update,* Sustainable Development Goals, (2023), p. 13 & FAO, *The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security,* Rome, (2021), p. 136.

Food systems are highly vulnerable to shocks arising from climate variability. This vulnerability is particularly acute in the agricultural sector, where disasters can be catastrophic for crop growth, livestock health, fisheries and aquaculture production, and can seriously compromise forest and other ecosystems[156]. Impacts on soil and the water balance are just two examples. Changing distributions of plant and animal pathogens and transmission vectors are of concern. Similarly, the loss of predictability of cropping seasons is challenging for farmers[157]. Paradoxically, the sector is caught in a "vicious cycle" of mutual destruction: while agriculture is a primary victim of climate change, the entire food supply chain – from production and transformation to waste management – is a significant driver of the crisis[158]. Food systems contribute to the total global emissions by approximately 15%[159]. Agricultural activities are the main source of methane (CH4) and nitrous dioxide (N2O). Differently from the CO2 coming from transport, refrigeration, and deforestation that represent a long-term threat, these gases remain in the atmosphere for a shorter time than CO2. Notwithstanding this, their immediate climate-altering potential is significantly higher[160]. Agricultural activities such as industrial livestock farming and the intensive use of synthetic fertilisers generate a self-reinforcing loop: they intensify the extreme weather patterns that make farming increasingly difficult. Consequently, experts suggest that climate goals can only be met if there is a significant shift in dietary habits toward lower-emission food sources, specifically by reducing the demand for meat and dairy[161].

The global food system is uniquely positioned at the intersection of environmental stability and human survival. Unlike other industrial sectors, agriculture is directly and immediately sensitive to atmospheric and hydrological shifts. Its productivity highly depends on the stability of the global water cycle and the health of the soil, both of which are currently undergoing rapid transformation mainly due to climate change[162]. Climate change does not merely undermine plant growth, but with shifts in temperature, erratic rainfall patterns, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, it alters the agricultural zones that have sustained civilisations for millennia. These environmental drivers trigger a degradation of the physical foundations of farming – from soil fertility and organic matter to water quality – forcing a radical and often difficult shift in the traditional farming and livestock practices[163]. Because agriculture is so heavily reliant on weather and water to prosper, it is particularly defenceless against disasters and climate variability. This is especially true in agriculture-based economies where staple food production remains largely rain-fed and uninsured against climatic fluctuations. Consequently, the reduction in

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156 FAO, *The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security,* Rome, (2021), p. 9.
157 Islam M., *Impacts of Climate Change on Water Resources, Agricultural Production and Food Security: Evidence from Türkiye,* Journal of Economy Culture and Society, (2022), p. 165.
158 Bruno F., *Climate change issues in international food law,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* Ch. 21, Peace Palace Library and Radboud University Nijmegen, p. 427.
159 Elver H., *T'he Adverse Impact of Climate Change on the Right to Food,* (2015), A/70/287, para. 42.
160 World Vision, *How climate change affects food security. Extreme weather is leaving more children without food.*
161 Elver H., *T'he Adverse Impact of Climate Change on the Right to Food,* (2015), A/70/287, para. 42.
162 Fitton N, Alexander P., & Others, *Global Environmental Change – The vulnerabilities of agricultural land and food production to future water scarcity,* Elsevier, (2019).
163 Abebaw S.E., *A Global Review of the Impacts of Climate Change and Variability on Agricultural Productivity and Farmers' Adaptation Strategies,* in *Food Science & Nutrition, (2025),* volume 13, issue 5, Wiley Online Library.

production, which is the most direct impact, does not remain confined to the field. Instead, it triggers a multitude of effects along the entire value chain: it hinders agricultural growth and undermines rural livelihoods among others, thus placing every dimension of food security at risk. Moreover, such biological disruptions directly reflect in socio-economic dangerous consequences, including volatile commodity prices, a decline in the quality of raw ingredients, and market uncertainty[164]. In nations where agriculture remains an economic pillar, this decline in productivity triggers a wider crisis: it erodes household income, reduces overall consumption, and ultimately destabilises the real GDP[165].

Going deeper, these general pressures of climate change dismantle agricultural productivity across some primary, interconnected pillars: water, soil, biological system, and market stability.

Agricultural productivity is intrinsically tied to the stability of the water cycle, as irrigation allows the cultivation of crops when rainfalls are erratic or insufficient. Today, nearly half of the global population lives in a condition of severe water scarcity for at least one month per year, a number estimated to worsen as climate change intensifies the hydrological cycle in a negative sense: prolonged droughts that deplete groundwater reserves followed by intense precipitation that the soil is not able to absorb[166].

Rising temperatures accelerate the melting of glaciers and snowpacks, which are considered as the nature's water towers, and consequently it threatens long-term irrigation for billions. This represents an extremely negative fact for agriculture as it accounts for 70% of global freshwater use[167]. Groundwater serves as a critical buffer during droughts, but its recharge is becoming increasingly unpredictable given that it depends on rainfall, flooding, and local environmental conditions. It is true that increasing flooding enhances groundwater recharge in some areas, but as its occurrence is increasing, also is the occurrence of prolonged droughts, which are expected to reduce this recharge in arid and semi-arid regions. At the same time, excessive groundwater extraction already exceeds recharge rates in many regions, leading to depletion and water quality problems such as salinisation and contamination. Overall, semi-arid and arid regions are particularly vulnerable to declining groundwater resources[168].

Climate change not only affects the water resources and water levels, but it also significantly affects the water quality, which alters food security in the affected region[169]. Indeed, sea-level rise poses a dual threat to coastal regions: it does not only destroy housing and infrastructure but also causes groundwater salinisation, thus rendering soil toxic and

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164 FAO, *The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security,* Rome, (2021), pp. 25-26.

165 Bruno F., *Climate change issues in international food law,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* Ch. 21, Peace Palace Library and Radboud University Nijmegen, p. 442.

166 Turral H., Burke J., & Faurès J.M., *Climate Change, Water and Food Security,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2011), Rome, p. 5.

167 Elver H., *T'he Adverse Impact of Climate Change on the Right to Food,* (2015), A/70/287, para. 43-46.

168 Turral H., Burke J., & Faurès J.M., *Climate Change, Water and Food Security,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2011), Rome, pp. 55-58.

169 According to the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC, a temperature increase of 1°C-2°C in the Mediterranean region will increase aridity in the wider area, cause heat waves, and the number of hot days will increase, particularly in inland areas. Islam M., *Impacts of Climate Change on Water Resources, Agricultural Production and Food Security: Evidence from Türkiye,* Journal of Economy Culture and Society, (2022), p. 164.

unproductive for traditional crops and compromising the safe drinking water essential for health and nutrition[170].

For many communities, especially those living in coastal areas, the right to food is directly linked with the health of the ocean. This is because ocean acidification and the warming of its waters are forcing mass migrations of fish species toward higher latitudes where waters are colder, depriving coastal populations of their primary protein source and economic lifeline[171]. This relocation affects food supply and destroys the infrastructure of the "blue economy"– from ports to processing facilities and equipment – and aquatic ecosystems, leaving vulnerable communities without the protection of a safety net[172].

Climate change alters both the quantity and seasonal distribution of water resources. Agriculture heavily depends on water; consequently, reduced availability and increased competition for water resources limit agricultural food production and threaten long-term sustainability. Moreover, it is expected that an increase in global temperature due to climate change will contribute to increasing water scarcity, which is expected to affect almost 5 billion people around the world and to make more than 60% people in Southern Africa vulnerable[173].

Soil is a living ecosystem, not merely a medium for growth. Climate change accelerates its physical and chemical decline through several channels. First, higher temperatures speed up the decomposition of organic matter, stripping the soil of the carbon necessary for fertility, while extreme weather physically washed away topsoil and arable land. Second, as desertification creeps into previously temperate zones, the geographic limits of viable farming are being forcibly redrawn. This geographical "squeeze" is particularly acute in the developing nations, where pastoral systems depend on fragile rangelands and livelihoods and where the majority of the poor reside in rural areas and depend directly on farming to provide food for their families and generate income[174].

Beyond the physical loss of land, a hidden crisis lies in the chemistry of the crops themselves. High concentrations of CO2 in the atmosphere trigger an automatic physiological response in staples like maize, wheat, and soy, favouring the production of carbohydrate over essential minerals such as protein, zing, and iron. This results in a "dilution effect" that potentially brings millions into a "hidden hunger", which is a state where caloric intake is sufficient but nutritional health collapses due to lack of essential minerals intake[175]. A 34% of the global agricultural land is already degraded leading to the lack of sufficient arable land, and this

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[170] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Report of the Office of the High Commissioner and Secretary-General*, A/HRC/10/61, (2009), para. 29.

[171] Fish constitute a source of high-quality protein, omega-3 fatty acids, as well as essential micronutrients such as calcium, phosphorous and zinc, which promote health and nutrition. FAO, *The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security,* Rome, (2021), p. 64 & IPCC, WHO, UNEP, *Fact Sheet – Food and Water. Climate Change Impacts and Risks,* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (2022), p. 2.

[172] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/53/47, Human Rights Council, (2023), para. 12.

[173] Islam M., *Impacts of Climate Change on Water Resources, Agricultural Production and Food Security: Evidence from Türkiye,* Journal of Economy Culture and Society, (2022), p. 166.

[174] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Food Security,* in *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, (2019), pp. 454-468.

[175] *Ibi, pp. 463-464.*

push individuals towards land-use conflicts and activities of intense deforestation, further worsening food insecurity[176]. Rising temperatures, changing patterns of precipitation and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods are increasingly affecting access to land.

Additional negative consequences of agriculture include loss of biodiversity. Climate change indirectly affects food security by disrupting ecological and biological systems. Biodiversity loss, particularly the decline of pollinators, reduces agricultural productivity, especially for nutrient-rich crops like fruits and vegetable. Climate change also alters the geographical distribution of crops, often requiring shifts in land use and farming practices, as well as the biological rhythm of plants. The anticipation of flowering and harvest dates, while may appear benign, decouple crops from their natural pollinators and increase water demand due to higher evapotranspiration rates[177]. Climate events reduce seasonal yields, but they do not stop here; they destroy the infrastructure of food systems, from irrigation networks to storage facilities, hindering a region's ability to recover before the next disaster hits again. Higher temperatures and humidity reduce post-harvest storage time, thus altering the quality of products and increasing food safety risks from pests and insects[178]. In fact, warmer and humid environments are fertile grounds for biological hazards and accelerate pest reproduction and increase their aggressiveness. Warm and humidity also favours the emergence of food-borne pathogens and toxigenic fungi which accelerate food spoilage and compromise food safety, as well as animal diseases, like food-and-mouth disease, which threaten livestock production, trade, and consequently regional food security[179]. Briefly, new diseases and invasive species are more likely to emerge as a result of climate change and represent a serious risk for the life and health of humans, animals, and plants[180].

The degradation of resources translates directly into economic instability. Agriculture is the main source of income in many Least Developed Countries (LDCs), contributing up to 30% of national GDP. The global food trade is mainly concentrated and dependent on the central role of few regions and for this reason a single climate shock in one area could give birth to a serious crisis in the global supply. Reduced agricultural production leads to economic losses for both producers and consumers, as it contributes to higher and more unstable food prices, affecting consumers' ability to afford adequate nutrition[181]. These economic effects force a shift towards less diverse, lower-quality diets, resulting in increasing

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[176] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 26 on land and economic, social, and cultural rights,* E/C.12/GC/26, (2022), para. 56.

[177] Nucleo Valutazione Verifica Investimenti Pubblici, *Oggetto: L'impatto dei Cambiamenti Climatici sull'Agricoltura,* Dipartimento per la programmazione e il coordinamento della politica economica, (2025), p. 2.

[178] Jensen L. & Hourdin C., *Climate change impacts on food security in the European Union,* European Parliamentary Research Service EPRS, (2025), p. 5.

[179] Nucleo Valutazione Verifica Investimenti Pubblici, *Oggetto: L'impatto dei Cambiamenti Climatici sull'Agricoltura,* Dipartimento per la programmazione e il coordinamento della politica economica, (2025), p. 2.

[180] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Food Security,* in *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, (2019), pp. 458-460 &. Turral H., Burke J., & Faurès J.M., *Climate Change, Water and Food Security,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2011), Rome, p. 54.

[181] Bruno F., *Climate change issues in international food law,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* in *Research handbook on international food law,* Ch. 21, Peace Palace Library and Radboud University Nijmegen, p. 429 & FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 – Addressing high food price inflation for food security and nutrition*, (2025), Rome, p. 53.

diet-related mortality, social unrest, forced migration, and the abandonment of rural livelihoods, because the cost of survival exceeds the financial capacity of the most vulnerable populations[182]. Moreover, declines in agricultural production can trigger sudden changes in agricultural trade flows: countries increase import expenditures and reduce export revenues in order to compensate for domestic loss. For some cases in Africa, the compensatory increase in imports has been as high as half the loss. Research indicated that for every 1°C increase in temperature, the economic growth of poor countries can drop by 1.3 percentage points, primarily driven by agricultural losses[183]. Between 2008 and 2018, LDCs lost over $100 billion in production – a financial burden that the current adaptation finance gap (estimated to be 10 to 18 times smaller than what is needed) cannot cover[184].

The most devastating impact of climate change on the right to food is the erosion of purchasing power. When a harvest fails, smallholder farmers lose both their food supply and the capital necessary to purchase it, forcing them to migrate towards urban centres[185]. The transition from a self-sufficient rural life to a precarious urban existence requires a costly redesign of food supply chains that many nations are ill-equipped to handle. Indeed, failing to address these climate shocks poses a direct threat to nutrition, but also to global peace and security because as the cost of survival increasingly exceeds the financial capacity of the most vulnerable populations, the environmental crisis evolves into a permanent humanitarian catastrophe affecting everyone.

Finally, an additional but less apparent threat arises from the policies intended to deal with climate change. Under the Kyoto Protocol and the UNFCCC, states expressed their commitment to mitigate climate impacts, but measures not correctly designed can have adverse secondary effects on human rights. Measures like "green" alternatives can create a competition for land between fuel and food, contributing to price inflation and displacement of local farmers, effectively sacrificing the right to food for the sake of energy mitigation. Similarly, mitigation requirements – such as forest conversation or mandatory changes in farming practices – may hinder development in parts of the world that lack the financial or technological resources to adapt, further straining states already struggling to meet their citizens' basic needs. The preamble to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change explicitly recognises the "*fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impact of climate change*"[186]. However, translating this priority into reality depends on political choices currently under negotiation. Only by putting food security at the centre of climate programs can the international community build a food system that is both resilient to the environment and respectful of human

[182] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Food Security,* in *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, (2019)*, p. 462.*

[183] FAO, *The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security,* Rome, (2021), p. 36 & Falco C., Galeotti M., & Olper Al., *Climate Change and Migration: Is Agriculture the Main Channel?,* Working Paper Series N. 100, Bocconi, (2018), p. 4.

[184] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Measures for minimizing the adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/55/37, Human Rights Council, (2024), para. 8.

[185] Jensen L. & Hourdin C., *Climate change impacts on food security in the European Union,* European Parliamentary Research Service EPRS, (2025), p. 4.

[186] Bourke-Martignoni J., Dugard & other, *The right to food,* in *Research handbook on economic, social and cultural rights as human rights,* 2020, p. 157.

dignity. In fact, as declared by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Advisory Opinion on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights, States should advance equitable, rights-based climate change mitigation measures with respect to food systems, promote universal social protection systems to strengthen resilience in the context of climate change impacts, and advance clean, healthy and sustainable environments and equitable land-related policies to safeguard the right to food[187]. A human rights-based approach requires states to:

- Limit and regulate: cut emissions and vigilantly oversee polluting non-state actors within their jurisdiction to prevent future food insecurity.
- Implement "do no harm" adaptation: ensure that domestic and international climate policies do not inadvertently infringe upon social and economic rights.
- Empower the vulnerable: shift the focus from passive protection to active empowerment. This involves providing at-risk communities transparent information, a meaningful voice in the policy making process, and access to legal remedies to hold those responsible for climate-induced harm accountable.

A human rights-based approach is therefore essential to ensure that climate programs do not inadvertently harm the very populations they are meant to protect[188].

The effects of climate change on agriculture are already evident in many regions. Extreme weather events have already worsened living conditions, reduced crops, and destructed housing and infrastructures. They also directly affected the productivity of all agricultural and fishery sectors, negatively impacting food security and livelihoods[189], and showed indirect effects through rising food prices and insecurity. Climate change affects food production unevenly across regions, with higher intensity on LDCs, altering trade patterns and increasing dependence on imports for many countries. Overall, climate change leads to a combination of negative consequences such as reduced food availability, higher prices, lower nutritional quality, and increased instability, ultimately threatening both food systems and global food security[190].

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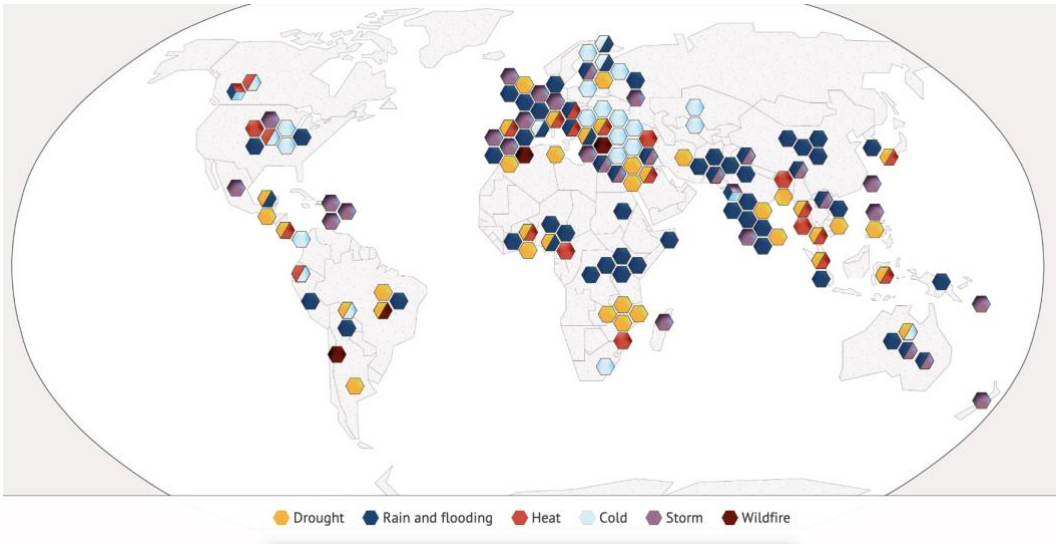
[187] Celorio R., *Advisory Opinion 32/25 on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights: The Inter-American Court of Human Rights Meets the Moment,* Volume 25, Issue 14, Insights, American Society of International Law, (2025) & General Assembly of the United Nations, *Measures for minimizing the adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/55/37, Human Rights Council, (2024), para. 9.

[188] Caesens E. & Rodríguez M.P., *Climate Change and the Right to Food - A comprehensive Study,* Columbia Law School – Human Rights Institute, 2009, volume 8, pp. 14-15.

[189] IPCC, WHO, UNEP, *Fact Sheet – Food and Water. Climate Change Impacts and Risks,* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (2022).

[190] Jensen L. & Hourdin C., *Climate change impacts on food security in the European Union,* European Parliamentary Research Service EPRS, (2025).



[Snapshot of how extreme weather can impact food production. From Dwyer O. & Prater T., *Mapped: How extreme weather is destroying crops around the world,* CarbonBrief – Clear on Climate, (2025)]

2.3. Regions Most Affected by the Negative Impacts of Climate Change on Food Security

While the destabilising effects of climate change are a global phenomenon, their intensity and manifestations are profoundly asymmetrical. Moving from overall structural vulnerabilities to their concrete regional consequences exposes a climate gap, in which areas with existing socioeconomic weaknesses are affected most severely, as the intersection of extreme weather patterns and limited adaptive capacity transforms environmental fluctuations into acute food crises.

As already mentioned, climate change is fundamentally altering the geography of global agriculture, creating a stark contrast between high-latitude and tropical regions. Regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean, and parts of Latin America are anticipated to suffer the most. These arid and semi-arid face a volatile combination of rising temperatures and increasingly erratic rainfall that render agriculture increasingly precarious. In contrast, some northern regions may see temporary extensions of their growing seasons[191]. However, these localised gains are largely outweighed by the massive productivity losses in the tropics, where many crops are already pushed to their thermal tolerance limits, and any further warming would be catastrophic. Furthermore, while global precipitation may increase in aggregate, its distribution is becoming increasingly unpredictable. For example, parts of Asia may face more intense and destructive monsoons, while the Middle

[191] Turral H., Burke J., & Faurès J.M., *Climate Change, Water and Food Security,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2011), Rome, pp. 58-61.

East and North Africa – already representing the most water-scarce regions on Earth – are facing drastic dropping of water levels that goes below the threshold of absolute scarcity[192].

The most affected regions are the most vulnerable ones: Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, parts of Latin America, and mountainous regions such as the Sahel, the Hindu Kush Himalayas, and the Andes. Vulnerability is measured in terms of poverty, limited access to technology and markets, weak infrastructure, environmental degradation, and high dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) stands out as the most vulnerable region in the world, with estimates suggesting that in 2050, 65% of the world's population risking hunger will be located here[193]. The vulnerability of SSA is rooted in its agricultural structure: over 95% of its farming is rain-fed, making the entire food system sensitive to shifts in precipitation[194]. In fact, the effects that global warming and rainfall decrease have on agricultural production threaten both the welfare of the population and its economic development. Studies indicate that major cereal crops, such as maize, will decline up to 40% by the end of the century[195]. In this region, heat stress reduces soil fertility, water scarcity limits irrigation potential, and land degradation reduces the amount of arable land available for a growing population. As a result, climate change is expected to expand arid areas, reduce cultivable land, and intensify competition over natural resources. This vulnerability in SSA is also due to the region's very low adaptive capacity in connection to the acute levels of poverty and the limited facilities needed to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate. Changing precipitation patterns and rising temperatures increased the frequency and intensity of droughts, especially in East and Southern Africa. These droughts have had devastating humanitarian consequences, contributing to widespread food insecurity, mass displacement, and loss of life. Somalia, for instance, has faced over 30 climate shocks since 1990. In 2020, the combination of desert locusts, conflict and climate-induced price spikes devastated the lives of millions of agro-pastoralists[196]. Overall, these dynamics significantly undermine the fundamental right to food for millions of rural and smallholder communities in SSA by reducing food availability, limiting access to productive resources, and increasing vulnerability to food insecurity[197].
Within the SSA, the Sahel offers a stark example of climate change acting as a threat multiplier. In these 12 countries[198], the struggle for food security is inseparable from socioeconomic instability, human rights and social justice, as agriculture and livestock are the main sources of subsistence for the majority of people living there. The situation in this

[192] Burrows K. & Kinney P.L., *Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus,* International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, (2016), New York, p. 11.
[193] Elver H., *T'he Adverse Impact of Climate Change on the Right to Food,* (2015), A/70/287, para. 25.
[194] Ofori S.A., Cobbina S.J., & Obiri S., *Climate Change, Land, Water, and Food Security: Perspectives From Sub-Saharan Africa,* Frontiers, (2021), p. 2.
[195] Abebaw S.E., *A Global Review of the Impacts of Climate Change and Variability on Agricultural Productivity and Farmers' Adaptation Strategies,* in *Food Science & Nutrition, (2025),* volume 13, issue 5, Wiley Online Library.
[196] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/53/47, Human Rights Council, (2023), para. 11.
[197] Ofori S.A., Cobbina S.J., & Obiri S., *Climate Change, Land, Water, and Food Security: Perspectives From Sub-Saharan Africa,* Frontiers, (2021), pp. 3-6.
[198] Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Chad.

part of the world is strongly impacted by climate change because agriculture, largely rainfed, plays an important economic role there[199]. The occurrence of drought and floods directly affects agricultural production, causing significant human loss and economic damage in the Sahel countries due to the lack of good quality infrastructure and structures. Droughts are one of the main causes of migration in developing countries and the Sahel in particular. Since 1901, the Sahel has recorded more than half of all drought events on the African continent, causing enormous socio-economic and environmental impacts in this semi-arid region, resulting in massive migration, famine and desertification[200]. Environmental degradation in the Sahel has led to a desertification of livelihoods; then, as traditional farming and pastoralism become impossible, the resulting poverty and unemployment have created a vacuum that extremist groups exploit for recruitment. In addition to the great climatic variability, they face civil wars, mass migration, and terrorism that create lasting instability. This creates a feedback loop: environmental stress leads to conflict, conflict leads to deserted fields and prevents the transport of food, and deserted fields lead to famine. Climate change is affecting agricultural productivity and 80% of the Sahelian agricultural population is at risk of being food insecure, living with less than a dollar per day. This can limit the purchasing power of poor households and push these individuals to focus on cheaper grains and other less nutritious foods. Faced with soaring prices, households can no longer choose between a meal and basic health care or access to education for children[201].

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is expected to be the region most affected by climate change after Sub-Saharan Africa. Averages temperatures in that region are forecast to increase by 3°-4°C by the end of the century, faster than the global average[202]. Indeed, the warming on the African continent is projected to be greater than the global average with an increased average temperature of 3-6°C by the end of the century[203]. Agriculture is the most important activity in Africa: it employs more than 60% of the population and account for more than 50% of GDP in some regions[204]. Studies have shown that climate-induced agricultural shifts may lead to a 15% reduction in global cereal production by 2050[205]. While agriculture may adapt to minor changes in climatic averages, drastic alterations pose significant challenges. Climate change decreases agricultural incomes, increases unemployment of the agricultural population and economic loss at the country level. The economic impacts of climate change are enormous because African economies are not diversified, and a large part of the population is active in agriculture.

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[199] Yobom O., *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Sahel,* Economics and Finance Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté, HAL Open Science, (2020), p. 9.
[200] *Ibi*, p. 166.
[201] *Ibi*, p. 237, p. 206.
[202] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Fifth Assessment Report.
[203] Ofori S.A., Cobbina S.J., & Obiri S., *Climate Change, Land, Water, and Food Security: Perspectives From Sub-Saharan Africa,* Frontiers, (2021), p. 1.
[204] Yobom O., *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Sahel,* Economics and Finance Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté, HAL Open Science, (2020), p. 47.
[205] Abebaw S.E., *A Global Review of the Impacts of Climate Change and Variability on Agricultural Productivity and Farmers' Adaptation Strategies,* in *Food Science & Nutrition, (2025),* volume 13, issue 5, Wiley Online Library.

These are the main reasons why Africa is considered to be the most affected and vulnerable area to the negative impacts of climate change[206].

Beyond Africa, other regions face unique but equally devastating climate-induced threats to their right to food. The impacts of climate-related extremes on food security, nutrition and livelihoods are particularly acute also for people living in Asia, small island, Central and South America, and the Arctic[207].

- Asia: home of two thirds of the world's hungry, the continent faces dual threats that jeopardise its foundational food systems[208]. On one hand, the accelerating melting of glaciers in the Himalayas stresses water supplies for millions and that farmers depend on for irrigation. On the other hand, rising sea levels are encroaching upon fertile delta regions, which are essential for global ride production. In South Asia specifically, the shift in monsoon patterns combined with rising average temperatures has led to a measurable decline in the yields of staple crops like rice and wheat[209]. This isn't just a matter of lower production; the extreme unpredictability – where prolonged dry spells are often followed by devastating flash floods – makes it nearly impossible for small-scale farmers to plant their planting cycles. As a result, regions that were once breadbaskets are becoming hotspots for food insecurity.
- Latin America and the Caribbean: despite significant progress in hunger reduction since the 1990s[210], especially in Latin America, the regions remain at risk as the gains are being eroded by increasingly frequent climate shocks. The "Dry Corridor" in Central America, for example, is experiencing persistent, severe droughts that trigger both acute forms of malnutrition and mass migration[211]. In this region, heat stress and water scarcity are affecting the subsistence and commercial agriculture. Staples like maize are failing and high-value crops such as coffee are suffering[212]. As coffee represents a central product in the regional economy, a single failure of its harvest leads to a lack of food, but more importantly to the total loss of income for smallholder farmers, income necessary to buy essentials or invest in the next season.
- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Mountainous Areas: these regions are characterised by geographical isolation and high-level vulnerability to climate

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[206] Yobom O., *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Sahel,* Economics and Finance Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté, HAL Open Science, (2020), p. 47.

[207] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/53/47, Human Rights Council, (2023), para. 9 & IPCC, WHO, UNEP, *Fact Sheet – Food and Water. Climate Change Impacts and Risks,* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (2022), p. 1.

[208] Yobom O., *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Sahel,* Economics and Finance Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté, HAL Open Science, (2020), p. 210.

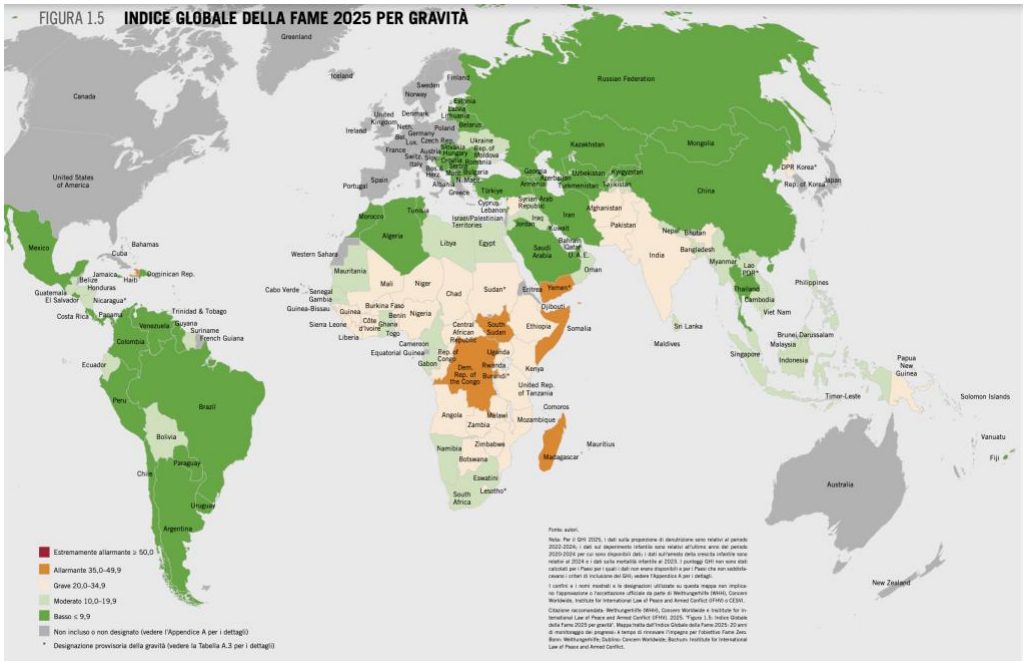
[209] Turral H., Burke J., & Faurès J.M., *Climate Change, Water and Food Security,* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2011), Rome, pp. 58-61 & Abebaw S.E., *A Global Review of the Impacts of Climate Change and Variability on Agricultural Productivity and Farmers' Adaptation Strategies,* in *Food Science & Nutrition, (2025),* volume 13, issue 5, Wiley Online Library.

[210] Yobom O., *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Sahel,* Economics and Finance Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté, HAL Open Science, (2020), p. 210.

[211] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food,* A/HRC/53/47, Human Rights Council, (2023), para. 11.

[212] Abebaw S.E., *A Global Review of the Impacts of Climate Change and Variability on Agricultural Productivity and Farmers' Adaptation Strategies,* in *Food Science & Nutrition, (2025),* volume 13, issue 5, Wiley Online Library.

shocks. For SIDS, a single disaster can disrupt an impressively high percentage of their agricultural GDP, while communities living in the mountains face soil erosion and limited access to basic services, factors that increase their food insecurity[213].



[Snapshot taken from Scherer S.F., Wecker K., & Others, *Indice Globale della Fame. 20 anni di monitoraggio dei progressi: è tempo di rinnovare l'impegno per l'obiettivo fame zero,* Welt Hunger Life, Concern World Wide & IFHV, (2025), p. 22, showing which country faces food insecurity and at which GHI level]

Climate change threatens the capacity of entire regions to sustain their own food production. Between 2008-2018, production loss caused by climate change amounted to USD 30 billion for Africa (both sub-Saharan and North Africa), and slightly lower for Latin America and the Caribbean at USD 29 billion. The loss across the Caribbean SIDS amounted to USD 8.7 billion alone. For the same period, Asia experienced crop and livestock production loss valued at a notable USD 49 billion, with Southeast Asia and Southern Asia surpassing all other sub-regions at USD 20.7 and USD 25 billion respectively. The total estimated loss for the Pacific SIDS across Oceania was lower in absolute terms at USD 108 million for the 2008-2018 period.[214] The diversity of impacts highlights the need for localised analysis and tailored adaptation strategies rather than broad global generalisations.

The severity of climate Impacts is ultimately determined by a population's adaptive capacity. In fact, that part of the population living in condition of poverty within developing countries are particularly vulnerable to climate change as they are disproportionally dependent on climate-sensitive resources for their food and livelihoods, for their survival[215]. The most

[213] FAO, *FAO's responses to the Questionnaire disseminated in relation to Human Rights Council resolution 50/9 on human rights and climate change*, (2022), pp. 2-3.
[214] FAO, *The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security*, Rome, (2021).
[215] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Report of the Office of the High Commissioner and Secretary-General*, A/HRC/10/61, (2009), para. 26.

affected and vulnerable to these events are especially those entitled with the fewest resources that allow them to defend their practice and to adapt. Smallholder farmers and pastoral communities often lack the technology, insurance, or institutional support to survive a climate shock and a single failed harvest[216]. In addition, non-climatic factors – such as conflict, marginalisation, and limited access to education – further exacerbate these vulnerabilities, making climate change a multiplier of already existing inequalities, in global food systems[217]. In many developing nations, agriculture accounts for over 50% of GDP and employs the majority of the workforce. When climate change hits this field, it causes a systemic collapse of national economy, leading to soaring food prices that make nutrition inaccessible even when food is available in the market.

Indeed, climate change is not merely a technical challenge of agricultural yields, but a fundamental threat to the right to food and a major driver of global inequality. Ultimately, when the physical and economic foundations of a food system collapse, the crisis transcends agriculture and becomes a destabilising force that shatters social cohesion and forces individuals to make the agonising choice between starvation, flight, or struggle.

2.4. Dynamics of Food Vulnerability: Migration and Conflict

The desperation born from climate-induced hunger does not remain confined within borders. Food security is the solid ground of social stability; when it fails, the impacts extend far beyond the agricultural sector. In many vulnerable regions, the struggle for food is no longer just a technical challenge for farmers, but the resulting food-security gap acts as a primary catalyst for human displacement and a catalyst for violence and pre-existing political tensions. By acting as a threat multiplier, climate-induced food insecurity forces societies and pushes individuals into a complex nexus of forced migration and resource-driven conflict. To understand why this happens, it is important to trace the causal chain from a failed harvest to the destabilisation of entire nations.

Climate change offers serious negative impacts on environmental and human systems through both extreme events such as drought, floods, and wildfires, and slower onset impacts such as changing rainfall patterns, sea-level rise, and decreased soil fertility. These events cause the displacement and relocation of individuals due to the damage or loss that climate infringe on land and property, to the collapse of health and security systems, increasing political instability, or even conflicts. As already mentioned, climate change exacerbates existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities, deepening poverty and food insecurity, expanding the lack of employment opportunities, limiting access to social protection, and depleting the natural resources upon which the rural livelihoods or the entire communities depend on[218].

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[216] Yobom O., *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Sahel,* Economics and Finance Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté, HAL Open Science, (2020), p. 218.
[217] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Food Security,* in *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, (2019), pp. 453-454.
[218] FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* p. 7.

The First Assessment Report of the IPCC (1990) noted that the larges impact of climate change on communities might be represented by human migration. The report estimated that 150 million people will be displaced by climate change-related phenomena by 2050 as desertification, increasing water scarcity, floods and storms will continue to occur. The report also highlighted that climate-related displacement will primarily fall on those individuals living in poor conditions within the poorest regions of the world[219].

Migration is often considered as the final adaptation strategy for families who have tried and failed all ways to cope with hunger at home. Paradoxically, those who are not able or not willing to migrate are often at the greatest risk, because when managed safely and orderly, migration can actually support agricultural development, economic growth, and food security. How? Migrants often send home remittances, knowledge, and technology assimilated within the host countries that strengthen the resilience of their original communities[220]. By contrast, poorly managed or forced migration can heighten pressure on scarce natural resources and exacerbate tensions over land tenure between migrants and host communities. Migration can be either internal or international and either temporary or permanent. Most migration after extreme weather events is temporary: people often attempt to return to their places of origin and rebuild their livelihoods. Usually only a proportion of displacement leads to more permanent migration[221]. For example, slow-onset events can lead to initial temporary migration to seek out opportunities, followed later by permanent migration as conditions worsen due to climate change, but it cannot be foreseen. Sea-level rise, for example, will affect migration flows and result in permanent migration as coastal areas become uninhabitable: seawater intrusion can result in salinisation of freshwater resources and loss of agricultural productivity. Weather-related extremes and longer-term climate change leading to loss of agricultural productivity will have a significant impact on migration. However, different disasters impact rates of temporary and permanent migration differently and are intrinsically tied to other factors such as economic status. In both developed and developing countries, migrants after extreme natural events have been observed to remain within national borders and close to their place of origin[222].

The presumption is that adverse weather shocks, induced by very hot or very cold temperature, could induce people to migrate. Note that the effect could be both direct – as people choose to migrate to cope with the physiological effects of extreme temperature – but also could be indirect through the agricultural channel[223]. The transition from farmer to migrant is driven by two primary economic pressures. First, the depletion of survival assets: in developing countries, agriculture is not just an occupation, but it represents a household's

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[219] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Report of the Office of the High Commissioner and Secretary-General*, A/HRC/10/61, (2009), para. 55.

[220] Burrows K. & Kinney P.L., *Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus,* International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, (2016), New York, p. 6.

[221] FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* p. 7.

[222] Burrows K. & Kinney P.L., *Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus,* International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, (2016), New York, p. 6.

[223] Falco C., Galeotti M., & Olper Al., *Climate Change and Migration: Is Agriculture the Main Channel?,* Working Paper Series N. 100, Bocconi, (2018), pp. 19-20.

entire capital and the main source of income and employment. In addition, agriculture is the sector most affected by climate change with important implications for agricultural productivity, rural livelihoods and food security, particularly in the developing world where most of migrants come from[224]. When a sudden disaster – such as a cyclone – destroys a crop, it wipes out the "savings" needed for the next season. This loss of assets leaves rural families with no safety net, forcing them into urban centres or across borders just to survive. Quantitatively, research indicates that a 1% reduction below the trend in agricultural productivity over a 10-year period induced an increase of the emigration rate of about 2% for low- and middle-income countries[225]. Between 2008 and 2015, an average of 26.4 million people were displaced annually by natural disasters, a figure expected to exceed 400 million by 2050[226]. Second, the slow-onset squeeze: unlike sudden storm, processes like desertification or rising sea levels, ocean acidification or glacial retreat slowly erode the viability of the land. As production declines, local food prices rise – a phenomenon known as "climate inflation". In low-income regions where food accounts for up to 70% of a family's budget, this inflation acts as a driver of displacement, making the cost of staying and facing these prices higher than the cost of fleeing. In fact, climate change creates a situation that make staying home nearly impossible for vulnerable individuals. Indeed, while sudden disasters like hurricanes and tsunamis grab the world's attention because of their sheer violence, the slower, quieter changes – like the creeping desertification of farmland or the steady erosion of coastlines – actually impact far more people in the long run, thus leading to disastrous results[227].

Additionally, migrants' displacement doesn't always come after climate-induced events, but it could be driven by the recognition of a specific zone as a high-risk zone facing extreme increasing disaster risk or whenever climate change leads to the severing of already exiting political tensions, outbreaking into violence or conflicts[228]. Recent works have emphasised how climatic conditions may influence the relationships between groups, increasing the probability of large-scale conflicts, and how conflicts are clearly a primary source of migration decision[229].

While climate change may not be the sole cause of conflict, it is universally acknowledged as a catalyst for violence and conflict in conjunction with other factors. Increased competition over dwindling resources can aggravate the potential for migration to lead to

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[224] In developing countries, the agriculture sectors (crops and livestock, fisheries and aquaculture and forestry) absorb 26 per cent of the total damage and losses from climate-related disasters. These impacts aggravate food insecurity and intensify migration around the world. FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* p. 4 & Falco C., Galeotti M., & Olper Al., *Climate Change and Migration: Is Agriculture the Main Channel?,* Working Paper Series N. 100, Bocconi, (2018), p. 2.

[225] Falco C., Galeotti M., & Olper Al., *Climate Change and Migration: Is Agriculture the Main Channel?,* Working Paper Series N. 100, Bocconi, (2018), p. 14.

[226] FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* p. 4.

[227] IOM (International Organisation for Migration), *Migration, environment and climate change: assessing the evidence*, (2009), Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 14-15.

[228] Lasater M.E., Prager G., & other, *Understanding relationships among climate change, conflict, migration/displacement and health in humanitarian settings: a scoping review, OpenAccess, (2025), volume 19, article number 73,* p. 2.

[229] Falco C., Galeotti M., & Olper Al., *Climate Change and Migration: Is Agriculture the Main Channel?,* Working Paper Series N. 100, Bocconi, (2018), pp. 18-19.

conflict, especially as populations continue to grow and resources remain scarce[230]. Conflicts are projected to globally increase both in response to and alongside increasing climatic hazards, resource scarcity, and governance challenges. Researches reveal strong causal links between climatic variability and various levels of conflict – interpersonal, intergroup, and state-level – across all global regions [231]. The link between food and conflict is rarely a direct "food war". Instead, it is a process where scarcity ignites existing social and political fires. Regions with historically weak governance are doubly vulnerable: they lack the institutional mediating forces required to manage resource disputes[232]. As arable land and water disappear, groups that previously coexisted are forced to compete for shrinking grassland and water. In agriculture-dependent communities in low-income contexts, droughts have been found to increase the likelihood of violence and prolonged conflict at the local level, which eventually pose a threat to societal stability and peace. For example, in the Sahel, droughts force nomadic herders to move livestock into farming territories earlier than usual. When negotiations and land-use regulations fail to adapt to these new climatic realities and to resolve competition over resources, the result is often violent communal conflict over water and grazing rights[233].

Furthermore, when people displaced by hunger move into areas where resources are already under pressure, it creates perceived insecurity among the host community. The migrant is often labelled as "the other" who has come to take jobs and food, thus adding to the humanitarian crisis also the element of an ethnic or political struggle between migrants and residents in receiving areas[234]. Receiving countries may feel overwhelmed and potentially threatened by the influx of people with different languages and religions. In these vacuums of stability in which the state can no longer ensure the right to food, extremist groups often step in, using food or small salaries to recruit desperate individuals who have lost their agriculture likelihoods. Indeed, climate change doesn't just cause conflict, but it also fuels the machinery of instability and drive significant levels of migration and displacement.

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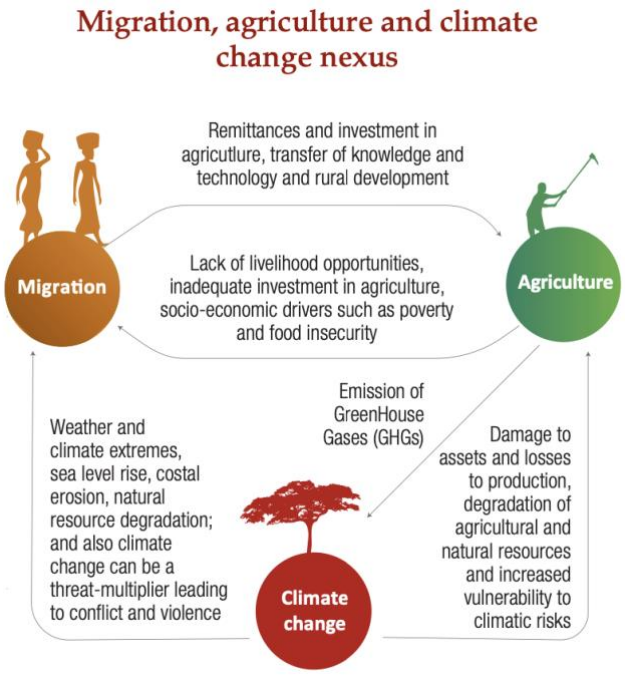
[230] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Food Security,* in *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, (2019)*, p. 522 &* Burrows K. & Kinney P.L., *Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus,* International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, (2016), New York, p. 8.

[231] Lasater M.E., Prager G., & other, *Understanding relationships among climate change, conflict, migration/displacement and health in humanitarian settings: a scoping review, OpenAccess, (2025), volume 19, article number 73,* p. 2.

[232] Burrows K. & Kinney P.L., *Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus,* International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, (2016), New York, p. 11.

[233] Efobi U., Adejumo O., & Kim J., *Climate change and the farmer-Pastoralist's violent conflict: Experimental evidence from Nigeria,* in *Ecological Economics,* Elsevier, (2025), p. 1.

[234] FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* p. 9.



[Snapshot taken from FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* p. 9.]

The most dangerous aspect of this dynamic is its circularity. Climate shocks cause food shortages and resource scarcity, which drive migration and conflict over access and use, which, in turn, not only forcibly displace persons creating lasting tensions with host communities but it also prevents farmers from returning to their fields and disrupts food transport, creating even deeper famines. This circularity confirms and aligns with the definition of climate change as a threat multiplier, compounding impacts on migration/displacement, conflict, and ultimately health[235]. This suggests that the right to food should not simply be considered as a humanitarian issue but as a fundamental requirement for global peace.

The crisis in Sudan serves as perfect example of how climate change acts as a primary driver of environmental and especially social collapse. The temperatures rise has accelerated water evaporation and fuelled the Sahara's expansion, effectively disrupting the grazing lands and water sources that sustained generations. This environmental decay forced nomadic pastoralists to migrate, pushing them into direct collision with sedentary farming communities. Persistent droughts have dismantled traditional resource-sharing agreements between these groups, giving birth to a struggle for dwindling land and water that eventually turned into a violent partisan conflict. This instability and unviability of agriculture inevitably spill over from rural fields into urban centres through distress migration, placing unsustainable pressure on urban infrastructures and creating a secondary competition for

[235] Lasater M.E., Prager G., & other, *Understanding relationships among climate change, conflict, migration/displacement and health in humanitarian settings: a scoping review, OpenAccess, (2025), volume 19, article number 73,* pp. 10-11.

resources among refugees and host populations[236]. Ultimately, the Sudanese experience demonstrates that when the fundamental right to food and water is stripped away by environmental degradation, the resulting scarcity becomes an enduring catalyst for war. It highlights that in regions where survival is strictly tied to the land and its resources, climate change is not just an ecological threat but a profound destabiliser to national security and a challenge to human dignity.

In 2025, scholars suggested that 3.6 billion people lived in highly climate-vulnerable contexts. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 75% of forcibly displaced people already resided in countries with high exposure to climatic hazards, and nearly 50% of forcibly displaced people were living in contexts exposed to conflict in addition to climatic events[237]. As the magnitude and frequency of climatic shocks and hazards are projected to substantially increase and natural resources to become increasingly scarce in proportion to the rising population, addressing this requires moving beyond humanitarian aid toward long-term political and legal solution that place food security and human dignity at the centre of global climate policy.

[236] Caesens E. & Rodríguez M.P., *Climate Change and the Right to Food - A comprehensive Study,* Columbia Law School – Human Rights Institute, 2009, volume 8, p. 27.

[237] Lasater M.E., Prager G., & other, *Understanding relationships among climate change, conflict, migration/displacement and health in humanitarian settings: a scoping review, OpenAccess, (2025), volume 19, article number 73,* p. 2.

Chapter Three
How the UN System Is Responding to New Food Security Challenges

The international community has long recognised that widespread hunger is an unacceptable violation of human dignity. This consensus – that every human being has a fundamental right to be free from malnutrition – forms the backbone of the mandates for the Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs): the Food and Agriculture organisation (FAO), the International Fund for agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP) [238]. However, this fundamental right to be free from malnutrition is now under unprecedented threat from the accelerating climate crisis. Climate change is already affecting the livelihoods of millions through extreme weather events and systemic changes in meteorological patterns, acting as a threat multiplier and taking existing poverty and turning it into an acute catastrophe. We see this through rising sea levels and warming oceans that decimate fish stocks, and through intense droughts that turn fertile land into dust. The irony of this crisis is that those who contribute the least to global emissions – including small-scale farmers, fishers, and indigenous foresters – are the ones currently losing their livelihoods to extreme weather and paying the higher costs[239]. Consequently, as extreme weather patterns and environmental degradation destabilise the agricultural sector and the entire global food systems, the RBAs have had to evolve and to adapt their mandate to present challenges. Their work is no longer just about distributing food, but it is about building ecological resilience to protect the right to food in an unstable world. This commitment is confirmed by the development of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development as well as from the Paris Agreement of 2015. This Agreement acknowledged the urgent need for an effective and progressive response to the growing threat of climate change, while also taking into account the specific needs and unique circumstances of developing countries. Recognising the paramount importance of ensuring food security and eradicating hunger, as well as the particular vulnerability of food production systems to the adverse effects of climate change, the Parties reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the implementation of the UNFCCC and advancing its objectives[240].

Tackling food insecurity requires action from governments, businesses and individuals, alongside practical measures to help farmers adapt. Within this context, the UN system plays a key role.

3.1. Global Indicators of Food Insecurity

International organisations rely on standardised analytical tools to assess the severity of food crises and coordinate a global response. Each tool serves a specific purpose, ranging from emergency triage to long-term health monitoring. The most widely used is the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a global partnership involving

[238] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, p. 1.
[239] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), p. 5.
[240] United Nations, *Paris Agreement,* Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

governments, UN agencies, and NGOs, used to describe a crisis. It consists in the share of data and the use of the finding to help design programmes that properly address people's needs[241]. The IPC classifies the severity of food insecurity in a region of the world in order to attract international attentions to certain critical situations and promote action. This classification ranges from 1 to 5, from "*no/minimal food insecurity*" to "*catastrophe*", where the highest level corresponds to an extreme emergency that can be categorised as *famine* or *quasi-famine*.[242] Going deeper, the WFP has explained in its website the 5 phases of food insecurity:

1. Phase 1 IPC: no/minimal food insecurity → families can meet their basic needs, malnutrition is low (under 5%), and life is stable. The quantity and quality of food are constant for most people, with more than 2,100 calories per capita per day.
2. Phase 2 IPC: food insecurity at the level of "stress" → people have a minim level of food consumption but only by scarifying other essentials like clothing or healthcare. Their income is precarious and at this stage, 5-10 percent of the population is malnourished in acute form and people take in 2,100 calories per day, that is, they barely have an adequate diet that meets their food needs.
3. Phase 3 IPC: acute food insecurity at the level of "crisis" → families are faced with deficiencies in food consumption and start selling their producing assets – tools, seeds, or livestock – just to buy food. At this stage, food choices are limited and about 10-15 percent of the population is severely malnourished.
4. Phase 4 IPC: acute food insecurity at the "emergency" level → gaps in food consumption become extreme, with very high rates of acute malnutrition and high mortality. People are forced to sell their last remaining possessions. At this stage, between 15 and 30 percent of the population is severely malnourished, and people have access to three or fewer food groups such as fruits, grains, and vegetables and take less than 2,100 calories per day.
5. Phase 5 IPC: "catastrophe" or "famine" → families are facing extreme lack of food and other basic needs even after all possible adaptation mechanisms have been put in place. At least two out of 10,000 people die of hunger or disease daily, in conditions of famine, and acute malnutrition among children exceeds 30 percent. People only have access to one or two food groups and there is an extreme shortage of calories per capita per day. At least 20 percent of families are facing a severe food shortage[243].

In regions where IPC data is unavailable, other equivalent measures are used, for example what is known as the *Cadre Harmonisé* in West Africa[244], or WFP's Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) method[245]. However, while the

[241] Anthem P., *Food security – what it means and why it matters,* World Food Programme, (2025).
[242] Er M., *Le cinque fasi della fame, dalla sicurezza alimentare alla carestia,* World Food Programme, (2024) & WFP, *Understanding famine: what it is, how you can act,* (2025).
[243] Er M., *Le cinque fasi della fame, dalla sicurezza alimentare alla carestia,* World Food Programme, (2024).
[244] For more information, see https://reliefweb.int/report/ghana/cadre-harmonise-identifying-risk-areas-and-vulnerable-populations-food-and-nutritional-insecurity-sahel-and-west-africa-ghana-results-current-march-may-2023-and-projected-june-august-2023-acute-food-security-analysis
[245] For more information see https://vamresources.manuals.wfp.org/docs/the-consolidated-approach-for-reporting-indicators-of-food-security-cari

IPC tracks food insecurity in sudden crisis hotspots over the short term, other tools look at the slow-motion hunger that plagues millions. To analyse the long-term and chronic undernourishment in the world as well as the severity of food insecurity, FAO and other UN agencies mainly rely on two main statistical measurement tools: the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) and the Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU) indicator[246]. FIES is a statistical methodology that measures the severity of the food insecurity experienced by people in an internationally comparable manner. Rather than just counting calories, this method asks people about their experience. It relies on people's direct *yes/no* responses to eight brief survey questions which focus on self-reported food-related behaviours and conditions associated with difficulties in accessing food due to resource constraints. In other words, it is used to see if people are worried about where their next meal comes from. This captures the psychological and social reality of hunger. The Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU) indicator is a long-term statistical tool which measures the percentage of a population that consistently lacks the calories needed for an active, healthy life. This serves as an indicator to monitor progress towards the goals agreed to at the WFS in 1996: the MDGs and SDG 2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[247]. The PoU was included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development indicator framework to monitor progress towards zero hunger[248].

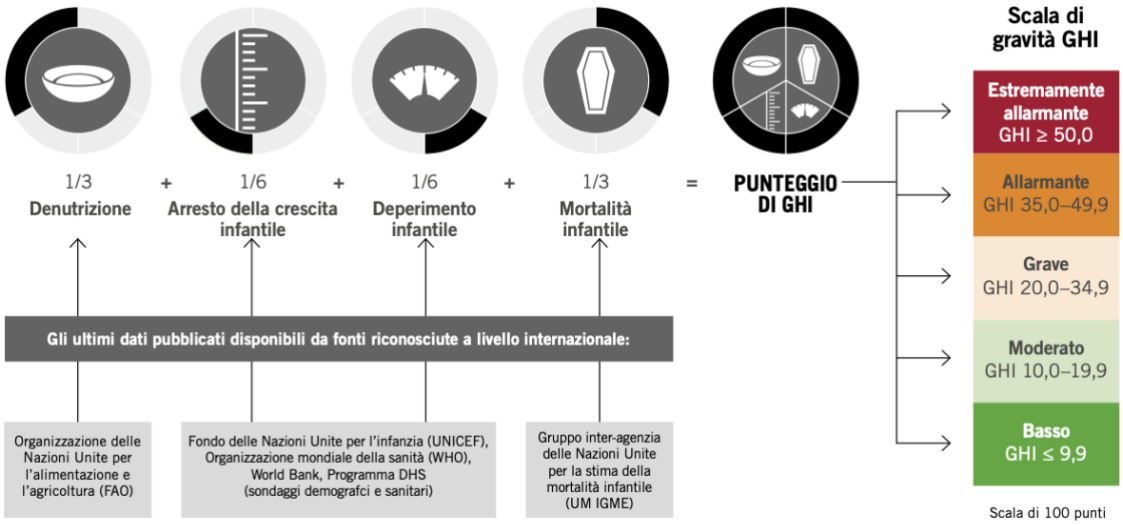
Finally, the Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a key tool developed to measure and monitor hunger comprehensively at the global, regional, and national levels. GHI scores are measured through four indicators: malnutrition, child stunting, child wasting, and child mortality. The former, differently from the other three, refers to the percentage of the entire population with insufficient caloric intake. But calories are not the only focal point of concern. The other indicators include looking at stunting (low height for age) and wasting (low weight for height) in children under five, thus revealing the "hidden hunger" of nutrient deficiencies that can permanently damage a child's development and health. Additionally, it observes the mortality rate of children which reflect the fatal combination of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments. Based on these indicators' values, the severity of hunger is calculated based on a GHI score within a 100-point scale, where 0 is the best possible score (no hunger) and 100 the worst one which is extremely alarming[249]. Each country's GHI score is classified by severity, ranging from low to extremely alarming, as illustrated in the following snapshot.

[246] FAO, *Putting a number on hunger – Different measures for different purposes.*

[247] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 – Addressing high food price inflation for food security and nutrition*, (2025), Rome, p. 4.

[248] FAO, *Putting a number on hunger – Different measures for different purposes.*

[249] Scherer S.F., Wecker K., & Others, *Indice Globale della Fame. 20 anni di monitoraggio dei progressi: è tempo di rinnovare l'impegno per l'obiettivo fame zero,* Welt Hunger Life, Concern World Wide & IFHV, (2025).



[Snapshot from Scherer S.F., Wecker K., & Others, *Indice Globale della Fame. 20 anni di monitoraggio dei progressi: è tempo di rinnovare l'impegno per l'obiettivo fame zero,* Welt Hunger Life, Concern World Wide & IFHV, (2025).]

Every system has its flaws. The IPC is only as good as the data collected on the ground – which is difficult in active war zones for example. The FIES is often criticised for being subjective since it relies on self-reporting and personal perspectives rather than universal data. Yet, despite these limitations, these tools are essential. They transform the abstract concept of the right to food into a measurable reality, forcing the international community to look at the data and, hopefully, take action. Indeed, these classification systems play a crucial role in mobilising international attention and coordinating humanitarian response.

Understanding the scale of food insecurity is only the first step. The true test lies in institutional accountability. Various United Nations agencies contribute to the global food security agenda by dealing with the transformation of food systems in line with the various goals of the 2030 Agenda, addressing different dimensions of food security. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the World Food Programme are two agencies with special focus on food security; the former addressing multiple dimensions of food security and the latter eradicating hunger and malnutrition through humanitarian aid. On the other hand, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) aims to improve food security through better food production systems. Finally, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) addresses the dimension of economic access to food by creating new jobs and higher income, very often with a special attention on rural communities and agribusinesses[250]. Accordingly, the next sections will analyse the institutional response, examining the specific strategies and operational measures adopted by the key UN agencies to align their food security mandates with the urgent realities of climate change.

[250] UNIDO, *Food Security and Climate Change – A 2023 update,* Sustainable Development Goals, (2023), p. 25.

3.2. Food and Agriculture Organisation

Since its founding in 1945, the Food and Agriculture Organisation – the world's leading authority on agriculture, nutrition, and land – had experiences a significant institutional transformation. What began as a project centred on fundamental caloric sufficiency and technical modernisation has developed into a rights-based worldview. The FAO now sees food as a basic human rights that is increasingly threatened by the unstable environment of the 21st century rather than just a commodity to be traded.

The formal adoption of a rights-based approach at the 1966 World Food Summit marked a significant turning point in this transformation. Here, hunger was reinterpreted as a legal violation rather than an economic or moral failure. The FAO developed the Voluntary Guidelines for the Right to Food, which serve as a practical roadmap for governments to protect the right of their citizens to access proper and adequate nutrition. Under this framework, feeding a population is no longer considered an act of charity, but the fulfilment of a state obligation[251]. Nevertheless, several scholars caution that the expansion of the FAO's mandate from a primarily technical organisation into a broader rights-based and operational actor has generated important institutional tensions. Uma Lele observes that the organisation is increasingly combining normative functions – such as the production of global standards, data, and policy guidance – with ambitious development roles. This has strengthened FAO's global visibility, but also raised concerns regarding institutional coherence, overlapping priorities, and the organisation's capacity to effectively balance technical neutrality with political and developmental objectives[252].

The FAO's mandate is closely related to the 2030 Agenda. To achieve the goals of sustainable agrifood systems and to eradicate hunger (SDG 2) and poverty (SDG 1), the organisation recognises the urgency and the need to simultaneously regulate climate action (SDG 13)[253]. In 2022, FAO launched its Strategy on Climate Change (2022-2031), which is based on the idea that agrifood systems are not just the victims of environmental degradation, but a primary vehicle for the solution[254]. This decade-long plan is built upon four pillars of "Better" objectives[255]:

- Better production: moving toward efficient, low-emission farming.
- Better nutrition: protecting food quality against environmental stressors.
- Better environment: safeguarding the biodiversity that underpins food systems.
- Better life: focusing on equality and *leaving no one behind*.

This strategy treats food security as a complex network: the FAO looks at every link in the chain – from soil health and water management to food processing and waste reduction. To make this and other strategies effective, it is firstly important to define the concept of

[251] Bultrini D.B., *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009, Rome, p. 1.

[252] Lele U. & Goswani S., *The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,* in Lele U., et al. (Eds.), *Food For All – International Organizations and the Transformation of Agriculture,* New York, Oxford University Press, (2021), pp. 649-650 and 695-696.

[253] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), p. 6.

[254] FAO, *FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031,* (2022), Rome, p. 2.

[255] *Ivi*, p. 11.

vulnerability by referring to evidence-based data. By conducting exhaustive assessments analysing how weather patterns affect aquaculture, livestock, and forestry, the FAO understood and highlighted the human element: the livelihoods of families who depend on these sectors. The organisation examined this nexus and subsequently identified the most fragile social groups, leading to targeted strategies that prioritise women and youth[256].
In fact, the organisation rejects a "one-size-fits-all" solutions. It acknowledges that a fishing community in a SIDS faces entirely different climate risks than a pastoralist community in the Sahel, for example. Therefore, it tailors its interventions to local contexts and to different social groups, whether small-scale farmers, women, youth, or indigenous peoples[257]. Importantly, this includes integrating local and indigenous knowledge with scientific approaches and modern science.
FAO's programs on food security and nutrition encourage political initiatives to ensure that people have access to enough high-quality food to carry active, healthy lives in their places of origin and destination. FAO supports countries to make sure food systems are sustainable, to promote healthy balanced diets and to raise awareness of the need to reduce food losses and waste for effective climate action[258]. FAO offers tools for crop and food security assessments in order to improve the situation in places of origin and destination for migrants, as well as to expand knowledge. These include: integrated food security phase classification (IPC), crop and food security assessment missions, and the Global Information and Early Warning Systems on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS)[259].

To operationalise this vision and transform it into practice, FAO acts across three reinforcing levels of action: global and regional, national, and local.
Within the global and regional pillar, the organisation advocates and coordinate international initiatives with the aim to strengthen international policy and governance to make sure that food security remains a priority in climate treaties like the Paris Agreement. It fosters collaboration and innovation, and it provides the global community with accessible data and evidence-based research to manage climate risks and improve carbon sequestration[260].
At the national level, the FAO operates as a fundamental backbone for nations striving to harmonise agricultural productivity with an increasingly volatile climate. Even prior to the 2022 strategy, the FAO was instrumental in helping countries craft National Adaptation Plants (NAPs) that create "enabling environments"[261]. This involves building the legal and economic frameworks necessary for farmers and fishers to adopt modern tools. Similarly, the FAO's strategy helps developing countries build the infrastructure and technical capacity needed to implement their climate commitments. This support extends to actions as the modernisation of research and innovation systems, the improvement of early warning mechanisms, and the development of robust monitoring and reporting frameworks for greenhouse gas metrics. Furthermore, the organisation facilitates access to diverse climate

[256] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), pp. 13-15.
[257] FAO, *FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031,* (2022), Rome, p. 4.
[258] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), p. 29.
[259] FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* p. 12.
[260] capturing carbon in soil or vegetation. FAO, *FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031,* (2022), Rome, pp. 19-21.
[261] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), p. 33.

financing resources through partnership with the private sector and other international organisations, and encourages strategic public-private partnerships to accelerate local action[262]. On the technical front, the FAO assist countries in tracking and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through specialised frameworks, adopting a dual strategy: reducing the harm caused by deforestation while simultaneously turning the soils and forests into carbons sinks that sequester emissions[263]. FAO provides guidance and support on climate change adaptation and mitigation to countries around the world.

Lastly, the local pillar comprehends the promotion of practical, science-based solutions on the ground – such as drought-resistant crops or sustainable irrigation – to protect the livelihoods of those on the front lines, the most vulnerable, moving beyond mere survival assistance but shifting the focus towards enhancing the inherent resilience of production systems so that they can absorb climate-relates shocks and face future challenges[264]. Empowering farmers, fishers, and other local actors with digital technologies and peer-to-peer learning, the organisation succeeds in lowering the barriers to climate-resilient practices. Example of climate-resilient practices include improving weather forecasting and monitoring changes in aquatic ecosystems – such as salinity and pH levels – so that producers aren't caught off guard[265]. In addition to tackling food security and nutrition, this local focus guarantees that communities can successfully manage climate risks, profit from new environmental financing schemes like carbon markets, and achieve sustainable development. Moreover, FAO provides a safety net against transboundary pests and sudden natural catastrophes, as well as to climate shocks and slow onset events in general, to financially protect them from future events[266].

Indeed, in each of these pillars, FAO's support consists of elements aligned with the core functions of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31, including capacity development, strategic partnerships, inclusive approaches, new policies, practices and technologies and improved access to financing. The strategy pushes for broad partnership involving governments, international organisations, the private sector, and civil society, along with inclusive participation that ensures the broader social engagement of women and youth. It further promotes for multi-stakeholder collaboration in decision-making processes and stresses the urgency to enhance resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement[267].

Driven by the aim to converge the realities of climate change's effects and human rights' requirements based on evidence and investment, and as the primary custodian of SDG data, the FAO makes sure that policy decisions are grounded in hard facts, using high-tech monitoring and local knowledge to provide a clear picture of global food trends. At the same time, the organisation also acts as a financial bridge, helping vulnerable nations and individuals secure access to funds and to the resources necessary for adaptation and

[262] FAO, *FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031,* (2022), Rome, pp. 22-24 and pp. 27-28.
[263] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), pp. 13-15.
[264] FAO, *FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031,* (2022), Rome, p. 16 & FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), pp. 13-15.
[265] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), pp. 13-15
[266] FAO, *FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031,* (2022), Rome, pp. 24-26.
[267] *Ivi*, p. 11.

survival[268]. Crucially, the FAO works to educate and empower local communities to make them conscious of the opportunities they can seize to improve their conditions. Importantly, FAO doesn't operate in a vacuum but through several partnership with other organisations and NGOs among others. One of these partnerships, the one with the Global Environmental Facility, has transformed lives and landscapes across more than 120 countries for over a decade. This partnership has successfully implemented over 180 projects that have reached more than 4.6 million people, fostering economic growth and generating 350,000 jobs within rural communities, which provides a vital contribute to local economies. Beyond human impact, the partnership proved successful also for the natural world: it actively safeguarded biodiversity within 189 fragile marine ecosystems and played a decisive role in preventing the loss of hundreds unique animal breeds and crop varieties that were facing the risk of extinction[269].

Ultimately, the FAO's strategy aims to generate agrifood systems that are sustainable, inclusive, and resilient. Through the combination of technical support, local knowledge and financial access, the organisation is moving to create a future in which every person has stable access to safe and nutritious food[270]. This mission is maintained through a regularly reviewed Action Plan with targets, indicators, timelines, responsibilities and a tracking process, including plans for capacity development, resource mobilisation and communication, thus ensuring that climate action remains flexible, transparent, and, above all, human centric.

Notwithstanding the 2022 FAO's Strategy on Climate Change, the FAO provides a sophisticated technical toolkit designed to transform data into action, helping nations move from broad climate goals to measurable improvements in food security.

To manage the amount of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) produced, a country must first be able to count them. Tools like FAOSTAT and the Global Forest Resources Assessments (FRA) provide the data required to understand the current state of land use and GHG output. For more specialised sectors, the Global Livestock Environmental Assessment Model (GLEAM) and the LEAP Partnership offer sophisticated metrics to calculate the impacts that livestock supply chains have on the environment[271]. To keep this data accessible and transparent, platforms like Open Foris provide open-source software that helps local officials collect and analyse land-use data efficiently, ensuring they can meet their international commitments. The preservation of soil organic carbon are vital components of global climate change mitigation, as the soil serves as the largest terrestrial carbon reservoir. Through the process of photosynthesis, plants capture atmospheric carbon and store it within the earth; however, the decomposition of this organic matter can result in the release of GHG. To address these challenges, FAO and the Global Soil Partnership facilitate international cooperation among 194 countries to monitor and manage soil health effectively, as sustainable soil management not only would offsets these emissions but also bolsters climate adaptation. Key initiatives include the Global Soil Information System and

[268] *Ivi*, p. 17.
[269] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), p. 32.
[270] FAO, *FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031,* (2022), Rome, p. 16.
[271] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), pp. 16-19.

the Global Soil Organic Carbon Map, which identify degraded regions and evaluate carbon sequestration potential. Together, these efforts aim to build resilient natural resource systems that protect carbon-rich lands while simultaneously reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions[272].

Protecting livelihoods requires looking forward to identifying where the next crisis might emerge. The Agricultural Stress Index System (ASIS) uses satellite data to identify drought hotspots with the aim to alert governments with early warning before crops fail. Similarly, AquaCrop is a specialised model that simulates how different climate scenarios would affect crop yields based on water availability; the Breed Distribution Model predicts how temperature rise would actually affect livestock survival in their current habits[273]. Beyond these tools that focus on biological data, SHARP and AMICAF focus on the human element, giving farmers and pastoralists the possibility to self-evaluate their own resilience and adaptive capacities[274]. The MOSAICC system integrates scientific simulations directly into policy design, serving for long-term strategic planning, while the Climate and Land Hub (CL-Hub) serves as a centre for knowledge exchange to allow countries to share what works and what doesn't. The FAO facilitates these dives into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and ensures that every country has a tailored roadmap and the financial assistance necessary to turn global climate promises into local reality in an effective and efficient way[275]. FAO also produces evidence-based knowledge material on how climate change effects groups in vulnerable situation in order to support the formulation of measures on adaptation and resilience to climate change. One example is the publication on Actions of Indigenous Youth in local food systems during times of adversity[276]. FAO conducts global and regional analyses of Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) to provide an overview of priorities and support needs in the agriculture and land use sector for climate change adaptation and resilience. It supports countries to strengthen the inclusivity of their climate actions and investments through technical and capacity support to policy and programme design and implementation[277].

A shift from a simple focus on maximising short-term production towards more sustainable agriculture is fundamental to effectively handle the interconnected issues of migration, agriculture and climate change. Sustainable management and usage of agricultural and other natural resources enhance resilience against climate hazards and creates employment in rural areas both of origin and destination[278]. FAO's Blue Hope Initiative is projected to improve the economic and social resilience of communities living along the coasts in the Mediterranean, and provides migrants with access to services, information, and

[272] *Ivi*, p. 26.
[273] *Ivi*, p. 18.
[274] FAO, *FAO's responses to the Questionnaire disseminated in relation to Human Rights Council resolution 50/9 on human rights and climate change*, (2022), p. 5.
[275] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), pp. 16-19.
[276] For more information see https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9b9c4c3f-c370-4266-9c11-2a938e25fa04/content
[277] FAO, *FAO's responses to the Questionnaire disseminated in relation to Human Rights Council resolution 50/9 on human rights and climate change*, (2022), pp. 6-7.
[278] FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* p. 12.

livelihood opportunities[279]. Climate change adaptation strategies focusing on rural development create opportunities for people, especially youth, to stay in their homes avoiding abandoning their lands. This guarantees social protection, efficient management and usage of resources, and food systems that are more sustainable. FAO, through its initiatives, enhances decent rural employment – especially for women and youth – promoting off-farm activities, and fosters rural-urban linkages. FAO also supports the rural poor to handle climate-related risks through advocating for seasonal agricultural employment mechanisms and better working conditions for agricultural migrants. It encompasses tools and approaches including junior farmer schools that offer training on agricultural skills to vulnerable rural youth, as well as cash transfer programmes to benefit smallholder farmers vulnerable to climate extremes. Moreover, trainings on gender in agriculture address the different needs of men and women when supporting the development of rural communities[280]. FAO also contributes to the recovery of rural communities after the occurrence of weather extremes, and promotes good practices for disaster risk prevention, preparedness, and response. Preparedness strategies comprise early warning systems, evacuation plans, and measures that ensure adequate assistance and protection for migrants. Initiatives as disaster risk reduction in the agriculture sectors aimed at reducing damage and loss related to climate disasters, thus improving resilience. Among them, the *Caisses de resilience* promotes investments in good agricultural practices and the development of institutional and technical capacities, while the *Safe Access to Fuel and Energy* (SAFE) helps meeting the energy needs of both migrants and host populations in emergency to reduce environmental damage[281].

The evolution of the FAO from a technical body to an advocate for the Right to Food has transformed the organisation in the primary actor in the fight against hunger. By incorporating the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement into its mandate, the FAO area of work is not anymore limited to providing advice on agricultural output, but it now orchestrates a multi-level response to the climate crisis. In an era where climate change threatens the right to food, the FAO's role is indispensable: it provides the essential data, the diplomatic platform, and the financial strategy required to stabilise human survival with environmental stability. Ultimately, the FAO acts as the stabiliser for global food systems, ensuring that the right to food remains a protected, non-negotiable reality in a rapidly warming world.

3.3. World Food Programme

World Food Programme is the first-response UN agency to intervene when disasters occur. Every year, it assists millions of individuals who are facing displacement or deprivation of basic resources due to conflicts, climate-related disasters, pandemics or other catastrophic events. It provides emergency assistance to people whose lives or livelihoods are under threat by assisting them through food and cash. WFP also supports resilience

[279] *Ibidem*.
[280] *Ivi,* pp. 13-14.
[281] *Ivi,* p. 14.

building, training people to face future challenges and consequently reducing the need for assistance in the aftermath of crises[282]. WFP's goal is to enhance the capacities of food insecure communities, institutions and governments to allow them to prepare for, respond to and recover from climate shock and slow onset climate change[283]. WFP also supports long-term solutions like drought-resistant crops and disaster risk insurance. It saves lives following climate-related disasters by assisting people in the most remote and challenging locations. At the same time, WFP supports communities to: (a) Anticipate climate hazards before they turn into disasters by using early warning systems to trigger pre-positioned financing for preventative action; (b) Restore degraded ecosystems that serve as natural shields against climate impacts; (c) Protect the vulnerable individuals with safety nets and insurance against climate extremes; and (d) Energize schools and communities through access to sustainable energy[284].

In the face of increasingly extreme weather events and environmental degradation, WFP is helping food-insecure communities to manage natural resources in a sustainable way to make them able to meet their livelihood needs and safeguard these resources for future generations. WFP integrates knowledge of the impacts of climate change on food security and nutrition into local, national and global policy and planning. This helps governments identify which communities are most at risk and integrate food security considerations into national policy and planning such as NAPs and Nationally Determined Contributions under the UNFCCC[285]. WFP manages the impact of climate events through tools as the Forecast-based Financing, which provides communities with funds before a disaster occurs, offering them the time and resources needed to prepare and protect their lives and livelihoods. They may evacuate their livestock, reinforce homes or buy food and essential items[286].

WFP is the largest humanitarian organisation: it implements school meal programmes and addresses all forms of malnutrition – from vitamin deficiencies to obesity – particularly focusing on children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, providing them with cash and vouchers when food is available but unaffordable. It is also the largest humanitarian provider of cash assistance, working with wholesalers and retailers to increase the availability of food and ensure the fairness of prices. WFP addresses imminent food needs and empowers communities with the ability and skills to improve infrastructure and environmental sustainability thanks to several initiatives including the Food Assistance for Assets programme[287].

WFP supports governments and other partners in improving their abilities to handle emergencies and enhance food security, helping them to secure money from donors, investing in early-warning systems for climate change, and offering technical advice and

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[282] WFP, *Our work*.

[283] WFP, *WFP and Climate Change: helping countries increase climate resilience to achieve zero hunger,* p. 2.

[284] WFP, *OHCHR Questionnaire for the Secretary-General's report on the adverse impacts of climate change on the right to food*, p. 3.

[285] WFP, *WFP and Climate Change: helping countries increase climate resilience to achieve zero hunger,* pp. 2-3.

[286] WFP, *Our work*.

[287] Lele U., Agarwal M., Baldwin B.B. & Goswami S., *Perspectives Moving Forward,* in Lele U., et al (Eds.), *Food For All – International Organizations and the Transformation of Agriculture,* New York, Oxford University Press, (2021), p. 969.

functional support to improve social protection systems. Through WFP's initiatives, it complements government efforts to end hunger[288]. For example, in Somalia, in 2022, when weather forecasts indicated that drought conditions would continue to deteriorate, WFP worked with the government to deliver early warning messages to 1.2 million people and anticipatory cash transfers to 117,000 individuals to ensure that the most affected and remotest of populations had the necessary resources to protect their lives and livelihoods[289].

As already introduced, before a crisis WFP works with governments and local partners to anticipate climate shocks through anticipatory action, emergency preparedness, and early-warning systems. One of WFP's central programmes to manage climate-related risks is its Anticipatory Action (AA) for climate shocks programme. The AA programme enables the implementation and financing of actions before an extreme weather event has occurred, driven by the aim to prevent and mitigate – to the extent possible – the effects of climate extremes on highly vulnerable people and their food security. It proves successful also thanks to WFP's cooperation with national governments and local partners, as well as with other humanitarian agencies, NGOs, and academia. This programme currently operates within 44 countries around Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean[290]. However, it is important to highlight the fact that anticipatory action and resilience programming often remain dependent on unstable funding and may struggle to address the deeper political and economic causes of food insecurity[291].

Once emergencies arise, WFP's response capacity become fundamental. It operates through a skilled workforce that is continuously trained and through a global supply chain capable of delivering food, cash assistance, and logistical support even in hard-to-reach areas. Specialised services – including air transport, emergency depots, telecommunications, and engineering support – enable rapid deployment and coordination[292]. Common services included the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), the Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD), and the Logistic Cluster – platforms that enhance coordination and information management during crises and emergencies while simultaneously providing access to core services.

- The UNHAS ensures safe, reliable, cost-efficient transport for humanitarian personnel and light cargo to and from areas of crisis. It guarantees access to some of the most remote and hard to reach locations in the world where commercial aviation services are unavailable or unsafe. In 2024, UNHAS succeeded to transport more than 355,000 passengers and 4,025 metric tons of light humanitarian cargo –

[288] WFP, *Our work* &. WFP, *WFP and Climate Change: helping countries increase climate resilience to achieve zero hunger,* p. 3.
[289] WFP, *OHCHR Questionnaire for the Secretary-General's report on the adverse impacts of climate change on the right to food*, p. 3.
[290] WFP, *Anticipatory Action for climate shocks.*
[291] Lele U. & Goswani S., *The World Food Programme,* in Lele U., et al. (Eds.), *Food For All – International Organizations and the Transformation of Agriculture,* New York, Oxford University Press, (2021), pp. 875 and 901-902.
[292] WFP, *Emergency preparedness and response.*

including medical supplies and equipment – to nearly 400 hard-to-reach destinations[293].

- The UNHRD delivers comprehensive supply chain solutions and specialised training through its global network of hubs. By promoting partnerships and encouraging innovation, it enables the international humanitarian community to respond rapidly and effectively to populations in need[294].
- The Logistics Cluster forms part of the cluster system established by the Inter-Agency Stranding Committee (IACS). It is a partnership-based network that supports global, regional and local actors in addressing logistical challenges affecting the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Prior to crises, the Cluster works to strengthen humanitarian response capacity, particularly in high-risk countries. During emergencies, where local capacities are overwhelmed, it provides leadership, coordination, information management and access to shared logistics services. In the aftermath of crises, the Cluster evaluates the response efforts, identifies areas for improvement, disseminated best practices and solutions, and invests in preparedness and learning, to help communities and governments "build back better and greener" throughout recovery and reconstruction processes[295].

WFP works throughout a well-defined four steps-process. First, WFP understand climate-related problems and needs by analysing the impact of climate change and variability on people's food security, and assessing community needs and institutional capacities for climate risk management and adaptation. Second, it integrates climate and DRR into country strategies and programme: it defines the rationale for a climate-related intervention, outlines the strategic approach across five focus areas[296] and outcomes, and select the appropriate tools to achieve the intervention's goals. Third, it works with climate finance. It means that WFP supports national governments, WFP country offices and regional bureaus to access and programme bilateral and multilateral climate funds to finance strategic climate solutions. Finally, WFP tests, learns, scales-up and mainstreams by implementing tangible climate and DRR projects at country levels, based on rigorous MM&E frameworks that inform how to bring interventions to scale and mainstream climate resilience into food systems[297].

WFP flagship programmes such as FoodSECuRE, Climate Services, the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative and the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) programme are also integral parts of how WFP can contribute to the achievement of SDG 2 and the implementation of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement[298].

To strengthen long-term resilience to crises, WFP restore community infrastructure with the aim to help communities to rebuild stronger foundations for the future. In collaboration with the private sector[299], WFP fosters entrepreneurship and innovation through projects

[293] WFP, *UN Humanitarian Air Service.*
[294] WFP, *Driving sustainable change in emergency preparedness and response, enabling effective support for those in need.*
[295] WFP, *Logistics Cluster* & WFP, *Climate Change Policy Update,* (2024), p. 6.
[296] Vulnerable communities, ecosystems & natural capital, institutions, systems, and policies.
[297] WFP, *WFP and Climate Change: helping countries increase climate resilience to achieve zero hunger,* p. 5.
[298] *Ivi*, p. 3.
[299] Private sector partners are not only significant donors to emergencies, but they also share expertise that helps to shape long-term solutions. This helps to mobilise new resources and reduce humanitarian needs.

that improve business skills, small-scale enterprise development and connections with the local markets. These activities are driven by the aim to strengthen national systems and empower local actors. Within this context, country offices are fundamental, and for this reason the WFP integrates them within these processes through the Global WFP Innovator Accelerator and regional innovation hubs. Existing hubs in Eastern and Southern Africa and Central and South America support country offices in the creation of possible solutions[300]. WFP also works to improve nutrition by providing school meals and promoting the production and consumption of nutrient-rich foods while improving their availability during seasonal shortages. Its Home-Grown School Feeding programmes strengthen resilience as they link smallholder farmers with schools, creating a stable market for local products and at the same time ensuring that children receive fresh and nutritious meals. In addition, WFP supports the development of local expertise to enhance countries' long-term resilience through the Assets Resilience Academy (LARA) – a partnership involving more than 21 national universities. LARA provides practical field-based training aimed at strengthening the capacities of governments, partners, and communities[301].

Additionally, WFP offers new technologies and enhance the responsible use of data to achieve zero hunger by 2030. It facilitates the integration of a variety of technologies, services and tools to better equip communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change. This can include integrating climate solutions into a variety of interventions such as: diversifying people's livelihoods; income opportunities and adaptive skills; protecting community assets, income and crops with climate change insurance[302]; strengthening access to financial services for risk managements solutions; improving access to climate information and energy services; and rehabilitating the protective functions of natural landscapes[303]. It makes sure that a person receives the right and tailored benefit via its cloud-based platform, SCOPE, as it uses real-time data to improve delivery of targeted assistance[304]. In its drive to innovate, the WFP fuses traditional support mechanisms with advanced technology, specifically satellite-supported monitoring, early-warning tools, and forecast-based financing. These tools, powered by AI and developed with partners such as Google, allow WFP and governments to act early, in advance. The digital twin simulations, for example, show how a cyclone would affect the food system of a specific community, allowing that community to adjust the eventual weaknesses before the occurrence of such disaster. This favours better planning, such as the pre-positioning of food in secure areas and the reinforcement of flood defences to protect from inundations[305]. This year, 2026, WFP will launch a five-year Digital Business Transformation Plan, which will implement a digital approach that modernises how WFP plans, delivers and accounts for its work. It will use real-time data systems, blockchain and AI to optimise supply chains and automate processes. Moreover, digital cash transfers and e-vouchers will support local markets and

[300] WFP, *WFP 2026 Global Outlook. Hunger and hope: Innovative solutions to address food insecurity,* (2025), p. 6.
[301] WFP, *Climate and Resilience.*
[302] For more information see https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000140608/download/
[303] WFP, *WFP and Climate Change: helping countries increase climate resilience to achieve zero hunger,* p. 3.
[304] WFP, *Our work.*
[305] WFP, *WFP 2026 Global Outlook. Hunger and hope: Innovative solutions to address food insecurity,* (2025), p. 4.

lower delivery costs, while platforms like Enhance already analyse diet cost, nutrition and sustainability[306]. Also in 2026, WFP will scale up its Global AI Strategy: AI-enabled tools will deeply apply in supply chain management, targeting, governance, partnerships and employee capacity. One example is SCOUT, an AI-powered supply chain tool that helps WFP decide where to buy, store and deliver food most efficiently. The tool has already saved WFP US$5 million in two years and is projected to generate US$25 million in annual savings[307]. Clearly, every innovative approaches – such as climate-smart agriculture or digital advisory services for farmers and microinsurance – are increasingly coordinating with FAO, helping people withstand shocks and build better futures. Importantly, women, girls and indigenous peoples will be at the centre of these efforts[308].

Life-saving nutrition support maintains the central position in WFP's mandate. It delivers programmes to prevent and manage malnutrition in collaboration with UNICEF and WHO, with national governments and with the support of the private sector partners. WFP increases access to healthy diets encouraging the cultivation and consumption of nutrient-rich crops and supports local solutions[309]. With a joint commitment across eight African countries, the WFP is expanding youth employment within the agricultural sector. It prioritises female participants and focuses on skills training and market integration: the program has reached 613,000 people to date[310].

WFP also supports the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which provide mechanisms for advancing food and nutrition security in a changing climate[311].

However, even though climate change intensifies food insecurity, famine and hunger are rarely caused by climate alone: armed conflict, political instability, unequal access to resources, and global economic inequalities remain central drivers and contributors to food crises. Indeed, even highly sophisticated anticipatory systems introduced by WFP and other organisations cannot fully eliminate food insecurity, as broader political and structural transformations at both national and international levels are necessary[312].

Notwithstanding this, the transformation from a reactive crisis-response model of action to an anticipatory and data-informed one has allowed the WFP to fundamentally redefine the right to food as a proactive commitment rather than a static legal principle. It demonstrated that when advanced technology is integrated with local engagement and commitment, the inevitable shocks of climate change do not automatically translate into famine but can lead to different and less hard results. In this sense, the WFP guarantees that human survival is

306 *Ivi*, p. 6.
307 *Ivi*, p. 7.
308 *Ivi*, p. 12.
309 *Ivi*, pp. 11-12.
310 *Ivi*, p. 13.
311 WFP, *Climate Change Policy Update,* (2024), p. 4.
312 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 – Addressing high food price inflation for food security and nutrition*, (2025), Rome, p. 105 and IDLO, *Rule of Law for Food Systems Transformation – Policy Brief,* Creating a Culture of Justice – International Development Law Organization, pp. 25-26.

not left to the mercy of climate extremes, but is actively secured through innovation, anticipatory action, and the strengthening of the most vulnerable sectors[313].

3.4. International Fund for Agricultural Development

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is a specialised agency of the United Nations, founded in 1977, that operates in remote regions of developing countries and in fragile situations where few international agencies or financial institutions venture, investing in struggling producers, women, youth, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable groups with the specific aim of initiating a process of transformation in rural economies and food systems[314]. Given that improvements in rural areas promote prosperity, food security, and contribute to reducing poverty overall, IFAD has been committed for years to providing low-interest loans and grants to launch innovative rural development programs, thereby acting as a catalyst to increase the range of public and private investments in agriculture and implementing innovative tools for rural finance, market access, and inclusive value chain development[315]. The ultimate vision of IFAD is a world where rural populations can escape the cycle of poverty by building livelihoods that are not only profitable but also resilient enough to withstand modern environmental and economic shocks[316]. Supporting national governments in implementing these strategies indirectly means offering concrete assistance to smallholder farmers, women, young people in rural areas, indigenous peoples, and fishers as they grow and strengthen their resilience in the face of challenges.

The practical impact of this mission is evident in the organisation's expensive reach. In a single year, 2019, millions of people have gained access to advanced training in livestock and crop management and technologies, while thousands of kilometres of roads have been constructed to link remote farms to buyers. Beyond infrastructure, IFAD's work involves bringing promotional services to microenterprises and implementing sustainable management practices across millions of hectares of land[317].

Addressing the climate crisis is perhaps the most urgent modern challenge for the agency. As rising seas and extreme weather patterns threaten the very ecosystems farmers depend on, IFAD is strongly committed – through investment projects and capacity-building initiatives – to promoting environmentally sustainable food production[318]. It has disclosed initiatives like the *Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Program*, which represents the world's largest global climate adaptation initiative specifically for smallholder farmers,

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313 Lele U. & Goswani S., *The World Food Programme,* in Lele U., et al. (Eds.), *Food For All – International Organizations and the Transformation of Agriculture,* New York, Oxford University Press, (2021), pp. 889-901 and Lele U., Agarwal M., Baldwin B.B. & Goswami S., *Perspectives Moving Forward,* in Lele U., et al (Eds.), *Food For All – International Organizations and the Transformation of Agriculture,* New York, Oxford University Press, (2021), p. 922.

314 IFAD, *IFAD's History.*

315 FAO, IFAD, WFP, *Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies*: Delivering on the 2030 Agenda, (2016), Rome, par. 9.

316 IFAD, *IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 – Enabling inclusive and sustainable rural transformation,* (2016), p. 5.

317 IFAD, *IFAD at a glance*, p. 3.

318 *Ibidem.*

providing them with the technological know-how and financial backing needed to improve production, diversify their risks and protect their livelihoods[319].

Given the prolonged and recurring nature of contemporary crises, a solid and robust synergy between United Nations agencies and other international organisations is undoubtedly essential. The partnership between the FAO (which hosts ten IFAD country offices within its facilities) and IFAD is a history of mutual cooperation spanning some forty years, with the former serving as the largest and oldest agency for technical and regulatory expertise specialising in food and agriculture, and the latter managing one of the broadest rural investment portfolios among international financial institutions, with unique potential for financing innovative projects[320]. Throughout this partnership, FAO supports member countries by providing them with direct assistance in implementing IFAD-funded projects, while IFAD strengthens technical assistance through grants to the FAO. This collaboration has resulted in billions of dollars directed toward hundreds of investment operations[321]. Furthermore, FAO and IFAD collaborate on policy and research supporting initiatives such as the Family Farming Knowledge Platform[322], but also contribute, as active members, to key multi-stakeholder platforms including the Committee on World Food Security, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAR), the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the Agricultural Market Information System, the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition, and many others[323]. There is now broad and shared agreement on the urgent need to promote a coherent response at the United Nations system level aimed at accelerating the recovery of countries affected by crises: in this regard, IFAD has always been at the forefront, both in concretely addressing complex emergencies and through participation in various forums[324]. Among the latter, one may cite the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) or the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), established by the Economic and Social Council in 1946 as a standing committee "*for the purpose of taking all appropriate steps, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, to ensure the fullest and most effective implementation of the agreements entered into between the United Nations and the specialised agencies*"[325] and which includes the participation of 14 specialised agencies, in addition to the United Nations.

The joint efforts undertaken to achieve the new global goals of Increased food security and reduced poverty require additional forms of collaboration. This collaborative

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[319] IFAD, *Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme*, (2015), Rome, p. 2 & FAO, IFAD, WFP, *Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies*: Delivering on the 2030 Agenda, (2016), Rome, para. 9.
[320] FAO & IFAD, *FAO IFAD Complementarity and cooperation,* p. 5.
[321] *Ibidem*.
[322] The Family Farming Knowledge Platform collects high-quality digitized information on family farming from around the world, including national laws and regulations, public policies, best practices, relevant data and statistics, research, articles, and publications. It provides a single point of access to international, regional, and national information related to family farming issues; integrating and systematizing existing information to better inform and provide knowledge-based assistance to policymakers, family farmer organizations, development experts, and stakeholders in the field. For more information see http://www.fao.org/family-farming/background/en/
[323] FAO & IFAD, *FAO IFAD Complementarity and cooperation,* p. 6.
[324] IFAD, *Post-crisis assistance: the role of IFAD*, (1999), Rome, p. 20.
[325] Hill M., *The Administrative Committee on Coordination, in The Evolution of International Organizations*, (1966), p. 129.

spirit extends to the WFP, where the organisations work together in crisis-hit nations to assess immediate needs and provide long-term agricultural aid[326].
In light of these complementary roles, in addition to its operational activities in the field, IFAD, FAO and WFP regularly consult and share information on their respective upcoming project activities to set global priorities and produce essential reports on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), ensuring that the Agenda 2030 remains on track despite shifting geopolitical and economic climates.

By blending traditional development strategies with cutting-edge adaptation techniques, IFAD helps millions of people navigate an increasingly unpredictable environment. Through its strategic alliances with multilateral development banks, NGOs, agricultural research centres, civil society organisations and the private sector, the Fund continues to evolve from a provider of aid into a powerful architect of lasting rural independence[327].

3.5. United Nations Industrial Development Organisation

UNIDO adopts a multifaceted strategy to combat food insecurity and climate change, focusing on a systemic overhaul of agricultural production, supply chain management, and national economic frameworks. By championing regenerative intensification, the organisation fosters a sustainable industrial environment that allows for increased food yields while strictly mitigating environmental harm. Central is the deployment of Rural Transformation Centres (RTCs), which guarantee affordable access to capital-intensive machinery while integrating digital payment systems and modern irrigation techniques to enhance productivity and innovation. The RTCs, when located near Integrated Agro-Industrial Food Parks (IAFPs), enable producers to consolidate their harvests, access cold storage facilities, and comply with strict traceability requirements, thereby improving better market access and ensuring more stable incomes[328].

The organisation also conducts specialised training and promotes mechanisation as a service. UNIDO collaborates with the private sector to train individuals in the operation digitalised farm equipment, creating a modern class of rural entrepreneurs with its Learning and Knowledge Development Facility (LKDF). UNIDO's decisive role doesn't reflect only in the field, but also in the entire supply chain as it enhances local value. Its partnership with the World Food Programme focuses on the local production of fortified foods which addresses immediate humanitarian needs, generates local employment and cuts the environmental costs of international shipping and import flows. This is complemented by technical support to adopt biodegradable packaging and resource-efficient processing technologies that align with global standards[329].

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[326] IFAD, *Post-crisis assistance: the role of IFAD*, (1999), Rome, p. 20.
[327] *Ivi*, p. 21.
[328] UNIDO, *Food Security and Climate Change – A 2023 update,* Sustainable Development Goals, (2023), pp. 25-26.
[329] *Ivi*, p. 26.

Within the economic sphere, UNIDO helps member states to deal with the complexities of international trade and improve the quality of infrastructures. It provides the technical expertise to help states to develop their national action plans respectful of the global food safety standards, making sure that local agribusinesses can compete on a global stage. Additionally, through its Innovation Hub for Agribusiness Transformation, the organisation transfers knowledge and provides technical solutions. UNIDO is aware of the elevated massive capital required to allow these transitions, and for this reason it collaborated with international financing institutions to bridge the investment gap. Therefore, UNIDO positions the transition toward sustainable food systems as a global responsibility, making sure that the financial burden of this transformation is shared equitably across the international community, without any kind of discrimination[330].

There is a widening global consensus on the understanding that a holistic approach for food system transformation can only address the challenge of food insecurity. In this regard, further collaborations among relevant UN agencies, namely IAEA, IFAD, FAO, UNIDO, WFP and WHO, can better leverage investments, reduce costs through information sharing and tackle complex development issues in a timely manner. New innovative initiatives, such as the Agrifood Systems Transformation Accelerator (ASTA) and UNIDO-WFP supplier development programme, already show the first promising results and therefore further investments in such partnerships will be essential from the international community.

3.6. Collaborative UN Frameworks for Global Food Security

Building resilience within global food systems is a challenge far too complex for any single organisation to tackle alone. It requires a unified approach that addresses not only climate change but also the underlining social issues like poverty, inequality, and human insecurity that make communities vulnerable[331]. The General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolution 74/149 of 2019, invited governments, UN agencies, funds and programmes, treaty bodies, civil society actors, NGOs, and the private sectors to cooperate fully on ways and means of realising the right to food[332]. Also, the SDGs urge for higher levels of coordination and support for the UN system.

At the heart of this collaborative effort are the Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs): FAO, IFAD, and WFP. In 2023, these three organisations solidified their partnership through a new five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This agreement focuses on key thematic areas such as agrifood systems, nutrition, gender equality, resilience building, youth, and climate change, environment and biodiversity, leveraging the unique strengths of each agency – FAO's technical expertise, IFAD's financial investment, and WFP's humanitarian reach – to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The MoU also states that the RBA's collaborative efforts will be underpinned by science and innovation, by strong data and analysis, knowledge sharing, awareness raising, and joint resource

330 *Ivi*, pp. 26-27.
331 WFP, *Climate Change Policy Update,* (2024), p. 11.
332 General Assembly of the United Nations, *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019,* A/RES/74/149, (2020), para. 49.

mobilisation, communication and advocacy[333]. The RBAs contribute to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in a coordinated and mutually supportive manner focusing on SDG 2 as the central point. This partnership manifest in several high-level coordination bodies and technical platforms[334]. These included the Committee on World Food Security, the primary intergovernmental forum for food policy, for which the RBAs represented the technical foundation for years[335]. The RBAs are deepening and expanding their partnership to guarantee a unified voice for food security, rural development, and empowerment of women and youth, on the global stage; in fact, they perfectly align their efforts at major international summits like the G20 and other UN forums. This collaboration covers many levels, from high-level policy negotiations to public awareness campaigns, all focused on turning global initiatives into tangible progress for vulnerable population worldwide[336]. On the ground, the collaboration between FAO and WFP extends to co-leading the Food Security Cluster (FSC) during humanitarian emergencies and participating in UN-Nutrition to coordinate and leverage the response of UN agencies to address the root causes of malnutrition. The FSC was created to coordinate the response mainly focused on food security during a humanitarian crisis, dealing with issues of food availability, access and utilisation[337]. Additionally, together with the European Union, FAO and WFP are Founding Members of the Global Network Against Food Crisis, which is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors united by a shared commitment to addressing the root causes of food crises and advancing sustainable, evidence-based solutions through coordinated analysis, knowledge-sharing, and collective action[338]. Beyond the immediate RBA circle, these agencies engage with the wider UN system through the UN Sustainable Development Group[339] and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee[340], ensuring that humanitarian response and long-term development are perfectly aligned to better achieve the SDGs[341].

Each of the RBAs maintains its own partnerships with other UN agencies, international financial institutions and a range of other relevant stakeholders.

Great emphasis is placed on the recognition of food security as deeply intertwined with environmental health and human mobility. WFP and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) have joined forces to protect water security and restore ecosystems in regions

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333 FAO, *FAO and UN System Partnerships* & FAO, IFAD, WFP, *Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies*: Delivering on the 2030 Agenda, (2016), Rome, p. 3.

334 FAO, IFAD, WFP, *Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies*: Delivering on the 2030 Agenda, (2016), Rome, para. 11.

335 IFAD, *IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 – Enabling inclusive and sustainable rural transformation,* (2016), p. 25.

336 FAO, IFAD, WFP, *Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies*: Delivering on the 2030 Agenda, (2016), Rome, para. 32.

337 FAO, *FAO and UN System Partnerships*.

338 *Ibidem*.

339 A high-level forum for joint policy formation and decision-making which guides, supports, tracks and oversees the coordination of development operation in countries and territories across the world.

340 The longest-standing and highest-level humanitarian coordination forum of the UN. It brings together the executive heads of several organisations and consortia to formulate policy, set strategic priorities and mobilise resources in response to humanitarian crises.

341 For more information about UN initiatives see FAO, IFAD, WFP, *Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies*: Delivering on the 2030 Agenda, (2016), Rome.

devastated by floods and droughts[342]. Meanwhile, FAO – in collaboration with the UN Development Programme and the UNEP (a collaborative partnership known as the UN Programme on Reducing Emissions form Deforestation and Forest Degradation) – leads initiatives like UN-REDD+, a massive collaborative effort that helps dozens of countries monitor their forests and reduce emissions from deforestation[343]. Recognising the human element of these environmental shifts, FAO works closely with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Global Migration Group on projects related to climate change, food security and displacement. This ensures that the links between rural poverty, climate displacement, and agricultural livelihoods are addressed in global policy debates, rather than being treated as separate issues[344].

Looking toward the future, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and its Task Force (UNTF) are driving a "delivering as one" approach. It involved 160 members from 50 UN agencies working to transform food systems through innovation and joint funding[345]. The UNTF has established a digital platform that enables its members to exchange data and resources, share updates, and coordinate their engagement in key food systems-related events. Fundamental has been the introduction of thematic dialogue sessions that examine the links between food systems and major issues as climate change. Through its global advocacy and convening functions, the Hub has played a key role in positioning food systems transformation at the forefront of climate and sustainable development agendas[346]. Recent developments include the launch of the Food Systems Window of the Joint SDG Fund which mobilised tens of millions of dollars for national food transformations, the Converge Initiative, and the 2024 Youth Leadership Programme designed to create and train the next generation of farmers. Through these initiatives, the Hub succeeded to provide tailor-made technical expertise, policy advice, and catalytic funding[347].

Special attention is also being given to social equity through initiatives like the International Year of the Women Farmer, which aims to dismantle the barriers women face in agriculture[348]. Though annual flagship publications like the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report that monitors and analyses the world's progress towards ending hunger, FAO, WFP, IFAD, UNICEF and WHO continue to provide the data and analysis necessary to guide the global community toward a more resilient and equitable future, towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[349].

Ultimately, the challenge of global food security in an era of increasing climate volatility transcends the mandate of any single organisation. The complexity of cascading climate shocks requires a collaborative response. No single organisation can address the root causes of poverty, conflict, and agricultural collapse without the synergy of a global

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[342] FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018*, (2018), p. 13.
[343] *Ivi*, pp. 22-23.
[344] FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Climate Change – Reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience,* pp. 18-19.
[345] United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub, *Global Food Systems Transformation 2025: Progress Report Bases on Inputs from Countries, Coalitions, and the UN System Ahead of UNFSS+4,* (2025), pp. 40-41.
[346] *Ivi*, p. 45.
[347] *Ivi*, p. 43.
[348] FAO, *FAO and UN System Partnerships.*
[349] *Ibidem.*

framework. It is here that emerge the indispensable role of the United Nations. The UN align technical expertise, humanitarian reach, and financial investment, forming a cohesive barrier against the threat of famine. This cooperative approach serves as the essential architecture for protecting the right to food, which is not anymore a theoretical legal aspiration but a protective reality on the ground. Through synchronised data, shared innovation, and collective policy-making, the UN acts as the critical stabiliser, ensuring that even as the climate becomes more volatile, the global response remains robust, resilient, and, above all, human-centric. Notwithstanding the amazing success reached by the UN and the collaboration between its agencies, critics have highlighted that global food governance remains fragmented, with overlapping mandates, competing priorities, and uneven institutional capacities[350]. However, the efficacy of these global strategies is ultimately measured by their impact on the most vulnerable populations and still, hunger remains one of the most severe global challenges despite decades of international commitments. Indeed, the following chapter will examine a practical application of these mandates: the case of Somalia. Through the lens of its recurring drought crises, the next chapter will analyse how climate change has directly jeopardised the fundamental right to food in the country and how the United Nations, through Its coordinated efforts in stabilisation and resilience-building, attempts to navigate the intersection of environmental collapse and humanitarian necessity.

[350] Lele U. & Others, *Food For All – International Organizations and the Transformation of Agriculture,* TJ Books Limited, Oxford University Press, (2021), p. 297.

Chapter Four
The Case Study of Somalia

4.1. The Geopolitical Landscape and the Climate Context

Somalia's history has been defined by a search for stability. After its independence in 1960 and the military administration of Siad Barre from 1969 to 1991, the nation collapsed into decades of internal conflict. Power became divided between clan-based militias and non-state actors, leading to persistent instability for decades. While the 2012 shift toward a federal system – split between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and various Federal Member States – marked a step toward recovery, the central government still lacks total territorial control and unity. State institutions remain unchanged and usually characterised by lack of transparency and a constitutional framework based on clan rivalry that complicates effective governance. This constitutional framework actually lacks clear guidelines on power-sharing and this often leads to opposition between federal and state levels, leaving international partners with no solid ground and forcing them to navigate a labyrinth of competing policies just to reach communities in need. This absence of a solid administrative framework is worsened by a lack of reliable data: without a formal census since 1975, planning depends on estimates rather than hard facts[351].

The Somali economy is deeply rooted in the land: agriculture and livestock production contribute nearly 75% of the GDP and employing 80% of the workforce[352]. Notwithstanding its centrality, the sector is struggling from different perspectives: grain production has dropped by 60% since the late 1980s, and farming is mainly restricted to the fertile regions in the south leaving the rest of the nation heavily dependent on external markets[353]. In fact, Somalia currently produces only 30% of its own food, making the entire population vulnerable to the volatility of global prices and inflation[354].

This vulnerability is amplified by the fact that Somalia stands on the front lines of global climate change and the climate crisis, ranking 178th out of 185 countries in terms of vulnerability and susceptibly[355]. Historically, the rainy season allows two harvests per year, but more and more frequently the rains are missing, or where there are, they are short-lived and of little impact. Since 2006 the drought has hit Somalia every year; in 2011 the Horn of Africa experienced a widespread famine that, in the country, claimed over 250.000 victims. Yet, until July 2022, families were able to cope, albeit with difficulty, with constant rains and therefore food shortages – by putting food aside or selling livestock to be able to buy food and water – until the subsequent rains[356]. But not anymore: the spectre of famine reappeared

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[351] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), pp. 1-2.
[352] *Ivi*, p. 5.
[353] *Ibidem*.
[354] Khorsandi P., *Drought in Somalia: The race to save lives as the climate crisis and conflict drive hunger. World Food Programme's unprecedented scaleup requires funds to continue into 2023,* World Food Programme, (2022) & WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 3.
[355] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 5.
[356] Cutelli E., *The drought in Somalia and the spectre of famine,* World Food Programme, (2022) & McFadden K., *In Somalia, women and children are bearing the brunt of the Horn of Africa drought,* World Food Programme, (2022).

in Somalia, which is experiencing the worst conditions in the last forty years. The environment has become a cycle of extremes: erratic rainfall, devastating droughts, and "once-in-a-century" floods, further exacerbated by the locust invasion, COVID-19, and price inflation in recent years[357]. The intensity of such recent shocks has broken these traditional resilience mechanisms. From 2021 to 2023, the country endured its longest drought on record, immediately followed by catastrophic flash floods in late 2023 and 2024, which worsened even more the drastic condition already devastating the country. These climate shocks do more than destroy seasonal harvests; they decimate livestock that serve as the primary financial security for pastoralist families and spark conflict over increasingly scarce natural resources like water and grazing land.

The period between 2021 and 2023 marked the most severe and prolonged drought In Somalia's recorded history. This crisis was the result of five consecutive failed rainy seasons, a climatic failure that pushed the nation to the absolute brink of famine. The landscape turned into a wide area characterised by a grey and cracked expanse where even the primary rivers ran dry[358]. This period faced a total collapse of the rural safety net and almost 3 million livestock died, experiencing a loss that effectively wiped out the wealth of an entire generation of pastoralist communities and removed animal protein and milk, a critical source for children. Beyond biological outputs, the drought triggered a localised economic crisis: the price of local cereals increased by over 100% due to the 70% reduction in domestic production[359]. The environmental aridity also fuelled secondary health crises, specifically an increase in vector-borne diseases and a widespread measles outbreak as immune systems were weakened by prolonged calorie deficits. For the agricultural south, the drying of the Juba and Shabelle rivers meant that even where irrigation infrastructure existed, there was simply no water to pump, leading to the total abandonment of many smallholder farms.

The transition from drought to the"2023-2024 floods was not a recovery, but a new form of destruction. This "once-in-a-century" flooding, intensified by the El Niño, caused an estimated US$176 million in immediate damages across the country[360]. If on one side the drought took lives slowly through hunger, on the other the floods caused immediate mortality and the rapid destruction of infrastructure. Approximatively one-third of the disaster's effects were concentrated in farming and livestock sectors, where floodwaters drowned surviving crops and washed away the topsoil necessary for future planting[361]. This inundation also created a public health emergency of a different nature, as contaminated water sources led to a sharp rise in cholera and acute watery diarrhea – particularly frequent in children[362]. Economically, the floods severed critical supply lines: the cost of basic vegetable such as onions quadrupled almost overnight as transport became impossible, turning a crisis of availability into a crisis of extreme price inflations.

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357 WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), pp. 1-2.

358 Cutelli E., *The drought in Somalia and the spectre of famine,* World Food Programme, (2022).

359 Abbonizio A. & Symington A., *Horn of Africa hunger crisis pushes millions to the brink,* World Food Programme, (2023).

360 Fakat K.H. & Abdi S.M., *"The river took it all": Somalis wate for waters to recede as floods kill dozens,* The Guardian, (2023).

361 WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. ii.

362 Medicins Sans Frontieres, *Drought in Somalia: causes and consequences for the population*, (2022).

4.2. Humanitarian and Nutritional Impacts of Climate Change

Decades of violence combined with these environmental disasters have created a permanent state of humanitarian emergency. The drought led to a rapid increase in the number of people in crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3 and 4) in Somalia, rising from 3.5 million in 2020 to a peak of 6.5 million people in 2023[363]. Among these, 1.5 million children under five suffered from acute malnutrition, with 386.000 in a severe state that put their lives at immediate risk[364]. These data highlight the cruel reality of a public health crisis where malnutrition disproportionately affects women and children. Youth make up 75% of the population but face almost no economic opportunity. Rates of education access remain dangerously low, with 3.3 million children (65%) still out of school. This exposed, as a consequence, the younger generation to negative mechanisms such as child labour, early marriage, and family separation[365]. By the middle of 2024, internal displacement reached a historic high of 3.86 million people[366]. Many families have often been forced to choose between remaining in isolated territories controlled by militant groups like Al-Shabaab or seeking refuge in precarious urban displacement sites, 85% of which sit on private land with no legal protection[367].

Actually, delivering aid to these people is a dangerous mission. Humanitarian access is frequently blocked by active hostilities and clan-based military operations, movement restrictions imposed by armed groups, or the presence of unexploded ordnance. In 2024, 23 of the 74 districts within the country were defined as "hard-to-reach", isolating hundreds of thousands of individuals from life-saving support[368].

This instability has automatically resulted in a grave public health emergency: 54% of Somalis live below the poverty line, and most of them cannot afford the luxury of a balanced and nutritious diet[369]. The healthy food is now four times more expensive than a diet that only meets basic energy requirements through staples like sugar and maize. It became difficult even to find onions, tomatoes and potatoes: a kilo of onions has quadrupled in price up to US$4[370]. This has led to a "hidden hunger" marked by severe micronutrient deficiencies. High rates of Vitamin A and iron deficiency are excessive, and almost half of all children younger than five suffering from anaemia[371]. In regions like Gedo, Benadir and Galgadud, the situation is even more dire, with families skipping meals and selling their last

[363] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 3.
[364] Cutelli E., *The drought in Somalia and the spectre of famine,* World Food Programme, (2022) & McFadden K., *In Somalia, women and children are bearing the brunt of the Horn of Africa drought,* World Food Programme, (2022).
[365] WFP, *WFP Somalia Country Brief*, (2025), p. 1.
[366] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 7.
[367] Gallardo S.C., *Somalia's journey of hunger. How conflict and extreme weather have displaced millions and fuelled severe food insecurity in the Horn of Africa country,* World Food Programme, (2025).
[368] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), pp. 7-8.
[369] WFP, *Somalia* & Office of the Prime Minister and World Food Programme, *Somali Fill the Nutrient Gap and Cost of the Diet Assessment. Final Report,* World Food Programme, (2020), Mogadishu, Somalia, p. 19 and p. 30.
[370] Fakat K.H. & Abdi S.M., *"The river took it all": Somalis wate for waters to recede as floods kill dozens,* The Guardian, (2023).
[371] Office of the Prime Minister and World Food Programme, *Somali Fill the Nutrient Gap and Cost of the Diet Assessment. Final Report,* World Food Programme, (2020), Mogadishu, Somalia, p. 7.

remaining assets just to secure a single meal[372]. This dire situation led the Federal Government to declare a State of Emergency in November 2025.

The reality of this crisis is best understood through the experiences of those forced to flee. The severe water scarcity and the aridity of the pastures have decimated livestock, compromising the livelihood of the Somal pastoral communities. Drought and ongoing insecurity have forced hundreds of thousands of people to move from rural areas and settle in urban centres in the hope of finding food, clean water, shelter and medical care. Many people also sought refuge in the camps for internally displaced persons[373]. In the firsts three months of 2022 alone, the drought forced over half a million people to leave their villages in search of help, often walking day and nights, with small children and infants[374]. Mothers arriving at the displacement camp of Kabasa speak of the exhaustion of walking hundreds of kilometres for weeks, losing their donkeys and livelihoods to the heat.

"*We left home because there was nothing left, only hunger and drought"*[375].

Mothers arrived at the Kabasa camp in Dolow, the border between Somalia and Ethiopia.

As one 75 years-old displaced person noted: "*For 20 days we walked taking out children with us… we didn't have money for a car*"[376]. They often arrive with nothing left but the hope of assistance, yet even reaching a camp offers no guarantee of survival. For these families, the arrival at a camp is rarely the end of the struggle; many find the resources there as exhausted as the land they left behind[377].

"*We walked for eight days, for about 120-150 kilometres. Our cattle had died due to the drought. We learned that an organisation was distributing food in the Admadow camps. I was registered but I didn't receive anything. I'm waiting, everyone is waiting."*[378]

Displaced, 65 years old.

As of late 2025, Somalia remains in a state of emergency. While a massive increasing of international aid prevented a total famine in previous years, the core drivers of the crisis – conflict, climate change, and economic fragility – remain unresolved. In 2023, Somalia ranked last on the Human Development Index, a stark indicator of the cumulative impact of these crises. Today, Somalis are leaving their homes for reasons that go beyond their nomadic traditions. Conflict, insecurity and weather extremes have displaced 3.9 million people and sharply driven up hunger, which is expected to worsen with the time

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372 M.L., *In Somalia la siccità è un'emergenza senza precedenti: 4 milioni di persone a rischio,* AFV Libera la tua mente, (2026).

373 Medicins Sans Frontieres, *Somalia, senza fondi la crisi nutrizionale diventa catastrofe,* (2025).

374 Cutelli E., *The drought in Somalia and the spectre of famine,* World Food Programme, (2022) & McFadden K., *In Somalia, women and children are bearing the brunt of the Horn of Africa drought,* World Food Programme, (2022).

375 McFadden K., *In Somalia, women and children are bearing the brunt of the Horn of Africa drought,* World Food Programme, (2022).

376 Medicins Sans Frontieres, *Drought in Somalia: causes and consequences for the population*, (2022).

377 WFP, *WFP Somalia Country Brief*, (2025), p. 1

378 Medicins Sans Frontieres, *Drought in Somalia: causes and consequences for the population*, (2022).

passing by[379]. Approximatively 6 million people are still in need of urgent assistance, but the National Health Plan suffers from chronic funding shortages[380] and the path to resilience is long[381]. The "once-in-a-century" events have become a recurring reality, depriving a resilient but exhausted population of the time they desperately need to recover, to rebuild their lives and their country[382].

4.3. The Role of The Federal Republic of Somalia

From the perspective of international law and the right to food, the Somali state – despite its institutional fragility, limited territorial control, and prolonged political and economic instability – remains the primary duty bearer under international human rights law. Somalia is a party to the ICESCR and consequently it is bound by Article 11 ICESCR, which protects the right to adequate nutrition. According to the CESCR, in General Comment No. 12, States have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food, taking all necessary measures to guarantee physical and economic access to adequate food, especially in emergency situations[383]. This entails not only the negative obligation to refrain from interfering with individuals' access to food, but also positive obligations to protect and fulfil this right through effective policies, social protection mechanisms, agricultural support, and accessible humanitarian coordination. Additionally, Somalia is party to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, which impose obligations to plan climate adaptation, reduce vulnerability and integrate climate risk into public policies.

The Government of Somalia strongly commits to do as much as possible to implement, improve and scale-up the implementation of policy instruments and programmes contained in the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty at the country level[384]. In particular, it commits to the *Baxnaano* National Safety Net Programme enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme, ultimately handling its ownership and coordination. Moreover, the Federal Government of Somalia develops action plans for establishing functional national contributory and social pension and social health insurance programmes for Somalia, and implements Labor Intensive Public Work Programmes. The Somali

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379 Gallardo S.C., *Somalia's journey of hunger. How conflict and extreme weather have displaced millions and fuelled severe food insecurity in the Horn of Africa country,* World Food Programme, (2025).

380 At the end of 2023, amounted to 2.6 billion dollars, it was funded only at 44.5%. *La crisi umanitaria della Somalia richiede interventi e finanziamenti immeditati per evitare la fame,* Nazioni Unite, (2024).

381 WFP, *WFP Somalia Country Brief*, (2025), p. 1.

382 Wilton P., *Dial A for anticipate: WFP helps families in Somalia as floods hit food and drive hunger. How WFP ad Government agencies work together to counter the devastating cycle of climate-change-propelled cycle of droughts and floods,* World Food Programme, (2023).

383 Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999).

384 The mission of the Alliance is to "*support and accelerate efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty (SDGs 1 and 2) while reducing inequalities (SDG 10), contributing to revitalize global partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17) and to the achievement of other interlinked SDGs, and championing sustainable, inclusive and just transitions".* Federal Republic of Somalia, *Statements of Commitments to the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty,* (2024), p. 1.

government invests in developing capacities of national institutions to understand and simulate the effects of climate shocks, in order anticipate them and protect its population[385].

Notwithstanding these efforts, including the introduction of a new Constitution in March 2026 recognising fundamental rights, the regulatory framework continues to differ across federal member states, thus contributing to political and legal fragmentation that mirrors in decentralised responses and commitments. Moreover, the rejection of the new Constitution by the regions of Jubaland and Puntland creates further fragmentation. The Somali authorities have often proved unable, and at times unwilling, to implement adequate long-term strategies capable of addressing the structural causes of food insecurity. State institutions continue to suffer from weak administrative capacity, insufficient public infrastructure, corruption, and chronic dependence on foreign assistance. As a result, governmental responses have largely remained reactive and emergency-oriented rather than preventive and sustainable[386]. In many regions, particularly those affected by insecurity or under the influence of Al-Shabaab, the state has failed to ensure consistent access to essential services, humanitarian aid, and food distribution mechanisms, consequently manifesting a failure to respect one of the fundamental pillars of the right to food under international law. Moreover, although Somalia has formally engaged with international human rights frameworks and repeatedly appealed for international support, critics argue that the government has not sufficiently translated these commitments into effective domestic action.

Despite its failure to guarantee food security and respect the right to food of the Somali population, the government has partly contributed to protect its people by progressively integrating climate risk into national planning. During the climate crisis in Somalia, strategic tools aimed at climate adaptation and at reducing the vulnerability of rural communities were developed. Among these, the National Transformation Plan 2025-2029 – which includes climate resilience among the pillars of national development highlighting the government's commitment to build a peaceful, stable and prosperous nation[387] – the National Development Plan (NDP-9) which was designed to guide the nation towards sustainable economic growth, stability and human development, and the National Adaptation Plan, presented in 2025 as a reference framework for adaptation to climate change in the fields of agriculture, food security and water resource management[388], are of particular importance. Furthermore, Somalia submitted its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0), committing to a 34% reduction in GHG emissions by 2035[389]. In the firsts months of 2026, the Federal Government activated the National Preparedness Plan for Food and Nutrition Security Crises, which introduces a coordinated framework to

[385] Federal Republic of Somalia, *Statements of Commitments to the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty,* (2024), pp. 2-3.
[386] *Somalia,* International Center for Not-For-Profit Law, (2026).
[387] Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development, *National Transformation Plan (NTP) 2025-2029,* Federal Republic of Somalia, (2025), pp. 1-2.
[388] For more information see Federal Republic of Somalia, *National Adaptation Plan of Somalia (2026-2030),* Minister of Environment and Climate Change, (2025).
[389] Federal Republic of Somalia, *Somalia's Third Generation Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0),* Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, (2025), p. 50.

address immediate needs while strengthening the country's ability to withstand future shocks. This plan seems promising as it combines imminent humanitarian assistance with longer-term measures that support and enhance resilience of public institutions in the agricultural sector[390]. From the point of view of international climate law, such initiatives can be interpreted as the implementation of the obligations arising from the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, which require States to develop and implement adaptation strategies to reduce the vulnerability of populations to climate impacts. In particular, the attention devoted to food security, the management of water resources and the resilience of agricultural systems highlights the recognition by the Somali authorities of the link between climate change and the enjoyment of fundamental human right to food.
Moreover, although state capacity was limited by persistent security problems, institutional fragility and lack of financial resources, the Somali authorities requested and facilitated international assistance, at least partially fulfilling the obligation of cooperation under international human right law in cases where a States does not independently have the necessary resources to guarantee the right to food. In this context, the Federal Government has become heavily reliant on cooperation with UN agencies and international humanitarian actors. It has taken on a role of coordinating humanitarian operations, declaring a state of emergency and collaborating with UN agencies, such as FAO and the WFP, and other international partners to ensure food assistance and support for the livelihoods of the affected populations.

However, an overall assessment of Somalia's compliance with its international obligations also required considering the structural limitations of state action. Despite these efforts, millions of people continue to suffer from acute food insecurity and dependence on humanitarian aid. In terms of international human rights law, this does not automatically imply a violation of Article 11 of ICESCR, since obligations relating to economic and social rights are subject to the principle of progressive implementation and the availability of resources, as specified in Chapter 1. However, the Somali case highlights how the increasing frequency of extreme weather events may strain the ability of fragile states to effectively guarantee the right to food, making support for international cooperation – particularly with the United Nations – and global climate financing mechanisms essential.

4.4. The Role of the United Nations

The Rome-Based Agencies, specifically FAO and WFP, had developed an initiative that was planned to implement a synchronised and coordinated program across three African countries, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, and Somalia. This initiative has been financed by the Government of Canada with the primary objective to eliminate the existing separation between short-term humanitarian assistance and long-term developmental stability and rather present the possibility to apply both strategies within the same context. The RBAs committed themselves to address urgent hunger while

[390] World Bank Group, *Joint Communiqué – Activation of the National Preparedness Plan for Food and Nutrition Security Crises in the Federal Republic of Somalia,* (2026).

simultaneously building sustainable and resilient food systems, which would eventually break the cycle of recurring crises. In the context of Somalia, this partnership led to successful results thanks to the complementary role of such organisations. On one side, the FAO contributed with technical expertise in productive sectors enhancing water infrastructure and improving livestock management, while on the other side, WFP dedicated on human capital providing nutritional support for vulnerable groups, focusing on social behaviour change, and educating women about breastfeeding and dietary diversity. This coordination ensured that communities were not just receiving aid that would have helped them in the short-term to decrease their suffering, but also conferred them an active role in the transformation of their economic and nutritional conditions[391].

A pillar of the RBAs initiative in Somalia was their commitment in livelihood diversification, offering both traditional and alternative pathways to self-reliance. Large-scale agriculture remained a priority and a traditional pathway, but the program introduced alternative ones as "kitchen and market gardens" with the aim to empower women and youth, their resilience and their technical capacities. These gardens turned small lands into viable business enterprises and reliable sources of micronutrients by training in perma-gardening and drip irrigation. Their implementation significantly enhanced food security and nutritional diversity for women and children, and households realised how gardening represents a viable business enterprise: by adopting advanced irrigation, soil conservation and pest control techniques, they have been able to strengthen their economic resilience and provide a stable food supply independent of traditional pastoral systems[392]. Innovative environmental management also played a critical role. One of the program's most significant breakthroughs involved the *Prosopis juliflora*, an invasive three species typically viewed as a threat to rangelands. The initiative taught communities to process this wood into a high-quality livestock feed. This strategy achieved three goals simultaneously: it created a new commercial stream for households, reversed land degradation, and provided a local alternative to expensive imported animal feed[393]. Furthermore, ad additional source of income was introduced with professional beekeeping practices, which provides families with the equipment and technical skill to produce honey even during dry seasons, and sell it. Along these income-generating activities, the program introduced energy-efficient and smart technologies to addresses environmental degradation, and prioritised natural resource managements and conservation to guarantee the long-term sustainability of these gains. This included the rehabilitation of vital infrastructure and the creation of different rangeland reserve areas[394]. By working in close coordination with the Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation, the RBA initiatives ensure that progress is not lost when specific projects end.

All current FAO activities are anchored in the 2022-2025 Country Programme Framework (CPF). This strategic document aligns local needs with the FAO's broader

[391] Palombi L., *Innovative agriculture, livestock and natural resource management in Somalia,* FAO, (2023).
[392] Their income increased approximatively by 15 percent. Palombi L., *Innovative agriculture, livestock and natural resource management in Somalia,* FAO, (2023).
[393] Palombi L., *Innovative agriculture, livestock and natural resource management in Somalia,* FAO, (2023).
[394] *Ibidem.*

Regional Priority Areas of Work for Africa: sustainable production, equitable nutrition, and climate action[395].

The FAO's work in Somalia is guided by a precise definition of resilience: "*the ability of individuals, households, and communities to prevent, anticipate, absorb, adapt and transform positively, efficiently, and effectively when faced with a wide range of risks and crises while maintaining an acceptable level of functioning without compromising long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security, human rights, and well-being for all.*"[396]. To achieve this, interventions are categorised into five distinct capacities[397]:

1. Preventive: reducing future risks through sustainable land management techniques like soil conservation and crop rotation. Joint efforts with the WFP focus on empowering women and youth by improving crop quality, reducing post-harvest waste, and securing better market access. Together, these interventions shift the focus from emergency relief to long-term resilience against climate shocks, reducing the future negative impacts of climate change on household food security and nutrition[398].
2. Anticipative: using early warning systems to act before the occurrence of a disaster. The Desert Locust Early Warning System (DLEWS) and data-driven geospatial tools supported by the World Bank and USAID are crucial examples. These systems provide real-time information that allows humanitarian actors and governments to shift from providing assistance as a reaction to disaster, to proactive and evidence-based decision-making that anticipate disaster's impacts. This approach was implemented before the 2023 El Niño rains: early warning data have been integrated with rapid-response measures, including unconditional cash transfers, animal health surveillance, and the construction of flood defences, allowing FAO to help at-risk communities living in riverine areas avoid the impacts of flooding, at least the worst ones. Displacement was inevitable, but the distribution of early-germination seeds made sure that families had the possibility to quickly resume farming as floodwaters receded. These initiatives wanted to strengthen local institutional knowledge and evacuation procedures, ensuring that Somalia will be better prepared for the next environmental shock[399].
3. Absorptive: combining emergency relief with livelihood protection to help families survive and recover from an environmental shock. The *Cash+* package, for example, provides unconditional cash transfers to meet immediate food needs while simultaneously supplying agricultural inputs, such as seeds and veterinary care, to allow families to restart food production and protect their remaining assets. In regions severely affected by droughts and floods, the FAO also implements *Cash-for-Work* (CfW) program. It consisted in providing short-term income to individuals while they committed to restore productive assets and rehabilitate community

[395] FAO, *Resilience building in Somalia – FAO Programme Review (2024),* (2025), p. 3.
[396] *Ivi*, p. 4.
[397] *Ivi*, p. 2.
[398] *Ivi*, p. 6.
[399] *Ivi*, pp. 8-9.

infrastructure. Special emphasis is placed on the most vulnerable; for instance, collaboration with WFP provides fresh food vouchers and nutritional supplements to pregnant women and children. Beyond land-based farming, investments from the World Bank are helping diversify the economy through the fisheries sector, providing equipment and training to create new food sources. By integrating these multi-sectoral supports, the FAO enables displaced and rural population to "bounce back" from disasters without falling into permanent destitution[400].

4. Adaptive: adjusting farming techniques as the climate shifts. These initiatives include the obligations for States to adapt to the shifts in the climate, as well as promoting climate-smart agriculture and agro-ecology which help to minimise the impacts on the environment and at the same time maximise production and nutritional quality. Adaptation also means the rehabilitation of infrastructure such as irrigation systems and flood control barriers in riverine areas. The FAO works to ensure fair management and equitable access to water and land to automatically mitigate resource-based conflicts. Furthermore, the FAO invests in the professionalisation of the agricultural sector by: aggregating farmers into groups based on their income potential to improve market access; empowering women to take leadership roles in managing water and land resource data; strengthening institutional policy, helping federal and state government develop the guidelines necessary for a climate-resilient economy. Through adaptive strategies, the FAO ensures that Somali communities are not just surviving shocks, but that they learn and evolve their practices to be able to protect themselves in a changing environment[401].
5. Transformative: reforming agricultural and institutional structures and market systems for permanent change that would allow communities to cope with climate events. A transformative initiative is the UN Joint Action for Building Resilience, based on a collaboration between FAO, WFP, and UNICEF. It integrates education, health, hygiene, and nutrition with food security to ensure that children in disadvantaged areas have better health and education, while their families possess the assets necessary to cope with major economic and climate shocks[402]. The EU-funded RAAISE project drives the FAO to ensure structural growth in the fisheries and livestock sectors via several transformative pillars. First, through policy and legal reform, as it established the regulatory and institutional framework necessary to create a stable environment for both national and international trade. Second, rehabilitating key infrastructures and promoting the adoption of modern technologies to make Somali products competitive in global markets by following innovation. Third, building the technical and management capacities of federal and state institutions to govern these sectors effectively. Fourth, creating sustainable jobs and private enterprise opportunities that guarantee economic inclusion[403].

[400] *Ivi*, pp. 10-11.
[401] *Ivi*, pp. 12-13.
[402] *Ivi*, p. 4.
[403] FAO, *Resilience building in Somalia – FAO Programme Review (2024),* (2025), pp. 13-14.

The FAO highlights the importance of public-private partnerships, evidence-based evaluation, and youth-led peacebuilding to maintain these gains even in the long-run. In the Middle Shabelle region, funding from Sweden has been used to modernise rural services thus eliminating the clear distance between smallholder farmers and the private sector. This initiative established local institutions entitled to manage the entire cycle of production, from planting to professionalised marketing. To make sure these interventions are based on evidence and hard facts, the FAO conducted impact evaluations, specifically on the *Cash+* program demonstrating that the combination of emergency cash with training and inputs is more impactful than providing cash alone[404]. This program allows FAO to send and track assistance even in Somalia's most remote and "hard-to-access" regions, proving extremely successful. The scale of this intervention in 2023 was immense: it reached 2.6 million people with direct assistance, 1.4 million individuals received crop and vegetable support resulting in the production of over 224.000 tonnes of food, and livestock assistance reached 1.1 million people leading to the production of 38 million litres of milk. Beyond direct transfers through which the FAO inserted 62 million into the local economy in 2023, the organisation utilised cash-for-work initiatives to rehabilitate vital infrastructures[405].

As already introduced, the FAO has invested heavily in early warning infrastructure to transform its approach from a purely reactive one into proactive risk reduction before disaster occurrence. Examples include the Somalia Desert Locust Unit (DLU), a tool that uses geospatial data to monitor and control infestations of locust before they can destroy pastures. The FAO also successfully implement early-warning measures before the occurrence of the 2023 El Niño rains: flood defences, reinforcement of river embankments and rehabilitation of canals along the rivers. This allowed farmers to safeguard their crops and eventually utilise residual moisture for planting once the waters receded[406]. Additionally, Somalia's FAO office welcomed an important donation from Sweden that was used to strengthen early-warning systems by increasing the use of platforms such as the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit and the Somalia Water and Land Information Management Drought Index. Part of that donation will also support FAO's new initiative that, in 2026, is planning to provide preventive assistance to more than 5,600 vulnerable households in areas that are facing worsening water shortages. The project, beyond protecting lives and livestock, aims to reduce future humanitarian needs, safeguard food-production systems, and strengthen community resilience to recurring climate shocks[407].

The focus of FAO is also directed towards economic inclusion, especially for displaced populations. FAO has established over 500 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) which work to foster financial independence, particularly among women, providing temporary land access and vocational training in trades and successfully transforming "beneficiaries" into economic decision-makers. Through this strategy, nearly 4.000

[404] *Ibidem*, 13-14.
[405] FAO, *Somalia – Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024,* (2024).
[406] FAO, *Resilience building in Somalia – FAO Programme Review (2024),* (2025), p. 7.
[407] FAO, *Sweden Approves Lifesaving New Anticipatory and Early Action Project to Protect Drought-Affected Communities in Somalia,* (2026).

displaced households gained temporary land access and cultivated over 10.000 acres with drought-tolerant crops. This strategy, combined with climate-smart agriculture and supported by local authorities and peer learning, allowed FAO to build resilience, reduce food insecurity and increase self-reliance[408].

Notwithstanding the massive role of FAO in the complex Somali crisis, no single organisation operates in a vacuum. As co-leads of the FSC, the WFP and FAO coordinate a network of 256 local and international partners, ensuring that aid is not just a sending of resources, but a targeted response that aligns with the needs and priorities of Somali institutional counterparts.

As the primary humanitarian actor in the country, the WFP's first priority is rapid disaster response. Traditional in-kind food rotations remain a lifeline in WFP's work, but there has also been a significant increasing of cash-based assistance. This method grants families the dignity of choice while simultaneously inserting capital into local economies, supporting Somali retailers and producers[409].

To combat the physiological toll of hunger, the WFP provides 90% of the nation's specialised nutritional support, targeting the most vulnerable groups: children and pregnant or breastfeeding women. This isn't just about calories, but it is about preventing the long-term stunting of Somalia's human capital[410].

The entire WFP's work in Somalia is governed by the 2022-2025 Country Strategic Plan (CSP), a strategic framework that bridges the gap between urgent humanitarian relief and long-term national development. It focuses on five strategic outcomes (and nine activities)[411]:

1. Crisis response (SO1): immediate food access during disasters.
2. Social protection (SO2): strengthening government-led safety nets like *Baxnaano*.
3. Climate-smart food systems (SO3): training smallholders and rehabilitating infrastructure.
4. Institutional capacity (SO4): enhancing the ability of state and federal institutions to deal with crises.
5. Logistics (SO5): the WFP does not only assist through food and cash but also provides the connective system for the entire humanitarian community. It transported thousands of tons of cargo and tens of thousands of personnel through ports and airs services (UNHAS), ensuring that even when roads are flooded or blocked by conflict, life-saving assistance reach those areas in need[412].

[408] FAO, *FAO good practices of climate action in food crisis and fragile contexts,* (2025), p. 10.
[409] WFP, *Somalia* & WFP, *WFP Somalia Country Brief*, (2025), p. 1.
[410] WFP, *Somalia.*
[411] WFP, *WFP Somalia 2022 Annual Country Report overview*, (2022), p. 2.
[412] WFP, *Somalia.*

Focus area	Strategic outcomes	Activities	Modality
Crisis response	SO1: Food-insecure and nutrition-insecure people, in disaster-affected areas, have access to adequate and nutritious food and specialized nutritious foods that meet their basic food and nutritional needs, during and in the aftermath of shocks.	Activity 1: Provide integrated food and nutritional assistance including school feeding in emergency as well as early recovery and emergency livelihood support to crisis-affected people such as returning refugees, IDPs and people living with HIV.	Food Cash-based transfers (CBT) Capacity strengthening
Resilience building	SO2: Vulnerable people in targeted areas have improved nutrition and resilience, and benefit from inclusive access to integrated basic social services, shock-responsive safety nets, and enhanced national capacity to build human capital, all year round.	Activity 2: Provide conditional and unconditional food or cash-based food assistance and nutrition-sensitive messaging to food-insecure people through reliable safety nets, including home-grown school feeding. Activity 3: Provide an integrated nutrition support and malnutrition prevention and treatment package to targeted vulnerable people.	Food CBT Capacity strengthening
Resilience building	SO3: National institutions, private sector, smallholder farmers, and food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable populations in Somalia benefit from climate-smart, productive, resilient, inclusive, and nutritious food systems by 2030.	Activity 4: Provide an integrated package of livelihood support activities, anticipatory actions and services, skills, assets and infrastructure to households and communities to strengthen their resilience and food systems.	Food CBT Capacity strengthening
Resilience building	SO4: National institutions and government agencies in Somalia benefit from strengthened capacities, policies and systems by 2025.	Activity 5: Provide technical support to national and subnational actors that strengthens their capacities to develop and implement peacebuilding, hunger-reducing, national policies.	Capacity strengthening
Crisis response	SO5: The humanitarian community in Somalia is better able to reach vulnerable people and respond to needs throughout the year.[84]	Activity 6: Provide air transport services (passengers and light cargo) to the humanitarian community. Activity 7: Provide mandated logistics services to the humanitarian community through the coordination mechanism of the logistics cluster. Activity 8: Provide on-demand services to the humanitarian community. Activity 9: Provide mandated emergency telecommunications services to the humanitarian community through the coordination mechanism of the emergency telecommunications cluster (added in December 2022 through budget revision 1 (BR 01)	Service delivery

[Snapshot taken from WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 9.]

These five strategic outcomes are not independent but rather interconnected to move people from emergency survival assistance to long-term self-sufficiency. Individuals facing immediate disaster (SO1) are not just given temporary food, but they are systematically linked to nutritional programs and national safety nets (SO2). Once stabilised, they receive support to build physical assets and sustainable livelihoods (SO3), creating a defence against future shocks. Moreover, strengthening the capacity of government institutions (SO4) is a priority integrated into every activity of the organisation to ensure local ownership. Meanwhile, SO5 provides the essential logistics that allow the entire humanitarian community to operate safely and efficiently. This integrated system is built to guarantee that every dollar spent on short-term assistance in areas facing hunger also contributes to the

broader goal of building a resilient food system[413]. In the face of the 2022 drought, this approach reached a record of 6.9 million people. Mobile cash transfers via the SCOPE platform allowed the WFP overcome security risks and logistics obstacles, allowing families to buy food locally and bolstering the domestic economy during an imminent famine[414].
The WFP aligns its CSP with Somalia's Ninth National Development Plan, thus making sure that its efforts in technical assistance, policy advice, and infrastructure development are not useless but directly improve the government's ability to address hunger independently and prepare the country to withstand recurring climate shocks by itself[415].
A key pillar WFP's strategy is the *Baxnaano* program, the Government-owned Shock-Responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project (SRHCP). It was established to provide unconditional cash transfers to poor households facing crises, creating a safety net that reached 1.2 million people in 21 Somali districts in 2022[416]. This program also developed the Unified Social Registry, which is a digital platform that serves as the essential database and allows for rapid expansion of assistance during crises. Through this program the WFP acted as a technical advisor, later assigning the full management of the program to the federal government in mid-2024 and ensured that social protection is not an external "gift" but a permanent feature of the Somali state, helping families to cope with recurrent climate shocks without falling back into destitution[417]. Projects like *Kobciye* ('uplift' in Somali language) have further expanded this vision by offering climate-resilient training and equipment to farmers, such as tractors and solar-powered water pump systems[418]. For example, the WFP has created a water access initiative combining drip irrigation with a careful analysis of land use and local vegetation in the arid region of Galmudug. However, the project did not only impact the technical infrastructure, but the WFP was able to change the community's mindset. Having been able to demonstrate that the land can be consistently productive, the program has empowered residents to grow their own food and secure a steady income[419].

The WFP uses Anticipatory Action to build climate resilience, deciding to act in advance rather than waiting for flood or drought to cause further displacement. In the face of the 2023 El Niño phenomenon, the WFP sent pre-emptive cash transfers to 200.000 people before the water arrived, allowing them to protect their assets and evacuate. The WFP also stationed boats in strategic locations to ensure food distribution once the floods occurred[420]. Combined with radio and SMS warning, this funding allowed families like 80-

[413] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 8.
[414] WFP, *WFP Somalia 2022 Annual Country Report overview*, (2022), p. 1.
[415] WFP, *Somalia.*
[416] In 2022, 7.8 million people received food and cash and 290.000 people received first-line assistance. The school meals reached almost 190.000 children, 7.500 farmers received support with assets and resilience practices, 1.000 hectares of irrigation canals and 14 hectares of land have been rehabilitated, while 31 water harvesting structures restored. Almost two thousand mt of cargo have been transported to 30 locations for 16 organisations, and approximatively 17.000 passengers and one thousand mt of life-saving cargo transported. WFP, *WFP Somalia 2022 Annual Country Report overview*, (2022), pp. 1-2 & WFP, *Somalia.*
[417] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), pp. 30-32.
[418] Hirsi F., *Planting hope: How an EU-funded agriculture project is lifting up farmers in Somalia,* World Food Programme, (2024).
[419] *Ibidem.*
[420] WFP, *From drought to floods: climate extremes drive Somalia hunger crisis,* (2023).

year-old Madina Odawye to buy food and pay for evacuation, significantly reducing the eventual need for emergency rescue[421].

> *"I heard the radio messages, and I received US$70… I bought rice, spaghetti and oil. It helped us. It came at the right time."*[422].
>
> Madina Odawye, displaced.

Those families who received assistance before the floods manifested superior food security, with 46% maintaining acceptable levels of food consumption. It proved that proactive intervention is far more effective than reactive relief. Additionally, the WFP has made significant investments in smallholder farmers, offering new technologies and training that cut post-harvest losses by 10 percent in 2024[423].

In 2023, the WFP Strategic Plan achieved a massive scale of impact in Somalia, as it delivered food and cash-based assistance to 7.4 million people. This effort was supported by targeted nutritional aid for 2.8 million individuals and specialised malnutrition treatment for nearly 100,000 women and children. The WFP's strategy was not exclusively on emergency relief, but expanded also to long-term stability by providing 200,000 students with home-grown school meals and training over 10,000 farmers to enhance their productive capacity[424]. It also inserted nearly US$800,000 into the economy by purchasing food locally, strengthening local food systems and benefiting smallholder farmers. Driven by this success, the WFP and the Government of Somalia continue to prioritise home-grown school meals as nationally led projects, with the Government presenting its first federal budget allocation for 2026[425]. These efforts attract investment and protect livelihoods and food availability while enhancing resilience[426].

A major reason of this progress was the advancement of gender equality and women's economic empowerment. The WFP prioritises women as the primary recipients of safety net assistance – reaching over half of the beneficiaries in both 2022 and 2023 – and ensures that resources are placed directly in the hands of those managing household needs. This focus included digital financial literacy and mobile money training for 162,000 women[427]. Logistically, the WFP still remains the backbone of the humanitarian response, as it transported 3,300 metric tonnes of vital cargo and 20,000 passengers across 30 locations, ensuring that partners could reach even the most isolated communities[428].

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[421] Wilton P., *Dial A for anticipate: WFP helps families in Somalia as floods hit food and drive hunger. How WFP ad Government agencies work together to counter the devasting cycle of climate-change-propelled cycle of droughts and floods,* World Food Programme, (2023).

[422] Wilton P., *Dial A for anticipate: WFP helps families in Somalia as floods hit food and drive hunger. How WFP ad Government agencies work together to counter the devasting cycle of climate-change-propelled cycle of droughts and floods,* World Food Programme, (2023).

[423] WFP, *WFP Somalia 2024 at glance. Full Report,* (2024), p. 3.

[424] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 46.

[425] *Ibidem.*

[426] WFP, *WFP Somalia Country Brief*, (2025), p. 2.

[427] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 46.

[428] WFP, *WFP Somalia 2023 Annual Country Report overview*, (2023), p. 2.

The WFP ability to operate in contested of hard-to-reach areas rests on four core principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Humanity drives the focus on the most vulnerable, such as women and children, using local partnerships to reach isolated areas. Impartiality refers to the ability to distribute aid based on verified vulnerability data bypassing local power structure and clan dynamics. The WFP uses a diverse network of local actors to ensure aid is seen only as a needs-based intervention, thus maintaining neutrality even in contested regions. Finally, independence is given by transparent partner selection and clear communication with authorities, maintaining life-saving assistance free from political interference[429]. Around 85% of the WFP's 100 NGO partners are national organisations which serve to navigate complex clan dynamics and reaching areas inaccessible to UN staff[430]. Moreover, collaborative efforts with UNICEF and FAO integrate water, sanitation, education, and food security, ensuring that a single community receives a complete package of support[431]. Furthermore, with funding from the Somalia Joint Fund, WFP is also partnering with UNFPA, UNSOM, UN Women and WHO to enhance the economic autonomy and human rights of marginalised women and girls[432]. WFP partnered with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Somali Disaster Management Agency to strengthen coordination and develop joint operating procedures, building a more unified national approach to shock response[433]. Alongside with the role of WFP and FAO, CARE International supported health and nutrition services in 15 facilities, Save the Children deployed mobile teams to drought-hit areas, WHO supplied Severe Acute Malnutrition kits, and IMC expanded access to essential care by opening two new health facilities in Cadaado and Caabudwaaq in the Galgaduud region[434].

The WFP also committed to build institutional sustainability and provide logistical support. To achieve this objective, the organisation delivered specialised trainings to government institutions on maternal health and malnutrition management and created a roadmap for local authorities to take control and ownership of these programs. By doing this, the WFP successfully bolstered the ability of the Somali government to manage emergencies at both the federal and state levels. Federally, the organisation provided the foundation for the Somalia Disaster Management Agency (SoDMA) to create its 2024-2029 strategic plan. This framework moves beyond temporary stabilisation, instead embedding disaster risk management directly into long-term development goals. Being technically backed by WFP, SoDMA has been able to map risks, train personnel in early warning systems, and build a sophisticated data management system. In regions like Galmudug and Puntland, this partnership has led to the activation of tailored disaster management approached, localised risk strategies, and the establishment of dedicated community committees. By conducting coordinated monitoring with these ministries, the WFP has

[429] WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), pp. 47-49.
[430] *Ivi*, pp. 57-58.
[431] *Ivi*, p. 49.
[432] WFP, *WFP Somalia 2023 Annual Country Report overview*, (2023), p. 3.
[433] WFP, *WFP Somalia Country Brief*, (2025), pp. 1-2.
[434] OCHA, *SOMALIA: 2025 Drought Emergency Situation Report No. 2,* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, pp. 4-6.

ensured that aid is increasingly more precise and targeted and that the government is increasingly capable of leading its own humanitarian oversight[435].

As the international community works to eliminate the distance between short-term humanitarian assistance and long-term economic development, the WFP and its partners are hopefully helping Somalia build a future where hunger is no longer an inevitable byproduct of the climate, where hunger it is no more a plausible condition. The UN proved able to handle the mission focused on bolstering food security and nutritional progress, manifesting a 97% recovery rate from moderate acute malnutrition and a 10% improvement in the number of children accessing a high-quality diet in 2024[436]. Notwithstanding these achievements, various obstacles still persist, and the humanitarian landscape remains critically fragile. The school feeding program supports student retention and provides a market for local farmers, but the reality is that it reached only a tiny fraction (6%) of children in need due to poor infrastructure and fluctuating funding[437]. Additionally, while malnutrition treatment recovery rates have soared above 90%, broader food security indicators show only minimal improvement because of the scale of climate shocks[438]. Sustaining these gains requires continuous international support and engagement of the international community, but funding shortfalls currently prevent the WFP and other organisations from reaching more than half of those in need due to crisis-level of hunger. The WFP had to reduce its large reach significantly despite the population's continuous and increasing needs, as a consequence of the halving of funding in the period between 2021 and 2023[439]. With a reduction of total funding of 29%, general food assistance reached 60% people less in 2024 than during the record-breaking year of 2023[440]. The reduced funding, manifesting in the form of inconsistent resources and logistical challenges, has particularly impacted the school feeding program, which reached only a small portion of out-of-school children up to date[441]. More in general, without additional funding WFP will struggle to scale anticipatory action programmes or make longer-term investments to build resilience, help Somalia adapt to increasingly severe climate shocks and break its reliance on crisis-driven humanitarian assistance[442]. Critically low funding is preventing humanitarian organisations from keeping pace with rising needs[443].

In order to maximise the impact of available funds and manage these shortfalls, the WFP prioritised the most vulnerable, cost-efficiency and localised operations[444]. Nevertheless, the revision of its plans putting the most vulnerable at the forefront for the limited resources is

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435 WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 41.

436 For more information see WFP, *WFP Somalia 2024 at glance. Full Report,* (2024), p. 3 and WFP, *WFP Somalia 2024 at glance. Full Report,* (2024), p. 2.

437 WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. x.

438 WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 37.

439 *La crisi umanitaria della Somalia richiede interventi e finanziamenti immeditati per evitare la fame,* Nazioni Unite, (2024) & Abbonizio A. & Symington A., *Horn of Africa hunger crisis pushes millions to the brink,* World Food Programme, (2023).

440 WFP, *WFP Somalia 2022 Annual Country Report overview*, (2022), p. 3.

441 For more data see WFP, *WFP Somalia 2024 at glance. Full Report,* (2024), p. 2.

442 WFP, *From drought to floods: climate extremes drive Somalia hunger crisis,* (2023).

443 Gallardo S.C., *Somalia's journey of hunger. How conflict and extreme weather have displaced millions and fuelled severe food insecurity in the Horn of Africa country,* World Food Programme, (2025).

444 WFP, *WFP Somalia Country Brief*, (2025), p. 2.

not enough, as still US$ 79 million are necessary to cover at least the 70% of the requirements for life-saving food and nutrition assistance[445]. The WFP reduced its collaborating partners from 94 to 53 and prioritised cash-based transfers in order to reduce supply chain risks and logistics costs, while at the same time stimulating local markets[446]. Through this multi-level network of government agencies, international partners, and private-sector retailers, the WFP continues to protect humanitarian gains while struggling to break the cycle of aid dependence in Somalia[447]. Strategic alliances with the Somali government have been central to ensuring these efforts survive funding volatility.

Despite persistent obstacles – particularly chronic underfunding, political instability and the growing intensity of climate-related disasters – the United Nations has played a crucial role in protecting the right to food in Somalia. Through humanitarian assistance and climate resilience initiatives, UN agencies have contributed significantly to reducing food insecurity, strengthening local coping capacities and preventing the humanitarian crisis from escalating into even more catastrophic scenarios. Assessed against the legal standard of the right to adequate food as elaborated in General Comment No. 12, the UN's intervention in Somalia can be understood as a concrete mechanism through which the territorial state is supported in conforming to its international human rights obligations under Article 11 of the ICESCR. With respect to the obligation to respect, the UN has assisted the Federal Government of Somalia in developing early warning systems and anticipatory action frameworks that prevent state actors from disrupting food access during climate shocks. The UN supported the construction of flood defences, the rehabilitation of irrigations infrastructure, and the pre-positioning of resources before the outbreak of disasters. Regarding the obligation to protect, the UN helped the government in strengthening institutional oversight of food markets, monitoring food price volatility and building the regulatory and logistical capacity necessary to maintain supply chains even in hard-to-reach areas. The WFP's cash-based assistance programmes, by injecting liquidity into local markets rather than bypassing them, have actively supported market stabilisation, while the FAO's work on land governance has contributed reducing resource-based conflict between farming and pastoralist communities. With respect to the obligation to fulfil, the UN's contribution has been most visible. The FAO's Cash+ programmes, climate-smart agriculture initiatives, and Village Savings and Loans Associations have "facilitated" the right to food by empowering communities to rebuild productive capacity and achieve greater food self-sufficiency. The WFP's school meal programmes and its direct food and cash transfer have "provided" the right to food by ensuring that the most vulnerable receive the minimum essential level of nutrition that the state is obliged to guarantee regardless of available resources. Furthermore, the UN's sustained investment in institutional capacity reflects a long-term commitment to transferring the fulfilment obligation back to the state itself, transforming the UN's role from a provider of last resort into an architect of sustainable state compliance. Indeed, where the Federal Government of Somalia has lacked the

[445] *Ibidem.*
[446] WFP, *WFP Somalia 2024 at glance. Full Report,* (2024), p. 4 & WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 29 and p. 53.
[447] WFP, *WFP Somalia 2024 at glance. Full Report,* (2024), p. 1.

institutional capacity, the financial resources, or the technical expertise to fulfil its duty to ensure adequate food for its population, agencies such as FAO and WFP has stepped in not merely as humanitarian actors, but also acting as enablers of state compliance with binding international law. In this sense, the UN systems functions as an indispensable bridge between the normative commitments enshrined in the ICESCR and the practical realities of a state struggling to meet its minimum core obligations. While it cannot substitute the sovereign duty of the Somali state, nor compensate indefinitely for the structural failures of global climate governance, its presence ensures that the right to food retains operational meaning even where state capacity has been most severely eroded, and that the gap between international legal obligation and lived humanitarian reality, though still painfully wide, does not become an irreversible conclusion.

At the same time, the Somali case illustrates the structural limits of international intervention. Although these programmes have produced tangible results, effective and long-term protection of the right to food cannot be achieved without sustained financial commitments, stronger institutions and continuous international cooperation. This observation is not merely a policy recommendation, but rather it reflects a binding legal obligation. Under 11 of the ICESCR, states parties undertake to take steps – both individually and through international cooperation – to the maximum of their available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the right to food, thus, to ensure the fundamental right to be free from hunger[448]. General Comment No. 12 further reinforces the obligation to cooperate by claiming that the States that are able to do so must provide assistance to other States that cannot independently fulfil their minimum obligations relating to the right to food[449]. Additionally, paragraph 26 of the General Comment No. 36, in relation with Article 6 of ICPPR, expanded this provision by establishing that States have positive obligations to address conditions that threaten survival, including hunger and malnutrition. It explicitly states that States must cooperate internationally to address threats to the right to life arising from disasters and humanitarian crises. Consequently, denying or withdrawing funding that prevents mass hunger can be viewed as a threat to the right to life[450]. In the Somali context, this means that the chronic underfunding of UN humanitarian operations is not merely a failure of political generosity but a potential breach of the cooperative obligations that international human rights law imposes on states with the capacity to contribute.

Nevertheless, the experience of Somalia demonstrates that investment in climate-smart agriculture, social protection and risk-management strategies can generate meaningful and lasting impacts, even in contexts marked by conflict and fragility. In this regard, the United Nations has not only responded to emergencies, but has also supported a gradual transition from reactive humanitarian action to more preventive and resilience-oriented approaches.

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[448] General Assembly of the United Nations, *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, A/RES/63/117, (2008), art. 11.

[449] Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (*E/C.12/1999/5*),* Global Health & Human Rights, (1999), para. 36-38.

[450] Committee on Civil and Political Rights, *General Comment No. 36: Article 6* (CCPR/C/GC/36/), UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (2019), para. 26.

The 2025 Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia concluded that famine thresholds were ultimately avoided and that, without humanitarian assistance, the loss of life would have been considerably higher[451]. Ultimately, the Somali experience highlights both the indispensability of UN intervention and the urgent need for a broader, long-term transformation of the Somali's agrifood system in order to ensure that no one is left behind in the face of the accelerating complexities of the 21st century climate crisis[452].

[451] Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia, March 2025 & WFP, *Evaluation of Somalia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, (2026), p. 30.
[452] FAO, *FAO good practices of climate action in food crisis and fragile contexts,* (2025), p. 15.

Conclusions

This thesis has sought to demonstrate that the right to food, while normatively robust and progressively embedded in the architecture of international law – from Article 11 of the ICESCR and General Comment No. 12 to the FAO Voluntary Guidelines and the 2030 Agenda – faces an unprecedented structural threat in the accelerating impacts of climate change. The presence of facilitative human rights law, jurisprudence, policies and institutions is not, on its own, sufficient to ensure the right to food globally. While notable advances have been made over the past few decades in reducing the levels of hunger and malnutrition experiences by right-holders around the world, these gains appear to be precarious and, in certain regions, short-lived[453]. The legal framework is not the problem: states have clear obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to food without discrimination, and the normative content of that right – encompassing availability, accessibility, adequacy, and sustainability – is well defined and authoritatively interpreted. The problem is the widening distance between those obligations and the lived reality of the billions of people currently experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity, of the million individuals who go hungry daily, and of the millions in places like Somalia who have been forced to choose between starvation and displacement. This distance is not a failure of law alone, but it is a failure of political will, of financial commitment, and of the international community's collective ability to treat the right to food as the legally binding, enforceable entitlement it had always been rather than as a humanitarian aspiration to be pursued when circumstances allow.

Climate change does not merely reduce crop yields and production, but it dismantles the very conditions upon which the right to food depends. It erodes water systems, degrades soil, inflates prices, triggers displacement and forced migration, and fuels resource-driven conflict, thus acting, as this thesis has argued throughout, as a threat multiplier that transforms already existing vulnerabilities into acute humanitarian catastrophes. What makes this threat particularly insidious is its asymmetry: the communities bearing the heaviest burden of climate-induced food insecurity – smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa, pastoralists in the Sahel, coastal fishers in SIDS, women, and children – are precisely those who have contributed least to global emissions and that possess the fewest resources to adapt and recover. This moral and legal asymmetry is not merely an ethical concern, but it represents a structural violation of the principles of non-discrimination, equity, and common but differentiated responsibilities that underpin both international human rights law and the climate governance regime. As the IPCC has confirmed with high confidence, and as the data reviewed throughout this thesis demonstrate – especially from the catastrophic convergence of drought, flood, and conflict in Somalia – climate change is already eroding the four pillars of food security in ways that existing legal frameworks are struggling to fully capture, and that existing institutional responses are struggling to adequately address.

[453] Albani L., & Others, *Diritto al cibo – Lo sviluppo sostenibile a partire dai sistemi alimentari,* GCAP Italia, (2019), p. 18.

The analysis of the response of the United Nations system reveals a paradox at the heart of current global governance: the institutional architecture is increasingly sophisticated, yet structurally insufficient. The Rome-Based Agencies – FAO, WFO, and IFAD – have evolved significantly, moving from reactive food distribution toward anticipatory action, climate-smart agriculture, and resilience-building[454]. The Somalia case study illustrates both the real impacts that coordinated UN intervention can achieve – famine threshold avoided, millions reached, government capacity strengthened – and the fragility of those gains when funding collapses, political instability persists, and climate shock recur faster than communities can recover. The deeper structural problem lies in the distance between climate governance and human rights law. The Paris Agreement acknowledges food security as a priority but does not treat it as a legally enforceable right. The UNFCCC framework is built on state voluntarism and nationally determined contributions rather than binding accountability mechanisms rooted in human rights obligations. The result is a architecture of governance in which climate mitigation and adaptation commitments are made in one institutional space, while the human rights consequences of their failure are managed – inadequately – in another. This fragmentation reflects a deeper political unwillingness to acknowledge that climate inaction constitutes a violation of existing human rights obligations. International human rights law provides the normative tools to close this gap: the obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to food extends to the design of climate policies, and states are bound, as the Inter-American Court of Human rights confirmed in its 2025 Advisory Opinion, to integrate human rights standards into every dimension of their climate action, ensuring that the most vulnerable are protected and that the effects do not fall on those least responsible for the crisis. But as long as these obligations remains politically aspirational rather than judicially enforceable at the international levels, and as long as climate finance for the UN remains chronically underfunded relative to the scale of adaption needs, the gap will persist.

The United Nations has played an indispensable, if imperfect, role in bridging the gap between the legal promise of the right to food and the humanitarian reality on the ground. Through the normative work of the CESCR, the advocacy of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and the operational mandates of the RBAs, the UN system has built a multi-layered architecture that simultaneously defines the right, monitors its realisation, and intervenes when it is violated. The FAO has evolved from a technical body focused on agricultural productivity into the primary custodian of the right to food in international policy, embedding human rights standards into national adaptation frameworks and providing governments with the legal and institutional tool to translate treaty obligations into domestic reality. The WFP has transformed the concept of humanitarian response, shifting from passive food distribution in the afterwards of emergencies toward anticipatory action, cash-based assistance, and digital innovation – demonstrating in Somalia that proactive intervention, when adequately funded and coordinated, is measurably more effective than reactive relief, and that technology, when placed in the service of human

[454] Lele U., Agarwal M., Baldwin B.B. & Goswami S., *Perspectives Moving Forward,* in Lele U., et al (Eds.), *Food For All – International Organizations and the Transformation of Agriculture,* New York, Oxford University Press, (2021), pp. 969-970.

dignity, allows assistance to reach the most isolated and vulnerable populations. IFAD has directed investment towards the smallholder farmers and rural communities who are simultaneously the most exposed to climate shock and the most neglected by conventional development finance, proving that targeted investment in rural resilience can generate lasting change even in the most fragile contexts. Linking emergency humanitarian responses to long-term development assistance has been fundamental to building and enhancing local capacity. Without this structural link, states couldn't transition from crisis management to addressing foundational needs in agriculture, schooling, and social protection systems[455]. Together, these agencies represent a model of coordinated multilateralism that saves lives and builds resilience, and demonstrate that sustained international cooperation can deliver tangible and effective results. Yet the UN system also reflects the structural limitations of the international order within which it operates. Its effectiveness is contingent on the political will and financial contributions of Member States, and when that support falters – as the sharp funding reductions to WFP operations in Somalia between 2021 and 2024, or the broader retreat from multilateral commitments painfully illustrate – the consequences fall hardest on those who have no alternative safety net. Yet precisely because of these limitations, the indispensability of the UN becomes even clearer. In a world where binding enforcement mechanisms for the right to food remain weak, where climate finance falls chronically short of what is needed, and where the most vulnerable populations have no other institution capable of advocating for their rights, coordinating their relief, and holding their governments accountable, the UN system is not simply useful; it is irreplaceable. Without it, the right to food would remain a legal text without a guardian, a promise without a keeper, and for millions of people already on the edge of survival, that difference is the difference between life and death.

Looking ahead, meaningful progress requires more than incremental reform. It requires a fundamental reorientation of the relationship between climate governance and the right to food – one that places binding human rights obligation at the centre of climate policy rather than treating food security as a secondary concern to be accommodated within a framework primarily designed around emissions targets and economic interests. Concretely, this means integrating the right to food into NDCs and NAPs as a non-negotiable benchmark against which climate commitments are evaluated; scaling up climate finance to levels commensurate with actual adaptation needs, with particular priority given to the most vulnerable nations that have contributed least to global emissions but bear the heaviest consequences; strengthening the justiciability of the right to food at both national and international levels, so that individuals and communities have effective legal recourse when climate inaction or poorly designed mitigation measures undermine their access to adequate nutrition; and investing in the kind of sustained, coordinated, and locally owned institutional capacity that the Somalia experience shows is both achievable and fragile. Encouragingly, the contours of this transformation are already beginning to emerge in state practice. Across multiple regions, governments are increasingly embedding the right to food into domestic

[455] Lele U., Agarwal M., Baldwin B.B. & Goswami S., *Perspectives Moving Forward,* in Lele U., et al (Eds.), *Food For All – International Organizations and the Transformation of Agriculture,* New York, Oxford University Press, (2021), p. 970.

constitutions and legislative acts, explicitly aligning their national food systems strategies with climate and biodiversity frameworks[456]. Furthermore, policy design is becoming noticeably more inclusive, and multi-stakeholder dialogues and coalitions of action are progressively centring the voices of those historically marginalised yet most exposed to climate shocks, including women, youth, and smallholder farmers. To ensure accountability, nations are also leveraging advancements in data systems, agricultural science, and artificial intelligence to guide evidence-based judicial and political decisions. Crucially, this domestic momentum is being paired with creative fiscal strategies to bridge the adaptation funding gap, as states reallocate national budgets, tap international climate funds, and pioneer innovative mechanisms[457]. These collective steps reveal a nascent but undeniable global recognition that securing the right to food requires both deep national commitment and structural international solidarity. It also means addressing the structural drivers of food insecurity that climate change amplifies but does not create alone – conflict, inequality, gender discrimination, and the chronic underfunding of social protection systems in the countries that need them most. Ultimately, this ongoing progress of systemic transformation, learning, and shared adaptation underscores that the right to food cannot be secured through emergency relief alone; it requires the transformation of the food systems, governance structures, and economic models that have produced and perpetuated hunger in the first place.

The world is not destined to fail on this. Between 2000 and 2016, global hunger fell significantly – proof that when political will and financial commitment align, progress is possible and measurable. The legal framework exists, refined over decades of normative development from the UDHR to the ICESCR, from General Comment No.12 to the Voluntary Guidelines, from the Paris Agreement to the most recent jurisprudence of international courts. The institutional architecture, however imperfect, is in place. The data, the early warning systems, the anticipatory tools, and the evidence-based strategies are available. What remains – and what this thesis has ultimately sought to argue – is the political courage to treat the right to food not as a humanitarian aspiration but as the legally binding, universally applicable human right it has always been, and to build a global climate response that is finally worthy of that commitment and of the billions of people whose lives depend on it.

The right to food is a universal promise that every person, everywhere, has access to affordable, safe, and nutritious sustenance. Honouring this commitment requires a sustained consolidation of multilateral efforts, translating global dialogues into practical national pathways, scaled financing, and technologically driven partnerships. This transformation cannot be top-down, but it demands genuine intergenerational leadership that centres youth as active co-architects of sustainable food systems. The path to 2030 offers definitive windows of opportunity to transition away from fragmented governance and toward a model of inclusive and networked multilateralism. By explicitly linking agriculture, climate,

[456] OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food – Fact Sheet No. 34,* United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, p. 9.

[457] United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub, *Global Food Systems Transformation 2025: Progress Report Bases on Inputs from Countries, Coalitions, and the UN System Ahead of UNFSS+4,* (2025), p. 1.

health, and finance at these critical milestones, the international community can transform global food systems into the ultimate lever for a resilient, equitable, and sustainable future[458]. The Right to Food has been written into the conscience of international law, debated in the halls of the United Nations, and defended by agencies working in the most forgotten corners of the world – yet as long as a child in Somalia still walks for days through a dying landscape in search of a meal that may not be waiting, the distance between what the law promises and what the world delivers remains the most urgent legal, political, and human challenge of our time.

In conclusion, finding a definite solution to the scourge of global malnutrition will not be an immediate or straightforward challenge in the short term. However, raising general awareness of the urgent need to establish a better legal framework for food security governance – drawing, in part, on mutual aid and cooperation – is always an essential first step towards a definitive solution in a field as fundamental to humanity as the agri-food sector. Indeed, countries should foster the implementation of the human right to food into national constitutions and realise its protection through justiciability and advocacy globally. World governments need to implement food security and nutrition policies into their national strategies, in a global effort to diminish world inequalities and hunger. Eradicating hunger and malnutrition in all its forms is a major challenge, but if all countries commit themselves to respect the duty of fulfilling the right to food, then the *Zero Hunger* goal would be realisable.

[458] United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub, *Global Food Systems Transformation 2025: Progress Report Bases on Inputs from Countries, Coalitions, and the UN System Ahead of UNFSS+4,* (2025), p. 50.

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