GROW

FOOD. WOMEN. PLANET.

ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE

What Canada can do to end the food crisis and reduce hunger around the world

Movements to transform our broken food system have sprung up everywhere. From Canada to Kenya, more and more people are working together to alter the way we produce, consume and even think about food.

Farmers are demanding a fairer deal from markets and companies. Women farmers are organizing to fight discrimination and secure equal access to resources. Consumers are influencing companies through the fair trade, organic or slow food movements, and through consumer campaigns.

Government, too, must act to head off the looming emergency threatening the lives and livelihoods of tens of millions of poor women and men. Rising food prices have driven the total number of chronically undernourished to nearly one billion – that is one in seven human beings.

By taking action on these priorities, Canada can ensure a better life for poor farmers and a more stable food supply for everyone for generations to come.

1.
INVEST IN SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

Unlocking the potential of smallholder agriculture represents our single biggest opportunity to increase food production, boost food security, and reduce vulnerability. Small-scale food producers currently feed over 2 billion people and have the skills to feed many more, yet they continue to be starved of investment, pushed aside by governments and companies alike.

Worldwide, aid to agriculture declined by 77 per cent in real terms between 1996 and 2003 and only turned around in 2008. Aid to farming is still less than 7 per cent of all donors' aid.

With the sharp rise in food prices since 2008, land has become the world's hottest commodity. A total area nearly the size of British Columbia has been purchased or leased in poor countries. This sort of investment has too often resulted in forced evictions, where poor communities lose access to the water and land they need to survive. Women's rights to land are routinely flouted.

Canada should:

- Maintain the portion of aid CIDA currently devotes to agriculture (17 per cent) and increase the aid budget to set us on a course for achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of our economy
- Maintain the current focus on supporting small-scale producers, especially women, and promoting sustainable climate-friendly farming
- Champion regulation of large-scale land acquisitions to ensure respect for the rights and livelihoods of local farmers, via the UN Food and Agriculture Organization Voluntary Guidelines on Land Purchases
- Require full disclosure by Canadian companies involved in land acquisitions, as well as guarantees to respect and protect the rights of affected communities, particularly their right to free, prior and informed consent.

2.

Get serious about climate change

Extreme weather is playing havoc with harvests the world over, driving down yields and causing hunger. The increase in droughts, floods and violent storms is consistent with scientists' predictions on the impact of climate change.

Canada is one of the top ten emitters of greenhouse gases in the world, both in per capita and absolute terms. If our food supply is to be stable and prices affordable, we need to dramatically reduce our emissions and provide urgent assistance to help vulnerable communities adapt. Nearly all of Canada's climate support for poor countries has helped private companies reduce their emissions (mitigation), rather than adaptation.

Canada should:

- Set a more ambitious target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, and implement the regulations needed to achieve it
- Provide our annual fair share of climate finance to help vulnerable communities, and ensure at least half supports adaptation. A significant proportion should be directed to women farmers.
- Champion action to bring the new UN Green Climate Fund to life.

3.

MAKE FOOD AFFORDABLE

People living in poverty spend half their income on food and the poorest as much as three quarters. When food prices mushroom poor people must do without, and it is women who most frequently eat last and least. The rise in prices in 2008 pushed more than 100 million people into the ranks of the hungry; further rises in 2011 added another 44 million.

Booming demand for biofuels is one cause of higher global food prices. In Canada, we burn four billion kilos of corn in our cars every year. Corn-based ethanol diverts food from the world market and is no better for the environment than gasoline, due to high greenhouse gas emissions from growing and processing the corn. Ethanol companies receive provincial and federal subsidies to the tune of $350 million per year.

Financial speculation based on food commodities are another factor in rising prices. Derivatives can swamp commodity markets with quick cash from non-agricultural speculators and exert upward pressure on prices.

Since global food production is not keeping up with rising demand, waste too has a direct impact on price and availability. Roughly one third of all the food produced gets spoiled or wasted. In poor countries food is lost due to poor infrastructure and lack of storage; in rich countries consumer and retail waste is the main cause.

Canada should:

- Redirect biofuels subsidies and tax-breaks toward solar, wind and the next generation of biofuels which do not use food crops
- Support a coordinated G20 effort to regulate financial derivatives based on food commodities
- Encourage food distributors and supermarket chains to reduce waste along their supply lines
- Provide education and incentives to reduce waste by consumers

4.

AVERT FOOD CRISES AND RESPOND MORE EFFECTIVELY WHEN THEY OCCUR

Food crises due to climate and price shocks are becoming more frequent and more severe. Canadians always respond generously to disasters, but our response often comes late and we do less well on the advance work: helping communities reduce risks and become better prepared to face a crunch.

Investing in local food production and funding adaptation to climate change are two key steps in avoiding crises. In addition, public food reserves of basic staples are a key tool for stabilizing prices, and emergency food stockpiles can speed up response to sudden crises. Finally, basic social safety nets are essential to help the poorest and most vulnerable survive a crisis. Yet sadly there is no social security program for four out of five people in the world.

Canada should:

- Respond right away to food emergencies. Early-warning systems now give plenty of notice
- Provide technical assistance to poor countries that wish to establish or improve national food reserves
- Support the G20 initiative for emergency food reserves to guarantee a quicker response
- Make disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction a key plank of Canada's aid program, including support for social safety nets

OXFAM CANADA

Oxfam Canada builds lasting solutions to global poverty and injustice. Oxfam Canada works with counterparts and allies around the world to secure human rights for all. Oxfam combines long-term development and humanitarian responses with research, advocacy and campaigning that challenge the root causes of poverty, injustice and inequality.

Founded in 1963, Oxfam Canada is a member of Oxfam, a confederation of 15 Oxfams that together work in 98 counties.

OUR GROW CAMPAIGN

The GROW campaign is calling for a dramatic change in the way we produce and share food. Almost a billion of us go to bed hungry every night - not because there isn't enough but because of deep injustice in the food system. We can feed the world by protecting the planet's resources and ensuring women are at the heart of the solution.

Living better. Growing better. Sharing better.
oxfam.ca/grow

GROW WITH US

We'll work with you to fix the broken food system. Join the campaign and you'll receive information and actions: **grow@oxfam.ca**

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