



# So much more needs to be done to end hunger, malnutrition

*World Food Day puts the plight of the world's starving under the spotlight*

## COMMENT



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OBSERVED annually on October 16, World Food Day serves as a reminder that a lot still needs to be done to end hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity globally.

The focus is also on the need to ensure everyone has access to enough nutritious food.

The theme for 2022, "Leave no one behind", is therefore quite fitting.

It should be pointed out, however, that the UN has expressed concern that we may not be able to achieve the second Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-2) of "Zero Hunger" by 2030. One of our major challenges is rising food prices.

The world has seen food prices rocketing for various reasons.

The current Russia-Ukraine war is having an impact on the availability of grain and fuel.

Not only does this mean less grain for the world, especially for people in developing countries, but also rising fuel prices.

Rising fuel prices also have an effect on the transportation of food, resulting in high food prices, and ultimately limiting people's access to quality foods.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to address hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity when food prices continue to rise.

This is especially true for a country like ours with its high rates of unemployment and poverty.

According to Trading Economics, South Africa's average food price inflation was 6.07% per annum between 2009 and 2022, reaching for this period its highest level of increase.

Furthermore, the price of a meal is estimated at R305, with breakfast varying in value depending on the



EVER-RISING food prices are making it increasingly difficult for the poor to access nutritious, healthy food, says the writer. | ARMAND HOUGH African News Agency (ANA)

food eaten.

This is not good news for the vast majority of South Africans who live in poverty.

To achieve sufficient food security, the four aspects of food security need to be achieved simultaneously.

These aspects are the availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability of food.

Food prices play a big role in accessing nutritious food, and it is very important to implement programmes that can increase this access for the population so that food insecurity can be reduced.

We should not underestimate the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic, especially interventions such as lockdowns, may have had on food security.

In a study published in Global Food Security (2021), Christophe Béné and his co-authors conducted the first global assessments of Covid-19's impacts on food systems and their actors.

They focused specifically on the food security and nutritional status of

those affected in low and middle-income countries.

The assessment covered 62 countries.

Their review confirmed the magnitude and the severity of the crisis.

The dimension of food security most affected has been accessibility, with reasonably solid evidence suggesting that both financial and physical access to food have been disrupted.

This probably was due to the restricted movement of people during lockdown. People also lost their livelihoods, which severely affected their food purchasing power.

The 2019 Lancet Commission report on Obesity, Undernutrition and Climate Change showed that while multinational and multi continental mitigation strategies (quarantine, shelter-in-place, shutdowns) have been enacted to stop the spread of the virus, these approaches have caused rapid shifts in the food environment and affected population-wide dietary practices.

Climate change is already ampli-

fying the multiple burdens of malnutrition by its effects on food security, public hygiene, water quality and supplies, food safety, and maternal and child health care.

Despite enormous successes in increasing global food availability (a key requirement for food and nutrition security), the global burden of under-nutrition and micro-nutrient deficiencies remains staggering.

In an article in the Annual Review of Public Health (2017), Samuel Myers and his co-authors assert that global food production is likely to be altered through several climate change-related pathways affecting the quantity and quality of food produced in the agricultural, fishery, and livestock sectors.

However, nutrition and food security are determined not only by aggregate food supply, but also by the ability of people and households to access, afford, and consume food.

The 2020 Global Nutrition Report emphasised that in a world operating with an already stressed food security system further vulnerabilities to food insecurity, malnutrition and obesity imposed by the pandemic are expected.

These will probably magnify disparities in healthy living behaviours, perpetuating a viscous synergy of complex, yet preventable, nutrition conditions that contribute to the development of diet-related non-communicable diseases.

More research is needed to determine the extent to which the pandemic disrupted food accessibility.

With 2030 around the corner, we do not have much time left to achieve the goal of zero hunger.

If we want to be successful, we need to start finding lasting solutions soon.

We should work together to bring food price inflation down so that more people will be able to afford quality and healthy food.

We must also create sustainable and resilient food systems for nutrition and health.

This year's World Food Day may be a good time to start.

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