

Hunger and Food

Sustainable Development Goal 2

Issues for Discourse with Youth

Bahá'í Discourse - Hunger

Sustainable Development Goal 2

2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture



Hunger

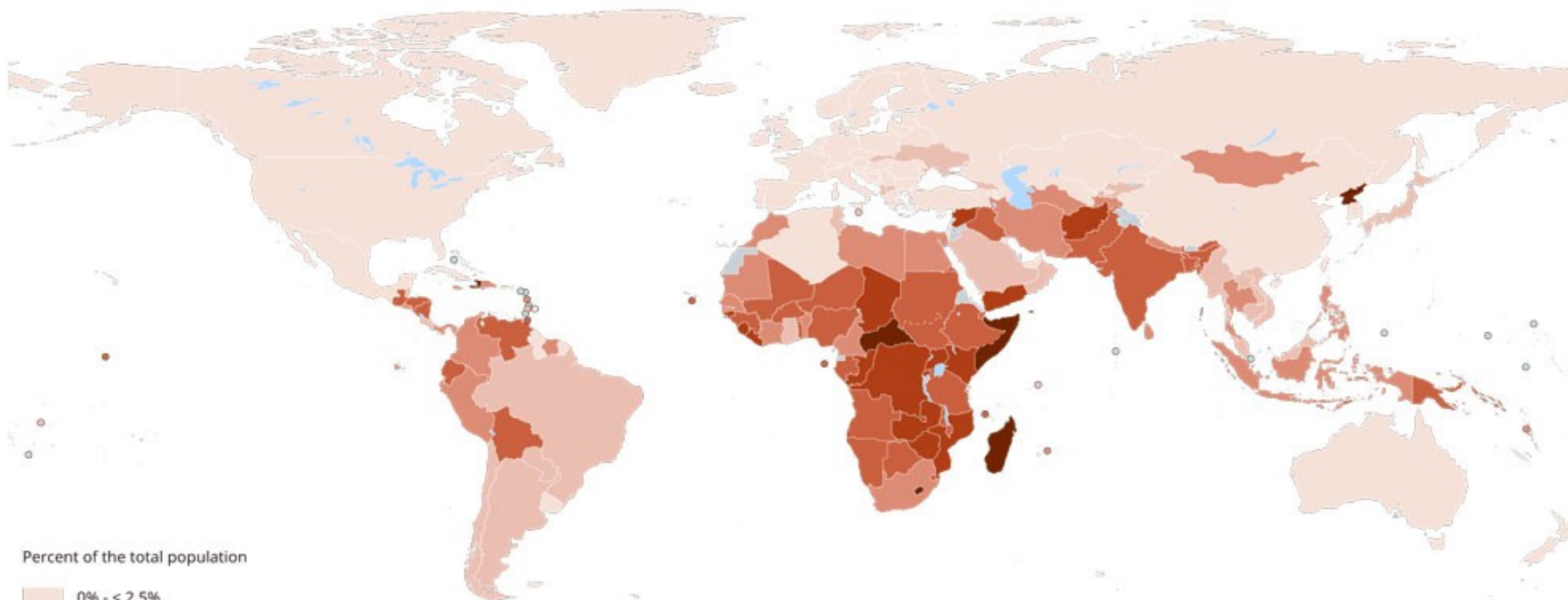
It is estimated that 1.02 billion people go to bed hungry every night. According to the Global Hunger Index, Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest child malnutrition rate of the world's regions over the 2001–2006 period. Hunger remains serious or alarming in 43 countries in 2023.



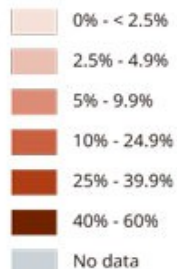
FAO Hunger Map



Prevalence of Undernourishment 2020-2022
SDG Indicator 2.1.1



Percent of the total population



Source: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2023. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural-urban continuum.* Data are available on FAOSTAT (<https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS>).

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Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Why do we still have hunger?

“As Britain became an imperial power, and then the world’s leading power of the 19th century, British philosophy changed to justify Britain’s emerging empire. British philosophers championed a powerful state (Thomas Hobbes’ Leviathan), the protection of private wealth over redistribution (John Locke’s right to “life, liberty, and property”), markets over government (Adam Smith’s “Invisible Hand”), and the futility of aiding the poor (Malthus’ law of population).”

(Jeffrey D. Sachs, 26 June 2023, The New World Economy,
<https://www.jeffsachs.org/newspaper-articles/us-politics-and-the-paris-finance-summit>)

Why do we still have hunger?

“When humanitarian crises arose in the British empire, such as the Irish famine in the 1840s and the famines in India later in the century, Britain rejected providing food aid and left millions of its subjects to starve, even though food supplies were available to save them. The inaction was in line with a laissez-faire philosophy that viewed poverty as inevitable and help for the poor as morally unnecessary and practically futile.”

(Jeffrey D. Sachs, 26 June 2023, The New World Economy,
<https://www.jeffsachs.org/newspaper-articles/us-politics-and-the-paris-finance-summit>)

Food Prices and Hunger

Poor people spend a greater portion of their budgets on food than wealthy people and, as a result, they can be particularly vulnerable to increases in food prices. For example, in late 2007, increases in the price of grains led to food riots in some countries.

Food Prices and Hunger

Threats to the supply of food may also be caused by drought and the water crisis. Intensive farming often leads to a vicious cycle of exhaustion of soil fertility and decline of agricultural yields. Much of the world's agricultural land is seriously degraded.

Limits to Food Production

- The Green Revolution of the 1970s increased food supply but such intensive agriculture requires high energy, fertilizer and petrochemical inputs
- World cereal production per person peaked in the 1980s and has decreased slowly since
- Feeding the growing world population and reducing hunger by half will require doubling world food production by 2050; hunger is increasing again

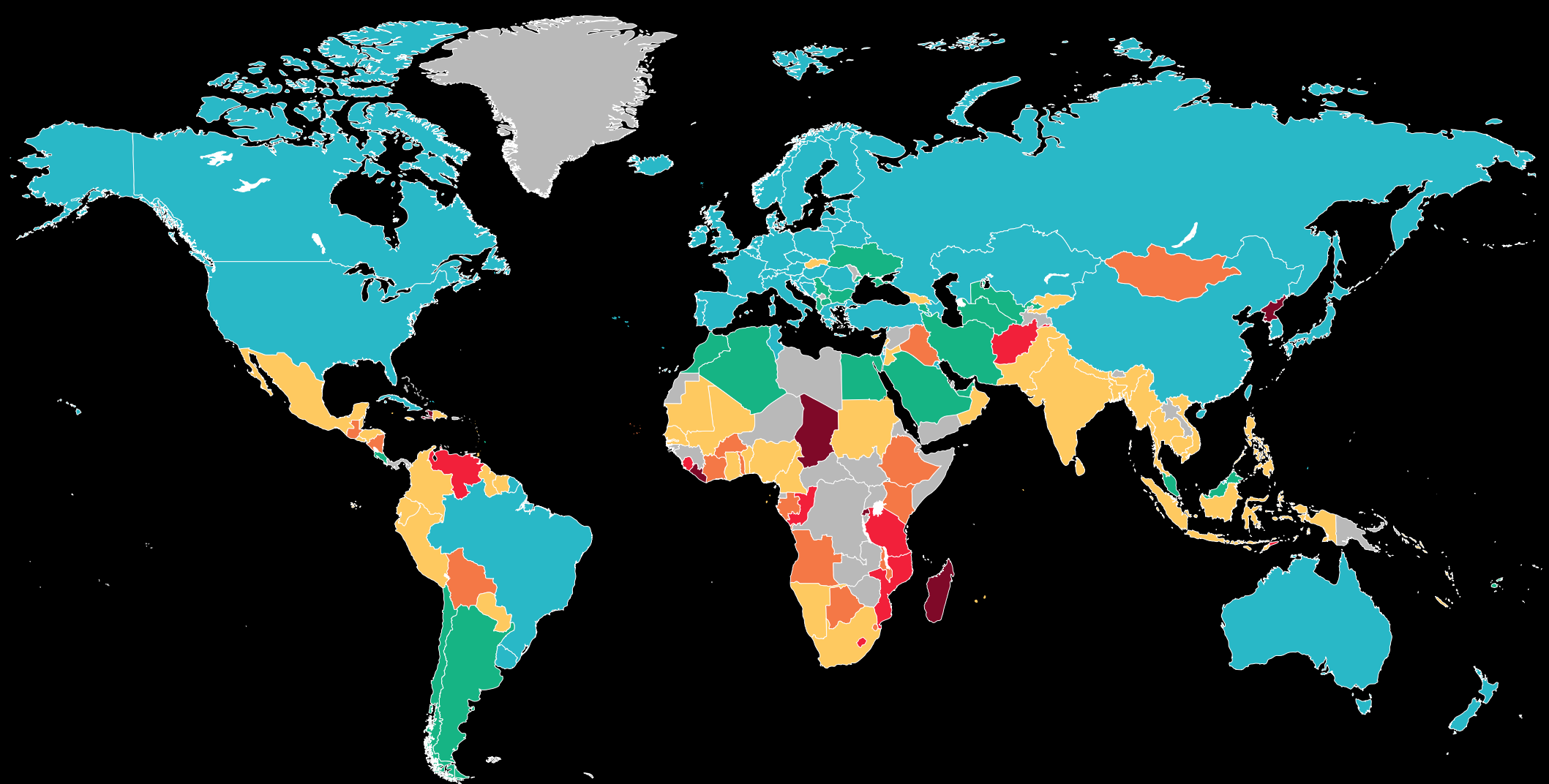
Food Consumption

- Predicted 9 billion population in 2050 will require 70% increase in food calories, with 70% more dependence on the productivity of our land and oceans
- 670 million people estimated to still be undernourished in 2030, 8% of world population
- Same as in 2015 when 2030 Agenda and SDGs launched
- 1 billion people could be fed with food wasted
- 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet
- 811 million people are hungry

Global Food Crisis Coming

- there are biophysical limits to food production
- we are destroying and poisoning the biosphere
- current food production relies on fossil fuels
- constrained by climate chaos impacting harvests
- growing demand for food
- globalised food system prioritises efficiency and profit over resilience and equity

(Jem Bendell, *Breaking Together* 2023)



Hunger Map – World Food Programme

No Hunger

The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, and that every one as far as possible, according to his position and rank, shall be comfortable. Whilst the nobles and others in high rank are in easy circumstances, the poor also should be able to get their daily food and not be brought to the extremities of hunger.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London, p. 29)

“Nobody should die of hunger”

Every human being has the right to live; they have a right to rest, and to a certain amount of well-being. As a rich man is able to live in his palace surrounded by luxury and the greatest comfort, so should a poor man be able to have the necessaries of life.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, pp.131-32)

“Nobody should die of hunger”

Nobody should die of hunger; everybody should have sufficient clothing; one man should not live in excess while another has no possible means of existence. Let us try with all the strength we have to bring about happier conditions, so that no single soul may be destitute.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, pp.131-32)

Food Insecurity

Agriculture still represents the fundamental basis of economic and community life: malnourishment and food insecurity suffocate all attempts at development and progress.

(Bahá'í International Community, *Eradicating Poverty: Moving Forward As One*, 2008)

Food Insecurity

Poverty is often concentrated in rural areas. Damage to natural resources, poor information and infrastructure often result in food insecurity, premature deaths and mass migration to urban areas in search of a better life. The farmer must be accorded his or her rightful place in the processes of development and civilization building: as the villages are reconstructed, the cities will follow.

(Bahá'í International Community, [Eradicating Poverty: Moving Forward As One](#), 2008)

Food

There are no specific dietary prescriptions or prohibitions in the Baha'i teachings, apart from alcohol. Eating is necessary for good health, and healing can be aided with proper foods. No one should go hungry.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 18, p. 230; *The Throne of the Inner Temple*, p. 19)

Food

“The nobility of man and his spiritual development will lead him in the future to such a position that no individual could enjoy eating his food or resting at home while knowing that there was one person somewhere in the world without food or shelter.”

(Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, vol. 3, p. 126)

Fasting

Fasting is a symbol. Fasting signifies abstinence from lust. Physical fasting is a symbol of that abstinence, and is a reminder; that is, just as a person abstains from physical appetites, he is to abstain from self-appetites and self-desires. But mere abstention from food has no effect on the spirit. It is only a symbol, a reminder. Otherwise it is of no importance.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era)

Food and Nutrition

Issues of food, nutrition, health and shelter are central to the challenge of providing an adequate standard of living for all members of the human family. These issues cannot, however, be tackled solely as technical or economic problems. Eliminating hunger and malnutrition; establishing food security; providing adequate shelter; and achieving health for all will require a shift in values, a commitment to equity, and a corresponding reorientation of policies, goals and programs.

(Bahá'í International Community, Feb. 18, 1998, Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development)

Food System

While advancements in global agricultural output have been made in recent decades, the world is in need of a food system that is sustainable, non-exploitative, and provides for the entirety of the global population. This will require not simply the application of new technology, but attention to the principles and assumptions underlying agricultural practice and policy from the local to the international level.

(Bahá'í International Community, Brussels Office, *Towards a Sustainable Food System*, 2022)

Food System

Foremost among the principles that should govern the operation of the food system is the oneness of humanity. Every individual, community, nation or region of the world is part of one unified entity, the well-being of whose parts are inseparable from the wellbeing of the whole.

(Bahá'í International Community, Brussels Office, Towards a Sustainable Food System, 2022)

Food System

Progress towards a food system that advances the global common good will rely to a significant degree on the manner and extent to which different perspectives are taken into account. Efforts to reform the global food system must begin with the recognition that no single set of actors and no individual continent possesses all the insights necessary to place global food security on a firm foundation.

(Bahá'í International Community, Brussels Office, *Towards a Sustainable Food System*, 2022)

Food System

A collective process of inquiry is required, with innovative mechanisms and structures to connect diverse stakeholders from all regions of the world, from farmers to researchers, with spaces in which consequential decisions are made.

(Bahá'í International Community, Brussels Office, *Towards a Sustainable Food System*, 2022)

Food of the Future

What will be the food of the future? Fruit and grains. The time will come when meat will no longer be eaten. Medical science is only in its infancy, yet it has shown that our natural diet is that which grows out of the ground. The people will gradually develop up to the condition of this natural food.

(`Abdu'l-Baha, *Health and Healing, Compilation of Compilations*, 1052, page 475; *Lights of Guidance*, p. 296)

The food of man

Regarding the eating of animal flesh and abstinence therefrom, know thou of a certainty that, in the beginning of creation, God determined the food of every living being, and to eat contrary to that determination is not approved... ..it becometh evident and manifest that the food of man is cereals and fruit.... Therefore he is not in need of meat, nor is he obliged to eat it. Even without eating meat he would live with the utmost vigour and energy.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Health and Healing, Compilation of Compilations, 1028, p.461)

The food of man

Truly, the killing of animals and the eating of their meat is somewhat contrary to pity and compassion, and if one can content oneself with cereals, fruit, oil and nuts, such as pistachios, almonds and so on, it would undoubtedly be better and more pleasing.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Health and Healing, Compilation of Compilations, 1028, p.461)

Man's Food

As humanity progresses, meat will be used less and less, for the teeth of man are not carnivorous.... The human teeth, the molars, are formed to grind grain. The front teeth, the incisors, are for fruits, etc. It is, therefore, quite apparent according to the implements for eating that man's food is intended to be grain and not meat. When mankind is more fully developed, the eating of meat will gradually cease.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, [Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), pages 170-171)

Eating Meat

But eating meat is not forbidden or unlawful, nay, the point is this, that it is possible for man to live without eating meat and still be strong. Meat is nourishing and containeth the elements of herbs, seeds, and fruits; therefore sometimes it is essential for the sick and for the rehabilitation of health. There is no objection in the Law of God to the eating of meat if it is required. So if thy constitution is rather weak and thou findest meat useful, thou mayest eat it.

Eating Meat

In regard to the question as to whether people ought to kill animals for food or not, there is no explicit statement in the Bahá'í Sacred Scriptures (as far as I know) in favor or against it. It is certain, however, that if man can live on a purely vegetarian diet and thus avoid killing animals, it would be much preferable.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1931; quoted in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 296)

The Golden Mean

As in so many other areas, the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in this regard follow the golden mean: kindness toward animals is definitely upheld, vegetarianism is encouraged, hunting is regulated, but certain latitude is left to individual conscience and in practical regard to the diversity of circumstances under which human beings live. For example, the indigenous peoples of the Arctic would be hard-pressed to subsist without recourse to animal products.

(Letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 29, 1995)