

“Any society where a healthy diet is more expensive than an unhealthy diet is a society that must mend its price system.”

Olivier De Schutter.

Special Rapporteur on the right to food. United Nations General Assembly 2011 (1)

Introduction to the problem and scale

- 10% of the world’s population live on less than US\$1.90 a day. (2) Whilst the richest 1% of the population own 50% of the global wealth.
- Despite the total number of people in poverty declining, the rate of decline is slowing and the inequality gap is increasing. (3)
- Millions more people are now predicted to fall into poverty as a direct impact of Covid-19 (4)
- “Feeding the 10 billion people projected to live on planet earth in 2050 must aim to go beyond producing more with less to balancing the focus on quality and diversity, linking productivity to sustainability and addressing the needs of people”. United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (5)
- Around one-third of the world’s population relies on farming, livestock, forests or fishing for food and income. (6)
- The poverty rate is three times higher in rural areas than in urban areas. (7)
- Livestock farmers and pastoralists make up more than half of the world’s rural poor. (8)
- Many small-scale farmers’ livelihoods are threatened due to pressures from land degradation and insecure tenure, often as a result of a globalised food system that favours concentrated, large-scale, and highly mechanised farms. (9)
- Migration is at unprecedented levels threatening social cohesion and cultural tradition. (10)
- “The scale of rural transformation in recent decades has been unprecedented: millions of people have abandoned their ancestral lands and migrated to urban areas, often impoverishing cultural identity, abandoning traditional knowledge, and permanently altering landscapes.” (11)
- Modern-day slavery affects 40 million people worldwide; 24.9 million are in forced labour, of which 16 million are exploited in the private sector; domestic work, construction or agriculture. (12)
- The agricultural sector is particularly at risk of unfair trading practices due to the unequal balance in bargaining power between small and larger players; typical examples include late payments for perishable food products and last-minute order cancellations. (13) Farmers should receive a much greater share of the revenue produced by the food chain.
- Within the UK, 25% of farming households are living below the poverty line. (14)

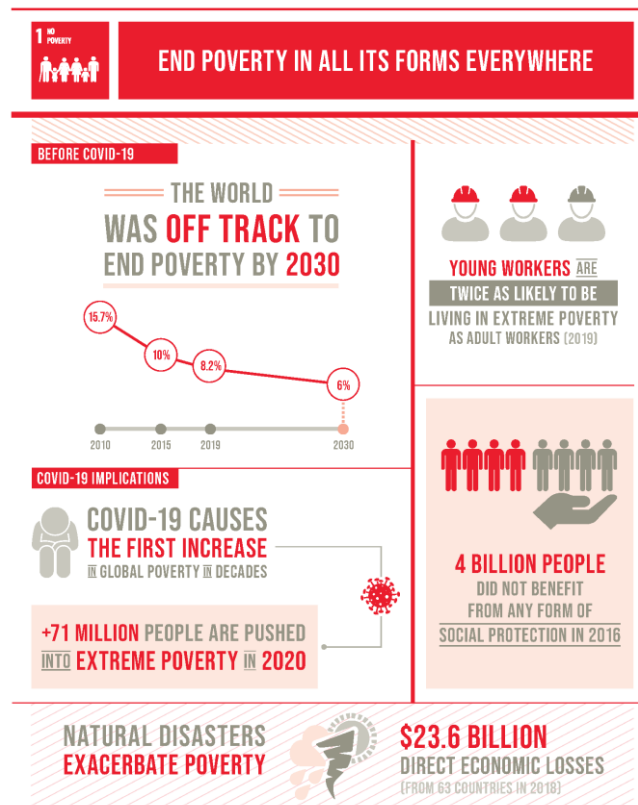
Link to intensive animal farming

- Intensive animal farming and the production of animal feed cause increased land and soil degradation, as well as water and air pollution, resulting in the erosion of natural resources on which smallholder farmers depend.
- “Small-scale farmers, the backbone of rural livelihoods and food production for millennia, are under immense strain from land degradation, insecure tenure, and a globalized food system that favors concentrated, large-scale, and highly mechanized agribusiness. These farmers often have limited options to pursue alternative livelihoods.” United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. 2017 (15)
- Demand for land to grow feed for intensively reared animals is driving land grabs, which threaten the ability of smallholders and indigenous peoples to overcome poverty. (16)
- Increased demand for grain to feed livestock is likely to push up food prices for the world’s poorest people; this trend is compounded with the rising global demand for meat and dairy products. (17)
- The growth of dead zones in oceans and lakes threatens livelihoods. Oceans feed more than 500 million people (especially in poorer nations) and provide jobs for 350 million people. There are now more than 400 coastal dead zones affecting a total area of approximately 95,000 square miles. (18)
- Seafood is a critical source of protein for more than 2.5 billion people, but more than half the ocean is now industrially fished and overfishing has caused catches to fall steadily. Supplies of wild fish are in danger of running out: over half of all wild fish are already fully exploited and almost a third have been overexploited. (19)
- Industrial agriculture requires less labour than agroecological systems. As a result, it leads to a loss of jobs for landless workers and out-competes small-scale food producers, thereby undermining their livelihoods. “The social benefits of agriculture can be eroded as production becomes more concentrated and intensive. Intensive agricultural systems are associated with negative effects on employment, wealth distribution, ancillary economic activity in rural areas [and] service provision in rural areas (such as schools and health facilities)” The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. (20)
- Intensive animal farming provides cheap food which in turn is based on the concept of cheap labour. (21)
- The *International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems* stresses that “cheap calories can no longer be a substitute for social policies, which must be rebuilt and redesigned to tackle the root causes of poverty and promote access to healthy food for all”. (22)
- “In many countries there is a worrying disconnect between the retail price of food and the true cost of its production. As a consequence, food produced at great environmental cost in the form of greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, air pollution, and habitat destruction, can appear to be cheaper than more sustainably produced alternatives.” United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (23)

Link to the relevant SDG (s)

- **SDG 1:** No Poverty: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- **SDG 2:** Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- **SDG 8:** Decent work and Economic Growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- **SDG 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries (24)



Source: unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020

References

- (1) Olivier De Schutter. Report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food,. 26 December 2011. United Nations General Assembly. Human Rights Council. A/HRC/19/59 http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session19/A-HRC-19-59_en.pdf
- (2) United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Goal No.1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>
- (3) World Bank: Decline of Global Extreme Poverty Continues but Has Slowed <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank>. Webpage. Accessed 28 October 2020
- (4) United Nations Sustainable Development Report 2020. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>
- (5) United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation. Transforming food and agriculture to achieve the SDG's. 20 interconnected actions to guide decision-makers. November 2018. <http://www.fao.org/3/I9900EN/i9900en.pdf>
- (6) United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation. Transforming food and agriculture to achieve the SDG's. 20 interconnected actions to guide decision-makers. November 2018. <http://www.fao.org/3/I9900EN/i9900en.pdf>

- (7) United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Goal No.1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/#:~:text=More%20videos%20on%20YouTube,-Share&text=According%20to%20the%20most%20recent,less%20than%20%241.90%20a%20day.>
- (8) United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. 2017. The Global Land Outlook, first edition. Bonn, Germany. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2017-09/GLO_Full_Report_low_res.pdf
- (9) United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. 2017. The Global Land Outlook, first edition. Bonn, Germany. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2017-09/GLO_Full_Report_low_res.pdf
- (10) Transforming food and agriculture to achieve the SDG's <http://www.fao.org/3/I9900EN/i9900en.pdf>
- (11) United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. 2017. The Global Land Outlook, first edition. Bonn, Germany. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2017-09/GLO_Full_Report_low_res.pdf
- (12) International Labour Organisation, 2017
- (13) Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)
- (14) Farmers Weekly 14 January 2020. Joe Stanley article: No room for error with new food and farming policies. Webpage. Accessed 5 November 2020 <https://www.fwi.co.uk/news/opinion-no-room-for-error-with-new-food-and-farming-policies>
- (15) United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. 2017. The Global Land Outlook, first edition. Bonn, Germany. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2017-09/GLO_Full_Report_low_res.pdf
- (16) Lymbery, P & Oakeschott, I., Farmageddon. Bloomsbury Publishing. London 2014 Chapter 11.
- (17) Oxfam, 4 a week; changing food consumption in the UK to benefit people and the planet, Oxfam GB Briefing Paper, 2009
- (18) Lymbery, P. Dead Zone. Bloomsbury Publishing. London. 2018. p77
- (19) FAO. State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture. 2010
- (20) HLPE. 2016. Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition: what roles for livestock? A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome *p78 Online*. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mq860e.pdf> Accessed 28 October 2020
- (21) Patel, R. Livestock production and human rights. Extract taken from Farming, Food and Nature Respecting Animals, People and the Environment. Ch 9 p66. Edited by Joyce D'Silva and Carol McKenna 2018 Routledge.
- (22) De Schutter O, 2019. Towards a Common Food Policy for the European Union. iPES Food. http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/CFP_ExecSummary_EN.pdf
- (23) UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2015. Natural capital impacts in agriculture
- (24) United Nations Department of Economic Social Affairs Sustainable Development <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>