

# CLIMATE CHANGE CAUSES HUNGER

## The Lack of Ambitious Climate Policies Puts Food Security in Jeopardy

### Recommendations for Action

- ▶ Advancing Climate Policies in Partnership With Poor Countries
- ▶ Introducing Effective Carbon Pricing in Germany
- ▶ Getting the Climate Protection Law Finally Passed in 2019
- ▶ Enshrining Sustainability in the Constitution as a National Objective

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## The Lack of Ambitious Climate Policies Puts Food Security in Jeopardy

**The “Fridays For Future” movement has sparked a wave of political action. Germany is discussing carbon pricing, and cities are declaring climate emergencies, but that is not enough for impoverished people in the Global South. Climate change has been a tangible reality in their lives for a long time, pushing them deeper into hunger. They need our support as they adapt to these circumstances. For our part, we have to reform our policies in the areas of forestry, agriculture, consumer behaviour, and energy and transport policy.**

Although climate change has not yet affected Germany too drastically, it is rightly regarded as a catastrophe. For at least two billion people in the Global South, however, it is already a harsh reality. It is hitting the poorest among them first and hardest. These are mainly women and small-scale farmers who are not contributing to climate change themselves and are hardly in a position to protect themselves from its effects. Some 600 million people are living in extreme poverty in rural areas throughout the world. A drought can quickly become life-threatening if people are dependent on food they grow themselves but can only draw enough water from the village well for drinking and handwashing. A modest increase in the price of groceries presents a threat to the poorest sections of the population, especially in the cities, as in some countries people spend up to 90 percent of their incomes on food.

Since 2015, global hunger rates have started rising again. This can be attributed largely to two interconnected factors: armed conflicts and the effects of climate change. Worldwide, there are currently 820 million people going hungry. That is one in every nine people alive. In 2017, around 95 million people were affected by starvation due to climate events. Climate change creates hunger.

If atmospheric warming is allowed to continue unchecked, global harvest yields will fall significantly. In 2010, the World Bank was already projecting that a rise of global temperatures by two degrees Celsius could drive another 100 to 400 million people into hunger and leave one

to two billion people facing water shortages. This assessment of the threat remains unchanged: Climate change “could push more than 120 million more people into poverty by 2030”, warned Philip Alston, the UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, in his report to the UN Human Rights Committee this year. He fears a “climate apartheid” in which “the wealthy pay to escape overheating, hunger, and conflict while the rest of the world is left to suffer”.

*“I fear a climate apartheid in which the wealthy pay while and the poor suffer.”*

*Philip Alston, UN, 2019*

Welthungerhilfe is already seeing the fatal consequences of climate change in many of its project countries. In Bangladesh, for example, whereas approximately 18 percent of the country is flooded in a normal year, up to 80 percent of its surface area is now at risk of flooding.

### Coastal Areas at Risk

Bangladesh is poor and is home to twice as many people as Germany. In addition, it lies in the path of many typhoons. These factors leave the country especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, with the increase in hurricanes, torrential rainfall, and flooding destroying its water

and sanitation infrastructure as well as houses, schools, and harvests.

Welthungerhilfe is supporting the households of small-scale farmers in vulnerable rural regions and on river islands, combining cutting-edge approaches with traditional methods to secure people’s survival and build resilience. Some of the planting is now done on small rafts that float during flooding and in sack gardens that help by being moved from areas before they get flooded. New methods are generating increased returns, for example by combining fish or duck farming with rice cultivation. This is in addition to the introduction of a modern, fast-growing strain of rice that can be harvested before the rainy season brings its devastating floods.

By building up farming cooperatives, Welthungerhilfe is also helping strengthen societal cohesion and people’s ability to fight climate change. Small-scale farmers share resources including seed banks, mills, and packaging equipment. Online weather and climate information help with disaster risk reduction, while sustainable water and waste management will reduce the problems caused by the next flood.

### Forecasting Disasters and Acting in Time

Forecast-based financing in humanitarian assistance is a modern instrument for improving predictions of the impacts that approaching droughts will have on hunger, enabling intervention to be more timely.

Experience has shown that each euro spent by Welthungerhilfe before a crisis is between four and five times as effective as one spent during or after a disaster strikes. The issue is similar to that of climate change: When a crisis occurs, the first people affected are either ill or

already dead. At that point, it is difficult and costly or simply too late to render humanitarian assistance.

Climate change makes forecasting harder because extreme weather events are growing in intensity and frequency. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that 80 percent of all major extreme weather events are now connected to climate change. However, the precision with which weather-related risks can be predicted is also increasing. This means that the time between the forecasting of a disaster and when it actually strikes must be used to avert any potentially fatal effects.

Such mitigation measures require indicators and thresholds, as well as drought analyses and emergency plans developed by experts working with the people affected, asking: How likely is a disaster to occur, and when would be the best time to act? How vulnerable is any given village, city, or region? Which challenges can the local population meet on its own, and which ones can it not? Emergency response plans must be drawn up, funded, and made immediately accessible. A considered political will is needed to achieve the necessary consensus and provide the required infrastructure, materials, and money before a disaster strikes, because the unfortunate truth is that funding generally only starts flowing in only once tragic photos begin circulating from the disaster area.

### Lowering Emissions, Securing Nutrition

Adaptive measures and preventative emergency aid are of little use without a simultaneous and significant reduction in emissions from energy production, transportation, and agriculture throughout the world, especially in wealthy societies. Climate researchers warn that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced to zero by



**IF WE FAIL TO ACT**

we risk letting **CLIMATE CHANGE** push **MORE THAN** another **100 MILLION** **PEOPLE INTO POVERTY** by **2030**

Source: Philip Alston, UN, 2019

no later than 2050 if adaptations to climate change are to be successful in the Global South.

The agricultural industry, whose production ensures global food and nutrition security, plays a dual role in climate politics: On the one hand, it causes greenhouse gas emissions; on the other, it acts as a carbon sink, with its soil and vegetation binding CO<sub>2</sub> and other gases. It causes 23 percent of all the emissions harming the climate but is itself also greatly affected by climate change. This means that the way we use land is a significant factor when it comes to protecting the climate.

Pressure on agricultural production is growing due to the growing global demand for both food and renewable resources. Harvests need to be more plentiful and reliable in order to meet increasing demand in the face of changing climate conditions. When it comes to development policy, agriculture is responsible not only for feeding the entire population but also for

helping fight poverty and building up society as a whole. Welthungerhilfe therefore advocates location-specific agriculture and the development of viable rural areas. Given the realities of climate change, it is important to not only invest in research and selective breeding but also maintain and expand agricultural diversity.

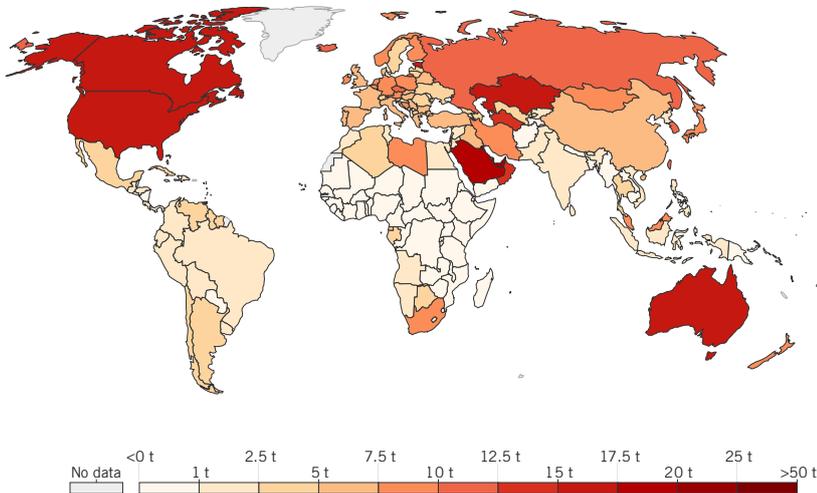
This means that the close connection between climate change and food security presents a special challenge. It becomes problematic if poor countries are compelled to adopt climate policies that diminish their development opportunities. In order to sustainably fight hunger in the Global South, industrialised countries and emerging economies have to do more to recognise their responsibilities as significant contributors to climate change. This includes reducing greenhouse gases and investing in the promotion of adaptation to climate change in developing countries. Climate protection is a question of equity, not only between generations but also between the rich and poor and the Global North and South.

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## CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions Per Capita, 2017

Average Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) Emissions Per Person, Measured in Tonnes Per Year



Sources: OWID based on CDIAC; Global Carbon Project; Gapminder & UN [OurWorldInData.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions/](https://www.ourworldindata.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions/) • CC BY • [www.ourworldindata.org/grapher/co-emissions-per-capita](https://www.ourworldindata.org/grapher/co-emissions-per-capita)

Poor countries that emit little CO<sub>2</sub> are suffering the most from the effects of climate change.

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## Recommendations for Action

- Poor countries need financial and logistical support to fight hunger and prepare for disasters. In addition to establishing early-warning systems, this involves making investments in infrastructure, agriculture, and the energy sector to help them adapt. At the same time preventative measures are required to guard against predictable droughts or floods, in order to save lives and minimise destruction.
- Effective climate protection requires fast and effective carbon pricing. Any comprehensive climate protection law in Germany must include carbon taxes and offsetting (emissions trading). Offsetting must be implemented at the political level to help quickly and drastically reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; this will require each tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> to cost far more than the current level of EUR 25 in Europe.
- The German climate protection law must be binding on national climate policies if climate goals are to be achieved by 2030. It must be passed this year.
- Sustainability should be enshrined in the constitution as a national objective.