

## Between suffering populations, profiteers and speculators: the fight against hunger is a battle against the established order

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Over the past five years, hunger has been on the rise again, and the number of food crises has increased. In 2022, 828 million people worldwide went hungry – 46 million more than in the previous year. According to the World Food Programme's 2023 Global Report on Food Crises, there were fifty-eight food crises across the world in 2022 and 258 million people suffered from acute food insecurity, meaning they were physically and economically unable to access enough food that was safe and nutritious. Undernutrition – a condition that results in stunted growth, acute malnutrition and multiple deficiencies – still causes around half the deaths of children aged under five. And leaving serious crises aside, three billion people are unable to have a healthy diet. Food insecurity used to be the tragic preserve of poor or war-torn countries. But it is now affecting developed countries ever more too. For example, 16% of French people claim they do not eat their fill and 26 million Americans went hungry in 2020. At the same time, farmers and livestock breeders have been widely marginalised and exploited by public policies, which benefit large agribusiness groups and their shareholders. At the start of 2024, farmers' protests in several European countries underlined this matter.

From different angles, the articles in this issue reach the same conclusion: our globalised economy has run out of steam and, instead of reducing inequalities and food crises, it only increases them. Africa was promised a "Green Revolution", yet this has not taken place. As Timothy A. Wise shows in his article, we are still awaiting an upturn in productivity, while soil quality and smallholders get poorer and the number of people going hungry only rises. In an ardent defence of agroecology, Caroline Broudic claims this epic failure can be partly explained by a desire to impose a global vision of agriculture and food systems that is simplistic, reductive and standardised. For her, this vision reflects neither the diversity nor the complexity of native or smallholder models but instead goes hand in hand with the interests of large agribusiness groups. Frédéric Mousseau goes even further as he analyses the hike in food prices that resulted from Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. He decries the guilty inertia of states and the collusion of international institutions that apply policies financed by public money – all at the expense of smallholders and consumers and in aid of large business groups and their shareholders. Meanwhile, Thomas Toulas calls for a holistic approach that takes into account power imbalances – between countries and genders – and the root causes of conflicts, as well as challenges regarding the climate and the environment.

For humanitarian organisations, the fight against hunger is therefore also a political one, requiring more than just resources needed to take action on behalf of populations. The fact remains, however, that the modalities of this humanitarian action still need to be adapted and improved, because it must be holistic. That is what Olivia Falkowitz suggests: based on the example of the Central African

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Republic, she recommends rethinking food security in light of health indicators to anticipate crises better and prioritise responses. And from Cameroon, Harold Gaël Njouonang Djomo maintains that a new approach is needed: a less vertical approach, closer to the reality on the ground in local regions. Readers can find his article exclusively in the *Forum* section of the *Humanitarian Alternatives* website.

We hope this issue will help us make progress together by giving us keys to improve the operations of humanitarian actors. Beyond their crucial role in the survival of millions, the latter need to convince their partners and political decision-makers that the fight against hunger in the world is the same as the fight for social and economic justice. We will never manage to defeat the scourge of hunger without questioning today's economic model and established order.

***Translated from the French by Thomas Young***

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