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August 21, 2023

This article is part of the World Economic Forum's Intelligence Map on Sustainable Development, which was co-curated by Southern Voice. Explore the map here.

Millions of people around the world go to bed hungry every night – and this has only worsened due to disruptions to global supply chains caused by climate change, the pandemic, conflict, and related food-price spikes. Rising temperatures, declining water supplies, and more frequent extreme weather events like floods and drought are impacting food supplies, making more sustainable food production more necessary every day. As defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, a sustainable food system “delivers food security and nutrition for all in a manner that the economic, social, and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.” Truly sustainable food systems are able to transform the way we consume calories, and to help build healthier communities. Following a “One Health” approach that recognizes human, animal, and environmental health as interconnected can help bolster sustainable food system efforts – which will be key for achieving greater food security and achieving the first United Nations Sustainable Development Goal, “Zero Hunger.” However, the necessary transformation of food systems requires both short- and long-term strategies.

In the short-term, existing food insecurity need to be addressed, particularly for the most vulnerable. In the medium- to long-term, greater focus should be placed on building resilient food systems – through regenerative farming, crop diversification, fewer environmental burdens, better water management, reduced chemical fertilizer use, and less waste. Digital technology can be used to better monitor processes from production to distribution; collaboration with the private sector entities could help develop smart systems capable of accurately assessing supply and demand. In Indonesia, for example, the online platform Sayurbox has enabled more people to buy fresh produce directly from farmers. Government support in the form of environmentally-friendly policies and nutritional goals is also needed. In Bhutan, the

government has connected some 2,000 farmers with nearly 100 schools across the country to provide students with nutritious, locally produced food. This provides additional income for farmers, improves children’s eating habits, empowers women-led farming groups, and helps bring communities together. Taking immediate action will be necessary to aid food security – the consequences of not doing so will be dire, and the poor and vulnerable will bear the brunt of the burden.

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