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**THE STATE OF
FOOD SECURITY
AND NUTRITION
IN THE WORLD**

**REPURPOSING FOOD AND
AGRICULTURAL POLICIES TO MAKE
HEALTHY DIETS MORE AFFORDABLE**

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SPAIN. Burlap bag filled with vegetables and fruits in a crop field – healthy eating and ecological agriculture.

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Rome, 2022

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FOREWORD

The challenges to ending hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition keep growing. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the fragilities in our agrifood systems and the inequalities in our societies, driving further increases in world hunger and severe food insecurity. Despite global progress, trends in child undernutrition – including stunting and wasting, deficiencies in essential micronutrients and overweight and obesity in children, continue to be of great concern. Further, maternal anaemia and obesity among adults continue to be alarming.

The most recent evidence available suggests that the number of people unable to afford a healthy diet around the world rose by 112 million to almost 3.1 billion, reflecting the impacts of rising consumer food prices during the pandemic. This number could even be greater once data are available to account for income losses in 2020. The ongoing war in Ukraine is disrupting supply chains and further affecting prices of grain, fertilizer and energy. In the first half of 2022, this resulted in further food price increases. At the same time, more frequent and severe extreme climate events are disrupting supply chains, especially in low-income countries.

Looking forward, the gains we made in reducing the prevalence of child stunting by one-third in the previous two decades – translating into 55 million fewer children with stunting – are under threat by the triple crises of climate, conflict and the

prospects for 2022 have been revised downward significantly; hence, more limited financial resources are available to invest in agrifood systems. Public-private partnerships will be extremely important for investments in agrifood systems. Robust governance will also be important to ensure that such partnerships ultimately benefit communities and people in greatest need, not powerful industry players.

This report shows that governments can invest in agrifood systems equitably and sustainably, even with the same level of public resources. Governments' support to food and agriculture accounts for almost USD 630 billion per year globally. However, a significant proportion of this support distorts market prices, is environmentally destructive, and hurts small-scale producers and Indigenous Peoples, while failing to deliver healthy diets to children and others who need them the most.

Food-importing countries have often provided stronger policy support, especially for cereals, with the aim of shielding their farming sector from international competition. In doing so, they may have been disproportionately fostering production of cereals relative to production of pulses, seeds, fruits, vegetables and other nutritious foods. These policies have contributed to food security in terms of sufficient quantity of calories, but they are not effective in improving nutrition and health outcomes, including among children.

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