Food aid
Food security
Is anybody still going hungry nowadays?

- Today, more than 850 million people on our planet are still going hungry and are malnourished.
- Every day, some 25,000 people die from hunger and hunger-related diseases. Hunger and its sequels claim more lives than HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis together.
- Abundance, not scarcity, best describes the world’s food supply. Global food production today is sufficient to feed twice the present world population.
- Changing food habits in e.g. China and India, climate changes, the increasing production of biocarbons as well as the increasing oil price have made food prices rise in the last years, which causes a big problem to countries having to deal with a structural food shortage.

Why are people going hungry?

Hunger and poverty are closely linked to each other in a vicious cycle, aggravating one another. Hunger is mainly a result of poor access to productive resources (e.g. fertile soil, water, income), of insufficient healthcare and/or lack of time or knowledge for the adequate preparation and intake of food.

In order to realize the right to food, the governments of nearly all countries including Belgium have repeatedly committed themselves to halve the proportion or number of hungry people by 2015, among others in the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and in the Declaration of the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome.
How does Belgium help?

Food shortage must be addressed, in fact, with a variety of measures in order to entirely cover all the phases between a crisis situation and the long-term impact (the so-called continuum):

This idea is reflected in the organization of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC) of the FPS Foreign Affairs, which is provided with a food aid unity and with the Belgian Survival Fund (BSF) and which also manages agricultural programme budgets.

The DGDC yearly spends over 20 million euro on food aid and actions for food security and this amount will be doubled in the coming years. But Belgium also seeks to improve food security through other channels. The DGDC yearly spends about 40 million euro through the Belgian Survival Fund. The BSF subsidizes programmes that tackle the causes of poverty and food insecurity. Finally, Belgium spends several millions of euros through the structural agricultural aid (multilateral/bilateral/NGO funding).

In this brochure we will only discuss the phase of the continuum closest to the crisis, namely: «Food aid»/«Food security through the budget line food aid».
Food insecurity and food aid

**Food security** can be a consequence of insufficient food, a lack of purchasing power, distribution problems, an unbalanced food pattern within households...

The **food aid** budget is aimed at increasing food security. There are three categories of projects:

- **Food aid** is supplied in unpredictable crisis situations resulting from natural or human disasters. Free food is distributed to those who suffer most from food insecurity. The main partner of this project is the World Food Programme of the United Nations (WFP) as well as the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) and the Belgian NGOs;

- **Food security projects** help increase food production by restoring food production systems after a crisis and by distributing seeds, fertilizers and small agricultural equipment. The main partner of this project is the emergency operations service of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, FAO (FAO/TC), which cooperates with local NGOs. The Belgian NGOs also participate in these projects;

- **Structural food aid supports** the food security policy of a partner country. This type of aid is usually provided on a bilateral basis, from state to state. But structural aid is also extended through other channels than the food aid budget. The Belgian Technical Cooperation as well as several NGOs for instance, increase food security by strengthening the agricultural sector in developing countries.
In order to support food security and to help in post crisis situations, Belgium gives money for food aid to countries that call for external aid in order to allow them to overcome their temporary food shortage. This programme thus includes much more than (emergency) food aid *strictu sensu*. Food aid is supplied in the form of financial donations and it is totally untied. The time that Belgium sent agricultural surplus or food in kind to developing countries, has long gone.

Food aid thus is a donation in money that the implementing partner organization uses to buy local or regional food. In this way, we not only provide food adjusted to people's food habits but we also avoid that local farmers and traders have to compete with goods from abroad. If the food is not, either locally or regionally, available, it often still is bought in other developing countries. The purchase of products containing GMOs (genetically modified organisms) is also prohibited.

The geographical distribution of food aid is focused on Africa (about 75%) and Latin America, Asia and the Middle East (about 25%). First beneficiaries of the food aid funded by Belgium are: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and West Africa. But Belgium also provides aid to countries such as Palestina, Afghanistan and Sudan...
Purchases of food on African markets

The DGDC does not only fund projects. By increasing its yearly contribution to the international humanitarian organizations budgets, Belgium is more involved in the policy of its multilateral partners. The DGDC pleaded, for instance, with the World Food Programme (WFP) in favor of the purchase of food on the local African markets, so that it benefits also to the African economies. The WFP yearly buys food for over 800 million dollar, which makes it not only the biggest distributor but also the biggest purchaser of food worldwide. As a consequence of this Belgian initiative that got the support of Sweden, new directives in favor of local food purchases have been adopted within the World Food Programme in 2006 and, again, in 2008. The WFP intends to deploy more staff for food purchases in developing countries and will cooperate more closely with the FAO and the IFAD, the UN food and agriculture agencies. The DGDC also works on these political issues in close cooperation with some NGOs, such as Vredeseilanden. The DGDC funds the strengthening of local purchases in the field through the WFP and Vredeseilanden, as well.
Regarding the debate within the WTO (World Trade Organization), the DGDC claims that food aid should be untied worldwide and be provided in cash. There are currently still countries which dump their own food surpluses in Africa and thus support their own economies. Some countries even sell food on the African market, thus competing with African farmers, in order to generate income for other projects (monetized food aid). Like almost all European countries, Belgium provides its food aid for free and in «untied cash», which allows aid organizations to buy not only the best food (food the beneficiaries are used to) but to buy it locally, as well, in order to support the local/regional economy.

More info on www.dgdc.be.
WFP is the food aid arm of the United Nations system and the world’s largest international food aid organization combating hunger in underdeveloped nations with severe food shortages. WFP helps **victims of natural disasters** like the Pakistan earthquake, the tsunami disaster and Bangladesh floods, **displaced people** both refugees and internally displaced persons in places like Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc as well as **the world’s hungry poor**, trapped between poverty and malnutrition. WFP operates from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East to Latin America and Asia & the Pacific.

WFP’s food assistance reaches about 90 million people in 80 countries. Belgium’s yearly contribution to WFP amounts to approximately € 14 million. Apart from funding WFP Operations, Belgium also finances Junior Professional Officers (JPO’s) and thanks to Belgian funding WFP has been able to strengthen further its current work on local and regional purchases.

With the support of the Belgian people, WFP is able to make a difference as becomes clear from the stories below:
Mozambique

The national average in Mozambique of the HIV/AIDS adult rate stands at 13-20 percent, according to UN-AIDS statistics. The number of orphans aged 0-17 due to HIV/AIDS is estimated to be 510,000. One of them is nineteen year-old Florinda Rafael, she has been taking on a lot of responsibility in the past five years.

Soon after her fourteenth birthday, both of her parents died, after long bouts with illness. Florinda was left with five younger siblings, two boys and three girls. «I felt abandoned,» she remembers, «and I didn’t know what to do.»

Desperate, Florinda sought help from a nearby orphan’s centre called Khanimambo, located on the outskirts of Mozambique’s capital Maputo. «Khanimambo saved our lives,» she says. «We came here with nothing and they gave us food, household supplies and an education.» Florinda was determined to keep her family together and Khanimambo provided the support she needed to do it.

Khanimambo was established in response to the growing number of orphans during Mozambique’s civil war. The war is over now, but the number of orphans in Mozambique – estimated at 1.6 million – continues to grow, largely due to the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS.

Khanimambo provides food, schooling and vocational training for 231 orphans and vulnerable children. In addition to on-site primary education, children at Khanimambo learn tailoring, carpentry and hairstyling. Florinda and two of her sisters are learning skills to become hairdressers and run their own salons.
WFP supports Khanimambo with food assistance and has contributed tools and supplies for the vocational school. The food support means more than just full stomachs for a day – WFP’s ongoing support to orphan centres in Mozambique is an investment in the future of the country itself. Making food available in safe and productive environments like Khanimambo ensures that the most vulnerable children will continue to come and participate in educational opportunities instead of resorting to risky behaviours like begging and prostitution on the streets of Maputo.

More than just the food and education, Khanimambo’s greatest contribution is the hope it gives to the children it serves. «I plan to open and manage my own salon one day,» Florinda says with confidence. Considering the determination she has shown in bringing up her family, it is easy to believe her.

In other cases, orphans who find new homes with extended families are often the last to be fed and the first to be taken out of school. The result: an increasing number of undernourished and under-educated young people.

WFP uses food aid to invest in their future in a variety of ways. For instance, (aids) orphans can be received by relatives thanks to take home rations of the WFP. These are food packages that orphan children give to the host family, providing it with an extra source of income instead of burdening it with another mouth to feed. It offers those children the chance to find a warm home, with relatives.
DR Congo

With the support of the Belgian government, WFP targets the most vulnerable populations in the DRC. In a country affected since more than a decade by the violence of various militia groups, where tens of thousands of people have fled their homes and are living either in camps or with host families.

Malnutrition rates average from 10-20%, and many people eat just one meal a day. Through general food distributions as well as targeted programmes, WFP provides life-saving assistance to the most needy in the east, including malnourished women and children and returnees who find themselves with few or no resources to begin their lives again.

«This food is our life-line» says 52 year old Stephany who was obliged to flee with her family after five men broke into her home one night and raped her.

She is now living with her daughter and her daughter’s family. The food she receives from WFP is divided between the 16 people that share the same house.

«If security returns, we will go home to our farm and fields», she says. «But at the moment it is not safe even during the day. There is nothing left there anyway, since the militia and army have harvested it all for themselves». 

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If you wish to learn more about WFP or should you wish to contribute to fighting hunger - you will find all the information you need on [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org).

Or you can download WFP’s free educational video-game Food Force. This game has been developed specifically to help children (between 8 and 13 years of age) learn about the fight against world hunger. It is the first humanitarian educational video game on the subject of world hunger and the work that goes into feeding people.

Food Force is available as a free Internet download from [www.food-force.com](http://www.food-force.com).
Emergency situations can have either a natural (hurricanes, floods or earthquakes) or a human (civil troubles and war) origin.

Rural populations in the developing world are often those who are most vulnerable to natural disasters and conflicts. As their communities generally depend mainly on agriculture as well as on other similar activities for their food security and means of subsistence, the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is crucial to emergency interventions and rehabilitation efforts in the area of agriculture, stock farming, fishery etc.

In case of emergency and post-disaster situations, the work of the FAO focuses on the protection and rehabilitation of the agricultural means of subsistence. The interventions of the FAO are aimed at helping beneficiaries to depend no longer on direct food aid or any other form of assistance, by helping them restart as soon as possible local food production. The emergency and rehabilitation programmes of the FAO help vulnerable households to become rapidly self-sustaining, so that they do not need further emergency aid interventions and do not have to make use of hazardous strategies such as selling their goods, being forced to migrate or even prostitute themselves in order to be able to survive.
The FAO currently has a budget of 500 million US dollars for its emergency and rehabilitation programmes, which are carried out in more than 40 countries and regions facing a dramatic food and agricultural crisis. These interventions make it possible to provide assistance to millions of vulnerable farmers, as well as to their families and communities.

**Burundi**

The agricultural input (package) delivered by the FAO within the framework of a programme funded by the Belgian government allowed me to restore the traditional production mechanisms, after a 10-year stay in the refugee camp Mutabira in Tanzania, claimed approximately fifty-year-old Mathias Bandyambona.

Farmer Mathias Bandyambona and his wife and three daughters recovered their 60 ares of land, 10 ares of which in marshland that has been rehabilitated with the help of the FAO. «My whole family sought exile in Tanzania following the civil war in 1993 during which my two eldest sons were killed. When repatriated in June 2008, we went back to our farm in the Community of Gishubi/Gitega. In the return kit that was made up by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, we found 20 gr horticultural seeds as well as 2 hoes delivered by the FAO.»
While waiting for a supplementary FAO funding for sowing food crops, I have asked my whole family to give me a hand with the horticultural seeds and, especially, to make good use of the two hoes by doing even some work for the neighbours, also. This enabled us to put some money aside and benefit for a longer time from the food provided by the World Food Programme.

Rediscovering the taste of *lenga lenga* (amaranth) and of cabbage filled my daughters with joy. Even if the first season harvest turned out to be disappointing, the second season harvest was so good that I could send my eldest daughter back to school and, even more important, that I was able to generate enough money to buy a pig.

Although I am fully aware that the FAO provides assistance to all the vulnerable members of all the communities in the country, a little supplementary boost would enable me to recover most of the means of subsistence I had before our forced exile."
Mohammad Ehtisham is an orphan and disabled 18-year-old boy. His father died three years ago and since then he and his mother are taking care of their six-member family. Their total landholding is 0.3 hectares; however, owing to a shortage of family labour, they are only able to cultivate 0.1 hectares. Ehtisham’s mother added that it was the first time in three years, after her husband’s death, that cultivated their land for which she credited FAO’s support. She further anticipated an increase in production from 280 to 320 kg from the same piece of land to 400 to 600 kg. She identified quality of seed and use of fertilizers as the main reasons for the expected increase. She argued that they have always used fertilizers, but it only included urea fertilizers, which was also used in lesser quantity. It was the first time they have used DAP, which has shown positive results.
If you have enough food to eat, you will survive. If you also have an income, you will live. Thousands of farmer households in the south can only dream of education, health care or a decent roof over their heads. *Vredeseilanden* makes an attempt to change things by supporting partner organisations in 13 countries, enabling family farmers and women farmers to become sufficiently strong at the local level to play a role on both the domestic and international market.

**Strive together for more local purchases**

Vredeseilanden and the food aid unity of the DGDC work hand in hand in order to further develop the economic position of farmers and women farmers in the Congolese province of North Kivu. Together, they try to achieve that these farmers are allowed to deliver food to the UN World Food Programme. Muhindo Bunambo is one of these proud farmers: «The first order of maize meal has been delivered, a new order of beans now is on its way.»
In the region of North Kivu that is suffering from political unrest, it is difficult for farmers to commercialise their agricultural activities. Amidst the violence, they have been victimised twice. The first time, because the military and social conflict caused a dramatic fall in their standards of living, and the second time because farmers and women farmers had difficulties in selling their products on the markets.
The local purchase of food can offer solutions. The DGDC had a study carried out into the purchase possibilities in the region, and it took two members of staff to the headquarters of the World Food Programme in Rome in order to plead the advantages of local purchases.

«With the World Food Programme now purchasing local food too, we continue to play a social and economic role as farmers», says Muhindo Bunambo of the farmer organisation Coocenki, who manages the store where maize and beans are brought to. «A delivery of 150 tonnes of maize meal meant a big organisational challenge. Bring together the maize of many small farmers is one thing, mill it is the next obstacle. There are hardly any solid and big engines available. But with a lot of hard work, we succeeded in meeting the delivery. The next delivery of 850 to 1000 tonnes of beans is now ready.»
The biggest technical problem is having the maize milled. The DGCD agreed to tackle this issue and to fund two new mills. As a consequence, the price for milling maize will fall in the entire province, and so will the price on the local market. The draining of marshland is also planned and the construction of a number of roads will be backed. A good infrastructure is still a big problem for the farmers in Kivu, because they need roads to bring their products to town in order to sell them.

As a result of the development of these commercial activities, Muhindo and some 700 other farmers have an income again, and now can dream of a future.

More info on: [www.vredeseilanden.be](http://www.vredeseilanden.be).