

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Developing agriculture in order to support humanitarian efforts

Student Officer: Umut Mutlu

Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

Increasing conflicts and disasters around the globe lead to a hobble in providing humanitarian necessities to all. This hobble mostly comes in the form of food insecurity and poverty. One of the most fundamental sources of overcoming this struggle is agriculture. If implemented correctly, it can optimize the usage of resources, fulfill human basic needs such as food, and build the foundation for sustenance and industrialization. Its importance can be highlighted by an estimation that has been made by the World Bank stating that the development in agriculture aims to feed about 10 billion people by 2050 (World Bank, 2024).

Contemporary events all around the globe, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine since 2014, the war in Gaza, the post-COVID-19 period, global warming, etc, have detrimental effects that hindered the development of agriculture. The major concerns of agriculture as of 2025 are resource shortage, urbanization, soil erosion, cost, irrigation problems, rising demand, and labor force (Robinson). All of these problems created major setbacks and delayed the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Goals created by the United Nations, which were originally aimed to be worked on heavily by 2030. The underlined goal related to this issue is “no hunger”.

List of countries that are affected most by hunger includes the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, The Sahel Region, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Northern Ethiopia, and Haiti (World Food Programme, 2023), while the top 4 agriculturally producing countries are China, the United States, India, and the Russian Federation (not in order) (Simpson).

The Economic and Social Council’s utmost duty is to maintain and secure the economic well-being of a nation. This agenda item will especially focus on achieving this via agricultural development. Ultimately, because of the shared resources, collaboration between the Member States is crucial and emphasized in tackling this issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Agriculture: According to the dictionary, agriculture is defined as the cultivation of the land, production of crops, rearing of livestock, and, to varied degrees, the processing and marketing of the final goods (Merriam-Webster). It is a versatile field that provides material, employment, food security, and etc. to a nation, and it is the top livelihood source for most countries.

Livelihood: Livelihood is defined as “means of support or subsistence” (Merriam-Webster). It is essential for a country to provide and maintain its citizens’ livelihoods to reach prosperity. In this agenda item, the livelihood is mostly sustained via agriculture.

Agriculturally Producing Countries: Agriculturally producing countries are the ones that support their economy and provide livelihood through the production of goods and services from agriculture. These countries rely on international trade networks and free trade policies to export agricultural products and import all other needs.

Humanitarian Efforts: Actions that are taken upon to provide for a human to sustain a life and, overall help the ones in need. It includes everything from sending humanitarian aid to an area after a conflict to supporting Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) to end poverty and food insecurity.

Food Insecurity: Food insecurity is the inability to reach to a regular food source to maintain their health or living. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food insecurity has varying levels, dependent on the varying access to food. This can be caused by various reasons such as, but not limited to, lack of resources, conflicts, poverty, etc. ([FAO](#))



Picture 1: FAO's Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) ([FAO](#))

Sustainable Agriculture: According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), sustainable agriculture is a farming method that protects the environment by allowing the sources to be sustained for the future ([USDA](#)). It is a crucial term for this chair report since sustainability is one of the key solutions to the agricultural problems; making it vital for development.

Subsistence agriculture: Farming or a system of farming that provides all or almost all the goods required by the farm family, usually without any significant surplus for sale (Merriam-Webster). Subsistence agriculture has been used for many years as the foundation of many poverty alleviation strategies, as it provides a safety net for food-price shocks and for food security.

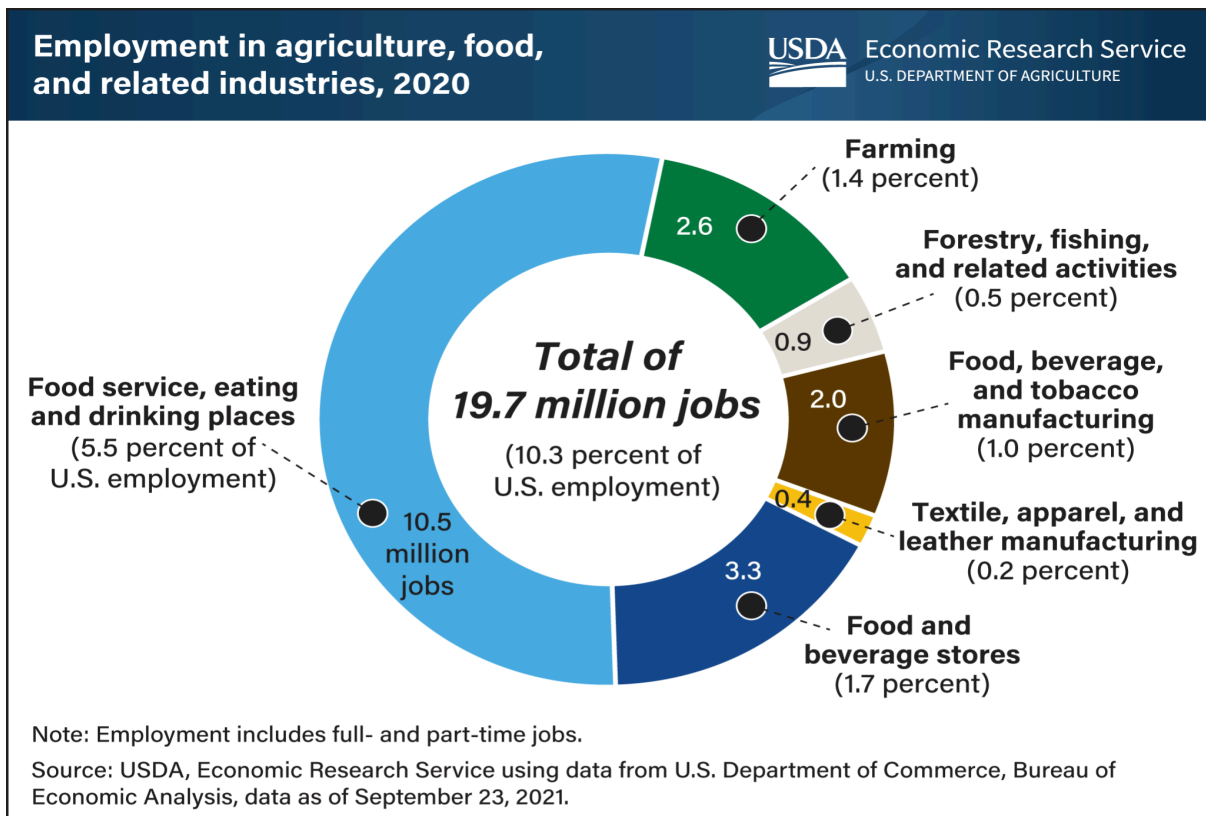
Cash-crop Dependency Curse: This phenomenon occurs when poor countries prioritize cash crops over food production, leading to limited economic diversification and making the country vulnerable to fluctuations in the food market.

General Overview

Agricultural Opportunities and Problems

Economies that are dependent solely on agriculture are the ones that take the most hit from a soil crisis. This can be caused by the increasing price of agricultural products due to conflicts. This is one of the main reasons Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) progress their economies at a lower rate. Their economy relies on agriculture due to the abundance of rural areas. This causes a major disruption in economic growth with the slightest of agricultural problems. The majority of the people who are food insecure living in rural areas can be shown as evidence for this claim. In 2022, approximately 2.4 billion people were categorized as food insecure ([UN, 2023](#)).

The representative of Nepal stated, while talking about LEDCs, “About two-thirds of people facing extreme poverty in the world are workers and families in the agriculture sector” ([UN, 2023](#)). This emphasizes the impact of the deficiency of agriculture on agriculturally dependent countries. In addition to this, agriculture not only provides food supply, but it also creates employment opportunities for most countries. This rate is much higher in LEDCs compared to more developed countries (MEDCs). For example, while Vietnam’s representative stated that 32 percent of the population’s employment comes from agriculture, thus highlighting the importance of sustainable agriculture for economic growth ([UN, 2023](#)), this rate is only 10.3 percent in the United States ([USDA, 2021](#)). Ultimately, it can be said that if a country is dependent on agriculture both for the economy and employment, then agricultural development is mandatory for an overall economic development.



Picture 2: United States agriculture-related jobs vs. total employment ([USDA, 2021](#))

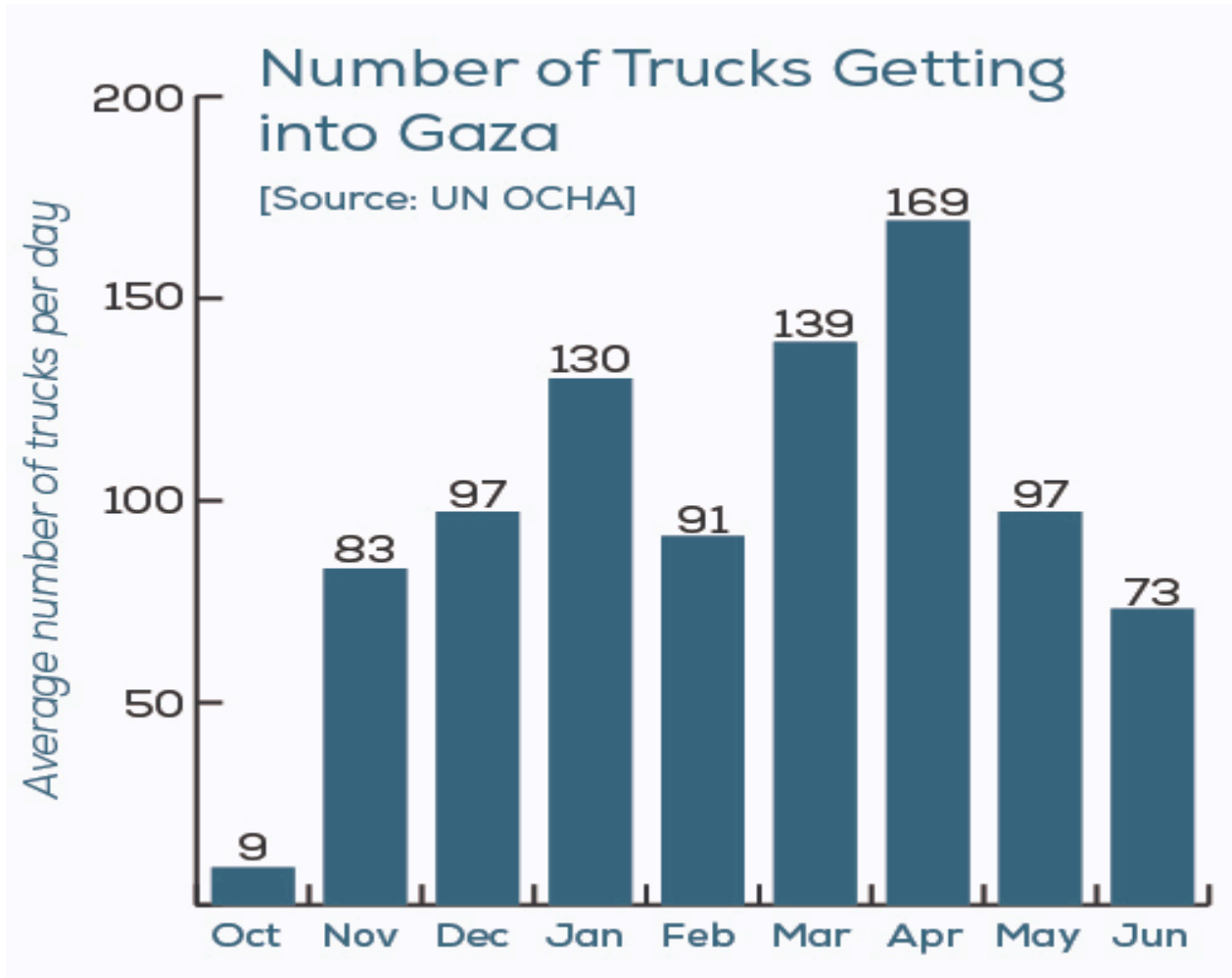
Humanitarian Deficiencies and Current Conflicts

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is one of the prime examples of how a war can directly affect the global food market due to a decrease or inaccessibility in agricultural production. After the invasion of Russia, Ukraine’s grain production decreased by 29 percent (EU, 2024). This caused a disruption in the overall grain trade in the world, depriving most countries of a consistent food source, further fueling food insecurity. The chart below shows the global price of grain throughout the years. This situation emphasizes the importance of development in agriculture to further prevent this issue. The Ukrainian agriculture will be further explained later in the report.



Picture 3: Global Grain Prices from 2021 to 2023 (EU, 2024)

Additionally, one of the most recent conflicts is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict had disastrous effects, causing over 46 thousand deaths. According to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), around 1.9 million people, which adds up to almost 90 percent of Gaza’s population, were displaced due to war and still face food insecurity (CFR, 2025). As a counter-action, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) sent approximately 7 thousand trucks worth of aid to the people in Gaza (UNWRA, 2025). These aids involve several essentials, from food to clothing. This is an example of how agriculture can provide essential human needs to prevent vital problems. While agriculture supplies raw materials for the clothing industry, supporting the clothing aid, it supplies crops, grains, and etc, to produce food to eliminate food insecurity. Even though these aids helped thousands of people in Gaza, there are still a lot of people who are not able to access these aids. The chart below shows the number of aid entering Gaza through the months. It is stated that these numbers are not enough. In order to overcome this struggle, the optimum solution is to develop the already existing, but disturbed, agricultural production. This will be further elaborated in the “possible solutions” part.



Picture 4: Number of aid getting into Gaza throughout months from october 2023 - June 2024 ([Anera, 2024](#))

Effects of Global Warming on Agriculture

Global warming has different types of effects on agriculture depending on the temperature. While higher temperatures speed up the crops' development process, which leads to a decrease in the amount of produced grains, it also increases evaporation, causing crops to lose moisture, which overall, leads to a decrease in the production of agricultural goods ([International Monetary Fund, Cline](#)). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also states that countries closer to the equator will feel the detrimental effects of global warming on their agriculture more than others.

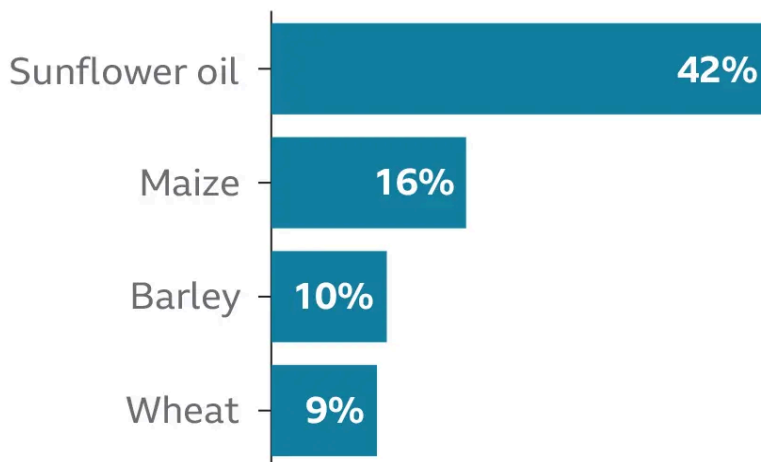
Additionally, it is foreseen that food demand will triple by 2080, which leads to an increase in concerns because, opposite to public perception, it is stated that technological developments will not have a sufficient impact to reverse the issue ([IMF, Cline](#)).

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Ukraine

Being one of the top agricultural exporters in the world makes Ukraine more sensitive to the development of agriculture. Ukraine’s main concern regarding this issue is the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian Conflict. A disruption in agriculture does not only harm Ukraine but also harms countries all around the world because according to the EU, Ukraine was one of the top suppliers of agricultural exports consisting of “world’s largest exporter of sunflower oil (50% of world exports), the third largest one of barley (18%), the fourth largest one of maize (16%) and the fifth largest one of wheat (12%). In 2021, Ukraine exported cereals worth almost \$12 billion (about €11.5 billion)” ([EU, 2024](#)).

% share of global exports, 2019



Source: Our World in Data, UN Food and Agriculture Organization



Picture 5: Ukraine’s percentage of global exports in 2019 ([BBC](#))

Russian Federation

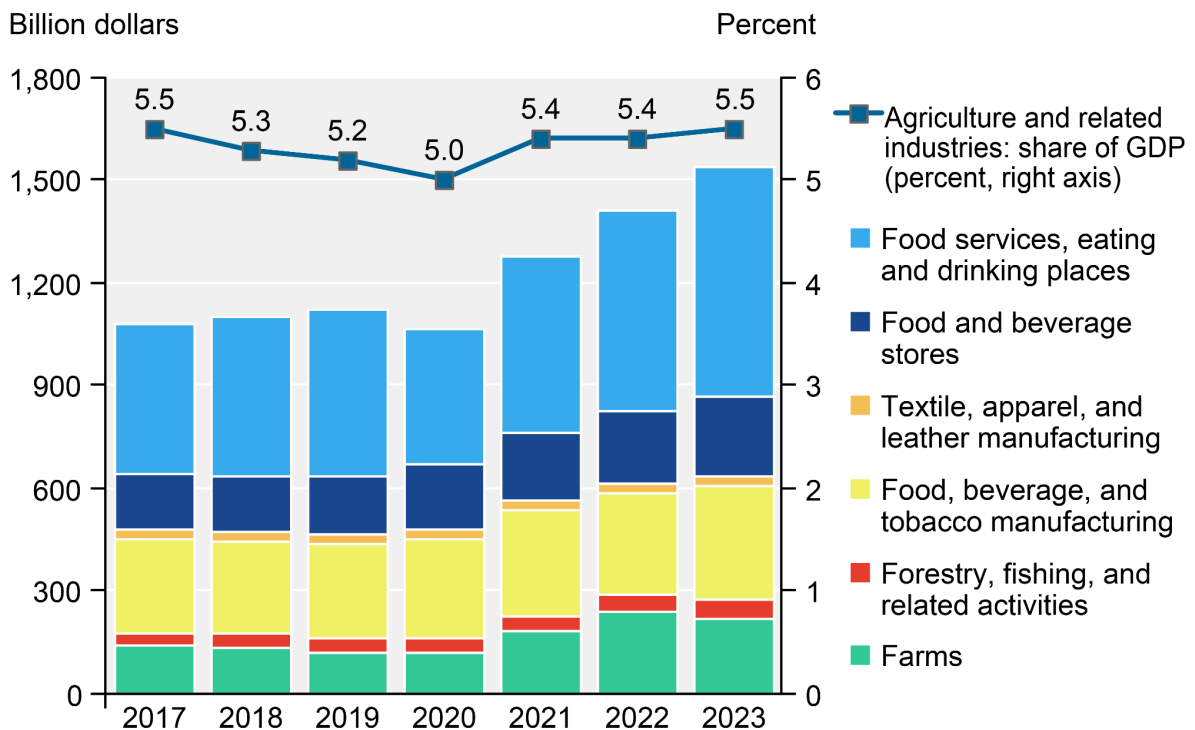
Despite the majority of unproductive soils, agriculture plays a crucial role in Russia’s economy. It provides approximately 25 percent of the total production output and employment ([FAO](#)). The Russian Federation mostly uses its grain production to feed its livestock ([FAO](#)). Currently, the Russian Federation is also dealing with food insecurity, even though it is not so severe. One of Russia’s current concerns is developing its agriculture to benefit from its rural areas. With this development they can further provide for their people, increasing the humanitarian efforts. The main problem with investing in rural areas is that people eventually flee those areas due to them not being “liveable”, thus crops stay unattended and ultimately go to waste. Another problem in agriculture is

that it increasing the prices of production materials such as fertilizer. High prices of these products deter the farmers from farming. The government can either provide subsidies to overcome this struggle or commit to agricultural development.

United States

Being one of the world’s largest agricultural exporters, the United States has built a highly developed agricultural sector that is a cornerstone of global food security. Advanced production techniques and robust infrastructure enabled U.S. farmers to form backbone of the American economy which is evidenced by the fact that in 2023, agriculture-related organizations and products had a share of approximately \$1.537 trillion in the U.S.’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (USDA, 2024), which made up roughly 5.5% of its whole GDP. The fact that the U.S. agricultural exports are valued at around \$174 billion in 2023 also underscores the U.S.’s importance in feeding the international market and helping food security (USDA, 2025). However, recent challenges raised by the current Trump administration and circumstances such as trade disputes, defunding of USAID, global warming, and changing federal policies continue to shape the sector and the rising uncertainties with realignments and evolving new world order highlight possibility of a breakaway from the old liberal world order as many are accustomed to being part of.

Value added to U.S. GDP by agriculture and related industries, 2017–23



Note: GDP = Gross Domestic Product.
 Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Value Added by Industry, September 26, 2024 release.

Picture 6: Shares' of Industries to United States Economy (USDA, 2024)

Brazil

Brazil mainly follows an agricultural policy called the *Agricultural Plan (Plano Safra)*. This plan holds an important place for Brazil's sustainable development, credit lines, and finance for agriculture as the programme offers subsidized loans to support both family farmers and larger businesses (Agroicone). As Brazil is one of the world's largest agricultural producers and exports, as it is leader in production of sugar, coffee, and soybeans, and with agricultural economy making around 26.57% of the whole GDP, *Plano Safra* plays an important role in ensuring financial stability and productivity of the farmers and thus country as a whole (USDA). *Plano Safra* highlights the roles government could play in stabilizing the markets in case of instabilities and both external and internal disturbances.

https://agroicone.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ENG-Agroicone_Breve-Analise_Plano-Safra-2024-2025.pdf

https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Brazilian%20Economic%20and%20Agricultural%20Overview%20_Sao%20Paulo%20ATO_Brazil_01-25-2022.pdf

Brazilian Production and Export Figures for Major Commodities for MY 2021/22					
Commodity	Rank in Production		Rank in Exports		Brazil/World Prod.
Sugar	1	36 MMT	1	26 MMT	20%
FCOJ (65 Brix eq.)	1	967,000 MT	1	1.0 MMT	57%
Coffee	1	56.30 MBags	1	33.22 MBags	34%
Soybeans	1	144 MMT	1	94 MMT	38%
Beef	2	9.70 MMT CWE	1	2.65 MMT CWE	17%
Chicken	2	14.72 MMT	1	4.18 MMT	15%
Corn	3	118 MMT	2	43 MMT	10%
Pork	3	4.45 MMT CWE	3	1.38 MMT CWE	4%
Cotton	4	13.20 MMT	2	8.30 MMT	11%

Picture 7: Brazilian Prduction and Export Figures (USDA/PSD Online, 2021)

European Union (EU)

The European Union plays a vital part in supporting agriculture to enhance food security and humanitarian efforts all around the world. The European Union is the world's largest humanitarian donor as it provides substantial funding, totaling €11.57 billion from 2021 to 2027, for food security programmes and humanitarian relief efforts through the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). The European Union is also focused on European integration on sustainable agricultural production through the European Commission's *Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)*, which influences global food security as it

incentives rural and agricultural development. The European Union also plays a vital role in sustainable and climate-friendly agricultural development through its funding and incentives.

China – People’s Republic of

China’s agricultural policy, as it is primarily outlined by the annual policy blueprint named *Central Document No. 1*, is mainly focused on agricultural and rural development and the stated document highlights the central government’s commitment to ensuring food security and development of rural areas (USDA). China’s grain output reached a record high of 706.5 million metric tons, accounting for almost a quarter of the whole world’s grain production, and being the world’s largest rice, wheat, and other vegetables its position of being one of the most vital players in the agriculture industry is undeniable (Reuters). To support and stabilize its agricultural sector, the Chinese government has implemented various measures amid increasing tensions and changing world dynamics such as increasing grain stockpiling and rural revitalization plans.

India

As one of the world’s largest agricultural producers and exporters, India has long secured its position as the leading producer of staple crops such as rice and wheat, as well as key commodities for the industrialized world, such as spices and cotton. The agricultural sector in India contributes roughly to 15-18% of its whole GDP, highlighting the importance of the sector not just for domestic food security for a country with a population over 1.4 billion but also economic stability overall (World Bank). With them following a comprehensive agricultural policy framework that combines various policies aimed at enhancing sustainable development and financial stability for its farming community, India highlights the vital role of government policies in bolstering the productivity and resilience of the agricultural sector.

Syria

Historically, Syria’s economy was deeply rooted in the agricultural industry. Prior to the civil war, the agricultural sector was one of the cornerstones of Syria’s economy, accounting for roughly 20% of its GDP (add source). The country was renowned for its production of cereals, cotton, olives, and a variety of fruits, which were not only vital for local food security but also formed a significant portion of its exports. With Syria being in a region where the Neolithic Revolution took place, possessing fertile lands, and having to access vital water resources such as the Euphrates and the Orontes, agricultural development and success seemed on grasp of reach. However, as a result of the Arab Spring, which began in 2010 with the self-immolation of a Tunisian vendor, the country collapsed into a fourteen-year-long civil war that is still ongoing to this date. In just two years, the country’s GDP shrank to one half of what it was in 2011, and cumulative GDP losses between 2011-2016 were estimated to be \$226 billion, about four times that of Syria’s GDP in 2010 (World Bank). The ongoing conflict in the region has not only devastated Syria’s infrastructure but also undermined its agricultural base, which has been for so many millennia the pillar of economic stability and rural livelihood of the

people inhabiting the region. Few of the problems the country is facing nowadays makes an example of other countries suffering from food insecurity all across the globe: destruction of infrastructure by war, displacement of rural communities, loss of financial support and credit due to collapse of governmental institutions, market distributions and trade barriers, and mined farmfields poses great threat to the rural communities' revitalization.

Timeline of Events

10,000 BC	The Neolithic Revolution, where the transition from nomadic hunting and gathering to settled agriculture took place
9000 BC	Domestication of Wheat and Barley, where early farmers in the Mesopotamia began cultivating wheat and barley that paved the way for settled societies
4000-3000 BC	Development of Irrigation and Canal Networks in Mesopotamia, which paved the way for the first states to be formed
800-900 AD	Medieval Three-Field System in Europe, improved soil fertility and boosted production
1492	The Columbian Exchange took place with the first voyage of Christopher Columbus which resulted in the widespread transfer of crops and livestock between the New and the Old World, that reshaped global agriculture
1600-1700 AD	The British Agricultural Revolution, where many innovations in farming techniques, crop rotation, and selective breeding increased agricultural productivity
1910s	The Haber-Bosch Process allowed mass production of synthetic fertilizers, which resulted in a dramatic increase in food production which modern society is built upon
1970s-present	Emergence of Sustainable and Organic Farming Movements
1900s-present	Agricultural Biotechnology
October 16 1945	Establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
6 December 1951	The International Plant Protection Convention
1961	Establishment of the World Food Programme
10 September 1998	The Rotterdam Convention

29 June 2004	Implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
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UN Involvement

Food and Agriculture Organization

Since its establishment in 1945, the Food and Agriculture Organization, also known as FAO, has worked to develop sustainable agriculture and end food insecurity. Some of their projects include:

- Action Against Desertification: The ongoing project started in 2020 with the aim of saving Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific from desertification. The actions taken in the project include land restoration, capacity improvement, and encouraging non-timber forest products ([FAO](#)).
- Adapting irrigation to climate change (AICCA): The project's mission is to develop agriculture by improving its irrigation system so that Africa, especially West and Central Africa, can share its water resources equally and effectively ([FAO](#)). The project is still being worked on.

World Food Programme

World Food Programme, also known as WFP, is an organization that works under the UN with the aim of preventing hunger, and food insecurity for every citizen around the world. Currently, it serves over 120 countries. It has multiple methods to reach its aim including but not limited to, early-warning systems, and a global footprint. According to their reports, they mostly deal with the post-conflict zones since 60 percent of the world's hunger, is created by armed conflicts ([WFP](#)). They are also working on finding a method to sustain agriculture and food security despite the harmful effects of global warming.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

The International Fund for Agricultural Development, also known as IFAD, can be simply explained as a UN agency with the aim of supporting rural areas and farmers financially to help them develop agriculture ([IFAD](#)).

Relevant UN Documents

Agriculture development, food security, and nutrition, 17 December 2021 (A/76/222)

International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development, 25 September 2024 (A/79/369)

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, 1 May 2024 (A/79/78)

Eradicating rural poverty to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 17 December 2021 (A/76/219)

Assistance to the Palestinian people, 20 May 2024 (A/79/85)

Agricultural technology for sustainable development, 19 December 2019 (A/74/215)

The right to food, 17 December 2018 (A/73/171)

Treaties and Events

The International Plant Protection Convention

The International Plant Protection Convention, hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization, sets regulations to ensure the safe transportation of plants and plant-based goods worldwide. This way, it aims to prevent any transportation-related disease that may contaminate the plant which can lead to health risks and food insecurity.

The Rotterdam Convention

The Rotterdam Convention is about inspecting the safety of chemical products which is used in agriculture to ensure the hygiene and health of the crops. It works collaboratively with the United Nations Environment Programme. The information collected from the convention is shared among member nations for the transparency of international trade.

Implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is about the sustainability of agriculture. It is also a medium used by governments and farmers to share their resources to further develop their agricultural system. Even though the treaty was signed in 2001, it was implemented in 2004.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

It is essential to highlight that almost every solution that was recommended to tackle the issue has not been either applicable or sustainable. For example, FAO's Action Against the Desertification Project (mentioned in the UN Involvement section of the report) was not attainable and did not make a noticeable difference since its first implementation. Its failure can be assumed to not having enough funding to restore all the deserted land and insufficient labor force and knowledge to turn the restored land into a productive agriculture field. Or, it can be because of the structure of some soil, which is beyond salvageable.

Another example of previous attempts would include the United Nations' attempt to deliver humanitarian aid to conflict zones, currently to Gaza. Even though this attempt can not be tagged as a “failure” due to the thousands of trucks worth of aid entering the area, it is safe to say that it is insufficient. The United Nations can not find a solution to the aid limit. As the agenda item deals with the development of agriculture to support humanitarian efforts, it is also essential for delegates to find a solution to the aid limit since otherwise, development in agriculture will not have any benefit to post-conflict zones.

Possible Solutions

First and foremost, although it may seem like the most evident solution and unnecessary to include in this research report, advancing technology is the ultimate way of advancing agriculture. In order to make this approach more sustainable, a further proposition would be to inspect the agricultural investments to sustain the development of agriculture. Currently, the misapplication of agricultural systems is the key reason for the development to go in vain. A UN body to provide transparency via regular inspections of these systems or incentivizing more investments on agriculture can be an efficient solution.

Moving on, the other most viable method to improve agriculture is through water. Irrigation is one of the fundamental elements of agriculture thus, its absence not only decreases productivity but eliminates it. Irrigation problems are mostly faced in Africa due to desertification and water shortage. One of the solutions that can be proposed is sharing the water resources among member states. A further solution is to advance the irrigation systems, ensuring that no water goes to waste.

Finally, as it is one of the most current problems in agriculture, protecting agricultural zones during times of conflict and ensuring the protection of agriculture's functionality comes before every other solution. Letting agriculture pause in times of conflict can lead to even further damage than the conflict itself. It is one of the main reasons for food insecurity and hunger around the globe. Overall, protecting the agricultural zones and farmers while supporting production can be the most important solution to this issue.

Notes from the Chair

While writing resolutions, delegates need to consider all kinds of humanitarian efforts. This includes everything from improving food security to providing shelters, but delegates should keep in mind that these improvements should be provided by agriculture and, thus, should find a solution with the aim of developing agriculture. There is a broad spectrum for delegates to choose from and they can be creative as long as they do not lose focus of the agenda item.

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