

# GRÓW

FOOD. LIFE. PLANET.



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# IF THE SYSTEM'S BRÖKEN,

# TOGETHER WE FIX IT

"The world produces enough food to feed everyone."

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2002.1

Yet, one in seven people on our planet go to bed hungry each night.

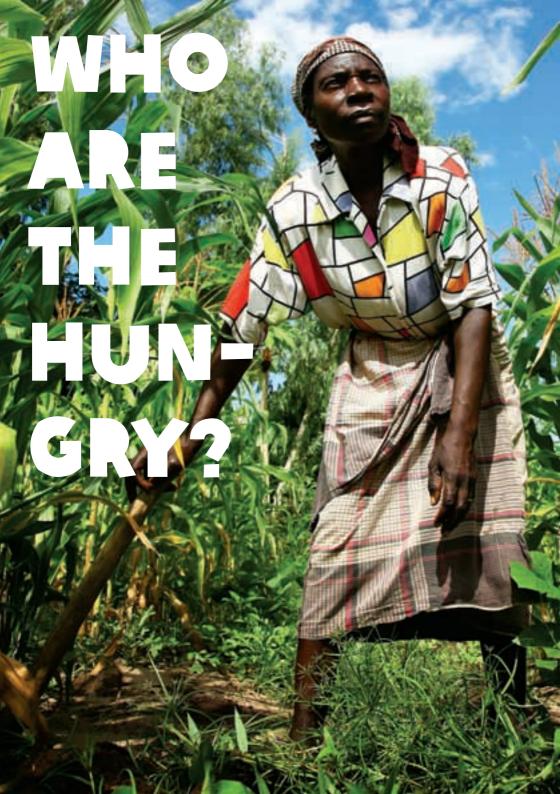
So why does hunger exist in a world with enough food for all?

Because hunger — along with obscene levels of waste and appalling environmental degradation — are by-products of our **broken food system**.

A system under further pressure from extreme weather events, rising food prices and failing production.

Movements to transform our broken food system have sprung up everywhere. From Australia to Bangladesh, people are working together to alter the way we produce, consume and even think about food. Oxfam wants to build on our ongoing work and help grow these movements to foster a consensus for change.

We are at a turning point. Join with us and be part of a future where everyone has enough to eat, always.



# THE PARADOX IN OUR BROKEN FOOD SYSTEM

Understanding **who** is hungry illustrates the abject failure of our current food system.

It is surprising to discover that 80% of the world's hungry people are directly involved in food production.<sup>2</sup>

They tend animals. They cultivate crops on their own small plots of land, or on land rented from

others. In some cases, they also supplement their diet with food from forests and the sea.

The hungry are small-scale food producers.

Paradoxically, they are surrounded by the means to produce and collect food, yet they miss out. Why?

# **CHALLENGE 1:** The reason why small-scale food producers go hungry is that they have been pushed aside by governments and companies for decades.

Even government aid to small-scale food producers declined by up to 77% in real terms between 1996 and 2003.<sup>3</sup>

Small-scale food producers have been pushed aside because of three enduring myths:

# MYTH 1: small-scale food producers are unproductive

Reality: these producers often have low yields because they don't have access to the resources needed to increase production. For example, small farms in Africa use tiny amounts of fertiliser, about one-eighteenth of farms elsewhere. In comparison, many large-scale farmers receive financial assistance through lavish subsidies. As an Australian agriculture minister

once said, "Cows in the European Union receive greater subsidies than these people."<sup>5</sup>

# MYTH 2: small-scale food producers won't adapt

Reality: producers living in poverty don't choose to cling to basic tools and farming practices as their preferred option. They rarely receive support from their governments or the private sector, and are often forced to leave prime agricultural land and fishing areas. Despite this, small-scale food producers are often at the forefront of agricultural and ecological practice, such as developing improved seed varieties and responding to changing weather patterns.



# MYTH 3: small-scale farming is subsistence only

Reality: small farmers in developing countries want to sell their excess produce. So why don't they? Without access to basic storage or refrigeration, and with few transport options, at least one-third of all their food perishes before making it to market. Oxfam's experience shows that small-scale food producers jump at the chance to cultivate and sell excess produce, but are hampered by a lack of the most basic infrastructure.

# The land grab phenomenon

Rather than tackling these myths and supporting small-scale food producers, many governments in developing countries are pushing them off their land and offering it to foreign governments and large corporations at rock-bottom prices.

In 2009 alone, the World Bank estimated that foreign investors acquired long-term rights (for example, 99 year leases) for almost 110 million acres of farming land and water in developing countries.8

The result is that countries rich enough to invest in off-shore land are able to secure food for their own domestic consumption. But this comes at the cost of those in developing countries who have lost their land, contributing to food insecurity and increasing migration to urban slums.



# ... A FUTURE OF M RE, FROM LESS



"The global community faces an enormous challenge to feed itself by the middle of this century as the demand for food increases significantly, perhaps doubling, while our capacity to produce food is constrained by water scarcity, declining arable land, declining nutrient inputs, declining agricultural research and development and deteriorating climatic conditions in key food growing regions of the world."

Australian Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries, 2010. 10

# **CHALLENGE 2:**

On current population and economic trends, global demand for food could increase by 70% by 2050, 11 although some estimates even suggest a doubling of demand. 12 At the same time, the very building blocks of the global food system — crop yields, land, water, fuels and fertilisers — are close to reaching their limits.

# Global crop yields

Previously, rising demand had been surpassed by increased crop yields. But this is unlikely to continue. Global growth in yields averaged 2% per year between 1970 and 1990, but fell to just over 1% between 1990 and 2007. This decline is projected to continue over the next decade <sup>13</sup>

## Arable land

At the same time, arable land per head is decreasing, having almost halved since 1960. A 2011 review by scientists for the British Government advised we should work on the assumption that there is little new land for agriculture. 15

## Fresh water

Water, the lifeblood of agriculture, is scarcer than land. Nearly three billion people live where demand for water outstrips supply. 16 In 2000, half a billion people lived in countries chronically short of water; by 2050 the number will have risen to more than four billion. 17

## Fuels and fertilisers

Our food system depends on fuels to the extent that it takes the equivalent of 60 barrels of oil to produce the amount of food eaten, per year, by the average Australian. But our supply of both fuels and fertilisers is threatened, with prominent Australian scientists noting that we are fast approaching the point where the demand will outstrip the supply of easily accessible fuels and fertilisers. 19

## The oceans

We can't expect our oceans to feed us instead. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, we've probably already reached the maximum potential to catch wild fish from the world's oceans.<sup>20</sup>

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The global food system is experiencing a second price crisis in just three years. In 2008, world food prices spiked dramatically. This pushed more than 100 million people into poverty,<sup>21</sup> before world food prices fell sharply a few months later. Food prices again surged to a new historic peak in February 2011.<sup>22</sup>

"Global food prices are now at dangerous levels, and ... it is already clear recent price rises for food are causing pain and suffering to poor people around the globe."25

Robert Zoellick,
President of the World Bank.

Such price volatility has meant bumper profits for agribusiness firms such as Cargill and Bunge.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, poor farmers can't turn higher prices to their advantage because most buy more food than they can grow, and nearly all lack the resources to turn this threat into an opportunity.

The number of recent price spikes in the global food system begs the question, are markets functioning efficiently? Even officials within the UN are calling for investigation into the possibility that financial speculators are artificially pushing up global food prices.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, the impacts of climate change are gathering pace.



# OUR CLIMATE AND FOOD PRICES

Climate change poses another major threat to food production.

Research has found that countries in sub-Saharan Africa could experience catastrophic declines in crop yields of 20%-30% by 2080 due to climate change, rising as high as 50% in Sudan and Senegal.26

Extreme weather events can wipe out harvests in a stroke, as we learned in Australia when food prices increased after the Queensland floods. The frequency and intensity of these types of events are expected to increase in coming years.

In addition to this, long-term and often quite localised changes are taking place as seasons become more

erratic and we experience increasing unpredictability in rainfall patterns. All are presenting real challenges to farmers, making it harder for them to know when best to sow, cultivate and harvest their crops.27

"Harvests are affected around the world by climate change."

Tony Burke, former Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 2008.28

# BE PART OF A FUTURE ...

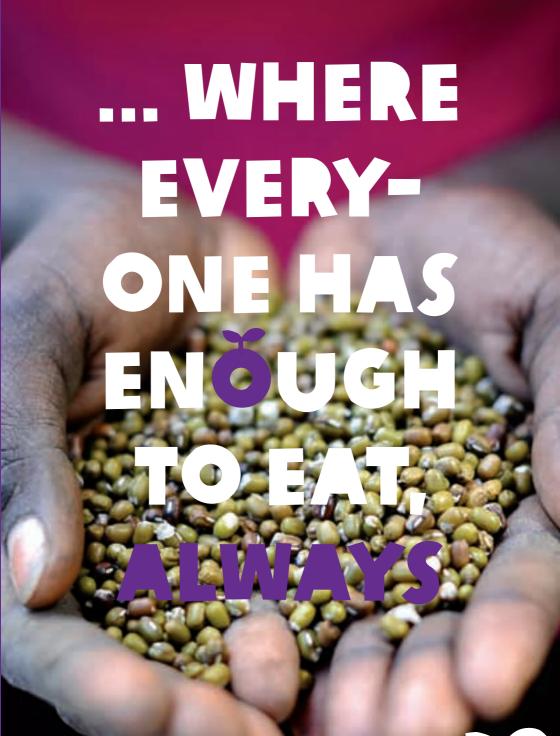
In the struggle to feed their families, women and men living in poverty are too often exploited or marginalised by the huge power imbalances in the food system. But people are fighting back to build a better and fairer world.

Farmer organisations and cooperatives are demanding markets and companies give fairer deals to their members. Women farmers are forming organisations to deal with the particular problems they face. Consumers are influencing company behaviour through their purchasing decisions — such as through the fair trade, organic, or slow food movements — or more actively through consumer campaigns.

Movements to transform our broken food system have sprung up everywhere. From Australia to Bangladesh, more and more people are working together to alter the way we produce, consume and even think about food.

Oxfam is part of that process.

Oxfam has been responding to food crises for nearly 70 years — from Greece in 1942 to Biafra in 1969. Ethiopia in 1984 and Niger in 2005. plus countless other silent disasters that play out beyond the gaze of global media. All have been entirely avoidable — the result of disastrous decisions, abused power, and perverted politics. More recently, Oxfam has found itself responding to growing numbers of climaterelated disasters. Prevention is better than cure. So Oxfam is calling for a new vision and joining with movements across the world to build a future where everyone has enough to eat, always.



# A NEW SY

"Primary producers are the cornerstone of any civilization."

Australian Liberal Party, 2010.29

Our current food system creates hunger in a world with plenty. We must centre a new food system on the needs of the vast majority of the hungry — small-scale food producers.

Simply producing more food, in a way that continues the marginalisation of small-scale food producers, will fail to address the global shame where one in seven go hungry each night. More of the same is not the answer.

## Quick fix: stop land grabs

We must stop governments and investors pushing small-scale producers off their land and offering it to foreign governments and large corporations at rock-bottom prices.

"We must not keep going down the road of land grabs to feed those who can afford it at the expense of those billions who cannot."

Greens Senator Christine Milne, 2010.30

The evidence shows that with the right policy framework, small-scale production can be a route out of poverty and hunger. Yet millions of small-scale producers are currently being forced off their land and into urban slums, looking for work in major cities.



In China, growth in agriculture has had four times the impact on reducing poverty as growth in the manufacturing or service sectors.<sup>31</sup>

We can and must invest in a new food system that prioritises the needs of small-scale food producers in developing countries, giving these women and men a real choice about how they want to earn a living.

Investing in small-scale producers will hit the double target of productivity gains and reductions in hunger.

# Quick fix: tackle waste

Our current food system allows enormous waste. It is estimated that more than 30% of all food is wasted worldwide.<sup>32</sup>

In Australia, where \$5.2 billion in food is wasted each year, 33 consumers and businesses must change their behaviours and practices. In developing countries, where waste is the result of poor storage and transport, governments can urgently increase investment to tackle this problem, and dramatically increase the amount of food available in poor communities.

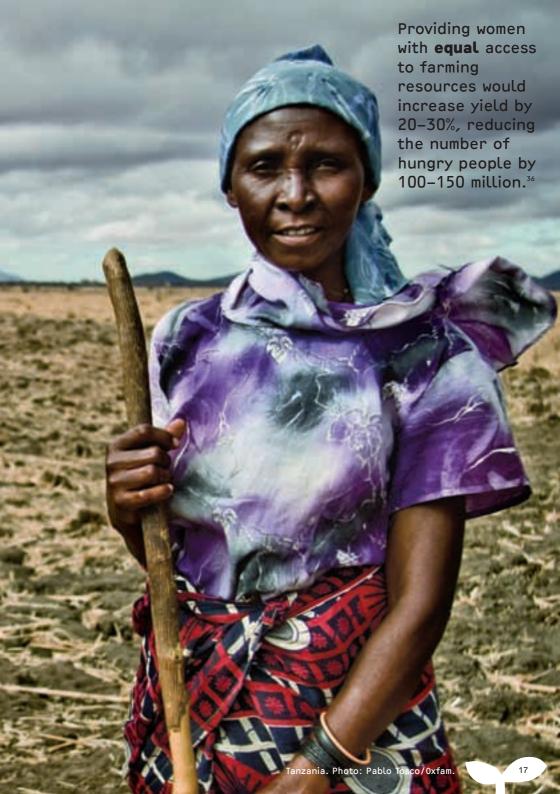
# A NEW FUTURE ... FOR HER

Truly transforming the food system requires a focus on women.

Women make up a large proportion of the population of small-scale farmers, up to 60% in some regions.<sup>34</sup>

However, due to economic, legal and social disadvantage and discrimination, women farmers control less land and livestock and have far less access to improved seed varieties, fertilisers, credit and government agricultural support services.<sup>35</sup>

Such discrimination is a violation of fundamental human rights. It also makes no sense to marginalise a major proportion of food producers. Estimates suggest that simply by providing women small-scale farmers with the same meagre level of access to resources as their male counterparts, they could increase yields on their farms by 20%-30%. This would in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12%-17%.37 If we seriously invested in women small-scale farmers, they would be the driving force, bringing real change to their communities.



# A NEW GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Our current system is buckling under the weight of food price crises.

Recent research undertaken by Oxfam shows that incomes of poor people in developing countries have not kept up with the rapid rise in food costs.

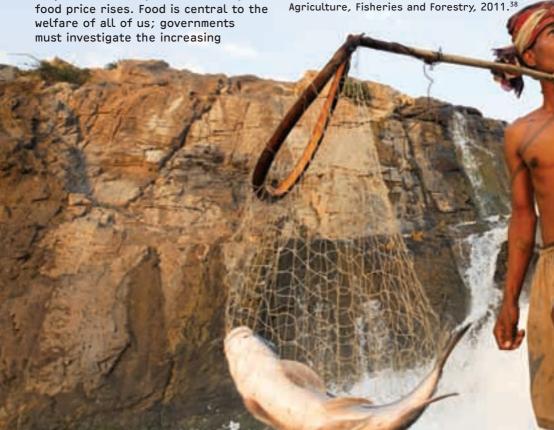
Governments and the private sector need to work to raise incomes to a liveable wage and improve social protection for the hungriest as a matter of urgency.

Governments' top priority must be to respond fast, fairly and effectively to food price rises. Food is central to the criticism of the efficiency of global food markets, and act quickly to resolve problems identified.

There is a global imperative to reduce the risks of future food price shocks and respond more effectively when they occur.

"Australia must play a constructive role in the international debates about global food security."

Senator Joe Ludwig, Minister for



# A NEW ECOLOGICAL

# **FUTURE**

"Put simply, we need to produce more food from the same or reduced land area without damaging the environment and by reducing waste along the food value chain. Increases in food production must be achieved while reducing inputs, particularly fertilisers, and coping with the effects of climate change."

Prime Minister's Science, Engineering

and Innovation Council, 2010,39

We must build solutions towards a new ecological future which can meet the challenge of more, from less. This can be achieved. We can mobilise investment and shift the behaviour of producers, businesses and consumers.

A clear goal is crafting global agreements to equitably distribute scarce resources; a global deal on climate change will be a litmus test of this success.



# LA CAN MAKE GOOD THINGS

We know that creating a future where everyone has enough to eat presents an enormous challenge. It's going to mean changing the beliefs and practices of businesses, governments and most importantly, each of us. Here's how together, we can make it happen.

# How can the Australian Government make good things GROW?

- → Prioritise aid to small-scale food producers, especially women.
- Work to protect the rights of small-scale food producers, especially women, to land and natural resources.
- ➤ Invest in research and development that fosters an ecological approach to agriculture; sustainably using land, water, energy and fertilisers.
- ★ Agree to a global deal on climate change that stops excessive greenhouse gas emissions from devastating food production.
- Address food price volatility by integrating food and social protection priorities within the aid budget, and by championing improved governance at the G20.

# How can Australian business make good things GROW?

- Ensure supply chains enforce the rights of small-scale food producers.
- Commit to living wages to ensure workers don't go hungry as food prices rise.
- Respect the rights of small-scale food producers to land and natural resources.
- → Pioneer a new ecological approach to agriculture; sustainably using land, water, energy and fertilisers, and curbing greenhouse gas emissions.





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Back cover: South Africa.
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# GROW IS A VISION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE.

It starts here, and it starts with all of us. So be part of it. Take the first step now at

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