

# Achieving the G7 Elmau Commitment in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Climate Change

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## KEY MESSAGES

- Hunger levels are rising as a result of worsening conflict, economic downturns from COVID-19, the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather-related events, high food prices, and inflation.
- The need for immediate assistance to respond to the current crises and longer-term investments to address the fundamentals of poverty and low performance in agriculture and food systems are key challenges that need to be addressed in order to end global hunger by 2030.
- Since the G7 Elmau commitment to lift 500 million people out of hunger and malnutrition in 2015, G7 countries have increased their spending on emergency food assistance but have not increased spending for longer-term investments in agriculture and food security.
- For the G7 to meet the Elmau commitment together with other development partners, they need to mobilize an additional USD 14 billion per year on average until 2030, on top of current spending.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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At their summit in Elmau in 2015, G7 heads of state committed to lifting 500 million people out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. This was part of a broader effort, to be undertaken with partner countries and other development partners, to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2).

Since the G7 commitment in 2015, the number of people affected by hunger has risen alarmingly, from 615 million in 2015 to 768 million in 2020 (See Figure 1) (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], World Food Programme [WFP], & World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Unfortunately, since 2015, ongoing conflicts, extreme weather-related events, and economic downturns have stopped progress toward this goal, and the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed more than 10 years of effort.

The situation is not improving. Food prices are high and rising, stocks are declining, and ongoing conflicts are getting worse. Between late 2020 and late 2021, food insecurity escalated significantly in 16 of the 20 countries and territories facing food crises, primarily because of conflict.<sup>1</sup> There is a dual need for both immediate assistance to respond to the current crises and for longer-term investments to address the fundamentals of poverty, and low performance in agriculture and food systems are key challenges that need to be addressed in order to end global hunger.

All this can change. New research confirms that the longer-term problems can be solved in the next decade if action is accelerated. There is a clear consensus and a call to action by the research community on what needs to be done and how much it will cost (including the donor contribution) to end hunger and malnutrition in the long-term and in an environmentally sustainable way (see Chichaibelu et al., 2021; Laborde, Murphy et al., 2020; Laborde, Parent et al., 2020; Program of Accompanying Research for Agricultural Innovation, 2020; FAO et al., 2021; von Braun et al., 2020; Center for Development Research [ZEF] & Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2020).

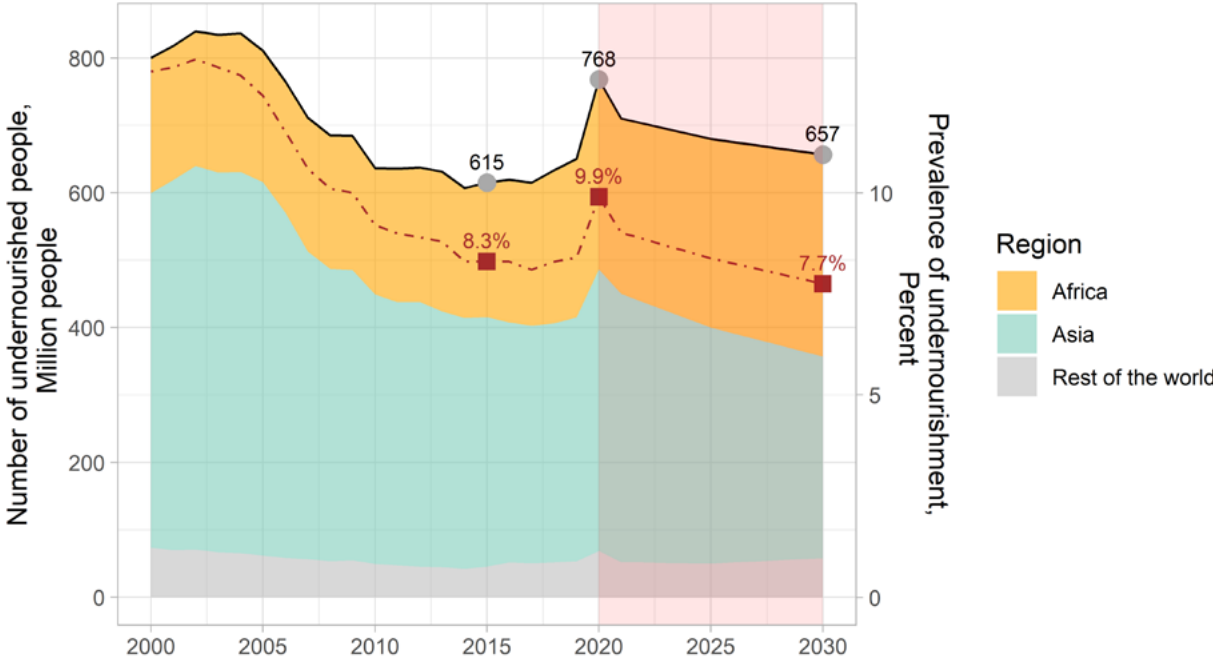
This year, the G7 will once again be held in Elmau, Germany. There is an urgent need to reverse the rise in hunger and get on track to achieve the 2015 Elmau commitment.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Comparable data were available for late 2021 in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria (21 states and the Federal Capital Territory), Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, and Yemen. Data covering mid-2022 were available for Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria (21 states and the Federal Capital Territory).

Hunger has risen from 615 million people in 2015 to 768 million people in 2020, and limited progress will occur by 2030.

**FIGURE 1. PREVALENCE OF UNDERNOURISHMENT AND NUMBER OF UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE BY REGION TILL 2030**



Note: \* 768 million represents the middle point of the range between 720 and 811 million people in 2020.  
 Source: FAO et al., 2021. Projections are consistent with the Ceres3030 modelling framework.

## 2. CONTEXT

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2021 was a year of global summits, decisions, and pledges relevant to achieving SDG 2, the Elmau commitment, and more. They include:<sup>2</sup>

- United Kingdom G7 Presidency—G7 humanitarian and crisis-related compact
- UN Food System Summit (UNFSS)—Science Reader, Commitments Registry, Summit Compendium, and the UN Secretary General’s Chair Summary and Statement of Action of the UNFSS
- UN Committee on World Food Security—Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition
- UN Climate Change Conference—Global Methane Pledge and the Global Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use
- UN Biodiversity Conference coming up in 2022
- Nutrition for Growth Summit

This paper provides policy options for what the G7 can do based on the evidence and research consensus on how much and what action to take—and where to take it—to achieve the Elmau commitment by 2030, while at the same time improving incomes of the poorest and protecting the climate. These investments need to include humanitarian and crisis-related spending, including through the commitments made by the G7 in 2021, as well as investments in peacebuilding in contexts where hunger and famine arise in conflicts.

## 3. G7 AID FLOWS SINCE THE ELMAU COMMITMENT

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Donor spending on agriculture, food security, and nutrition can be calculated in different ways.<sup>3</sup> Using an inclusive definition, G7 countries spend on average USD 17 billion per year (ZEF & FAO, 2020). While this figure shows an increase in the efforts by the G7 to reduce hunger compared to the period before the Elmau commitment, the recent evolution also shows that most of the increase has been oriented toward responding to crises and emergency needs.

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<sup>2</sup> Governments and development banks have also pledged money during these events, including [USD 8.5 billion](#) through the G7 famine prevention and humanitarian crisis compact, [USD 4 billion](#) through the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM for Climate), and [USD 17 billion](#) from the African Development Bank and other institutions.

<sup>3</sup> See discussions in Eber-Rose et al. (2020).

Before the Elmau commitment, donors spent on average USD 3.6 billion per year on emergency food assistance, with the G7 donors spending on average USD 3.1 billion per year.<sup>4</sup> Since the Elmau commitment, donors spent on average USD 5.7 billion per year on emergency food assistance, with the G7 donors spending on average USD 4.5 billion: a 58% increase.<sup>5</sup>

The need for more immediate assistance to respond to humanitarian crises is critical, and the related response by the G7 is appropriate. However, more action is now urgently needed to meet the Elmau commitment and to make the longer-term investments that are needed to address the fundamentals of hunger and poverty; otherwise, the 2030 goal of ending hunger will not be achieved.

In a call to action made in October 2020, the research community agreed that “Donors and affected partner countries must double their investment from now until 2030, and for OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] donors this means a total of about USD 14 billion more per annum” (von Braun et al., 2020, p. 312). The additional USD 14 billion per year is needed for longer-term investments in agriculture and food security, based on the evidence of the most effective interventions.

## 4. WHAT ARE THE EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS?

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The evidence of effective interventions is based on a set of comprehensive and long-term research programs and partnerships to identify high-impact, cost-effective interventions, which will be targeted at the countries that have the greatest need and will be delivered between now and 2030. These interventions will contribute to the Elmau commitment and more, including doubling incomes and productivity of small-scale producers and maintaining agricultural greenhouse gas emissions to reflect the commitments made in the Paris Climate Agreement and the Statement of Action from the UN Food Systems Summit.

The identified low-cost, high-impact interventions include (1) agricultural research and development (R&D), including increasing the adoption of climate-resilient crops, (2) agricultural extension services, (3) vocational training for rural youth, (4) enabling participation in farmers’ organizations, (5) digital agricultural information systems, (6) small-scale irrigation expansion in Africa, (7) improved feed for livestock, (8) economically viable payments for ecosystem services, (9) post-harvest losses reduction interventions along value chains, (10) rural infrastructure, services, and assistance to support small and medium-sized enterprises, and (11) scaling up social protection programs that are responsive to emergencies and strengthen resilience (Laborde, Murphy et al., 2020; von Braun et al., 2020; ZEF & FAO, 2020).

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<sup>4</sup> Average during the periods 2012–2014. Authors’ calculation based on the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee database (n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> Average during the periods 2017–2019. Authors’ calculation based on the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee database (n.d.).

Importantly, the researchers found that it is much more effective to create an integrated portfolio of interventions than to invest in interventions in isolation. Interventions are also more successful if the issue of long-term adoption by farmers is embedded in their design, for example, paying attention to the marketability of a crop and not just climate resilience or resistance to pests. And, given the multiple challenges facing food systems, interventions must achieve multiple and complex objectives, like having instruments that incorporate the three dimensions of sustainability while minimizing trade-offs.

## 5. WHICH ARE THE PRIORITY COUNTRIES?

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As Figure 1 illustrates, when the G7 made the Elmau commitment, two-thirds of the people affected by hunger were in Asia. By 2030, more than half the people affected by hunger will be in Africa. Therefore, Africa is the region with by far the greatest need for additional resources. Some countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Eritrea, will rely on donor support for more than 90% of their public budgets (Laborde, Parent et al., 2020).

## 6. WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR ACTION BY G7 COUNTRIES IN 2022?

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The options below reflect the need both for immediate assistance to respond to the current crises and for longer-term investments to address the fundamentals of poverty and low performance in agriculture and food systems.

1. **Pledge to double G7 aid for longer-term investments in agriculture and food security needed to achieve the Elmau commitment.** For the G7 to meet the Elmau commitment, together with other development partners, they need to mobilize an additional USD 14 billion per year on average until 2030 on top of current spending.<sup>6</sup> To meet this target, G7 countries should ensure that agriculture and food security remain a priority for any additional official development assistance allocated in relation to achieving the 0.7% target of gross national income from the current level of 0.27%.
2. **Commit to investing in more effective and sustainable interventions.** The G7 could commit to investing in the low-cost, high-impact interventions identified by the research community.<sup>7</sup> It could also commit to developing better official development assistance packages based on

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<sup>6</sup> Further information on the breakdown of the G7 share of the total additional annual investment needed is available on request.

<sup>7</sup> See Program of Accompanying Research for Agricultural Innovation (2020), ZEF & FAO (2020), and research by the Scientific Group for the United Nations Food Systems Summit (2021).

multiple interventions to achieve climate mitigation and adaptation outcomes, as well as other social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Innovations were identified as critical for that.<sup>8</sup>

3. **Commit to spending at least half of the additional aid in Africa** in recognition that, by 2030, Africa will have the greatest need because by 2030 more than half the people affected by hunger will be in Africa.
4. **Ensure that other aid finance programs are prioritizing investments in agriculture and food systems as part of the solution**, whether they be for climate change mitigation and adaptation, energy, gender equality and women's empowerment, health, or education.
5. **Scale up efforts to track commitments by assessing collective action and coordinating current and future action.** Tracking and monitoring commitments is necessary but insufficient to achieve the Elmau commitment. G7 countries could go beyond tracking and monitoring commitments to coordinating and assessing collective action.
6. **Actively support** the implementation of related actions that emerged from the UNFSS, such as the [Zero Hunger Coalition](#), the [School Meals Coalition](#), and other UNFSS initiatives by all stakeholders (public, private, civil society, and international organizations) at national and international levels.

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<sup>8</sup> von Braun et al. (2021a).

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