

HAMUN 44

ECOSOC

Topic A:

Food Security and the Future of  
Farming Families



### Letter from the Dais:

My name is Andrei Merkoulov and I am the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) director of the Houston Area Model United Nations (HAMUN). I'm currently working towards an associate's of arts and plan on transferring to the Moody College of Communication at UT Austin to obtain a bachelor's degree in Radio Television Film. This topic will be dealing with the global awareness of food security, whether people obtain the daily nutrition they need, and the future of farming families in terms of sustainable development. I expect those who are involved to utilize and develop leadership, critical thinking, and real-world problem solving skills when addressing this global issue that is prevalent everywhere, especially in African and South Asian areas.

### Committee Background:

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established in 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations (UN), a charter that expressed an obligation to uphold the human rights of citizens and outlined a set of principles to be followed in relation to achieving "higher standards of living," addressing "economic, social, health, and related problems," and "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."<sup>1</sup> The committee's primary purpose is to venture into discussion of international economic and social issues, being the central platform for debate, innovative thinking, and reflection upon sustainable development. ECOSOC was amended once in 1965 and again in 1974 to increase the number of members from 18 to 54, with seats being allocated based upon geographic representation as follows: 14 to Africa, 11 to Asia, 6 to eastern Europe, 10 to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13 to western Europe and other areas. The committee has undergone reforms twice, being in 2006 (A/RES/61/16) and 2013 (A/RES/68/1), in order to strengthen the Council and its working methods, emphasizing the integration and implementation of the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields.<sup>2</sup>

ECOSOC fulfills its mandate through its subsidiary bodies and in consultation of a broad range of civil society organizations (CSOs). More than 3,900 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with consultative status may voice their concerns to the international communities due to their ability to participate in UN conferences, meetings, and special sessions. The consultative status is given by ECOSOC's Committee on NGOs, in which the committee on NGOs directly reports to ECOSOC upon concerns and procedural matters raised by CSOs. ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 of 1996 defines eligibility requirements, principles, procedures, obligations,

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, Christopher N.J. "William H. Fitzpatrick's Editorials on Human Rights (1949)." *William H. Fitzpatrick's Editorials on Human Rights (1949) - Geschichte Menschenrechte*, June 2017, [www.geschichte-menschenrechte.de/schluesstexte/william-h-fitzpatrick-editorials-on-human-rights-1949/](http://www.geschichte-menschenrechte.de/schluesstexte/william-h-fitzpatrick-editorials-on-human-rights-1949/).

<sup>2</sup> "UN Economic and Social Council; Resolutions; Decisions." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/).

responsibilities, and rules for NGOs and the UN to uphold when establishing a consultative relationship. As of the June 2018 session, the Committee on NGOs granted consultative status to 209 NGOs, deferred an additional 223 NGOs for consideration in 2019, and reviewed quadrennial reports.<sup>3</sup>

#### Statement of the Problem:

In 2013, a Special Joint Meeting of the UNs ECOSOC and Economic and Financial Committee (EFC) discussed “Food security and nutrition: Scaling up the global response.” The meeting was organized to promote coordinated international action to address both immediate issue of high food prices and the long-term issues of production, trade, and consumption of food in order to prevent a repeat of the 2008-9 food crisis. Discussion of issues ranged from food security, nutrition to food waste, agricultural production, trade, and climate change as experts of agriculture, food security and nutrition, alongside representatives of Governments identified steps to build a future free of hunger.<sup>4</sup>

Urban sustainability is dependent on ensuring sustainable food security and food production. Over three quarters of the world’s poor live in rural areas, areas which have the highest rates among malnutrition. Due to this, a migration pattern of rural communities has been identified in which poorer communities move into the urban areas, increasing the urban populations. These migrants will remain poor in their informal urban settlements, facing even higher food prices and great challenges in accessing and maintaining food security. Because of the large unemployment and food insecurity among poor urban inhabitants, crime increases as well. The agricultural production on a global scale produces enough food to feed everyone in the world, yet an estimated of 840 million people are food insecure and considered to be undernourished internationally. About 1.2 billion people live in extreme poverty and over 75% of this population resides in rural areas that are primarily dependent upon agricultural production. The high proportion of food insecurity and poor people are subsistence farmers, herders, and fishers. These people are especially prevalent in South Asian and African areas, who are simultaneously called upon to play a key role in strategies to eradicate hunger and address the multitude of challenges over both supply and demand for food. The global prevalence of undernourished people can be seen in Figure 1 shown on the next page, coupling the number of people and percentage of the world’s population together into two individual lines upon the graph.

Sustainable development is not just about the planet, but also the people. This results in five consideration to keep in mind when dealing with food insecurity which include: (1) to recognize food security and good nutrition as a cornerstone of sustainable development, (2) to reduce the use of chemical inputs, make more efficient use of energy, water and natural

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<sup>3</sup> “Economic and Social Council Plenary Background Guide 2019.” *National Model United Nations*, 2018, [www.nmun.org/assets/documents/conferences/ny/ny19-bgg-ecosoc.pdf](http://www.nmun.org/assets/documents/conferences/ny/ny19-bgg-ecosoc.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> “Economic and Social Council.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/ecosoc/food/](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/food/).

resources, and reduce food losses and waste through improved storage facilities and distribution networks, (3) to be conscientious about the smallholder farmers, (4) to broaden rural and urban development policies for sustainable agriculture to work, and (5) to realize that rural economic diversification needs to build on strengthened rural-urban linkages.<sup>5</sup>

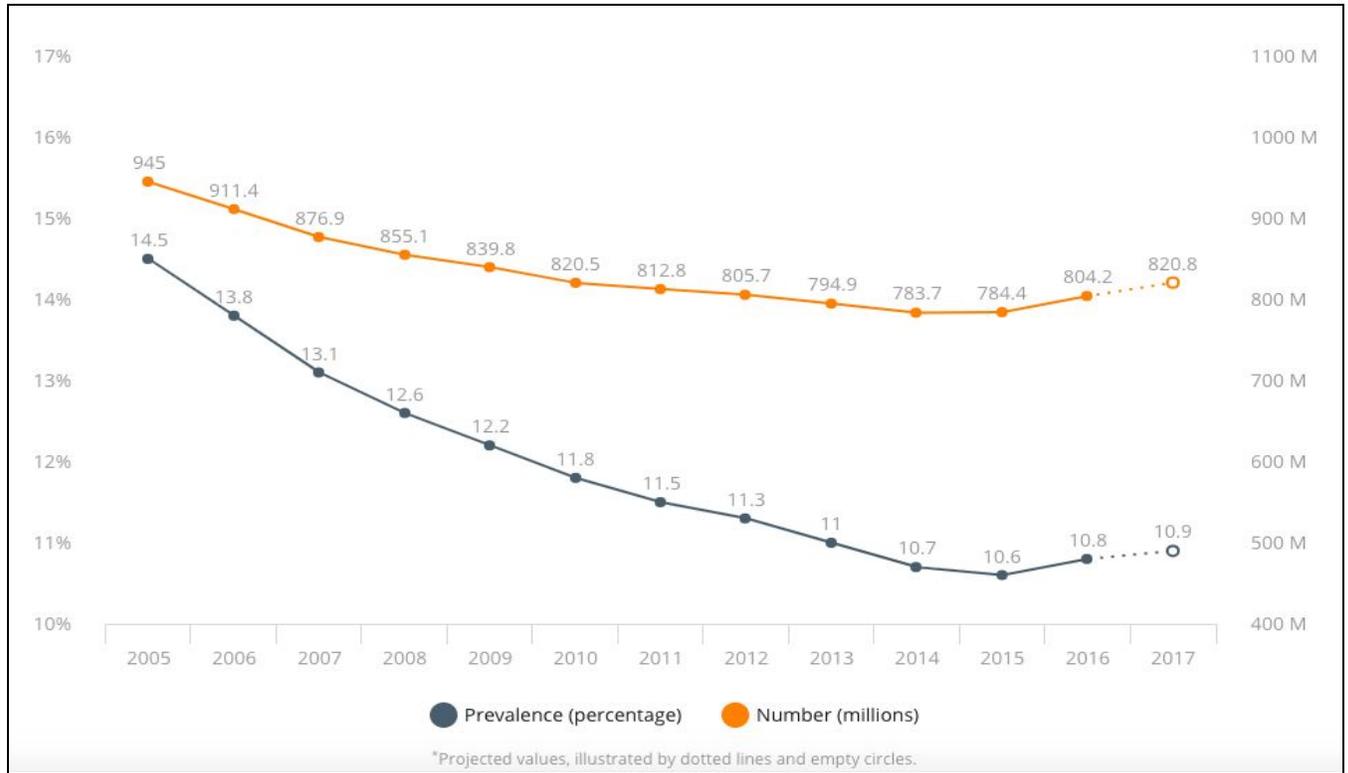


Figure 1, The Projected Values of Individuals Who Are Food Insecure<sup>6</sup>

History of the Problem:

In 1943, the UN Conference on Food and Agriculture was held from 18 May to 3 June in which they decided on establishing the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which later became officially established in 1945. The Green Revolution began to occur between 1950-60s in which an increase of agricultural production worldwide took place due to new research and developments in technologies that allowed better production. In 1961, the UN established the World Food Programme (WFP), A/RES/1714(XVI), as a multilateral food aid programme. The World Food Conference premiered in 1974, in which governments examined the global problem of food production and consumption, followed by a Plan of Action on World Food Security in 1979.

<sup>5</sup> "Contribution to the 2014 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Integration Segment." *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> "SOFI 2018 - The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World." *International Rice Commission Newsletter Vol. 48*, FAO of the UN, [www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition/en/](http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition/en/).

For two decades, leading up to the millennium, the global demand of food was increasing steadily along with the growth of the world's population, record harvests, and improvements in incomes. As a result, food prices continued to decline through 2000, yet in 2004, prices for most grains began to rise as a result of the increase in demand being greater than the production. Food stocks became depleted and in 2005, extreme weather incidents took place in major food-producing countries, resulting in the world cereal production to fall by 2.1% in 2006. Due to rapid increases in oil prices in 2007, the prices of fertilizer and other food production costs began to rise as well. Internationally, food prices reached unprecedented levels leading many countries to insulate themselves from potential food shortages and price shocks by imposing food exporting restrictions. In 2008, the rise of global food prices posed a major threat to global food and nutrition security and caused a host of humanitarian, human rights, socio-economic, environmental, developmental, political and security-related consequences. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established the High Level Task Force (HLTF) in response to the dramatic rise of global food prices, bringing together the Heads of the UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes to promote a comprehensive and unified response to the challenge of achieving global food security.<sup>7</sup>

In 2012 at the RIO+20 UN conference, the Zero Hunger Challenge was introduced in which all countries were invited to work for a future where every individual has access to adequate nutrition and resilient food systems, being followed shortly by the adoption of an international treaty that aimed at “addressing the food and nutritional needs of the most vulnerable populations” at the Food Assistance Convention, 25 April 2012. Plans to eradicate hunger, to prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide, to promote sustainability in agriculture and fisheries, and to benefit the rural livelihoods of family farmers would go to take place in the 2014 Second International Conference on Nutrition and the 2015 Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaption in Small Island Developing States. Later in 2015, another conference was held for the UN's Sustainable Development Summit: Goal 2 from 25 to 27 September, in which Goal 2 aims to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. During the 2016 high-level side event to the 71st UN General Assembly, conversations about achieving Zero Hunger and the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 were held.<sup>8</sup>

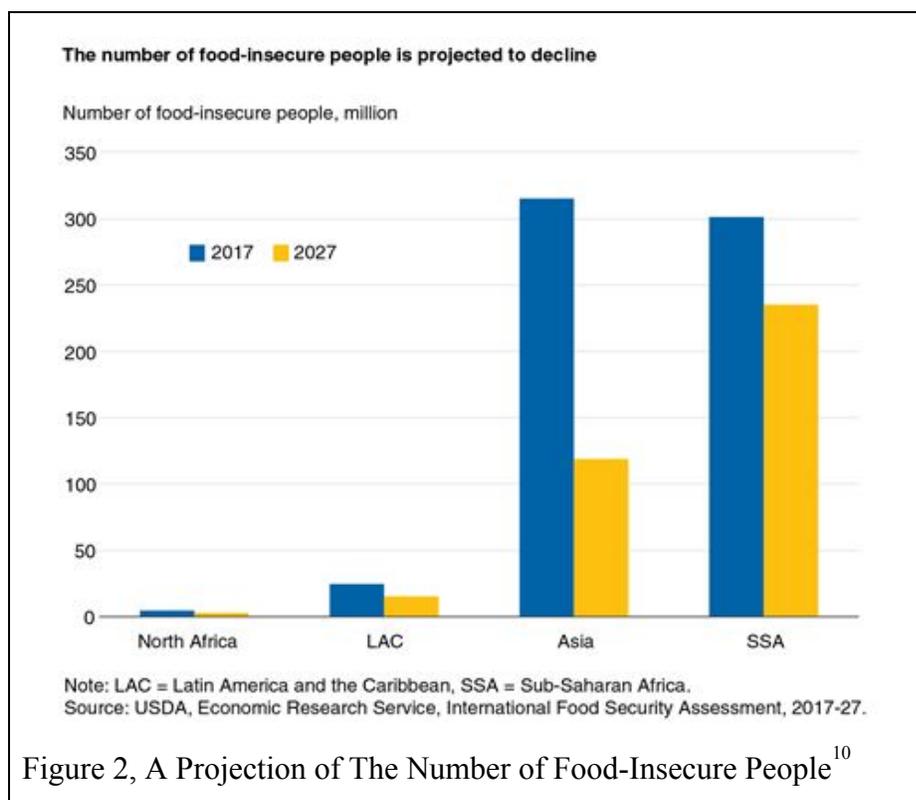
### Current Situation:

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<sup>7</sup> “Food.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/food/](http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/food/).

<sup>8</sup> “UN Milestones - Food Security and Nutrition - A Global Issue - Research Guides at United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [research.un.org/en/foodsecurity/un-milestones](http://research.un.org/en/foodsecurity/un-milestones).

Food insecurity is an issue found across the globe. It's more prevalent in African and South Asian areas, especially within rural areas that are impoverished and primarily dependent upon agricultural production. Out of the general population of food insecurity, many children are especially at risk due to the malnourishment leading to premature death and stunted development. Established in 1946, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) focuses upon bringing basics human needs, such as freedom, food, water, shelter and education, to children in need. A 2018 UNICEF report recommends strengthening local and global food systems to help more children and families access nutritious, as well as affordable and sustainable diets. The same article containing this information also stated that on a global scale, 1 in every 9 individuals suffers from food insecurity.<sup>9</sup>



Another article emphasizes data provided by the FAO that displayed an alarming trend in which the number of people suffering from undernourishment is increasing once again. Policies today balance the interests and needs of farmers and consumers in Europe, alongside food growers, consumers and citizens that are concerned towards the environment and the welfare of animals. The European agricultural sector is one the world's leading producers of food and is the world's top agricultural exporter and importer, being world's largest importer of agricultural products

<sup>9</sup> Fiorentino, Michael-Ross. "UNICEF World Children's Day: What Is the Global Status of Children?" *Euronews*, Euronews, 20 Nov. 2018, [www.euronews.com/2018/11/20/unicef-world-children-s-day-what-is-the-global-status-of-children](http://www.euronews.com/2018/11/20/unicef-world-children-s-day-what-is-the-global-status-of-children).

<sup>10</sup> "International Food Security Assessment, 2017-2027." *USDA ERS - Food Environment Atlas*, [www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2017/june/international-food-security-assessment-2017-2027/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2017/june/international-food-security-assessment-2017-2027/).

from Least Developed Countries. The European Union (EU) also promotes food security, food quality, and sustainable agriculture, both at home and abroad, especially in Africa where their focus is on creating decent rural employment, ensuring that farming remains a viable way of life for the aspiring generation of young Africans.<sup>11</sup>

As of 13 November 2018, a declaration was signed by heads of UN agencies and French President Emmanuel Macron at the conclusion of the first edition of the Paris Peace Forum, emphasizing pandemics, climate change, water scarcity and food insecurity among “the most pressing challenges in terms of peace and security.” The statement strongly advises collective action and enhanced collaboration and partnerships to promote the “common goal of a lasting security and development that benefits all.”<sup>12</sup>

The Economic Research Services (ERS) annual International Food Security Assessment (IFSA) estimates and projects levels of food insecurity at a national level for 76 low-income and middle-income countries, with global food security improvements projected to be largest in Asia, as seen in Figure 3. By 2028, based on project income growth and sustained low food prices, the share and the number of food-insecure people within these 76 countries are expected to decline by almost 10%, being equivalent to about 446 million individuals. The biggest improvements are projected for Asia, where strong economic growth combined with slowing population growth, particularly in India and Southeast Asia, contribute to increasing per capita incomes and expected improved food security by 2028.<sup>13</sup>

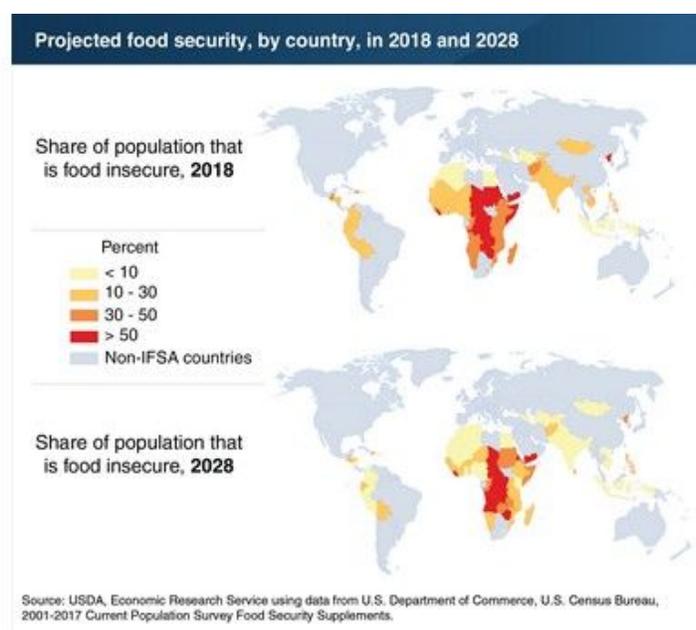


Figure 3, Projected Food Security, By Country, In 2018 and 2028<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> “Global Efforts to Fight Hunger and Feed the Planet in a Sustainable Way.” *Open Access Government*, 9 Nov. 2018, [www.openaccessgovernment.org/global-efforts-to-fight-hunger-and-feed-the-planet-in-a-sustainable-way/54287/](http://www.openaccessgovernment.org/global-efforts-to-fight-hunger-and-feed-the-planet-in-a-sustainable-way/54287/).

<sup>12</sup> Mead, Leila. “Paris Peace Forum Recognizes Climate Change, Food Insecurity, Water Scarcity as Challenges for Peace and Security | News | SDG Knowledge Hub | IISD.” *SDG Knowledge Hub*, 22 Nov. 2018, [sdg.iisd.org/news/paris-peace-forum-recognizes-climate-change-food-insecurity-water-scarcity-as-challenges-for-peace-and-security/](http://sdg.iisd.org/news/paris-peace-forum-recognizes-climate-change-food-insecurity-water-scarcity-as-challenges-for-peace-and-security/).

<sup>13</sup> “Global Food Security Improvements Projected to Be Largest in Asia.” *FreshPlaza: Global Fresh Produce and Banana News*, 14 Nov. 2018, [www.freshplaza.com/article/9042582/global-food-security-improvements-projected-to-be-largest-in-asia/](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9042582/global-food-security-improvements-projected-to-be-largest-in-asia/).

<sup>14</sup> “Global Food Security Improvements Projected to Be Largest in Asia.”

Despite there being programs and projects in place, at home and abroad in different nations, food insecurity and malnourishment is still arguably one of the largest, and preventable from the amount of food waste we have internationally, issues the globe is faced with. This raises concerns of what plans of actions should be taken place to further combat the struggle and provide assistance to those in need. Adding to the problem is the issue of climate change as well, which is now threatening many small agricultural businesses within Africa. Climate change is going to have huge consequences all over the world, especially in Africa. The harvests will be affected, threatening agricultural outputs. This will not only hurt many farmers and agricultural workers, but it'll also lead to a greater food insecurity. Alongside plans of action against food insecurity, discussion are needed over the worrying oversight of the lack of concern in regards to climate change affecting future farming families.<sup>15</sup>

#### Blocs:

The ECOSOC contains 54 seats, being allocated based upon geographic representation. The seats are allocated as follows: 14 to Africa, 11 to Asia, 6 to eastern Europe, 10 to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13 to western Europe and other areas.

Agriculture is a large part of Africa's and Asia's economy, yet food insecurity and malnourishment are commonly prevalent within these areas due to the poverty, despite there being such close access to food. It's important to realize that in order to require assistance in regards to food insecurity, other countries must first be willing to provide assistance. Some western and eastern European are offering some assistance currently, with the EU already promoting food security, food quality, and sustainable agriculture abroad in Africa.

A plan of action is needed to further strengthen the fight against international food insecurity.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What are the biggest obstacles preventing world-wide food security? Why do we allow individuals to have no access to quality, nutritious food, despite it being fundamental to human existence?
2. Should more extensive protocols be put in place to assist farming families or those who are food insecure during times of socio-economic chaos marked by food shortages and price shocks? If so, to what extent should the assistance aid the populations of people who are food insecure and/or suffering farming families?

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<sup>15</sup> Gannon, Kate Elizabeth, and Declan Conway. "Small Businesses in Africa to Suffer on the Frontline of Climate Change." *The Citizen*, The Citizen, 9 Dec. 2018, [citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/environment/2047655/small-businesses-in-africa-to-suffer-on-the-frontline-of-climate-change/](http://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/environment/2047655/small-businesses-in-africa-to-suffer-on-the-frontline-of-climate-change/).

3. Climate change can disrupt food availability, reduce access to food, and affect food quality. In what ways can we differently implement policy or better utilize technological advances in order to counteract these impediments?

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