# Global food system dangerously off track to meet hunger and climate targets, report warns



The global food system is under increasing scrutiny as data reveals it is “dangerously off track” in addressing hunger and sustainability, according to findings from the Systems Change Lab database. This resource, developed by a coalition of non-profits including the World Resources Institute and the UN Climate Change High-Level Champions, monitors progress across 32 critical indicators related to climate, biodiversity, and food equity. Alarmingly, only one indicator—dairy productivity—meets its targets, highlighting the urgent need for systemic transformation.

Food systems account for one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, with projections indicating that food-related emissions alone could surpass levels required to maintain global warming below 1.5°C by 2050. This is particularly concerning given that significant strides in managing emissions from agriculture have now stalled. The data suggests that while improvements are needed in dairy productivity and ruminant meat output per hectare, the high consumption of meat in affluent regions must also decline at an expedited pace—five times faster than current trends—to meet 2030 targets.

Debate persists within environmental circles regarding the role of meat in sustainable diets, underscoring a broader conflict of interest where crop production is frequently prioritised over animal welfare and environmental degradation. Notably, the report indicates that while some measures concerning water use efficiency and phosphorus management have made progress, many crucial sectors remain critically underperforming, with nine indicators showing negative trends including increased food waste and pesticide usage.

The recommendations put forth by the report aim to restrain agricultural expansion and enhance efficiency, targeting goals such as halving food loss by 2030 and shifting dietary patterns, especially within wealthier nations to mitigate hunger in low-income areas. This aligns with findings from the World Bank, which has called for a drastic reorientation of the global agrifood system. Their recent report, 'Recipe for a Livable Planet', suggests an annual investment of $260 billion in climate-focused agricultural practices by 2050 to achieve net-zero emissions.

The urgency is further corroborated by data from the Global Hunger Index, which indicates that the current trajectory is insufficient to meet the United Nations’ Zero Hunger goal by 2030. Reports categorise global hunger levels as “moderate”, with regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia facing more severe challenges, necessitating intensified actions to combat malnutrition and food insecurity.

To facilitate transformative change, platforms like the Food Systems Dashboard offer critical insights by compiling data from diverse sources, enabling stakeholders to visualise and analyse food systems on a country-specific level. Such tools are essential for informed decision-making and policy development that aligns with sustainability goals.

As the threats from climate change and food insecurity loom larger, the necessity for comprehensive reforms in the food system becomes increasingly urgent. The convergence of calls for action from various environmental and humanitarian sectors underscores a collective understanding: the current model cannot sustain the burgeoning global population, nor can it protect the fragile ecosystems upon which the world's food supply relies.

In addressing these multifaceted challenges, it becomes imperative that we foster a collaborative approach among governments, non-profits, and the private sector to ensure food systems are both resilient and equitable, providing nourishment without compromising the planet.

### Reference Map

1. [[1]](https://www.sustainableviews.com/global-food-system-dangerously-off-track-to-reduce-hunger-shows-data-cd426cf9/) Paragraphs 1-2
2. [[2]](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/05/07/world-bank-calls-to-drastically-reorient-the-global-agrifood-system) Paragraph 3
3. [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Hunger_Index) Paragraph 4
4. [[3]](https://www.foodsystemsdashboard.org/information/about-the-dashboard), [[6]](https://www.gainhealth.org/resources/reports-and-publications/food-systems-dashboard) Paragraph 5
5. [[5]](https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2023/03/06/without-changes-global-food-systems-may-drive-world-beyond-climate-targets/), [[7]](https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/new-research-urges-data-driven-action-for-agriculture-and-food-systems-change/en) Paragraph 6

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.sustainableviews.com/global-food-system-dangerously-off-track-to-reduce-hunger-shows-data-cd426cf9/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/05/07/world-bank-calls-to-drastically-reorient-the-global-agrifood-system> - The World Bank's report, 'Recipe for a Livable Planet,' emphasizes the urgent need to transform the global agrifood system, which significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. The report advocates for increased annual climate investments in agriculture to $260 billion by 2050, aiming to achieve carbon neutrality. It also recommends reorienting subsidies, promoting plant-based diets in wealthy nations, and restoring forests through agroforestry in low- and middle-income countries. Experts highlight the necessity for more substantial changes beyond marginal improvements to address the sector's impact on the planet.
3. <https://www.foodsystemsdashboard.org/information/about-the-dashboard> - The Food Systems Dashboard is a comprehensive platform that consolidates data from over 40 sources, including UN agencies and the World Bank, to provide insights into food systems worldwide. It features around 300 indicators covering aspects like food supply chains, nutrition, and environmental outcomes. The dashboard offers country-specific profiles, policy recommendations, and tools for stakeholders to analyze and visualize data, supporting informed decision-making for sustainable food systems.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Hunger_Index> - The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is an annual tool developed by European NGOs Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe to measure and track hunger globally, regionally, and nationally. The 2024 GHI report indicates that global progress in combating hunger remains insufficient, with a world score of 18.3, categorized as moderate. Regions like Africa South of the Sahara and South Asia exhibit serious hunger levels. The report underscores the challenges in achieving the Zero Hunger goal by 2030, highlighting the need for intensified efforts to address malnutrition and food insecurity.
5. <https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2023/03/06/without-changes-global-food-systems-may-drive-world-beyond-climate-targets/> - A study published in Nature Climate Change reveals that current global food systems, encompassing production, distribution, and consumption, could contribute approximately 1°C to global warming by 2100, potentially surpassing the 1.5°C climate target. The research identifies meat, dairy, and rice production as major greenhouse gas sources. It emphasizes the necessity for transformative changes in agricultural practices, energy decarbonization, dietary shifts, and food waste reduction to mitigate climate impacts and align with international climate objectives.
6. <https://www.gainhealth.org/resources/reports-and-publications/food-systems-dashboard> - The Food Systems Dashboard, launched in 2020, is a collaborative initiative involving the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Johns Hopkins University, FAO, CIAT, the University of Michigan, and Ag2Nut. It compiles over 200 indicators from sources like FAO, Euromonitor International, and the World Bank to assess components, drivers, and outcomes of food systems at the country level. The dashboard is continually updated to include new data, supporting stakeholders in analyzing and visualizing information for informed decision-making in food system transformations.
7. <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/new-research-urges-data-driven-action-for-agriculture-and-food-systems-change/en> - The Food Systems Countdown to 2030 Initiative (FSCI) has developed an indicator framework comprising 50 metrics to monitor global agriculture and food systems. This framework aims to guide decision-makers in transforming food systems to reduce environmental impacts and enhance climate change resilience. The FSCI emphasizes the need for data-driven actions to ensure equitable access to healthy diets through sustainable and resilient agriculture and food systems, addressing challenges like malnutrition and climate change.