



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

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### **We Can Halve Hunger, If We Change the Way We Do Business**

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A decade ago, the international community committed itself to halving the percentage of people who go hungry. When world leaders meet next week to review implementation of this and other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>1</sup>, they need to reexamine their policies and their commitment.

Last year alone, the number of people deprived of food rose from 915 million to 1.02 billion, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Although recent estimates suggest that number has dropped to 925 million in 2010, the goal of halving hunger by 2015, enshrined in the first MDG<sup>2</sup>, remains extremely challenging. The situation demands more innovative, better focused, and cost-effective action.

To reduce hunger:

1. We need to increase combined investment in agriculture and social protection. Interventions combining agriculture and social protection have high payoffs, since they can protect the poorest in the short term and increase their productive capacity in the long run. Evidence from Ethiopia shows that households with access to a safety net program and a complementary agricultural intervention are more likely to be food secure, borrow for productive purposes, and use improved agricultural technologies than households that have access to just one component.

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<sup>1</sup> The MDG Review Summit, officially called the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, will take place on September 20-22 in New York and is hosted by the United Nations Secretary General.

<sup>2</sup> In MDG1, UN member states pledged to “halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.”

2. The private sector and emerging economies must be encouraged to play a greater role in reducing hunger in developing countries. Firms must be given the right incentives to move beyond a short-term focus on corporate philanthropy and to develop inclusive business initiatives that help fight hunger and integrate smallholders into the global value chain. Many of the world's poorest people are smallholder farmers, and moving them out of poverty will involve increasing their productivity and linking them to high-value markets. Emerging economies need to be fully integrated into the global food security agenda, since they are ever more prominent in trade and investment, and in providing development assistance.
3. Developing countries must lead the fight against hunger with their own strategies. Some issues—such as climate change, trade, and disease control—need to be addressed at the international level, and individual countries must set their strategies in a global context. But on many other issues, experience teaches us that the most effective, efficient, and sustainable policies are those most attuned to local reality. After all, China, India, Vietnam, and others have enjoyed agrarian and economic success thanks to country-led policies, such as partial liberalization, that were considered unorthodox because of their content, sequencing, or both.
4. Innovation must be encouraged. Pilot projects and experiments have the potential to improve policymaking by giving decisionmakers information about what works before policies are implemented across the board. Experimentation can improve the success rate of reforms as successful pilot projects are scaled up and unsuccessful ones are eliminated. Policymakers need to allow experiments to be monitored impartially, and they must rapidly transform the lessons learned into large-scale reforms.
5. Decisionmakers at the global, regional, and national levels have made commitments to enhance food security but they have often not followed through. Governments and other institutions do need to keep their promises. Mechanisms to effectively ensure accountability and measure progress are urgently needed. In addition, the global food governance system itself needs to be reformed to work better. For example, the extremely volatile wheat prices seen in recent weeks remind us of the need for global institutional arrangements to prevent export bans, other forms of ad hoc protectionism, and excessive speculation.

With only five years remaining until the deadline of 2015, the objective of halving world hunger can be achieved—but only if we pursue it with increased vigor and innovation.

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*The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations. [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)*