

The impact of the war in Ukraine on food security in fragile contexts:

Four scenarios for humanitarian and development organizations



Key messages

Humanitarian and development organizations feel an urgent need to better understand the potential impacts of the Russian war in Ukraine on food security in fragile, low-income countries.

Wageningen University & Research, KUNO and the Netherlands Food Partnership, together with initiators Cordaid, Kerk in Actie and six other NGO's, developed four scenarios to provide insights in the possible implications of the war in Ukraine on their work. The foundation for these four scenarios is formed by two key uncertainties towards the future: (1) the intensity of the conflict (containment vs escalation) and (2) food system resilience (high vs low).

Four scenarios were developed that provide insights in the impacts of the war in Ukraine on food security in fragile, low-income countries.

These scenarios explored how the future of food systems in these countries would look like in the year 2025.

Scenario A (Global Food Crisis)

Spiking food prices, growing food insecurity and related social unrest.

Scenario B (Forced Adaptation)

Food prices first stabilize then continue to increase due to the regional spread of conflict, increasing instability in many regions and growing impact of climate events on global food production.



Scenario C (Sensitive to Shocks)

Low food system resilience and swift conflict containment improve food security short term, but food systems remain sensitive to shocks.

Scenario D (Ready for the Future)

Food prices stabilize and food systems become more diversified and resilient.

Humanitarian and development organizations need to develop strategies to prepare for these four possible futures.

Humanitarian organizations should be ready to either scale up crisis management in the 'Global Food Crisis' scenario or shift from relief to recovery and disaster preparedness in the 'Ready for the Future' scenario. Development organizations need

to invest more in food system resilience through diversification and prioritize local food production, but also be ready to put their resources to humanitarian purposes when needed. New, flexible and adaptive approaches are needed across the board to navigate an increasingly polarized world.

Four scenarios of the impact of the war in Ukraine in fragile contexts

Together with eight humanitarian and development organizations, KUNO, NFP & WUR developed the following four scenarios of the impact of the war in Ukraine on food & nutrition security in fragile, low-income countries.

A



Scenario A: Global Food Crisis (Low Food System Resilience, Conflict Escalation)

Even though global markets adjust to decreased supply from Russia and Ukraine, the regional spread and uncertain outcome of the conflict increases the prices of food, fuel and inputs. High food prices, decreased foreign investment and stretched aid budgets decrease the resilience of local food systems. Regional spread of conflict diverts resources from humanitarian aid in prolonged crisis areas. Hunger is used as political weapon in an increasingly polarized world. Growing food insecurity leads to social unrest in import-dependent countries. New, deepening conflicts may challenge local governance and lead to more economic migration and refugee flows.

B



Scenario B: Forced Adaptation (High Food System Resilience, Conflict Escalation)

Food prices first stabilize due to adjustment of global markets. In the long term prices increase again due to the regional spread of conflict, increasing instability and growing impact of climate events on global food production. Improved global food system resilience through diversification of production sources and creation of buffers. Local food system resilience remains limited as the effects of high food prices, increased cost of credit and stretched aid budgets are being felt. Polarization of political and economic systems in two camps, with increasingly separate food production and distribution systems. Humanitarian organizations need to navigate a highly political playing field. Increasing food insecurity due to limited local food system resilience and stretched humanitarian aid budgets.

C



Scenario C: Sensitive to Shocks (Low Food System Resilience, Conflict Containment)

Grain and vegetable oil prices first stabilize and then continue rising again due to prolonged sanctions and increasing impacts of climate change. Food systems adapt short-term to shortages in grain and vegetable oil from Ukraine, but continue to be highly sensitive to shocks. The global food system continues to face the impact of climate change, food insecurity and economic inequality – the status quo of the food system structure remains intact, including current economic inequalities. After initial spikes in food insecurity in many fragile countries, hunger and undernutrition return to pre-war levels but continue the rising trend and increased vulnerability witnessed in the past five years due to climate events and regional conflicts.

D



Scenario D: Ready for the future (High Food System Resilience, Conflict Containment)

Grain and vegetable oil prices stabilize long-term. Shift from dominance of global supply chains to a larger role for local production and regional trade. Global food systems become resilient to shocks through diversification and creation of buffers. Local food systems become less dependent on food imports through improving and diversifying local food production. Relative stability in the global food system creates room to invest in food system transformation, building alliances that work towards healthier, more inclusive and sustainable food systems. Improved affordability and access to food due to diversification of imports and increase in local production leads to decreases in hunger and undernutrition.

The impact of each scenario for farmers, consumers and policy makers

Each scenario will have different impacts for different stakeholder groups. Based on the stories of **Omar**, **Grace** and **Maryam** we explore which impact each scenario has for rural farmers, urban consumers and policy makers.

A

B

C

D

Omar
(Rural Farmer)



Scenario A: Global Food Crisis (Low Food System Resilience, Conflict Escalation)

- Due to extremely high fertilizer and fuel prices Omar sees income from farming dwindling, and he wonders whether to plant.
- On top of that, spiking food prices make it impossible to access enough nutritious food to feed his family.
- Growing insecurity in his country makes Omar wary to invest in his farm.

Scenario B: Forced Adaptation (High Food System Resilience, Conflict Escalation)

- In response to reduced imports, Omar started growing cowpeas and palm oil to meet high demand.
- This improves his income and resilience of the farm.
- However, continuously high food prices keep making it a challenge to provide well for his family.

Scenario C: Sensitive to Shocks (Low Food System Resilience, Conflict Containment)

- Prices for fuel and fertilizer remain high, which limits Omar's farming income and room for investment.
- This makes it more difficult to invest long-term in the resilience of his farm.
- Therefore, Omar's farm is often hard hit by droughts and price fluctuations.

Scenario D: Ready for the future (High Food System Resilience, Conflict Containment)

- Affordable food, inputs and fuel ensure Omar can earn enough to feed his family and invest in his farm.
- Omar is diversifying production on his farm by growing a mix of grains, vegetables and chickens.
- In this way, Omar has sufficient income even in times of external shocks.

Grace
(Urban Consumer)



- Spiking expenses for food and fuel make it hard for Grace to pay for health and education of her family.
- The children of Grace quit school and start working to make ends meet.
- Food and fuel protests in Grace's city create growing insecurity, making migration a real option.

- High food prices reduce the diversity of what Grace can buy, making her meals less healthy and nutritious.
- High costs of food, energy and transport leave little for education and health.
- Grace buys cowpea bread and cooks with palm oil instead of sunflower oil.

- Continuously high food prices make it difficult for Grace to offer her family a nutritious and diverse diet.
- A growing share of her family's diet comes from imported products as local production cannot keep up with growing demand.

- Affordable fuel and food prices enable Grace to invest in the health and education of her family.
- Grace and her family increasingly eat local instead of imported grains, dairy, eggs and vegetables
- As a result of government campaigns, Grace's family starts eating healthier.

Maryam
(Policy Maker)



- Maryam's government is struggling to provide basic services, with ODA funds redirected to Ukraine.
- Importing grains and oils has become virtually impossible for Maryam and her colleagues.
- Humanitarian aid is not enough to solve the growing hunger crisis.

- Stretched aid budgets put a strain on the budget of Maryam's government.
- Her government replaced Black Sea imports with more expensive imports from other regions.
- Maryam's government is pressured to take sides on a polarized global stage.

- Maryam's government becomes increasingly reliant on food imports due to dwindling production capacity in the country.
- Maryam's government does not invest in agricultural innovation and the resilience of the country's food system.

- Maryam is working on an integrated food system transformation policy to improve food security, create healthier diets and protect the environment.
- With her colleagues, Maryam makes the national food system less dependent on external imports of food.

Implications of scenarios for humanitarian and development organizations

With the input of the participating humanitarian and development organizations, **KUNO**, **NFP** and **WUR** discussed the following implications of the four scenarios for the work of humanitarian and development organizations.

A



Scenario A: Global Food Crisis (Low Food System Resilience, Conflict Escalation)

- Humanitarian organizations need to prioritize relief interventions and crisis management, scaling up food aid and refugee assistance.
- Development organizations need to shift some of their resources to humanitarian activities, to address the urgent needs of those in hunger.
- In this scenario, the allocation of resources over a growing number of food, climate, conflict and refugee crises is a crucial challenge.

B



Scenario B: Forced Adaptation (High Food System Resilience, Conflict Escalation)

- International efforts will focus more on peace building and conflict de-escalation.
- Development organizations can play a role in supporting local food system resilience by co-investing in local food production and promoting local cereal and vegetable oil alternatives.
- The increased polarization in global geopolitics in this scenario will put the neutrality principle of humanitarian organizations under pressure.

C



Scenario C: Sensitive to Shocks (Low Food System Resilience, Conflict Containment)

- Humanitarian organizations need to invest in scaling up disaster risk reduction, to minimize the impact of future shocks on food security.
- Development organizations need to improve food system resilience through climate-smart agriculture and agricultural diversification.
- The relatively short shock of the war in Ukraine can be used to lobby for more resources to address food security in fragile contexts.

D



Scenario D: Ready for the future (High Food System Resilience, Conflict Containment)

- Humanitarian organizations can shift more attention from relief to recovery interventions.
- Development organizations have room to work on a broad development agenda, including climate mitigation and adaptation, gender, biodiversity, health and good governance.
- In this scenario, humanitarian and development organizations have room to invest in localization, shifting to local management and solutions.

Colofon

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As part of the scenario analysis process, two online and one face-to-face workshops were held, in which eight humanitarian and development organizations participated: Action Aid, Cordaid, Oxfam Novib, Kerk in Actie, Save the Children, The Hunger Project, Woord en Daad en ZOA.

The face-to-face workshop was hosted by Cordaid. The illustrations are by Geert Gratama. May 2022.

