



## Food Matters

Food matters to human beings. Eating nutritious food each day is one of our most basic human needs.

However, around the world, people are suffering due to a lack of nutritious food.

Soaring food prices, unreliable crops due to the effects of climate change, and trade rules that favour the rich, are forcing more people into hunger.

### Consider these facts:

- Over 9 million people die worldwide each year because of hunger and malnutrition. 5 million are children.
- Approximately 1.2 billion people suffer from hunger (deficiency of calories and protein);
- Some 2 to 3.5 billion people have micronutrient deficiency (deficiency of vitamins and minerals);
- Yet, some 1.2 billion suffer from obesity (excess of fats and salt, often accompanied by deficiency of vitamins and minerals);
- Food wastage is also high:
  - ⇒ Rich countries are throwing out 25-30% of what they purchase.
  - ⇒ Australians throw away 3 million tonnes of food worth \$5.2 billion a year – about the same as it costs to run the Australian Army or meet the shortfall in the UN emergency relief fund. This comprises:
    - ✦ \$1.1 billion worth of fruit and vegetables
    - ✦ \$873 million in meat and fish
    - ✦ \$241 million in frozen food\*
  - ⇒ In the United Kingdom, 30-40% of all food is never eaten;
  - ⇒ In the US 40-50% of all food ready for harvest never gets eaten;
  - ⇒ The impact of this waste is not just financial. Environmentally this leads to:
    - ✦ Wasteful use of chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides;
    - ✦ More fuel used for transportation;
    - ✦ More rotting food, creating more methane — one of the most harmful



greenhouse gases that contributes to climate change.

⇒ The direct medical cost of hunger and malnutrition is estimated at \$30 billion each year.

\*Australia Institute "What a Waste" report 2009

### In a world of plenty, a huge number go hungry.

Hunger is more than just the result of food production and meeting demands. The causes of hunger are related to the causes of poverty. One of the major causes of hunger is poverty itself. Various issues concerning poverty lead to people being unable to afford food and hence people go hungry. There are other related causes (also often related to the causes of poverty in various ways), including the following:

- Land rights and ownership
- Lack of democracy and rights
- Diversion of land use to non-productive use
- Increasing emphasis on export-oriented agriculture
- Inefficient agricultural practices
- War
- Famine
- Drought
- Over-fishing
- Poor crop yield

