

## INTRODUCTION

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**Pamela Aróstica**

*Centre for Asia-Pacific and India Studies (CEAPI)*

**Anna Ayuso Pozo**

*Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB)*

This publication addresses the critical issue of food security, which is still one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, establishing “end hunger” in the world as the second of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet far from moving forwards since then, food insecurity has actually increased. The 2022 edition of *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, a report drawn up by the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), found that the number of people who faced hunger in the world increased to 828 million in 2021, a rise of 46 million compared to 2020, and 150 million more than in 2019. The number of people affected by hunger in 2021 reached 9.8% of the world population, compared to 9.3% in 2020 and 8% in 2019. If we include the moderately food insecure along with those facing serious shortages, in 2021 the figure hit 2.3 billion people (29.3% of the world’s population), which is 350 million more people than before the outbreak of COVID-19.

The pandemic had devastating effects, but it is not the only cause of the food crisis we are facing today. The 2023 report on food security (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, 2023) says that while global hunger did not grow in 2022, it continues to severely affect some regions of the planet and is still far above pre-pandemic levels. The nascent recovery after COVID-19 has been hampered by a rise in food prices and the effects of the Ukraine war on agricultural markets, with inflation impacting the high cost of these products and contributing to growing inequalities. Rising energy costs too have contributed to a spike in both farm gate prices and distribution costs. According to the FAO, food prices reached a peak in the first half of 2022 (FAO, 2023), depriving people on the lowest incomes of access to a healthy diet.

People living in conflict zones face constant problems to access to food. These conflicts generate forced displacement, hamper the practice of farming and livestock breeding, and hinder the arrival of

food to markets (ICRC, 2022). Along with the health crisis and global conflicts, however, climate change poses the greatest threat to food security. Severe drought and flooding jeopardise crops in every region of the planet. The Horn of Africa has suffered its worst drought of the last 40 years and is in an emergency situation (UNHCR, 2023). South America is facing a third year of severe drought due to the Niña phenomenon (IICA, 2023). The accumulation of factors that contribute to the food crisis make it a multidimensional phenomenon that is not only caused by circumstantial factors but is also linked to production structures and the sustainability of production in general and food in particular.

The goal of this digital publication, entitled *Food security: challenges and opportunities for European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean relations*, is to help strengthen bi-regional ties and improve mutual understanding between the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) by fostering dialogue and cooperation on food security. The study has its roots in a previous experience with the journal *Foreign Affairs Latin America (FAL)* in which several authors who form part of this online publication took different approaches to analysing the context and scope of the global food crisis and its effects and projections in Latin America (*FAL*, October-December 2022). The key question is this: what are the challenges and opportunities facing relations between the EU and LAC in the framework of food security? In order to answer this, several authors from institutions in Latin America, Europe and Australia examine the opportunities, challenges and projections regarding bi-regional relations from a food security standpoint.

The publication is divided into two parts: the first, called “Food security and the new post-pandemic context for the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean”, begins with the chapter “The new food security scenario after the pandemic: implications for the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean”. Its author, Detlef Nolte, compares the food security situation in the EU and LAC and the differences in the meaning of the concept as it is used in the two regions. It also examines the various effects of the war in Ukraine on food security, as well as the contribution that the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean make to global agri-food production and trade. Lastly, it analyses the possibilities for cooperation between the two regions, considering their international responsibility as major food producers.

In the second chapter, “Food security asymmetries in Latin America and the Caribbean: keys to cooperation with the European Union”, Pamela Aróstica looks at the challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of food security and how cooperation with the European Union is helping to improve it. It is based on a review of the academic literature and reports by international bodies, as well as on concrete examples of bi-regional cooperation programmes and projects. It ends by listing the main obstacles the EU and LAC must overcome to tackle pending food security challenges from a multidimensional perspective.

In the following chapter, “Food security in Latin America and Australia: China’s impact and insights for the European Union”, Adrian Hearn

examines the impacts of Chinese agricultural demand in South America, Australia, Cuba and within China's own borders, reflecting on the significance of these experiences for the European Union. The comparative study seeks to highlight the need for food security approaches that take account of local peculiarities and how they affect the interaction between different regions.

The second part of the publication is entitled "European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean relations: food security challenges, opportunities and projections". In the fourth chapter, "Food security from a geopolitical perspective: past, present and the challenges of 'grain wars'", María del Pilar Ostos examines food security challenges from a geopolitical perspective, starting with the historical context of the principal "grain wars" before arriving at the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its impact on the new geopolitical order. She ends by analysing the challenges posed by the geopolitical model of "agricultural pan-regions" like Latin America in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the redrawing of the world map conditioned by the main competitors in the food security field.

In the fifth chapter, "Food (in)security: Mercosur responses in a context of greater global demand", Sergio Cesarin looks at how in a complex situation that is having a negative impact on the principle of food security the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) 4 (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) constitute a competitive production ecosystem, capable of covering global food shortages and building bridges of cooperation with the European Union.

In the sixth and final chapter, entitled "The European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean: food security projections for bi-regional relations", Ignacio Bartesaghi examines the variables that give us a better understanding of the food security projections and scenarios with regard to bilateral relations. He notes that while in recent years the EU has become less important to LAC as a destination of the region's agricultural products, its place being taken by China, there have been signs of a certain recovery since 2020. He finds that there is a favourable international context for relaunching relations in which food security would gain greater weight, although the severity of EU legislation on environmental sustainability could stymie the process, as can be seen with the difficulties in closing the agreement between the EU and Mercosur.

The results of this publication were debated at the international conference of the same name – "Food security: challenges and opportunities for European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean relations" – on Thursday November 9th, 2023, at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB). This publication has been possible thanks to the support of the EU-LAC Foundation and the combined efforts of the Centre for Asia-Pacific and India Studies (CEAPI) at the Tres de Febrero National University (UNTREF) in Argentina, CIDOB, and the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). There is open access to this publication, which seeks to contribute to the bi-regional debate. It is available on the platforms of the above institutions for all those interested in the current debate on this issue.

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