



Geography of Hunger and Famine

Peter Atkins

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Introduction

All people can agree that hunger and famine are evils that must be eliminated from the world. Indeed, in April 2016 the United Nations declared a Decade of Action on Nutrition in support of efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and thereby meet Goal 2 of Agenda 2030: “No Hunger.” This is a tall order, given that 815 million people are currently undernourished worldwide. Worse still, there remain frequent incidents of acute and widespread food shortages that are either famines or major food emergencies. In addition, there have been disagreements about the definition of the terms *hunger* and *famine*, and about their measurement in the field. One justification for writing this bibliography is therefore to demystify the various debates by referring readers to a range of relevant literature, and encouraging them to go further by exploring the many perspectives now available for understanding hunger and famine, and for inspiring action to mitigate them.

General Overviews

There has been half a century of decline in the phenomenon of famine (Devereux 2000)—the result of greater global prosperity and a major humanitarian effort by the international aid community. The famines that do still happen tend to be in Africa (Devereux 2009), the most recent being declared in South Sudan in February 2017. In August 2017 the United Nations warned that twenty million people were at immediate risk of dying of hunger (Food and Agriculture Organization, et al. 2017). There were four countries at particular risk: Yemen, with 10 million at risk; Nigeria (North East), 4–6 million; South Sudan, 4–6 million; and Somalia, 2–4 million. A further eighteen countries were suffering a high magnitude of food insecurity or localized severe food insecurity (Food Security Information Network 2017). The literature on famine in recent decades has become more sophisticated, and in this bibliography we will consider not only natural disasters but also famines in the light of economic, political, historical, and cultural perspectives (Devereux 2008, cited under *Accountability: Human Rights, Famine, and Fault*, Ó Gráda 2009, Atkins 2012). The tools of famine analysis (Rubin 2016) and famine’s theoretical constructs have improved to the extent that some academic writings have influenced policy. Yet there remain disagreements and debates about the true nature of famine. These controversies are likely to continue because famines are exceptionally complex in their unfolding, and, because they are also geographically contingent, it is important for us to acknowledge at the outset that formulating general causal statements can be problematic. Fortunately, this is increasingly recognized in the technical literature and in most of the summary articles on famine that are available (Ó Gráda 2008, Atkins 2009, Prost and de Waal 2017, Alfani and Ó Gráda 2017).

Alfani, Guido, and Cormac Ó Gráda, eds. *Famine in European History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A historical perspective on famines from the Middle Ages until the present, compiled from a range of source material and analytical perspectives. Provides comprehensive geographical coverage from Scandinavia and Italy to Ireland and Russia.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Atkins, Peter J. "Famine." In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Vol. 4. Edited by Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift, 14–20. Oxford: Elsevier, 2009.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Primarily addresses an audience of geographers, but also provides a general conceptual genealogy of famine.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Atkins, Peter J. "Food Security, Safety and Crises." In *A Cultural History of Food*. Vol. 6, *The Modern Age*. Edited by Amy Bentley, 69–86. Oxford: Berg, 2012.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The paper is organized as a series of tropes, in effect figurative distillations that amount to framings of the key actors. This approach facilitates a novel cultural history of food crises, including famine.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Devereux, Stephen. *Famine in the Twentieth Century*. IDS Working Paper 105. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2000.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A widely cited working paper that compiles excess mortality data for more than thirty 20th-century famines, finding a total of more than seventy million deaths.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Devereux, Stephen. "Why Do Famines Persist in Africa?" *Food Security* 1.1 (2009): 25–35.

DOI: 10.1007/s12571-008-0005-8 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Famines persist in Africa decades after they were eliminated from Europe and most of Asia. Is this because of some African difference? Devereux thinks not. He adduces a number of factors that have made African communities and nations susceptible, including poor governance, ineffective and inappropriate interventions, and a lack of accountability that is observable in some low-income countries that have weak democracies.

Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme, and World Health Organization. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017: Building Resilience for Peace and Food Security*. Rome: FAO, 2017.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This is the premier annual report on global food insecurity, providing analysis of trends.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Food Security Information Network. *Global Report on Food Crises 2017*. New York: World Food Programme, 2017.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This report finds that in 2016 what are known as Level 3 situations accounted for 42.1 million people displaced by armed conflict, 23.2 million suffering from natural disasters, and 35.7 million at risk of famine (in Yemen, northern Nigeria, South Sudan, and Somalia).

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Ó Gráda, Cormac. "Famines." In *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*. Vol. 3. Edited by Steven N. Durlauf and Lawrence E. Blume, 263–268. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Ó Gráda's writing on famine is always interesting because of his willingness to discuss the balance among the causes of food emergencies between nature and human agency. His historical perspective indicates that food shortages have been more important than the modern literature acknowledges.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Ó Gráda, Cormac. *Famine: A Short History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Ó Gráda's work is important because of his interest in adding a long view to the literature on famine. Deploying the dispassionate eye of the economic historian, he is able to subject the (sometimes scant) evidence to rigorous economic and demographic analysis and so tease out conclusions that are occasionally at odds with accepted wisdom.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Prost, Marc-André, and Alex de Waal. "Famine." In *International Encyclopedia of Public Health*. 2d ed. Edited by Stella R. Quah, 102–113. Oxford: Academic Press, 2017.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

An excellent short summary of past and future trends, famine theory, health and societal implications, prediction, and prevention.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Rubin, Olivier. *Contemporary Famine Analysis*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016.

DOI: [10.1007/978-3-319-27306-8](#) [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Rubin is less interested in the empirical detail of individual famines than in discovering a suitable framework of famine analysis. Nevertheless, the book is informed by 21st-century famines, such as those in Malawi (2002), Niger (2005), and Somalia (2011).

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Definitions

Some have argued against the minute deconstruction of the term *famine*—which can lead to unhelpfully dry academic technical debates—and have suggested rather that a famine called on the ground should be taken seriously as such ([Rubin 2014](#)). [De Waal 2017](#) and [Ó Gráda 2009](#) (cited under [General Overviews](#)), for instance, insist that famines must be seen, respectively, as “a vortex of starvation” and as “killing events.” *Famine* is a difficult word, though, because its popular understanding of acute, regional, mass starvation is often at odds with the reality on the ground. This problem of definition is highly significant because use of the word is emotive and represents a political threshold for decisions about releasing intervention funds. One can immediately see why the word is a battleground for definitions, intervention policies, and practicalities, as well as the longer-term, strategic identification of causes and responsibilities. Since 2004 the definition of famine has switched from a qualitative foundation to a technocratic categorization of food crises and emergencies ([Food and Agriculture Organization and Food Security Analysis Unit 2006](#)) with a view to streamlining the triggering of thresholds and thereby facilitating intervention. The first UN-declared famine using this approach was in Somalia in 2011 ([UN News Centre 2011](#)), and the methodology has since been refined and widely accepted ([Devereux 2017](#)). Nevertheless, there have been attempts in recent decades to put famine beyond such instrumentalism and into a broader context of access to food, and to relate it to a conceptual framework of food security that is flexible in its analysis of food consumption in time and place. As a result, it has become fashionable in famine studies to move on from famine mortality as the principal marker and consequence to important additional understandings of the malnutrition, disease, and destitution that, in combination, make for the vulnerability characteristics of famine victims. In addition, scholars have looked at coping strategies and at famine memories. These amount to a break with the victimology of earlier strands of work, and they allow us to examine finer-grained stories about particular famines. Such developments in general approaches to famine have run parallel to advances in famine theory. The Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, in particular, has been responsible for a new set of perspectives that are not causalist in the sense of looking for a specific trigger event such as a drought, but instead consider the network of resources that can be deployed by families *in extremis* (see [Sen 1981](#), cited under [Entitlement Theory](#)).

Devereux, Stephen. "Famine." In *The International Encyclopedia of Geography*. Edited by Douglas Richardson, 2310–2319. Chichester, UK: Wiley, 2017.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The official UN procedure of famine definition since 2011 has streamlined the practical response and made it more difficult for host countries and the global community to ignore famines. But the author points to two potentially negative aspects. First, work to prevent a food emergency escalating into a famine may be delayed by decision makers waiting for the threshold to be triggered. Second, in many poor countries the problem of large-scale chronic malnutrition is neglected because it does not attract media headlines in the same way as famine.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

de Waal, Alex. *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine*. Oxford: Polity, 2017.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This book presents de Waal's refinement of his previous work. Here he sees famines as a "diverse set of phenomena with family resemblance" (p. 18). They involve disruption, disease, social breakdown, and also starvation—though not necessarily a high mortality from this cause alone. Famines are crises; they are sharp deviations from what is normal.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Food and Agriculture Organization, and Food Security Analysis Unit. *Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification: Technical Manual, Version 1*. Nairobi, Kenya: Food Security Analysis Unit—Somalia, 2006.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The first publication to make the IPC classification of food emergencies widely known. It has since been superseded by the publications of IPC Global Partners (see [IPC Global Partners 2012](#), cited under [Measurement and Classification](#)).

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Rubin, Olivier. "Diagnosis of Famine: A Discursive Contribution." *Disasters* 38 (2014): 1–21.

DOI: [10.1111/disa.12030](#) [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Rubin suggests that analyzing discursive indices of famine can help with uncovering trends in reports, for instance in the [ReliefWeb](#) database of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). This can reveal the telltale spikes of famine emergencies.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

UN News Centre. "When a Food Security Crisis Becomes a Famine." New York: UN News Service, 21 July 2011.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A brief news report, but foundational because it announced the first famine declared by the United Nations, and therefore a new era in official global definitions. The declaration of a famine carries no binding obligations on the UN or Member States, but it serves to focus global attention on the problem.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Measurement and Classification

Drawing inspiration from [Howe and Devereux 2004](#), the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Global Partners developed a definition of famine that has since become widely used (see [Food and Agriculture Organization and Food Security Analysis Unit 2006](#), cited under [Definitions](#)). The IPC approach represented the culmination of a debate about the need for an intensity approach to the severity of chronic food insecurity generally. Famine was to be level 5 (catastrophe) of a scale that runs from level 1 (no CFI), through mild/stressed, moderate/crisis and severe/emergency. Urgent action was deemed to be necessary from level 3 upward. Following the review [Young and Jaspars 2009](#), a second edition of the manual was developed by eight agencies and international NGOs ([IPC Global Partners 2012](#)). The IPC definition of famine now requires certain criteria to be met for a famine to be declared: a near complete food consumption gap for 20 percent of the population; more than 30 percent of children under five acutely malnourished; and two deaths per day in every 10,000 people, or four deaths per day in every 10,000 children under five, due to lack of food. Food security analysts now have a set of technical protocols (tools and procedures) to classify the severity of acute food insecurity, the aim being to help build a consensus around the definition of food stress, food crisis, food emergency, and famine in order to facilitate action. Important though it is, the IPC classification is not the end of the story, because it does not set out to classify various degrees of famine. This is taken further by [Devereux 2000](#) (cited under [General Overviews](#)) and [de Waal 2017](#) (cited under [Definitions](#)), which use a simple logarithmic scale of famines to identify "great" famines that kill 100,000 people and "calamitous" famines, the death toll of which is one million people or more. Another aspect neglected by the IPC and other instrumental approaches to famine and hunger more generally is the inequity of risk between genders, among age groups, and within households according to the micro-distribution of resource allocation and consumption power ([Vaughan 1987](#); [Harris-Fry, et al. 2017](#)).

Harris-Fry, Helen, Niva Shrestha, Anthony Costello, and Naomi Saville. "Determinants of Intra-household Food Allocation between Adults in South Asia—A Systematic Review." *International Journal for Equity in Health* 16 (2017): 107.

DOI: 10.1186/s12939-017-0603-1 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This study of the literature on Bangladesh, India, and Nepal finds a significant differential distribution of nutritional resources within households. Improving women's employment and nutrition knowledge would influence this, and potentially could increase nutritional efficiency by favoring pregnant or lactating women.

Howe, Paul, and Stephen Devereux. "Famine Intensity and Magnitude Scales: A Proposal for an Instrumental Definition of Famine." *Disasters* 28.4 (2004): 353–372.

DOI: 10.1111/j.0361-3666.2004.00263.x [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

In an attempt to move on from a descriptive approach to famine, Howe and Devereux propose scales that distinguish magnitude and severity in the hope of establishing an instrumental means of classification.

[\[+\]](#) [Find this resource:](#)

IPC Global Partners. *Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Technical Manual Version 2.0: Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security Decisions*. Rome: FAO, 2012.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The second edition of this key IPC publication aimed, as the subtitle suggests, at improving policy and practical responses to food insecurity in general, not just famines. The manual is written in the knowledge of international recognition by an organization that has in-depth governance structures supported by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection and other stakeholders.

[\[+\]](#) [Find this resource:](#)

Vaughan, Megan. *The Story of an African Famine: Gender and Famine in Twentieth-Century Malawi*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511549885 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A history of the 1949 famine in Malawi during the colonial period, illustrating the susceptibility of women and their children even in societies based upon matrilineal land rights. It is unusual in drawing upon sources such as the pounding songs of women on marital breakdown when husbands went to look for food but failed to return.

[\[+\]](#) [Find this resource:](#)

Young, Helen, and Susanne Jaspars. *Review of Nutrition and Mortality Indicators for the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC): Reference Levels and Decision-Making*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition, 2009.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This report is a summary of extensive discussions about which indicators to use for the various levels of the IPC classification. It looks at crude death rate, 0–5 death rate, wasting (low weight-for-height), stunting (low height-for-age), under five mortality rate, infant mortality rate, mid upper arm circumference (MUAC), underweight (low weight-for-age), and chronic undernutrition (low body mass index). The authors suggest a famine threshold of 5 per 10,000 per day. They also look at the duration of a crisis as an indicator.

Famine Stages, Monitoring, and Early Warning

Famine is time-specific, whereas hunger can recur on a seasonal basis and can also be long-lived. The spatial characteristics of famine, such as its extent and localized concentration, are complex and usually dynamic, such as when migration follows livelihood failure. A crisis may move from hunger to famine through a series of stages, and if the early signs can be recognized, then there is a chance that excess mortality can be averted later on (Howe 2010). In the early stages of a famine, people's primary goal is to avoid the loss of land, livestock, and equipment. The most common coping strategy at this point is self-imposed food rationing (Corbett 1988). Second, there is dietary change, such as the consumption of wild foods, immature crops, and even seeds. Third, families may send away some of their number, especially young children, to be fed by any neighbors or relatives who still have food. Fourth, taking loans or selling assets may become necessary, which may not be reversible at a later stage, followed possibly by begging or migration to locations where external support such as food aid is available. The unfolding of these coping strategies is context-specific, so their use as general famine descriptors and predictors may be problematic. A recent development is CARE/WFP's Coping Strategies Index, which is being used for both monitoring and intervention purposes (Maxwell and Caldwell 2008). Other forms of monitoring have also been developed, both long-term in famine-prone regions and short-term for the purposes of immediate intervention. Beginning in 1985 with USAID funding, the most important large-scale monitoring program is FEWS NET, operating now in thirty-four countries using evidence-based analysis of data from livelihood zones, climatic data, remotely sensed images of drought, and food price and trade data. Since 1994 the World Food Programme has been using vulnerability analysis and mapping to target food aid and famine relief, using livelihood mapping and food economy reports to enable grassroots needs assessments of vulnerable groups. This approach is based upon the insight that famine does not begin to kill people until it has destroyed their livelihoods. One depressing lesson of over thirty years of famine early warning systems is that the warnings are not always heeded and that many people die because of delayed action (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995, Bailey 2012, Hillbruner and Moloney 2012, Hillier and Dempsey 2012).

Bailey, Rob. *Famine Early Warning and Early Action: The Cost of Delay*. London: Chatham House, 2012.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A sobering report on the 2011 famine in Somalia. Despite the many warnings from FEWS NET, the tragedy was allowed to happen, mainly due to the politics of trying to prevent the Islamist organization al-Shabaab, the de facto administration in the famine-affected areas, from capturing humanitarian aid and diverting it to the support of their war machine. This is not an isolated example. Although famine early warning systems are becoming more sophisticated and reliable, delay persists. A new approach to decision making is required concerning the appropriate timing of intervention.

[+] **Find this resource:**

Buchanan-Smith, Margaret, and Susanna Davies. *Famine Early Warning and Response: The Missing Link*. London: ITDG, 1995.

DOI: 10.3362/9781780444925 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The authors look at famines in Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad, Mali, and northern Kenya during the drought years of 1990–1991. They find that early warning signals were not acted upon in a timely fashion, partly due to the limited capacity of the relief system, but also because of red tape and political maneuvering between national governments and aid agencies.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Corbett, Jane. "Famine and Household Coping Strategies." *World Development* 16.9 (1988): 1099–1112.

DOI: 10.1016/0305-750X(88)90112-X [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Using examples from Africa, Corbett argues that household strategies for coping with famine have identifiable patterns. The role of asset management is examined, along with the trade-off choices that are made between maintaining levels of food consumption and protecting the household's future income-generating capacity.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

FEWS NET.

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FEWS NET produces online reports on the situation in the world's most food-insecure countries. These include maps of current and projected food insecurity; alerts on emerging or likely famines; and specialized reports on weather and climate, markets and trade, agricultural production, livelihoods, nutrition, and food assistance. Expert knowledge is drawn from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the US Geological Survey.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Hillbruner, Chris, and Grainne Moloney. "When Early Warning Is Not Enough: Lessons Learned from the 2011 Somalia Famine." *Global Food Security* 1.1 (2012): 20–28.

DOI: 10.1016/j.gfs.2012.08.001 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

After an in-depth analysis of the Somalia famine, the authors conclude that, in the absence of incentives for early action for the various stakeholders, preventable famines are likely to recur, regardless of the quality of the early warnings.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Hillier, Debbie, and Benedict Dempsey. *A Dangerous Delay: The Cost of Late Response to Early Warnings in the 2011 Drought in the Horn of Africa*. Oxford: Oxfam, 2012.

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While drought was the initiating factor in food insecurity, this famine was human-made. Hillier and Dempsey examine the emergence of a full-scale crisis of hunger and livelihoods despite early warnings. Raising large sums for humanitarian response depends, they claim, on getting significant media and public attention, which in this case did not happen until the crisis point was already reached. Copublished by Save the Children.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Howe, Paul. "Archetypes of Famine and Response." *Disasters* 34.1 (2010): 30–54.

DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7717.2009.01113.x [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Howe claims that regarding famines as a set of interacting, self-limiting processes or cycles, rather than a linear process, allows a better prediction of and response to famine. He uses the dynamics of watch, sudden price spirals, media frenzy, overshoot, and peaks as examples, with particular reference to Ethiopia, Malawi, Niger, and Sudan.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Maxwell, Daniel, and Richard Caldwell. *The Coping Strategies Index: Field Methods Manual*. 2d ed. Atlanta, GA: CARE. 2008.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

In emergency situations of food insecurity, the CSI provides tools that are quick and easy to administer in the field, straightforward to analyze, and rapid enough to provide real-time information to program managers. It has been used in many African countries and several in the Middle East and Asia. It measures behavior—the things that people do when they cannot access enough food.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Causes

In the past, famines were seen as principally the result of natural disasters that reduced food production or interrupted trade. But it became increasingly clear toward the end of the 20th century that the failure of human institutions, especially political and economic institutions, and the degradation of traditional customs of social reciprocity are also heavily involved. War, poor governance, failing states, corruption, and dysfunctional markets have likewise been blamed. Extending [Devereux 2017](#) (cited under [Definitions](#)), we can identify five “Cs” as fundamental causes of famine: colonialism, capitalism, communism, climate, and conflict. Under colonialism, the political, economic, and cultural distortions introduced by European imperial adventures seem to have reduced resilience to famine and food insecurity in many regions. Examples are legion, with the best known being the Great Famine in Ireland in the 1840s ([Nally 2011](#); [Crowley, et al. 2012](#)), the undermining of the moral economy of food in northern Nigeria ([Watts 2013](#)), the Bengal famine in 1943–1944 ([Patnaik 1991](#)), and the extensive droughts of the late Victorian period ([Davis 2000](#)). Capitalism and the malfunctioning of markets are frequently cited as causes of famines. A recent example is the disaster capitalism thesis ([Klein 2007](#)), which suggests that famines over the last two centuries have acquired a new element that has become increasingly visible. This is the opportunity for restructuring offered by the shock of the events of large-scale social and economic dislocation, an opportunity frequently taken by those with a vested interest in change. Communism and other forms of authoritarianism have also been blamed. First, during the Stalinist period in the Soviet Union there was a deliberate attempt to break the kulak class through the forced collectivization of agriculture. In the view of some, this directly caused a famine in the Ukraine and about six million deaths in 1932–1933 ([Wemheuer 2014](#)). Second, there is the notorious example of the Chinese Great Leap Forward famine (1958–1962), thought to have been the greatest single famine in history, with 30–45 million deaths ([Dikötter 2010](#)). Third, and more recently, there was a famine in North Korea ([Haggard and Noland 2007](#)). Throughout history, climate been implicated in famine. It is difficult, however, to predict the future impact of human-made climate change ([Carty 2017](#); [Engler, et al. 2015](#)). Given the emerging extremes of temperature, and of drought and floods, it seems likely that poor people in the hardest-hit countries will be at increased risk. Conflict is the last of the five Cs, and we will reserve a discussion of its implications for famine to a later section, [“New” Famines](#).

Carty, Tracy. *A Climate in Crisis: How Climate Change is Making Drought and Humanitarian Disaster Worse in East Africa*. Oxfam Media Briefing. London: Oxfam, 2017.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Recent droughts in East Africa are likely to have been exacerbated by human-induced climate change. The impact is not for the future; it is with us now in countries unable to deal with famine conditions due to poor governance, conflict, and widespread poverty.

[+] **Find this resource:**

Crowley, John, William Smyth, and Mike Murphy, eds. *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*. Cork, Ireland: University of Cork Press, 2012.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This is one of the most significant contributions to the historical geography of famine. The level of scholarly detail is remarkable, with a regional cartographical coverage of the causes and impacts of the famine, drawing upon documents, poems, music, and photographs.

[+] **Find this resource:**

Davis, M. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. London: Verso, 2000.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

There were between thirty and sixty million famine deaths in the last quarter of the 19th century, especially in India, China, and northeastern Brazil. Although droughts linked to the El Niño-Southern Oscillation were the trigger, the fundamental cause, according to Davis, was the undermining of indigenous famine coping mechanisms by the liberal capitalism spread by British imperialism.

[+] **Find this resource:**

Dikötter, Frank. *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–1962*. New York: Walker, 2010.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A thorough account using previously unavailable government documents. It shows that the famine was only part of the horror of living in China at the time. Forced labor, cruelty, violence, and the absence of justice were all routine. Party cadres were ill-informed and themselves under pressure to deliver impossible targets.

[+] **Find this resource:**

Engler, Steven, Joan Okitoi, and Bernd Sommer. *Climate Change, Drought, and Famine in Kenya: A Socio-ecological Analysis*. KWI Working Paper 1. Essen, Germany: Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut, 2015.

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The authors found a relatively high social and environmental vulnerability in Kenya, so that even minor shifts in climatic conditions can show major effects on food security. They investigate Kenya's hunger crises in 2009 and 2011 using a Famine Vulnerability Analysis Model that focuses on socio-ecological systems.

[+] **Find this resource:**

Haggard, Stephen, and Marcus Noland. *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid, and Reform*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The North Korean famine of 1994–1998 was partly caused by cycles of flood and drought, but it was principally the responsibility of an authoritarian regime with misplaced priorities of militarism and national self-reliance.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. London: Allen Lane, 2007.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Klein's book is not specifically about famine, but its explication of the role of shocks in the spread of neoliberal ideas depends upon the kind of large-scale chaos and psychological distraction that is characteristic of famine situations.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Nally, David P. *Human Encumbrances: Political Violence and the Great Irish Famine*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011.

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Shows how British policies undermined rural livelihoods and made small farmers and other groups susceptible to environmental hazards such as the potato blight. Famineogenic governance structures in which a social contract with the people was absent, coupled with the political indifference that arose from negative stereotypes of Irish destitution, drove this tragedy. Nally also argues that the famine was welcomed in some quarters as a lever to accelerate socioeconomic change.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Patnaik, Utsa. "Food Availability and Famine: A Longer View." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 19.1 (1991): 1–25.

DOI: 10.1080/03066159108438469 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

For Patnaik, it was the colonial policies of Britain that provided a foundation for the famine in Bengal in 1943–1944. For decades the encouragement of commercial crops at the expense of food grains weakened nutritional self-sufficiency and put marginal groups of consumers at risk of food insecurity and ultimately of famine.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Watts, Michael J. *Silent Violence: Food, Famine, and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*. 2d ed. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2013.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The risk of drought is high in northern Nigeria. In precolonial times the Hausa stored food in good years against shortages in drought-affected years. Communal distributions meant that starvation was therefore avoided. When the British arrived they encouraged cash cropping and demanded taxes. Commodity production was therefore intensified, at times beyond the capacity of the ecological conditions. Food insecurity and famine became familiar. First published in 1983.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Wemheuer, Felix. *Famine Politics in Maoist China and the Soviet Union*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

DOI: 10.12987/yale/9780300195811.001.0001 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The collectivization of agriculture provided a basis for Stalin's collection of a "tribute" from the peasantry. This was used to finance industrialization and urbanization.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Food Scarcity Theory

The suggestion of Thomas Malthus (Malthus 1798, James 2008) that the working classes were at risk of famine because their numbers increased faster than their means of sustenance has been influential (Harvey 1974). It has been called a zombie theory because, despite evidence to the contrary, the neo-Malthusian specter of overpopulation continues to be raised as a famine risk (Ehrlich and Ehrlich 2013). In the 19th century, a general increase in crop yields and the emergence of a global food trading system undermined both the agricultural productivity and food availability strands of the Malthusian thesis, at least for the more advanced economies of Europe and North America. Malthus's ideas have somewhat uncomfortably been recycled more recently as "food-availability decline" (FAD) and applied to the postcolonial states of the Third World. According to this perspective, food scarcity theory is on strongest ground where supply-side food problems have led to a per capita decline in food production, for instance in sub-Saharan Africa, though alternative explanations are available for recent famines there (Devereux 2009, cited under General Overviews). Looking further back in history, Ó Gráda 2007 is clear that FAD *did* play an important part in most famines. A number of recent books indicate that Malthusianism is merely one example of an international existential anxiety about expanding population in relation to quality of life—for instance adequate nutrition—that has been dealt with by vast programs of social engineering (Connelly 2010, Bashford 2014, Mayhew 2014, Mayhew 2016).

Bashford, Alison. *Global Population: History, Geopolitics, and Life on Earth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A history of eugenics from 1900 to 1968, arguing that there was intellectual continuity before and after the Second World War with regard to population, geopolitics, and hunger.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Connelly, Matthew. *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Indirectly relevant to hunger and famine, but a major contribution to the literature on the control of reproductive rights in the 20th century. The author uses archives of groups such as Planned Parenthood and the Vatican's formerly secret papers.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Ehrlich, Paul R., and Anne H. Ehrlich. "[Can a Collapse of Global Civilization be Avoided?](#)" *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 280 (2013): 20122845.

DOI: 10.1098/rspb.2012.2845 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Here the Ehrlichs provide an auto-critique of their classic 1968 book *The Population Bomb*. While recognizing the weaknesses of their original prediction of widespread famine, overtaken, they claim, by the success of the Green Revolution, they remain resolutely neo-Malthusian in their gloomy overview of future population-resource dynamics.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Harvey, David. "Population, Resources and the Ideology of Science." *Economic Geography* 50.3 (1974): 256–277.

DOI: 10.2307/142863 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Harvey reminds us that Malthus was writing "a political tract against the utopian socialist-anarchism of Godwin and Condorcet and as an antidote to the hopes for social progress aroused by the French Revolution" (p. 258).

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

James, Patricia, ed. *T. R. Malthus: An Essay on the Principle of Population*. 2 vols. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A two-volume scholarly reconstruction of Malthus's *Essay* that demonstrates the substantial differences between the 1798 edition and the various revised editions published from 1803 to 1826.

Malthus, Thomas R. *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society*. London: J. Johnson, 1798.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A classic of the famine literature, though one suspects more often cited than read. It went through six editions and has since been frequently reprinted, summarized, excerpted, and quoted. The prediction is of a population “check” by starvation and disease when less food is available per head—a simple but powerful idea.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Mayhew, Robert. *Malthus: The Life and Legacies of an Untimely Prophet*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

DOI: 10.4159/harvard.9780674419407 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Shows that Malthus was controversial from the outset. Mayhew argues that his ideas continue to be irrepressible in the light of the juxtaposition of demography and climate change in the same environmental agenda.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Mayhew, Robert, ed. *New Perspectives on Malthus*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A collection of interdisciplinary essays from leading Malthus experts who reassess his work, published to mark the 250th anniversary of his birth.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Ó Gráda, Cormac. “Making Famine History.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 45.1 (2007): 5–38.

DOI: 10.1257/jel.45.1.5 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A wide-ranging article that was later extended by Ó Gráda 2009 (cited under [General Overviews](#)). A key point made is that there is a paucity of historical evidence for “pure” entitlement famines with no FAD dimension, indicating that modern famine scholarship underestimates the role of food supply.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Entitlement Theory

A radical new insight into famine was proposed in 1981 by Amartya Sen. To Sen, the FAD explanation was not borne out in the case studies of famines in Bengal (1943–1944), Ethiopia (1972–1974), the Sahel (1973), and Bangladesh (1974). Instead, he found that it was access to food, measurable in the “exchange entitlements” of individuals and households, that determined vulnerability to the shock of famine. These entitlements depend, among other variables, upon own-production, purchasing/bargaining power in a market, traditional community support mechanisms, and access to state relief. A period of socioeconomic stress might therefore include harvest failures, rising food prices, and falling wages. Lest the poor in the rural South be seen somehow as eternal victims, a post-Sen literature has grown around the concept of resilience, which discusses the various coping strategies adopted by the hundreds of millions of people worldwide who manage to survive despite living in the shadow of famine and the many environmental and political hazards that drive them to the economic margins of existence. Sen’s contribution forced famine studies to consider a new approach, and it got the attention of the policymaking community. The academic niceties of his work were in a sense secondary, though they have nevertheless generated considerable controversy in their own right. Works such as [Bowbrick 1986](#), [Nolan 1993](#), [Osmani 1995](#), [Fine 1997](#), [Devereux 2001](#), and [Elahi 2006](#) have thoroughly tested Sen’s theory against an array of empirical evidence, and the conclusion, in short, is that while the general principle has utility, there are some neglected aspects. Sen is most relevant to peasant societies with private property and some engagement with market-based exchange, but less predictive for precapitalist societies dominated by common property resources, and he is also unconvincing on famine under socialism. He is at his weakest when legal-based entitlements are flouted, as in times of civil conflict and war. A key criticism is that Sen underplays food shortages as a cause of famine. In [Sen 1999](#) he argued that the presence of liberal democracy in a country is a powerful anti-famine tool. The argument runs that effective political opposition and a critical media will hold governments and their agencies to account, and that indifference to starvation, inefficiency in relief delivery, and the deliberate creation of famine conditions are less likely as a result. The evidence suggests, however, that it is less the presence of a constitutional democracy that matters than the effective operation of institutions, coupled with the politicization of famine in a manner that commits politicians to an anti-famine political contract ([Banik 2007](#), [Rubin 2010](#)).

Banik, Dan. *Starvation and India's Democracy*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Disagreeing with [Sen 1999](#), Banik maintains that democracies do not necessarily protect their citizens from famine, especially if they have neoliberal economies dominated by a small elite.

[+] Find this resource:

Bowbrick, Peter. "The Causes of Famine: A Refutation of Professor Sen's Theory." *Food Policy* 11 (1986): 105–124.

DOI: 10.1016/0306-9192(86)90059-X [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Bowbrick is one of Sen's most trenchant critics. He derides Sen for reviving the demand-side-only approach of English classical economics, and accuses him of misreporting the data he used to support his empirical case study of the Bengal famine of 1943–1944.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Devereux, Stephen. "Sen's Entitlement Approach: Critiques and Counter-Critiques." *Oxford Development Studies* 29.3 (2001): 245–263.

DOI: 10.1080/13600810120088859 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A summary of the debate around Sen's entitlement approach to famines. Sen's theory is seen as open to criticism because of shortcomings "largely of Sen's own making" (p. 246). The paper is strong on Sen's own declared limitations on his theory. Discussion of the fuzziness of entitlements, for instance, lays bare Sen's reliance upon legal rights, when in traditional rural societies there are so many other ways of determining access or lack of access to food, such as the gendered inequalities in evidence throughout South Asia and elsewhere.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Elahi, Khandakar Q. "Entitlement Failure and Deprivation: A Critique of Sen's Famine Philosophy." *Journal of Development Studies* 42.4 (2006): 541–558.

DOI: 10.1080/00220380600680771 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Raises a number of objections to Sen's explanation of famines. One is that short-run food prices in famine situations are determined by speculation, not by actual supply and demand.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Fine, Ben. "Entitlement Failure?" *Development and Change* 28.4 (1997): 617–647.

DOI: 10.1111/1467-7660.00058 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Fine evaluates the various criticisms of Sen's thesis. Most criticisms arise, he finds, from misunderstandings of one sort or another. An example is that that some critics have mistakenly thought that Sen concluded that famines were seldom, or never, caused by FAD. According to Fine, Sen's approach.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Nolan, Peter. "The Causation and Prevention of Famines: A Critique of A. K. Sen." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 21 (1993): 1–28.

DOI: 10.1080/03066159308438535 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Nolan criticizes Sen for neglecting transport, which has a role in preventing and avoiding famines through its integration of the space-economy at various scales. It is essential in reducing price differentials and facilitating access to food in famine-prone regions.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Osmani, S. R. "The Entitlement Approach to Famine: An Assessment." In *Choice, Welfare and Development: A Festschrift in Honour of Amartya K. Sen*. Edited by K. Basu, P. K. Pattanail, and K. Suzumura, 253–294. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Osmani suggests that criticisms of entitlement theory are principally due to Sen's misplaced insistence on knocking down the straw man of FAD. He argues that it would have been better if Sen had not used FAD as his point of departure.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Rubin, Olivier. *Democracy and Famine*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Criticizes approaches to the causes of famine that simplify their argument to the level of whole political systems. Breaking down governance into its various elements is more productive.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Sen, Amartya. *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This book is a citation classic, and it has been significant in the maturing of the famine literature. Sen followed it with a number of publications expanding and modifying his argument in response to a vigorous debate about his theory.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Not just about food and famine, but important as a step beyond entitlement theory. Sen argues that progress with economic development depends upon access to a suite of freedoms. One of these is the right to food, thereby making a connection between food security and governance issues. In essence, this means that famine is least likely to happen in properly functioning democracies.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Interventions

Most commentators agree that it is important to move global sentiment about food and famine from a focus on emergency intervention to long-term policies for poverty reduction, the social protection of vulnerable groups (for instance by the provision of food vouchers or cash to chronically vulnerable households to mitigate the effects of a climatic shock or other disruption), and resilient and sustainable food production systems (Babu and Dorosh 2017). Some countries have already achieved this, such as Bangladesh (Ahmed, et al. 2000) and Ethiopia (Dorosh and Rashid 2012; de Waal 2017, cited under Definitions). Policies to improve food security have been widely adopted, from the economics of markets to the holding of strategic food reserves (Lynton-Evans 1997) and the tactical use of food aid (Barrett and Maxwell 2005). The situation in many countries, in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, remains fragile, and tipping into famine is possible as a result of drought or military conflict. Yet the public's understanding of famine is one of an acute food shortage that requires a short-term response. This humanitarian perception is a relatively recent one historically, following the formation of Oxfam in 1942. After the Second World War, international NGOs proliferated and their reaction to famine was paralleled by an increasing commitment by Western governments to food aid and the formation of the World Food Programme (WFP) by the United Nations in 1961. Recent food emergencies have shown that consensus is difficult to achieve even among NGOs, let alone between governments and international aid agencies such as the WFP. This is partly because these organizations have different, and sometimes contradictory, interests, but there are also practical and technical issues. The politicians who control the purse strings of food aid are most clearly moved by the label "famine," coupled with high media visibility. This leads to the argument sometimes articulated that famines should only be declared for large-scale, acute events, because to do so more frequently would "debase the coinage." Some famine and hunger responses have improved, such as the use of ready-to-use therapeutic foods—high-energy pastes typically made from peanuts, oils, sugar, and milk powder (UNICEF 2013)—though others, such as golden rice, have in the view of some given a bad name to techno-managerial approaches (Kimura 2013). Other interventions have been shown to make unjustified assumptions about the nature of the emergencies and therefore fail to improve food security (Levine and Chastre 2004). A solid foundation of data and analysis is necessary for emergency preparedness (Maxwell, et al. 2008), ideally to head off famines in risk-prone areas, but realistically in some regions to match emergency needs with the available resources (Barrett and Maxwell 2005). In the longer term and at a broader scale, a debate is necessary about the scientific and industrial contributions to eliminating hunger, from mega irrigation schemes and the plant breeding of the Green Revolution to genetically modified plants and animals (Cullather 2010).

Ahmed, Raisuddin, Steven Haggblade, and Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, eds. *Out of the Shadow of Famine: Evolving Food Markets and Food Policy in Bangladesh*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Despite its exposure to environmental hazards and extensive rural poverty, Bangladesh has overcome the specter of famine. The government, in partnership with a legion of overseas donors and NGOs, has supervised a shift from the hardship of the 1974 famine to the more resilient situation that exists today. This has been achieved while eroding the ration system and liberalizing foodgrain markets.

Babu, Suresh Chandra, and Paul Dorosh. *From Famine to Food Security: Lessons for Building Resilient Food Systems*. IFPRI Policy Brief. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2017.

DOI: 10.2499/9780896292888 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The emphasis here is upon building resilience: resilient policy systems at the national level that enable efficient management of emergencies but also plan and invest for long-term growth in food production; institutional resilience at the national and local level that can cope with shocks such as drought or conflict; and food system resilience built through the sharing of knowledge and technical innovation.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Barrett, Christopher, and Daniel Maxwell. *Food Aid after Fifty Years: Recasting Its Role*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2005.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Food aid was at first about disposing of the food surpluses of Europe and North America and using them as ammunition in the strategic geopolitics of the Cold War. More recently, food aid has been used for developmental and humanitarian purposes.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Barrett, Christopher, Daniel Maxwell, and Erin Lentz. *A Market Analysis and Decision Tree Tool for Response Analysis: Cash, Local Purchase and/or Imported Food Aid?* Atlanta, GA: CARE, 2007.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This paper seeks to provide field decision makers with a set of the detailed response analysis tools to determine the appropriate intervention in a food security crisis.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Cullather, Nick. *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This book shows that the Green Revolution was only one among several postcolonial attempts to resist communism by providing food to the hungry, thus stabilizing the regional politics of Asia. The result has been a greater concentration of rural wealth in the hands of those who control the productive resources; the creation of an international agro-industrial complex of corporations providing seeds, fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides; and a significant challenge to ecological sustainability in the Global South.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Dorosh, Paul A., and Shahidur Rashid. *Food and Agriculture in Ethiopia: Progress and Policy Challenges*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Ethiopia suffered major famines in the 1970s and 1980s. The claim in this collection is that the country has since increased food production, promoted market development, built a safety net for food-insecure households, and improved its disaster food emergency response capabilities. Problems remain, however, as demonstrated by yet another famine in 1998–2000 and continuing vulnerability to droughts.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Kimura, Aya. *Hidden Hunger: Gender and the Politics of Smarter Foods*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.

DOI: 10.7591/cornell/9780801451645.001.0001 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Through case studies of Indonesia, the author shows not only that the benefits of food fortification have been exaggerated, but also that the burden on women is increased as a result of them being told that balanced nutrition comes from packets and boxes rather than from their gardens.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Levine, Simon, and Claire Chastre. *Missing the Point: An Analysis of Food Security Interventions in the Great Lakes*. London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A number of crises in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa are analyzed, and the shocking conclusion is that few interventions were based on proper analysis. Not surprisingly, the results were poor in terms outcomes for food-insecure client groups.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Lynton-Evans, John. *Strategic Grain Reserves: Guidelines for Their Establishment, Management and Operation*. FAO Agricultural Services Bulletin 126. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1997.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Although the purpose of this bulletin is technical, the author makes the text accessible and the reader can appreciate the context in which food stocks are necessary to smooth out the fluctuations in food production that threaten the consumers of some countries with famine. In addition, there are sections devoted to the establishment and management of strategic grain reserves.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Maxwell, Daniel, Kate Sadler, Amanda Sim, Mercy Mutonyi, Rebecca Egan, and Mackinnon Webster. *Emergency Food Security Interventions*. London: Overseas Development Institute, 2008.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A critical review of good practice that seeks to provide an overview of analytical and planning approaches and programming practices in interventions. It is also about the often overlooked response analysis step: decision making, planning, and analyzing alternative interventions.

[+] **Find this resource:**

UNICEF. *Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food for Children with Severe Acute Malnutrition*. UNICEF Position Paper. New York: UNICEF, 2013.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

These foods are safe, cost-effective, and have saved hundreds of thousands of children's lives in recent years.

[+] **Find this resource:**

“New” Famines

In the 21st century, the phenomenon of famine has reemerged in Ethiopia (2000), Malawi (2001–2002), Niger (2005), Somalia (2011), and South Sudan (2017), and there have been many other emergencies of acute food insecurity. There is a literature claiming that a new category of famine has emerged that cannot be accommodated in the conceptual framework of FAD or entitlements outlined above. One view, put forth in [Edkins 2000](#), is that famine is “produced” by modernity and that we should therefore not be surprised that in its latest phase, globalization, we can see some new variants. There are three other strands in “new famine” thinking. The first, initiated by [de Waal and Whiteside 2003](#), linked the AIDS epidemic in Africa to a “new variant” famine that might follow the social disruption and economic decline that the disease was producing in some countries. This hypothesis was subsequently withdrawn, and detailed fieldwork presented in [Ansell, et al. 2016](#) shows that AIDS affects livelihoods in an unsystematic and unpredictable way, and that it cannot be linked specifically to food insecurity. Second, the conflict school of famine ([Macrae and Zwi 1992](#)) argues that food shortages are common in the chaos of war, and that this cause of famine has become more common in the last few decades, especially in Africa and the Middle East. Two iconic famines that have changed our way of thinking about famine are Sudan (1984–1985) and Somalia (2011). Alex de Waal’s book about Darfur ([de Waal 2005](#), first published 1989) was especially influential. His conclusions were that the key variables were not poverty or entitlements, but rather water and sanitation, and that mortality was at least as much from disease as from undernutrition. De Waal sees famine as more of a social than an economic process. Somalia suffered a famine in 1991–1992, but it was the one in 2011 that inspired a number of publications ([Haan, et al. 2012](#); [Maxwell, et al. 2015](#); [Maxwell and Majid 2016](#); [Majid, et al. 2016](#)), because it was deemed to have been preventable. These and other “new” famines all had a political element—either the deliberate withholding of food as a weapon of war or a calculated slow response by the international donor community. The third strand of “new famine” research has been a focus on the failure to prevent or respond to extreme hunger because of indifference or incompetence in the polity of some dysfunctional states ([Devereux 2007](#)). This is also political and is related to the next section, on accountability.

Ansell, Nicola, Flora Hajdu, Lorraine van Blerk, and Elsbeth Robson. "AIDS-Affected Young People's Access to Livelihood Assets: Exploring 'New Variant Famine' in Rural Southern Africa." *Journal of Rural Studies* 46 (2016): 23–34.

DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.05.008 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Here, qualitative research in a livelihoods framework looks at how AIDS is impacting young people's access to assets and skills in Malawi and Lesotho. The findings show that AIDS affects some young people's access to some livelihood assets, but the impacts are not invariably negative.

(+) Find this resource:

Devereux, Stephen. "Introduction: From 'Old Famines' to 'New Famines.'" In *The New Famines: Why Famines Persist in an Era of Globalization*. Edited by Stephen Devereux, 1–26. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A full account of why new conceptualizations of famine are required in the light of the relationship, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, between conflict and famine. In essence, the articles in this book are all, in one way, about politics rather than about the environment or economics.

(+) Find this resource:

de Waal, Alex. *Famine That Kills: Darfur, Sudan*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A revised edition of de Waal's classic 1989 volume, which challenged existing definitions and characterizations of famine. De Waal worked with the testimony of those most affected by famine, particularly with regard to their coping strategies and their efforts to protect productive assets. One important conclusion was that famines do not always involve heightened mortality, and that where they do, this is more often than not the result of disease than starvation.

(+) Find this resource:

de Waal, Alex, and Alan Whiteside. "New Variant Famine: AIDS and Food Crisis in Southern Africa." *Lancet* 362 (2003): 1234–1237.

DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(03)14548-5 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The burden of caring for those with AIDS reduced the viability of farming livelihoods in some parts of southern Africa. Rural communities became more sensitive to external shocks, such as drought, and their resilience declined.

(+) Find this resource:

Edkins, Jenny. *Whose Hunger?: Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Edkins sees modernity as framing both our understanding of and our responses to famine. The result of the discursive practices that constitute famine in modernity is a depoliticized, technologized approach to famine theorizing and famine relief.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Haan, Nicholas, Daniel Maxwell, and Stephen Devereux. "Global Implications of Somalia 2011 for Famine Prevention, Mitigation and Response." In *Special Issue: The Somalia Famine of 2011–2012*. Edited by Daniel Maxwell, Kirsten Gelsdorf, Nicholas Haan, and David Dawe. *Global Food Security* 1 (2012): 74–79.

DOI: 10.1016/j.gfs.2012.09.003 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This article summarizes the special issue about the 2011–2012 Somali famine, drawing five lessons from it: the delay in response, the criteria for declaring a famine, the nature of the response, the restrictions on the humanitarian space, and accountability (who is responsible for causing or allowing this famine to happen?).

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Macrae, Joanna, and Anthony B. Zwi. "Food as an Instrument of War in Contemporary African Famines: A Review of the Evidence." *Disasters* 16.4 (1992): 299–321.

DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7717.1992.tb00412.x [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The authors focus on the deliberate creation of famine, and also show how views about the causes of famines have evolved. They conclude that there are almost always multiple underlying causes.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Majid, Nisar, Guhad Adan, Khalif Abdirahman, Jeeyon Janet Kim, and Daniel Maxwell. *Narratives of Famine: Somalia 2011*. Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center, 2016.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The first-person narratives of the 2011 Somali famine that accompany the analysis in [Maxwell, et al. 2015](#).

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Maxwell, Daniel, and Nisar Majid. *Famine in Somalia: Competing Imperatives, Collective Failures, 2011–12*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

DOI: [10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190499389.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190499389.001.0001) [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

An account of every aspect of a famine that killed 250,000 people in southern Somalia in 2011–2012. The potential crisis had been predicted months before, but the international response was delayed by the presence of the militant Islamist group al-Shabaab.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Maxwell, Daniel, Nisar Majid, Guhad Adan, Khalif Abdirahman, and Jeeyon Janet Kim. *Facing Famine: Somali Experiences in the Famine of 2011*. Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center, 2015.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Based on more than 350 interviews with the local people most affected. The main dimension extracted was the coping strategies of households in the light of their social connectedness. For the full narrative approach, see [Majid, et al. 2016](#).

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Accountability: Human Rights, Famine, and Fault

There is nothing new about discussions of famine in the context of morality and politics ([Devereux 2008](#)). [Nally 2011](#) points out that food scarcity, with its extremes in famine, was taken for granted under mercantile economics, but this changed in physiocrat thinking to be seen as a problem of governance. In other words, the early intellectual stages of modernity pushed famine to the center of social responsibility. More recently, there has been much debate about whether human agency has been the principal cause of a specific famine, either directly through political decisions or indirectly through food system dysfunction. Within this debate there is the question of antisocial behavior during famines by individuals or groups, such as the theft of food. [Ó Gráda 2015](#) takes this a stage further with a discussion of cannibalism during a range of famines through the ages, covering eating those who died of natural causes as well as murder cannibalism. In broad terms, the humanitarian theme has achieved greater intellectual rigor as the result of a widespread discussion of the “right to food.” This is already an inalienable human right under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but its practical application is still at an early stage of development. In 2004 the FAO Council adopted the Right to Food Guidelines, but these are voluntary. Some activists have suggested that modern famines are always political to some extent, and that it is therefore possible to argue legally that there are accountable parties who are liable, either for negligence or, in the worst cases, for genocide, requiring prosecution in the International Criminal Court ([Marcus 2003](#), [de Waal 1997](#)) for their atrocities. This has dramatically shifted the center of gravity of famine studies from “what is the cause of famines?” to “who benefits from famines?” ([Keen 1994](#)). Provisions against famine crimes are already present in international law, but they need bolstering and codifying ([Edkins 2007](#), [de Waal 1997](#)).

Devereux, Stephen. "Famine." In *The Companion to Development Studies*. 2d ed. Edited by Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, 176–180. London: Hodder Education, 2008.

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Devereux argues that "famines have always been political" (p. 178).

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

de Waal, Alex. *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*. African Issues. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Building on [Keen 1994](#), de Waal calls for those who are responsible for famine or who fail to stop famine to be held criminally liable. He introduces the notion of "political contracts" between rulers and ruled that would guarantee the prevention of mass mortality due to famine. Published in association with African Rights, the International African Institute, and James Currey.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Edkins, Jenny. "The Criminalization of Mass Starvations: From Natural Disaster to Crime against Humanity." In *The New Famines: Why Famines Persist in an Era of Globalization*. Edited by Stephen Devereux, 50–65. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Edkins dismisses questions about the causes of famine, preferring instead to ask how acts of mass starvation are committed, by whom, and how those responsible can be brought to justice.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Keen, David. *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983–1989*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Famines have beneficiaries as well as victims. This unsavory thought is explored with respect to the 1980s famine in the Sudan. There were particular interest groups that actively promoted food insecurity, particularly among the Dinka, in order to steal assets and gain politically. International donors have proved to be ineffective in identifying and counteracting this cause of famine.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Marcus, David. "Famine Crimes in International Law." *American Journal of International Law* 97 (2003): 245–281.

DOI: 10.2307/3100102 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Argues for the criminalization of two degrees of faminogenic behavior. The first is recklessness, where a government implements policies that themselves engender famine, and then recklessly continue to pursue these policies despite learning that they are causing mass starvation. Second, there is the deliberate use of hunger as a tool of extermination.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Nally, David. "The Biopolitics of Food Provisioning." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36 (2011): 37–53.

DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2010.00413.x [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A clear statement of Foucault's understanding that implicit in laissez-faire economics is the notion of the emergence of anti-scarcity systems. This does not imply the disappearance of famines, but rather a shift from hunger amid scarcity to hunger amid abundance. In addition, famine, under the new biopolitics of liberalism, now has a "function" of precipitating socioeconomic change.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Ó Gráda, Cormac. *Eating People Is Wrong and Other Essays on Famine, Its Past, and Its Future*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A wide-ranging volume that reviews famines in Bengal (1943–1944), China (1959–1961), and preindustrial Europe. Its greatest strength is the scholarly use of evidence and the deployment of a number of analytical techniques.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

The Spectacle of Famine

Famines were discovered as a humanitarian concern in the 19th century (Vernon 2007), when a number of them in South Asia were covered by journalists. Campaigning to raise funds for famine victims followed in the 20th century, when the Save the Children Fund became active in the famine that accompanied the 1921–1923 civil war in Russia. Oxfam was formed later in the century in reaction to the famine in Greece (1942) and the Dutch hunger winter (1944–1945). The modern era of NGOs followed, and most are familiar with their advertising for public support using images of famine victims that collectively have been called the “spectacle of suffering.” Arguably, it was Walter Mallory’s book *China: Land of Famine* (Mallory 1926) that established the idea of the famine victim in the public mind, but in the last three or four decades, photojournalism and television have created a new suite of famine imaginaries. A key threshold was a television report by Michael Buerk and Mohamed Amin from Korem on the Ethiopian famine in 1984 (Franks 2013). It generated an immediate response, including the fund-raising concert BandAid. Campbell 2003 and Campbell 2012 are important here in establishing new ways of understanding the contexts in which photo-images of famine are created and consumed. But imaging hunger can also have negative consequences. Some argue that frequent depiction of starving children in Africa encourages a reductionism that lazy voyeurs accept and then fail to look for the variety of experience and resilience in that continent (Moeller 1999, Stupart and Strelitz 2016). The visual image is prone to the inductive fallacy of seeing: that one shot is representative of a wider truth (Atkins 2012, cited under General Overviews). Worse than that, political control of the reporting of famines by the media can exclude any inconvenient messages about government responsibility (Dugo and Eisen 2016). To this section we must also add the “spectacle of hunger” that is so effectively depicted in a range of media, from films such as the experimental documentary *H is for Hunger* (Hollander 2009) to the drama *I, Daniel Blake* (Loach 2016).

Campbell, David. “Salgado and the Sahel: Documentary Photography and the Imaging of Famine.” In *Rituals of Mediation: International Politics and Social Meaning*. Edited by François Debrix and Cynthia Weber, 69–96. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Debates the negative and potentially positive contribution of photojournalism to public understandings of famine, with particular reference to the work of the Brazilian photographer Sebastião Ribeiro Salgado. In contrast to the depoliticization of disasters in many media, Campbell argues that Salgado’s approach is ethical and responsible, making it possible to envisage a humanitarian ethos in famine images.

[+] **Find this resource:**

Campbell, David. "The Iconography of Famine." In *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller, and Jay Prosser, 79–92. London: Reaktion, 2012.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Looks at the Malawi famine of 2002 and deconstructs a "portrait of atrocity." The conclusion is that media create stereotypes of famine victims through the use of children. These icons have the function of alerting the public, though often after the event. The author claims that the main problem of famine is official indifference, and he sees the media as entrapped in that indifference until it is too late.

[+] Find this resource:

Dugo, Habtamu, and Joanne Eisen. "Famine, Genocide and Media Control in Ethiopia." *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 9.10 (2016): 334–357.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This paper shows how media control can be used to prevent global understanding of the unfolding of famine and thereby reproduce the power of elites.

[+] Find this resource:

Franks, Suzanne. *Reporting Disaster: Famine, Aid, Politics and the Media*. London: Hurst, 2013.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Franks sees problems with the media's coverage of the Ethiopia famine of 1984. While acknowledging the power of the BBC reporting, through images of emaciated children, and its impact in generating a response, her analysis finds simplistic narratives based upon natural disaster that were devoid of political context.

[+] Find this resource:

Hollander, Neil, dir. *H is for Hunger*. Vancouver: IndustryWorks Pictures, 2009.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Described by one website as "90 minutes of rage," this documentary is fronted by Henry Rollins. It is an angry monologue that seeks to raise popular awareness of issues concerning hunger.

[+] Find this resource:

Loach, Ken, dir. *I, Daniel Blake*. London: eONE Films, 2016.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A film about vulnerable people struggling with the bureaucracy of the British benefits system. At one level it is a pungent political satire of hunger and the need for food banks in a prosperous country.

[+] Find this resource:

Mallory, Walter H. *China: Land of Famine*. New York: American Geographical Society, 1926.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This book demonstrates early sophistication in the depiction and analysis of hunger. As secretary of the China International Relief Commission, Mallory was in a good position to take an overall view of the country most at risk in that decade, and this enabled him to present a multifactorial interpretation that included economic, environmental, political, and social causes, along with his suggested cures.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Moeller, Susan D. *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*. London: Routledge, 1999.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

An investigation of how the American media covered international crises, including famine, in the 1980s and 1990s. Moeller argues that the profit motive distorts the style of storytelling and causes compassion fatigue, but she insists that the media have a moral responsibility to the public to report accurately and objectively, avoiding formulaic superficiality and stereotyping.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Stupart, Richard, and Larry Strelitz. "Framing Famine: An Analysis of Media Coverage of the 2011 Famine in Somalia." *African Journalism Studies* 37 (2016): 100–119.

DOI: 10.1080/23743670.2015.1084586 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A content analysis of coverage of the 2011–2012 famine in Somalia on the websites of BBC News, CNN, and Al Jazeera. It finds an overwhelming reliance on Malthusian explanations of famine, and noticeable under-reporting of the famine until after it was formally declared by the United Nations.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Vernon, James. *Hunger: A Modern History*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

DOI: 10.4159/9780674044678 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Vernon attempts to unsettle the reader's expectations about hunger and finds a way in through British investigative journalism and photography—in other words, representational insights. There is a strong section on 19th-century famines in India, including discussion of the famine codes.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Famine Demography

Apart from mortality, what effect does famine have upon the demography of a region or nation? Sometimes this is difficult to say, because during famines the accurate recording of information is often one of the first casualties. Demographers are sometimes forced to estimate retrospectively from a range of different sources and indicators. For instance, there is usually a reduction in fertility due to starvation-induced amenorrhea, as is clearly visible in the population pyramid of China, which suffered a horrific famine between 1958 and 1962 (Ó Gráda 2016). Nevertheless, fertility rebounds later and numbers eventually recover, so Malthus was wrong on that score. Post-famine populations also tend to have a higher proportion of girls and women than normal, for physiological reasons, but also a lower representation of the old and the young, because they are vulnerable to starvation (Dyson and Ó Gráda 2002; chapter 4 of Ó Gráda 2009, cited under [General Overviews](#)). Famine is a testing ground for the fetal origins hypothesis, which suggests that stress in the womb will affect health in later life. Probably the most studied example of this is the Dutch “hunger winter” in 1944–1945, when civilian food supplies were cut by the German army (Stein, et al. 1975; Lumey and van Poppel 2013). The literature has been controversial, but the emerging consensus is that there is evidence for links between experiencing famine in utero and subsequent under-average height, diabetes, and schizophrenia. The evidence from the Great Leap Forward famine in China is less certain (Li and Lumey 2017). An addition to this literature is the insight that famine may cause epigenetic changes.

Ó Gráda, Cormac. “‘The Last, the Most Dreadful Resource of Nature’: Economic Historical Reflections on Famine.” *Atlantic Economic Journal* 44 (2016): 225–241.

DOI: 10.1007/s11293-016-9494-6 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Reviews the impact of famines on fertility and looks at famines in the context of the fetal origins hypothesis.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Dyson, Tim, and Cormac Ó Gráda, eds. *Famine Demography: Evidence from the Past and the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This is a collection of ten case studies on the demography of famines, both historical and modern: two Asian, two African, and three European. Drawing conclusions is difficult because thorough comparative histories are compromised by the variable quantity and quality of sources, and because of environmental and economic contexts.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Li, Chihua, and L. H. Lumey. "Exposure to the Chinese Famine of 1959–61 in Early Life and Long-Term Health Conditions: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." *International Journal of Epidemiology* 46.4 (2017): 1157–1170.

DOI: 10.1093/ije/dyx013 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Li and Lumey contradict some earlier research on the impact of the Great Leap Forward famine, which found overweight, type 2 diabetes, hyperglycemia, the metabolic syndrome, and schizophrenia were all more common among adults born during the famine, compared with controls born after the famine. These authors, conducting a carefully controlled meta-analysis of the literature, find no such effects.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Lumey, L. H., and Frans W. A. van Poppel. "The Dutch Famine of 1944–45 as a Human Laboratory: Changes in the Early Life Environment and Adult Health." In *Early Life Nutrition, Adult Health and Development: Lessons from Changing Dietary Patterns, Famines and Experimental Studies*. Edited by L. H. Lumey and Alexander Vaiserman, 59–76. New York: Nova Science, 2013.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Of all reported outcomes, associations between prenatal famine and adult body size, diabetes, and schizophrenia show the most consistent pattern. For other outcomes, the pattern is more variable and inconsistent.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Stein, Zena, Mervyn Susser, Gerhart Saenger, and Francis Marolla. *Famine and Human Development: The Dutch Hunger Winter of 1944–1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

A well-known account of the hunger-winter famine in the Netherlands. It attempts to pose questions about the physical impact of malnutrition in utero on long-term child development.

[+] [Find this resource:](#)

Famine Futures

The future of famine depends on whether we are capable of learning the lessons of recent decades (Devereux, et al. 2017). With the political will, famine can be eliminated. For instance policies such as “social protection” can be used, where regular and predictable support is provided to vulnerable people before shocks occur (Devereux 2016; Stavropoulou, et al. 2017). If policymakers do not come forward with such solutions, acute food insecurity and chronic undernutrition will last as long as ultra-poverty persists, especially among marginalized groups in marginal environments. This last point links to predictions that marginal environments may increase in area and severity of challenge as a result of global warming (Food and Agriculture Organization 2008; Porter, et al. 2014; Food and Agriculture Organization 2016). It seems particularly likely that there will be perturbations in the Asian monsoon and the spread of aridity in Africa and the Mediterranean, with the implication of increased vulnerability in countries (such as India) that are densely populated. As climate change modeling becomes more sophisticated, a consensus is growing that this type of famine risk will increase over the coming decades (Devereux and Edwards 2004).

Devereux, Stephen. “Social Protection for Enhanced Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Food Policy* 60 (2016): 52–62.

DOI: [10.1016/j.foodpol.2015.03.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2015.03.009) Save Citation » Export Citation » E-mail Citation »

Reviews social protection measures such as weather-indexed insurance, public works programs, emergency food aid, and buffer stock management. These seek to give vulnerable groups some stability, across seasons and years, in their income and access to food.

[+] Find this resource:

Devereux, Stephen, and Jenny Edwards. “Climate Change and Food Security.” *IDS Bulletin* 35.3 (2004): 22–29.

DOI: [10.1111/j.1759-5436.2004.tb00130.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2004.tb00130.x) Save Citation » Export Citation » E-mail Citation »

Looks at how climate change is likely to impact global food supplies, and how its impacts will be distributed. The authors ask whether climate change will increase or reduce the food security risks facing countries and people in different parts of the world.

[+] Find this resource:

Devereux, Stephen, and Jenny Edwards. "Climate Change and Food Security." *IDS Bulletin* 35.3 (2004): 22–29.

DOI: [10.1111/j.1759-5436.2004.tb00130.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2004.tb00130.x) [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Looks at how climate change is likely to impact global food supplies, and how its impacts will be distributed. The authors ask whether climate change will increase or reduce the food security risks facing countries and people in different parts of the world.

[+] Find this resource:

Devereux, Stephen, Lewis Sida, and Tina Nelis. *Famine: Lessons Learned*. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2017.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

This document is a model of concision. It summarizes the state of the art of our understanding of famine causes, responses, and recovery. It also lists and justifies the ten most important lessons learned from decades of analysis and action, success and failure.

[+] Find this resource:

Food and Agriculture Organization. *Climate Change and Food Security: A Framework Document*. Rome: FAO, 2008.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The FAO foresees that climate change will have a negative effect on all four dimensions of food security: food availability, food accessibility, food utilization, and food systems stability. It will therefore impact on human health, livelihood assets, food production, and distribution channels, as well as changing purchasing power and market flows.

[+] Find this resource:

Food and Agriculture Organization. *The State of Food and Agriculture: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security*. Rome: FAO, 2016.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The FAO assert that the effects of climate change on agricultural production will intensify, though with variations across countries and regions. Beyond 2030 the negative impacts on the productivity of crops, livestock, and fisheries will become increasingly severe.

[+] Find this resource:

Porter, John R., Liyong Xie, Andrew J. Challinor, et al. "Food Security and Food Production Systems." In *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Working Group II Contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Edited by Christopher B. Field and Vicente R. Barros, 485–533. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

[Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

The document most relevant from the fifth cycle of IPCC reports. Inevitably there are difficulties in predicting food output, but the scenarios are concerning for global food security.

[\[+\]](#) Find this resource:

Stavropoulou, Maria, Rebecca Holmes, and Nicola Jones. "Harnessing Informal Institutions to Strengthen Social Protection for the Rural Poor." *Global Food Security* 12 (2017): 73–79.

DOI: 10.1016/j.gfs.2016.08.005 [Save Citation »](#) [Export Citation »](#) [E-mail Citation »](#)

Social protection programs help the prevention of famine by enabling recipients to increase consumption, improve agricultural productivity, manage risks, and build assets.

[\[+\]](#) Find this resource: