

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-12311-3 - Combating Hunger and Achieving Food Security

M. S. Swaminathan

Frontmatter

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Combating Hunger and Achieving Food Security

Food security can be achieved only through concurrent attention to food availability, access and absorption. It needs synergy between food and non-food factors: clean drinking water, sanitation, primary healthcare and purchasing power. The future of food security will depend on a combination of the ecological prudence of the past and the technological advances of today and tomorrow. The issues that need to be addressed in combating hunger and achieving food security are highlighted in this book by a great Indian geneticist. The genesis and growth of the yield revolution in wheat is traced at the beginning in order to give readers, particularly the younger generation, an understanding of the efforts that ushered in the Green Revolution of the 1960s.

The book also discusses major causes of chronic and hidden hunger and emphasizes on the need to redesign the farming system to increase food production. The role of an effective monsoon management programme to maximise its benefits is examined. There are sections that analyse the importance of biodiversity conservation and enhancement and farmer skill development. Important issues for increasing agricultural production including investment by financial institutions in agriculture and rural development, women's role in agriculture, and youth employment in rural livelihoods are discussed in great detail in the text. The book concludes that there must be synergy between scientific knowledge, political will and farmers' active participation to achieve the goal of overcoming chronic and hidden hunger in the populations of developing countries.

M. S. Swaminathan is the founder chairman of MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, India. He studied at the Plant Breeding Institute of the University of Cambridge and earned a PhD in 1952. Professor Swaminathan has contributed significantly in the areas of agricultural science, food and nutrition. He has been described by the United Nations Environment Program as the 'Father of Economic Ecology'. Swaminathan is the recipient of many prestigious awards which include the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership (1971), the Albert Einstein World Science Award (1986), and the first World Food Prize (1987). He is Fellow of the Royal Society of London, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Italian Academy of Sciences.

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“There are some staggering facts to consider. We know that the world’s current food production is enough to feed its entire population one and half times. And yet, according to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization, one in eight people suffer from chronic malnutrition. Meanwhile, more food is wasted per year in the developed world than is produced in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa in the same period. As many of the essays in this collection demonstrate, the main issue is not scarcity, but poverty and equality. And the answer does not lie in the increasing yields, but in improving them.”

— **Sir Leszek Borysiewicz**, Vice-Chancellor,
University of Cambridge

“The policy recommendations presented in the book are based on solid empirical evidence produced and acquired by Dr Swaminathan over many years. He not only knows the history; he played a major role making it ... The book provides a knowledge-based tour-de-force of food, agricultural and related environmental policy issues.”

— **Per Pinstrup-Andersen**, Chairman,
High Level Panel of Experts to the UN Committee on Food Security

“... should be read by anyone who wants to understand what it takes to wage a ‘frontal attack’ on hunger and malnutrition in a developing country. Professor Swaminathan makes clear that this fight will require a combination of scientific know-how, political will, and farmers’ toil. His gift for explaining complex concepts in terms everyone can understand means the book will be valuable for policy-makers and lay readers alike. Swaminathan not only describes what was behind past progress in India, but also talks about the National Food Security Act and sketches what it will take to overcome chronic and hidden hunger ...”

— **Shenggen Fan**, Director General,
International Food Policy Research Institute

“... only M. S. Swaminathan has the breadth of experience, intellect and depth of insight to comprehensively describe the past, the present and the preferred future directions for development of India’s vast agriculture sector ... The must-read basic primer into India’s approaches and ways of thinking about human welfare, environment and agriculture from the intellectual giant who played a central role in the research and legislation behind the new technologies, services and policies addressing these challenges.”

— **Thomas A. Lumpkin**, Director General,
International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre

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