



# Our right to food

World Food Day  
October 16

2024

Above: Florence Kyuvi shows cow peas stored in a granary at her home in Kathonzeni, Makueni County, Kenya. MCC Photo/Mwangi Kirubi

MCC U.S. National Peace  
& Justice Ministries



**Mennonite  
Central  
Committee**

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The theme for World Food Day, Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2024, is “Right to foods for a better life and better future.” According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, **more than 3.1 billion people—42% of the world’s population**—are unable to afford a healthy diet, causing rising hunger and malnutrition. Children and women are often those most affected.

Food is a human right and a blessing from God (1 Corinthians 9:4; Exodus 23:25). Human decisions, however, such as unfair government policies, corruption and land grabbing, can leave people hungry. Changes due to human-caused climate change also contribute to food shortages. Effective government and corporate policies can create more equitable food systems. For example, policies that enable small-holder farmers to employ culturally- and context-sensitive techniques and equipment can significantly boost productivity.

Government policies such as the Food for Peace program in the U.S. Farm Bill, for example, increase the resilience of families in fragile contexts by helping them grow more nutritious food close to home. This makes families and communities more self-sufficient when a shock such as a drought or flood hits their community. When such policies are compassionately created and implemented, they can address both emergency and non-emergency needs.

**Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) responds** to food insecure populations by delivering food aid, such as food baskets, through partners during emergencies. MCC also supports conservation and “climate smart” agriculture projects, and other contextual and culturally sensitive approaches aimed at creating more equitable food systems.

As we celebrate World Food Day this year, let us acknowledge God’s benevolence to humanity and commit ourselves to contribute to a better world—a world in which no one goes to bed hungry.



## Damaris Gladys Mulinge: Diversification for women’s empowerment in Kenya

Damaris Gladys Mulinge, a 45-year-old widow and head of a household for seven, is part of Thanza Farmers’ Group in Kiou Sub-Location of Makueni County in Kenya. Mulinge, like the 30 other women in the group, is a smallholder farmer who faces challenges meeting the financial needs of her family.

After practicing conventional farming for many years, in 2021 Mulinge joined and participated in the Utooni Development Organization’s (UDO) Climate Smart Agriculture and Livelihoods Project (CSALP). She and other women learned to do conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and soil and water conservation. They also learned how to organize and participate in village savings and loans associations. Mulinge then increased the productivity of her 0.75-acre plot by intercropping maize with beans and by incorporating various conservation agriculture principles.

In 2023, Mulinge harvested five 100 kg (220 lb) bags of maize and two 100 kg bags of beans. She hopes to apply the principles, such as mulching to retain soil moisture, to other crops, including bananas. Currently, she grows nyota beans with terraces to better retain water. Nyota beans are also a good source of nitrogen which aids with soil fertility. Additionally, she has planted Napier grass on the terrace edges to protect other crops and to harvest as fodder for livestock.

Through diversification, Mulinge boasts of being able to afford three meals a day for her family, access a balanced diet and educate her children. She attributes her ability to meet economic and domestic challenges to the empowerment which she receives from the project through trainings and personalized follow-ups conducted by UDO project staff.

Damaris Mulinge works on her farm in Kiou Sub location of Makueni County in Kenya. MCC photo/ James Kanyari



# Worship resources

## Suggested songs

VT 268 Helpless and Hungry  
VT 309 Fill Us with Your Feast  
VT 715 Longing for Light  
VT 772 God of Justice

VT = *Voices Together hymnal*,  
Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, 2020.

## Call to worship (VT 876)

Living God,  
for whom no door is closed,  
no heart is locked,  
draw us beyond our doubts,  
till we see your Christ  
and touch his wounds  
where they bleed in others. Amen

## Suggested readings

Matthew 25:34-46  
Exodus 16:9-15

## Sending (VT 1066)

May the Christ who walks  
on wounded feet  
walk with you on the road.  
May the Christ who serves  
with wounded hands  
stretch out your hands to serve.  
May the Christ who loves  
with a wounded heart  
open your hearts to love.  
May you see the face of Christ  
in everyone you meet,  
and may everyone you meet  
see the face of Christ in you.

## Intercessions (VT 996)

Leader: Listening God,  
**All:** *you hear our prayers before we speak  
yet welcome our praying;  
therefore we come with confidence  
to lay our requests before you.*

Leader: We pray for Christians everywhere,  
for our denomination and congregation,  
for strength to persevere in faithfulness.  
We pray for the whole people of God.

**People:** **God of grace, hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for the nations of the world,  
for all leaders,  
and for those who make policy decisions.  
We pray for the well-being of our global community.

**People:** **God of grace, hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for the earth and all living creatures,  
for regions and species at risk,  
and for the sharing of resources.  
We pray for the wholeness of creation.

**People:** **God of grace, hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for those who are overcome by violence,  
for victims of injustice or oppression,  
and for those in poverty or pain.  
We pray for all who need healing and peace.

**People:** **God of grace, hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for those who endure trials,  
for those who are dying,  
and for those who mourn.  
We pray for all in need of comfort and hope.

**People:** **God of grace, hear our prayer.**

Leader: You have heard the prayers of your people, O God.  
We rest in the comfort of your care,  
as we pray in Jesus' name.

**All:** *Amen.*

## For further reading

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:  
World Food Day

<https://www.fao.org/world-food-day/en>



## Ato Abraham:

# Improving the lives of smallholder farmers in Ethiopia

Teaching conservation agriculture techniques in conjunction with organizing economic self-help groups (SHGs) can allow farmers to build savings together as they improve their food security. In Benishangul Gumuz Ethiopia, such programs build the resilience of smallholder farmers and their communities.

Ato Abraham, a smallholder farmer, previously spent a lot of money on fertilizer for his 5 hectares (12 acres) of land, yet the yields were insufficient to both feed his household and provide income to meet other needs. MCC supports the work of partner Feed the Hungry in Benishangul Gumuz to strengthen the capacity and innovation of farmers such as Abraham. Farmers learn techniques that allow them to use much less fertilizer and increase productivity. As local incomes grew due the increased productivity, Abraham's self-help group built a warehouse to store grain.

The farmer aggregation groups are able to receive better prices for the grain they sell because, when they store the grain collectively, they can sell in larger quantities and at more beneficial times. Through this shared-power approach and increased income, they can buy more seeds and other inputs. They can also plant profitable fruit trees, which provide extra food for the farmers, and fodder crops. Harvested fodder crops (like tree lucerne and certain grasses) can be used to control free grazing because animals can be confined and fed, rather than letting them forage.

Ato Abraham and members of his self-help group discussing their market aggregation work in Benishangul Gumuz. MCC photo/Paul Mosley

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