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AGAINST WAS, DROUGHT AD HUNGER: A GLOBAL COALITION TO PREVENT A FOOD CRISIS

Key Points

1. War in Ukraine, blocked fertilizer routes in Hormuz, and El Niño droughts threaten global food supplies. With international institutions paralyzed, Europe must lead a coalition to reopen vital trade corridors.
2. Europe must lead an international initiative to protect maritime trade, finance the World Food Programme, and provide smallholder farmers with technical assistance and drought-resistant seeds to stabilize global supplies.
3. Europe must organize an international coalition at UNGA to secure safe maritime shipping, fund relief agencies, and deliver technical support for drought-resistant farming to stabilize global food supplies.

Summary

A devastating global food crisis is accelerating due to the simultaneous convergence of the Ukrainian conflict, the Strait of Hormuz transit blockade, and record-breaking El Niño droughts. Rising food prices, shrinking agricultural yields, and trade protectionism jeopardize global security. This looming calamity coincides with a critical absence of multilateral political leadership, leaving international institutions paralyzed amid escalating geopolitical turmoil. In response, European governments should urgently assemble a pragmatic, multi-regional coalition uniting influential middle powers, affected nations, and major global players like China and India. Key priorities include establishing partial ceasefires to safeguard Black Sea grain infrastructure, granting US blockade exemptions for fertilizer shipments through Hormuz, and fully funding the World Food Programme's budget. By bridging deep geopolitical divides and aligning diverse national interests around human survival, Europe can demonstrate that collective international action remains possible. Overcoming these compound vulnerabilities will protect vulnerable populations, reduce migration pressures, and rebuild resilience against future shocks.

The emerging calamity

Rising global food prices and widespread food insecurity face unprecedented escalation due to three converging threats. The emergence of a "super El Niño" drastically threatens agricultural output across Asia and Africa, while the blockaded Strait of Hormuz restricts critical nitrogen and sulphur fertilizer exports. Meanwhile, escalated warfare in the Black Sea region has effectively severed major trade routes, crippling over 75% of Ukrainian and 90% of Russian grain export infrastructure. Unlike 2022, when diplomatic mediation successfully mitigated market shocks, 2026 presents daunting structural and political hurdles. Damaged infrastructure, adverse environmental conditions along European rivers, and political friction surrounding international institutions impede coordinated relief. Without immediate coordinated action, these compounding shocks threaten long-term agricultural productivity and global economic stability.

Preventing the worst

In response to escalating supply disruptions and multilateral paralysis, Europe must lead an international effort bringing key global players and affected nations together. To restore global supply chains, European powers must negotiate partial ceasefires protecting grain infrastructure while brokering practical trade exemptions for fertilizer transit through the Strait of Hormuz. Simultaneously, the coalition must bridge the World Food Programme's critical funding gap and mobilize $500 million for CGIAR to scale drought-resistant seeds and technical assistance. By distributing drought-resistant seeds and expert technical guidance to vulnerable smallholders, European leadership can effectively lower input costs, safeguard future harvests, and stabilize volatile global food markets.

Unpalatable—but necessary

Despite rigid political red lines, European governments can bridge deep diplomatic divides by leading a broad multi-regional response to the global food crisis. Partnering with the UN Secretary-General and influential middle powers, Europe can unite highly exposed developing nations while engaging China and India to exert diplomatic leverage over Russia. This proposed framework provides clear strategic incentives for all participants: Ukraine strengthens long-term diplomatic ties across Africa and Asia, while technical, expert-monitored arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz allow Iran and the United States to safely restore critical fertilizer exports.

Furthermore, by integrating international financial institutions and UN specialized agencies, the coalition can effectively pool funding to shield vulnerable agricultural markets from volatile price spikes. Most importantly, the initiative functions as a "no regrets" effort. Providing smallholder farmers with drought-resistant seeds, technical assistance, and input subsidies yields immediate food security benefits regardless of initial combatant participation. By asserting that collective action remains achievable despite widespread global disorder, proactive European leadership can gradually guide warring parties toward formal agreements to safeguard Black Sea maritime corridors and secure essential international supply lines.

FOOTNOTES

- Fowler, C., Kobzová, J., & O'Brien, J. (2026, September 7). Against war, drought and hunger: A global coalition to prevent a food crisis. European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR).https://ecfr.eu/article/against-war-drought-and-hunger-a-global-coalition-to-prevent-a-food-crisis/

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Mobilizing Multi-Regional Strategic Partnerships. Convening influential middle powers alongside crisis-exposed developing nations creates the necessary diplomatic weight to bridge geopolitical divides and coordinate collective crisis relief.
- Advancing "No Regrets" Resilience Frameworks. Deploying immediate agricultural, financial, and technical assistance ensures measurable humanitarian and market stabilization benefits regardless of initial geopolitical resistance from primary combatants.Establishing
- Securing Vital Agricultural Supply Corridors. Negotiating localized, functional ceasefires and trade exemptions safeguards critical grain export routes and ensures the continuous flow of essential fertilizers through contested maritime chokepoints.

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