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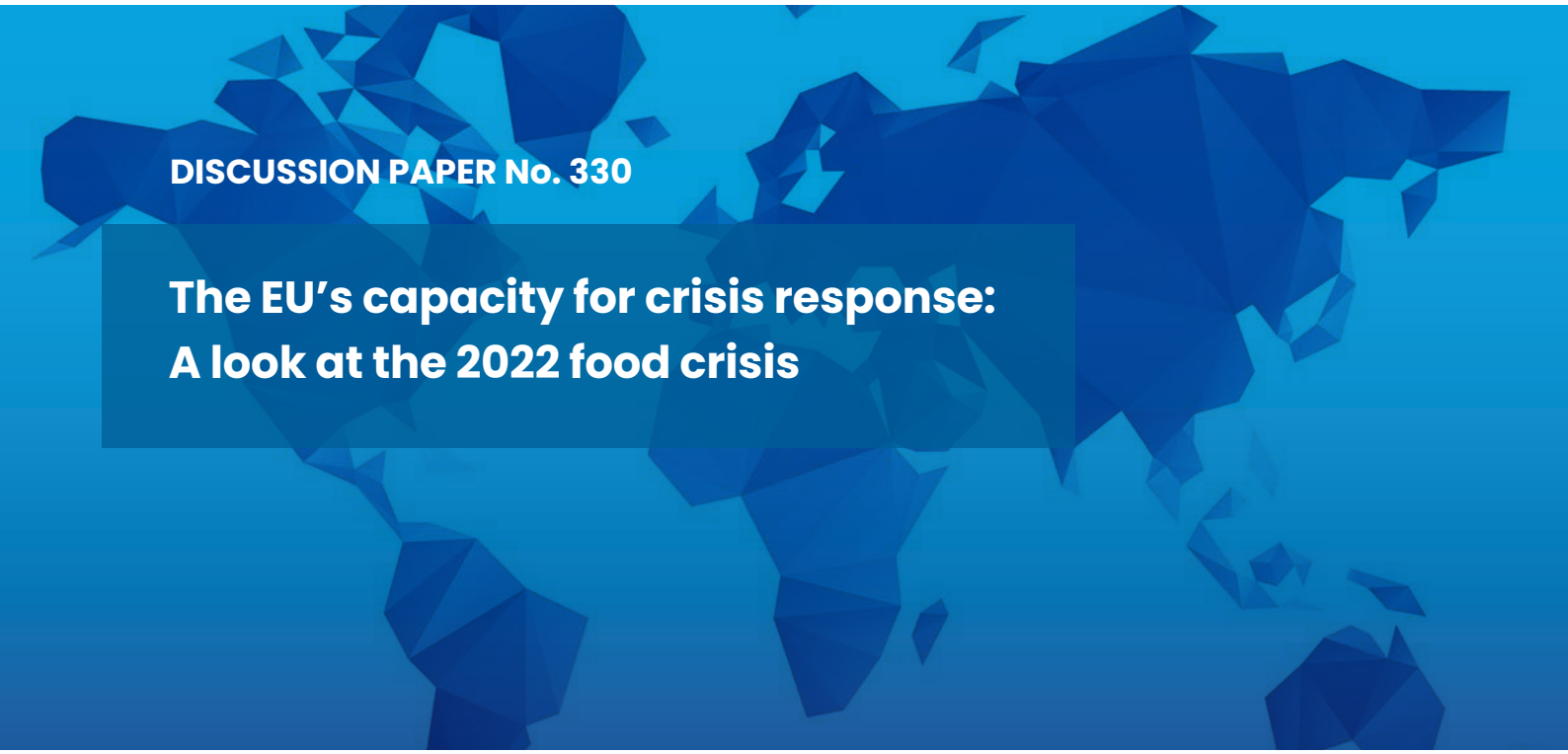

DISCUSSION PAPER No. 330

The EU's capacity for crisis response: A look at the 2022 food crisis

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The Russian invasion of Ukraine has made global food security a top priority for the EU, alongside the security and energy crisis it is already dealing with. In an increasingly volatile international environment, sufficient capacity for crisis response is fundamental if the EU wants to be a credible geopolitical player. In this paper, we look at the EU's response to the global food crisis – particularly in its relationship with heavily-impacted African countries – as an example of how swiftly and adequately it can adapt to crises. We also highlight opportunities for the EU to improve its crisis response.

We find that the EU's response to the food crisis has been limited compared to the scale of need and the EU's own objectives. Ultimately, support to Ukraine took precedence. In addition, the need to respond to multiple crises stretched the EU's capacity. The EU could make better use of the Team Europe approach to stimulate cooperation among European countries and institutions. It could also use its Global Gateway strategy to mobilise finance at scale to tackle the root causes of food insecurity, for example under the Africa-Europe Investment Package. In addition, the EU and its member states should deliver on their commitments to African countries when it comes to food security, mobilise financing – including special drawing rights – and adopt a more locally-owned, coordinated response with improved use of development financing tools.

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Acronyms

AU	African Union
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EC	European Commission
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
EFSD+	European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FARM	Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission
FEWS-NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
GCA	Global Center on Adaptation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPCC	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OJEU	Official Journal of the European Union
SDR	Special Drawing Rights
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

The 2022 global food crisis, originating in long-standing vulnerabilities of international markets and local food systems and aggravated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has made food security a top priority for European policymakers. The EU and its member states have tried to articulate a rapid and comprehensive response to address food insecurity, especially in Africa (Jones and Sergejeff 2022). To do so, they have used a Team Europe approach that brings together the EU, its member states, the European financial institutions and the private sector. The response encompasses emergency aid as well as longer-term support to sustainable food systems and agriculture. The EU has also engaged in communication efforts aimed at counteracting the Russian narrative that blames European sanctions for the crisis. Despite this heightened attention on food security, the war itself and the security and energy crises have been the principal focus of political attention in Europe. The EU has reacted unevenly to these events and questions have been raised on how well the EU is equipped to respond to multiple crises (Medinilla et al. 2022).

This paper looks at the EU response to global food insecurity, with a focus on the response towards heavily-impacted Africa. We look at this, firstly, as an example of the EU's ability to adapt and respond swiftly and adequately to crises and, secondly, to reflect on what the EU institutional set up and financial capacity can offer, along with how to overcome some of its limitations.

A better understanding of the role that the EU can and should play in responding to crises matters for several reasons. First and foremost, increased geopolitical, economic and environmental volatility, including climate change, increases the likelihood of successive and mutually reinforcing crises with global impacts. The EU itself recognises the need to scale up its capacity to respond to crisis situations, for example, in its work programme for 2023 (EC 2022a). Second, the EU's collective response capacity (that is, jointly with the EU member states) in times of crisis, domestically and internationally, is a key element of being a credible geopolitical actor as expressed in the EU Global Strategy (EEAS 2016). Yet, this aspiration is confronted with several challenges worldwide and internally. For example, the multiplicity of ongoing crises is testing the limits of the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (OJEU 2021), already in the second year of its implementation. This is supposed to provide the EU with significant financial means and flexible resources to respond quickly to crises and unforeseen events, jointly with other tools such as humanitarian aid, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Peace Facility. Finally, the Team Europe approach and the Global Gateway aim to mobilise the necessary political energy, expertise and public and private financing to address some of the underlying causes of crises, including food insecurity. But this will require additional funding and engagement from member states and the private sector (Teevan et al. 2022).

Section 2 of this paper presents some key facts about the food crisis. Section 3 outlines the EU response to the crisis so far. Section 4 highlights some of the challenges and dilemmas that the EU faces in laying out this response and links these to the broader discussion about the EU's capacity to respond to multiple crises. Section 5 gives ideas on how to improve the EU response to the food crisis and its overall capacities to respond to crises in the future, then we draw to a conclusion.

2. Vulnerabilities in African food systems increase food insecurity

The Russian invasion of Ukraine worsened global food security as it pushed up prices of food and fertiliser. In 2021, more people were undernourished than at any point since 2005 because of structural (such as vulnerability to climate change) and other drivers (such as COVID-19).[1] But the Russian invasion caused the Food Price Index, a measure of world food prices, to increase by a further 17% between January and March 2022, to a record high (FAO 2022a). The World Food Programme estimates that 47 million additional people go hungry as the conflict has caused food prices to rise and economies to slow down (WFP 2022a). With a growing gender gap in food security, women are particularly affected and have double the rate of severe food insecurity than men in Africa. The strain on government budgets will likely shift spending away from social programmes, limiting the provision and expansion of social protection measures needed to reach women and children (Bryan and Ringler 2022). The consequences are dire: more people around the world might lose their lives in this food crisis than on the battlefield. This crisis further derails the Sustainable Development Goal of zero hunger, with projections showing that 8% of the global population will still face hunger in 2030 (FAO et al. 2022).

The food price crisis hits Africa the hardest (WFP 2022a). Even before the Russia-Ukraine war, food insecurity in Africa was on the rise due to extensive drought, conflict and the economic consequences of COVID-19. A record drought is pushing millions of people towards starvation in the Horn of Africa alone (FEWS NET 2022). But the Russian invasion is worsening the affordability of food and the price of humanitarian interventions across the continent, and might plunge close to an additional 30 million Africans into acute food insecurity (WFP 2022b). While such severe food insecurity has far-reaching health impacts, it can create political tensions as well. Rising food prices have led to street protests, for example in Nairobi (Schipani and Terazono 2022). Yet the risk of social unrest may loom larger in North Africa, a region facing a steeper food bill as it imports much of its grain and one of great security relevance for Europe (Knaepen and Dekeyser 2022; The Economist 2022).

While Russia's invasion increased the need and costs of humanitarian interventions, **structural vulnerabilities in international food markets, local food systems and local contexts are worsening the current food crisis**. For example, the exposure to drought and import dependencies are examples of long-standing vulnerabilities in many African food systems that drive up food insecurity and contribute to their low resilience to this crisis. While swathes of Africa experience drought regularly, climate change is making these droughts, such as in the Horn of Africa, more intense and causing loss of productivity (IGAD 2022; IPCC 2022). Much of Africa's agriculture is indeed vulnerable to climate change and requires massive investments in its adaptation, which one estimate puts at USD 15 billion a year (Sulser et al. 2021; GCA 2021). And even though African policies and strategies widely call for immediate support for adaptation, investments in it fall way short of what is needed (Knaepen 2022; UNEP 2021).

Other **factors that cause weak-performing African agriculture include** limited agroecological potential, a colonial legacy of government policies neglecting domestic value chains over export chains, and the impacts of developed country policies on African agricultural sectors (Tondel et al. 2022). This weak performance means that, as a whole, Africa imports significant chunks of its food, a position that squeezed many countries' financial resources when wheat prices shot up following the Russian blockage of Ukraine's wheat exports.[2] North Africa, for example Egypt, is especially vulnerable to rising cereal prices, with its long-standing high dependency on cereal imports (for example, Luan et al. 2013). The situation is not so different for West Africa and the Sahel, where food systems suffer from a

[1] Yet, because of a growing population, the proportion of undernourished people fell from 12.3% to 9.8% between 2005 and 2021 (FAO et al. 2022).

[2] At the time of writing a new cereal export deal has led to global wheat prices trending downwards, but more is needed to reverse the food crisis (Walsh 2022).

high dependency on food imports as well (Ehui et al. 2022). Because of the food security crisis and rising costs of humanitarian interventions, the WFP is forced to 'take from the hungry to feed the starving' in the region (WFP 2022c). For sub-Saharan Africa, the situation improved slightly before the Russia-Ukraine war, as food imports stagnated and food exports rose (Fox and Jayne 2020). But a combination of demographic and economic growth and diet change means that, even with a stronger agricultural sector, sub-Saharan Africa's self-sufficiency in key commodities will decrease and its reliance on global food markets will rise (van Ittersum et al. 2016; OECD and FAO 2021). Given this dependency, EU policies that impact global food markets – such as its Farm to Fork Strategy – could have unintended consequences for Africa (Dekeyser and Woolfrey 2021).

Building resilience is key for avoiding new food crises. While food aid is needed in particular circumstances, the real answer lies in structural solutions and implementing policies and investments to build resilience against future shocks (Rampa 2022). The African Union (AU) had already designated 2022 as its year for building resilience in nutrition and food security (Bizzotto Molina et al. 2022). But as the crisis elevated food security on the international agenda, building food system resilience – especially in Africa – attained higher relevance and urgency. Unfortunately, other crises are present that compete for political attention and resources.

3. The EU's response to the food crisis

The EU response to the food crisis includes different measures that consider emergency needs and support structural solutions and measures that strengthen the resilience of African countries in particular. This stems from a renewed attention towards food security in Europe, on the back of the consequences of the Russian aggression in Ukraine and the strong geopolitical dimension that the crisis has acquired as a result. The EU has tried to limit global spillover effects of the crisis, on both food security and political instability. It has also tried to confront the Russian accusation that Europe is ultimately responsible for the food crisis due to sanctions against the country (Caprile and Pichon 2022).

Overall, the EU response to the food crisis has combined emergency, development, trade-focused and multilateral action and has built on the previously established role that the EU plays in the transition towards sustainable food systems. Its collection of planned interventions is comprehensive and tries to continue to address the long-term vulnerabilities of food systems, especially in Africa. Yet it appears somewhat limited in scope compared to the challenges posed by the crisis. It has also raised some questions on how well equipped the EU is to respond swiftly and adequately when multiple crises strike – COVID, food, energy, economic and climate. This section describes the EU response in its different components. The next section offers an analysis of some of its key aspects and links these to wider questions on the EU's capacity to react when crises occur.

Within two weeks of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, European leaders acknowledged the food crisis that would result from the war and invited the EU Commission to give its opinion on a possible response (European Council 2022a). **In the first few months, the EU emergency response amounted to punctual support measures**, with an emphasis on the European Neighbourhood, the Sahel and Lake Chad region and the Horn of Africa, where the crisis was especially severe and where European strategic interests are more at the fore. This was complementary to action that the EU already takes as an important supporter of sustainable food systems and nutrition through its development cooperation (EC 2022b).

It took a few months for a more comprehensive EU Global Food Security Response to be articulated under Team Europe, built around the following pillars (European Council 2022b; CoEU 2022a):

1. Solidarity measures, mostly emergency support
2. Increasing or front-loading support for the transition towards sustainable food systems
3. Preserving trade and the functioning of international food commodity markets
4. International coordination and multilateralism.

The emergency response focused especially on Africa, where the crisis has hit the hardest. The EU response included €225 million for the Southern Neighbourhood, €1 billion for the Sahel and Lake Chad region through Team Europe and €600 million for the Horn of Africa. A selection of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries benefit from an additional €600 million of decommitted European Development Fund (EDF) resources. These boost humanitarian action (€150 million) and sustainable production and resilience (€350 million, CoE U 2022b; Chadwick 2022). Other actions towards this latter objective have been enacted through EU geographic and thematic resources under the NDICI-Global Europe, which had already been allocated before the food crisis and the war (see discussion in Section 4).

The EU and its member states also committed to sustain food affordability through fiscal and macroeconomic support for low-income and vulnerable countries. Of the €600 million EDF funds, €100 million will boost macroeconomic support to affected countries through the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust that supports low-income countries with highly concessional loans (EC 2022c). The Council conclusions on the Team Europe response to global food insecurity encouraged the member states to "explore the possibilities of additional voluntary contributions to the re-channelling of advanced economies' Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to vulnerable countries" through the IMF (CoEU 2022a: 5; see Section 4 below).

The EU has invested in preserving the smooth functioning of food and key agricultural input markets and has made several calls to avoid any unjustified trade restrictions on food exports, in particular if purchased for humanitarian purposes (European Council 2022b; CoEU 2022a). These were only partially successful as within and outside Europe export bans were enacted. In Europe, Hungary started to block its cereal exports in March 2022. In addition, the EU has tried to facilitate trade of grains out of Ukraine through 'solidarity lanes', aimed at shifting trading routes through Europe and towards Africa and the Middle East. However, trade routes by land offer less capacity and are more expensive than those by sea and the increased grain exports did not reach their final destination at an adequate scale (EC 2022d; Bukhta 2022). The EU supported the UN-backed deal between Russia and Ukraine to reopen Black Sea ports for agricultural shipments negotiated with Turkey, which seems to be more successful (UN 2022).

At multilateral level, the EU has favoured support to existing initiatives, including from its member states, and joining forces with other international actors. It has only put itself forward in certain cases as a lead in the response to the crisis, with most of its political energy absorbed by Ukraine. The EU supported relevant global initiatives such as the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission (FARM), the G7 Global Alliance for Food Security and those by other relevant networks or actors such as the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. It also participated in visibility initiatives, such as a recent global food security event in September 2022 at the margins of the UN Global Assembly. This was promoted by the EU, the African Union, Germany, Spain, Colombia, Indonesia, Nigeria and the United States (Brzozowski 2022; European Council 2022c). The summit did not bring new commitments but did heighten political attention on the crisis. In a few other instances, the EU took a more direct role such as in April 2022, when it co-organised a pledging event to mobilise resources to tackle the food crisis in the Sahel and Lake Chad region (EU et al. 2022).[3]

[3] At the event, the EU and some member states made significant financial commitments. It is however difficult to track which of these amount to new additional resources and which overlap with other initiatives on food and nutrition security.

4. The challenge to respond to multiple crises

While the EU response to the food crisis is multifaceted, its limited financial scale compared to the needs to be covered and the scale of its support to Ukraine, plus its demure political engagement compared to other crises (for example, COVID-19) have raised some questions. These concerns especially relate to the EU's capacity to respond to multiple overlapping crises at an adequate scale and within an appropriate timescale, as well as how to combine this response with other international commitments, especially with Africa. Additional concerns focus on whether the flexibility mechanisms put in place under the new EU budget are fit for the task at hand.

Crisis response versus past commitments

A key challenge for the EU has been how to balance the commitments around the food crisis with the political attention and financial support to Ukraine. Overall, the EU institutions have earmarked €2.5 billion (€1.4 billion for development and €1.1 billion for humanitarian aid) with a nutrition objective for 2021–2024 (EC 2022e). Since the war started, the EU and its financial institutions agreed to mobilise €5.4 billion to support Ukraine through macro-financial assistance, budget support, emergency and humanitarian aid and crisis response (EC 2022f).[4] An additional €2.5 billion came through the European Peace Facility. The sheer scale of funding for Ukraine compared to the European Peace Facility size has raised questions, for example on the EU's ability to sustain its funding for African peace and security to the scale it envisioned before the war started (Shiferaw and Hauck 2022; Hauck 2022).

In fact, this challenge has been especially evident in Africa, where the EU response risks being seen more as an attempt to contain the sociopolitical instability that can derive from the crisis rather than a fully fledged emergency and development-focused response. In the words of one interviewee: "Africa remains top priority [for the EU institutions], but Ukraine is more than top priority" (interview 2 August 2022). If viewed from a country perspective, the response is thinly spread and resources small vis-à-vis the EU's own objectives. Countries in the Southern Neighbourhood (North Africa) received relatively small amounts compared to the scale of the crisis they are facing.[5] For example, Egypt received €100 million. As a comparison, the country's food subsidy scheme costs USD 5.5 billion in public resources with higher wheat prices likely to add USD 763 million to the 2021/2022 bill (El Safty 2022).[6] EDF decommitted funds target about 20 countries, selected on the basis of need (for example, Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo) and the potential impact of the EU intervention on productive capacities (for example, Kenya and Ghana; interview 2 and 3 August 2022).

Still, fears that programmed geographic and thematic resources under the NDICI-Global Europe may be shifted away from other priorities due to Ukraine have not materialised yet. Until recently, financial support to Ukraine was framed by the EU Neighbourhood Policy and funded through the NDICI-Global Europe.[7] But Ukraine's recently granted accession status means it (jointly with Moldova and Georgia) should from now on receive support under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) of the EU rather than the NDICI-Global Europe. This implies that the resources for Ukraine would not be provided at the cost of other countries and regions. However, it may also mean that some resources will be moved across instruments as countries change status. This will result in extensive

4 This is part of a package of exceptional macro-financial assistance in the form of loans of up to €9 billion.

5 The Food and Resilience Facility for the Southern Neighbourhood aims to support actions to face the immediate impact of the food crisis on vulnerable people, support long-term sustainability and transformation of local agri-food systems and contribute to macro-economic stability. Its indicative allocations (in millions) are: Algeria: €5m; Egypt: €100m; Jordan: €25m; Lebanon: €25m; Morocco: €15m; Palestine: €25m; Syria: €10m; Tunisia: €20m (EC 2022g).

6 Egypt's food imports amounted to USD 20.5 billion in 2021. Algeria spent USD 8.6 billion on food imports and received €5 million (FAO 2022b).

7 Before that, funding came through the European Neighbourhood Instrument.

internal negotiations among European players between those favouring Ukraine and those not wanting to disadvantage other parts of the world.

More specifically, **the European Commission assesses that the programming exercise, undertaken before the food crisis and the war in Ukraine, can address the underlying long-term causes of the crisis**. Programmed resources under the various geographic and thematic envelopes of the NDICI-Global Europe remain the main vehicle for supporting the development of sustainable food systems (interview 2 August 2022; EC 2022b).[8] Continuity is also envisioned in the plan to build the response "on the existing framework and commitments, such as the EU-AU Summit and agreed investments therein on food systems and the Great Green Wall" (CoEU 2022a: 6). With programming now finished, it would be politically and technically difficult to change geographic plans and allocations for the EU institutions in the short term. This limits adaptability to unforeseen circumstances but it also offers continuity of EU action. In the past, partner countries considered this an added value of the EU, as it offered some cover for the more volatile support from other sources (MacKellar et al. 2017; Bossuyt et al. 2017).

Testing the limits of EU budgetary flexibility

The rapid exhaustion of the EU flexibility mechanisms established under the NDICI-Global Europe is a key concern. This has hampered the EU's capacity to allocate more resources to the food crisis and to respond to other shocks or crises that may occur in the coming years. The NDICI-Global Europe features a €9.5 billion Emerging Challenges and Priorities Cushion and a non-programmable pillar for Rapid Response of €3.2 billion for the period 2021–2027. The Cushion is now exhausted for 2022 and the European Commission's margin of manoeuvre to bring in new funds and resources for the food crisis is very tight. Support to Ukraine absorbed a third of it and the rest went to other priorities such as Syrian refugees, the vaccines rollout, upholding human rights and supporting civil society. EU member states and the European Parliament have voiced concerns about the rapid exhaustion of the cushion and its use beyond responding to emerging challenges and priorities, and their role in its governance (Chadwick 2022; interview 3 August 2022). An EU more responsive to an increasingly volatile international environment was a key driver for the establishment of the NDICI-Global Europe. And the conjunction of the food, energy and security crises has put this to test in the second year of its functioning (Sherriff 2019).

How to use limited resources to respond to huge needs in Ukraine while catering to other EU commitments and priorities is an enduring, and very political, question. As the war continues, lifeline support to Ukraine and its reconstruction will become more and more expensive. How the EU can keep financing these efforts while honouring its commitments to other countries may be discussed in the upcoming mid-term review of the NDICI-Global Europe. An example is the EU's commitment of at least €29 billion to African countries through the NDICI-Global Europe for 2021-2027.[9] In principle, the mid-term review could open a debate between the EU Commission, the Parliament and the Council on the existing commitments. More broadly, it could lead to the review and possible revision of the whole EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 in light of the war in Ukraine and its huge costs. Such a revision could mean an increase of required contributions from member states, although their appetite to infuse the EU with more funding is unlikely to be strong, especially for international spending. Even under those circumstances, the resources needed to address EU external priorities and commitments together with the

[8] In addition, financial resources to address the immediate impact of the food crisis have been provided through EU humanitarian assistance – which is a non-programmable resource – and an additional €600 million has been provided through the decommitted funds of the EDF mentioned earlier.

[9] The EU has struggled to honour its commitment of €9 billion lending to Ukraine and only a tranche of €1 billion was released at the time of writing (August 2022). The provision rate for the country has been set to 70%, well above the 9% rate that the EU planned for its operations. Alternative solutions that would envision risk-sharing with the EU member states and the involvement of the European Investment Bank have not been negotiated successfully so far (Valero and Nardelli 2022)

reconstruction of Ukraine will require more than funding from the Multiannual Financial Framework and EU member states.

5. The EU's potential for crisis response

The EU response to the global food crisis has so far been limited in financial scope and has raised questions about its role in the crisis and how to combine this with other aspects of its external action. This section continues the analysis of the response, shifting the focus towards **European potential to do more and better when crises occur**, in the case of the 2022 food crisis as well as more broadly. This potential can be articulated in three ways:

1. Build a **strategic vision** to inform the crisis response.
2. Increase the **financial scope**: the EU institutions and member states should invest more resources in supporting partners, for example under Team Europe and the Global Gateway.
3. Improve **methods and instruments**: use the crisis to improve the processes and channels used to support partners, both at European level and in the countries involved.

Build a strategic vision

Africa has been hit hardest by the food crisis and has been the focus of the EU response. Still, there is scope to better anchor the **common European response to a strategic and long-term vision about the structural solutions to food insecurity, embedded in an Africa–EU long-term partnership approach**. Seriously committing to such a partnership on food security and sustainable food systems, built on the acknowledgment of common and sometimes conflicting interests, would allow the EU to respond more effectively to African demands.[10]

In the area of food security, in addition to access to finance, official development assistance and foreign direct investment (including through blended finance approaches that help derisk the food economy), **African stakeholders have repeatedly asked European counterparts** for (EC 2019; Dekeyser and Woolfrey 2021)**:**

1. context-appropriate technology, know-how and research and innovation investments for sustainable food systems
2. open trade, including refraining from a too restrictive application of the external dimension of the European Green Deal and the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy
3. support to intra-regional African trade to reduce import dependency from outside the continent (including by substantially reducing Europe's support to export-oriented value chains like cash crops)
4. sharing lessons learned on continental food policies (for example, the EU Common Agricultural Policy).

European policymakers should address these demands to tackle the long-term causes of food insecurity and the structural weaknesses of food systems in Africa, which is also the only way to build resilience against future shocks. **What Africa can in turn offer Europe** is great potential for investments in the national and regional food economies spurred by growing urban and regional markets (resulting from demographic and economic growth).

These commitments would need to be backed by strong political will and matching resources, in a context where much attention and funding is absorbed by Ukraine. Establishing a true partnership between Europe and Africa should indeed be **based on the last AU-EU Summit**, which seemed to have gathered that type of true political understanding and consensus (Apiko 2022), and the political declaration and action agenda of the **third AU-EU**

[10] Task Force Rural Africa 2019, in particular in chapter 2, reflects on the obstacles to putting in place such a partnership so far and on the often diverging interests and perspectives on food security and food systems in Europe and Africa.

Agriculture Ministerial Conference in June 2019 that endorsed an 'Africa-Europe rural transformation action agenda' (stemming from the Task Force Rural Africa report).[11]

A strategic vision and a true partnership are also fundamental to mobilise the appropriate levels of financial resources and the adequate methods and instruments for crisis response, be it the current food crisis or other future crises.

Increase the financial scope

A sizeable European response with adequate financial scope should build on all the resources that are available to Europe, beyond the EU institutions' budget. This should include in particular the member states' budgetary resources, the IMF's Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), multilateral programmes and initiatives such as those by international financial institutions and multilateral development banks, and private sector investments.[12]

The EU institutions' ability to increase their budgetary funding is limited by design. The EU budget, agreed with the EU member states, sets the limits of the EU institutions' financial might. As a result, the EU Institutions cannot increase their funding and can only reprioritise and reformulate existing initiatives.[13] Additional resources for European collective action would need to come from the member states, who have more flexibility but are also facing tough domestic socioeconomic challenges. Several member states have reprioritised parts of their bilateral aid budgets to support Ukraine and/or to host Ukrainian refugees, while others have announced aid cuts. This comes at the expense of third countries which may see their aid resources reduced (Medinilla et al. 2022).

Additional substantial resources could come from the possible reallocation of the USD 650 billion SDRs approved by the IMF in 2021. The global goal of the USD 100 billion reallocation of SDRs for low-income countries announced at the G20 Rome Summit had a focus on post-COVID recovery with no geographical focus. With the current crisis, and given Africa's particular vulnerability, EU member states should target SDR reallocation specifically to respond to the food security crisis in African countries. In doing so, they should call on other G7 and/or G20 countries to do the same. France, Italy and Spain have already pledged to reallocate 20% of their SDRs to low-income countries and other member states have pledged smaller amounts, totalling around USD 13 billion (Bilal 2022). China recently announced at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation it was prepared to channel USD 10 billion SDRs to Africa.[14] The AU-EU summit in February 2022 went in the right direction, and opened the door to reallocating SDRs for, and

[11] The EC Communication on 'Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems', the first reaction to these issues after the war, proposed that "For Africa, the AU EU Rural Transformation Action Agenda agreed in 2019 offers a basis for enhanced cooperation".

[12] The EU has communicated that it is mobilising over €7.7 billion for global food security up to 2024. This figure may include the EU and member states' funding, deployed under Team Europe, though this remains to be clarified. There is a need to specify what this figure includes, in particular whether it is additional to existing resources, who has committed it, for what and whom and what is the timeframe for deployment.

[13] This was the case when COVID-19 struck (Jones et al. 2020). Still, at that time the EU invested heavily in diplomatic efforts at the highest political level and reoriented all its plans to address the pandemic (). This is also when Team Europe arose as a policy/political initiative to give visibility and collective weight to European action.

[14] A recent statement by China on Africa following the forum: "We are prepared to, through the IMF's two Trusts, re-channel USD 10 billion of our own SDR to Africa, and encourage the IMF to direct China's contributions to Africa" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2022).

with, Africa.[15] But so far these pledges have not translated into disbursements, so now those allocations could be devoted to the food crisis as concrete implementation of the AU-EU summit decisions.[16]

Team Europe and the Global Gateway offer an opportunity to better coordinate European actors, including from the private sector, behind a sizeable Africa-Europe Investment Package. Despite political desire and the opportunity offered by Team Europe to act more cohesively and at scale, one of the main challenges is to get the buy-in of EU member states in practice, including additional resources and private sector engagement (Teevan et al. 2022; Jones and Sergejeff 2022). Past experience suggests that additional resources for the European Union (EU) may not be forthcoming.[17] Some Team Europe Initiatives do have a food security or agricultural component and the challenge will be to scale them up. At the AU-EU summit, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the mobilisation of at least €150 billion for Africa of the total €300 billion for the deployment of Global Gateway, including a sustainable food system component (EC 2022h). Therefore, it will be important to better link specific food crisis response interventions to broader Global Gateway investments. Global Gateway aims to bring Europe back into infrastructure investments and it will be key that these support intra-African trade rather than just food exports to Europe and that co-investing occurs in processing infrastructure for food and fertiliser.

The EU institutions and the member states, in a Team Europe approach, could **use their collective financial weight as shareholders** of European development finance institutions, international financial institutions, multilateral development banks and the Rome-based UN agencies, to enhance multilateral action in terms of improved spending levels, concessional terms (given the emerging debt crisis in many African countries), countries to be supported (such as African countries) and activities to be funded (that is, so that financial support is not only devoted to food imports and fertilisers, but rather targets structural solutions and longer-term resilience).[18]

Finally, **mobilising private sector investment at scale** is key. Blended finance, in particular through the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), should effectively target financial markets and investors to upscale private resources. In particular, public funds should be used to catalyse private investments to align these to sustainable development objectives. The 'Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity, Forests and Water' window of the EFSD+, for example, could be better used to incentivise the transformation towards sustainable food systems. This could be done through support for African small-scale farmers and small and medium enterprises, derisking investments in food value chains and improving access to finance for generally excluded players (see the following subsection for how to do this).

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15 EU-AU Leaders Declaration: "We also call for ambitious voluntary contributions, by channelling part of the recently allocated SDRs, in order to achieve the total global ambition of at least USD 100 billion liquidity support to countries most in need, of which a major part should benefit Africa. We welcome the USD 55 billion that have been pledged already from the new allocation of SDRs, of which several EU Member States (Team Europe) have so far pledged USD 13 billion and encourage more EU member states to consider contributing to this global effort. African institutions, in consultation with national authorities, will be involved in the use of these SDRs to support the continent's recovery."

16 The SDRs are owned by ministries of economy and finance and central banks whose position is that direct allocation of SDRs from a rich country to African countries, for example, is not possible, and that the only way to make direct or urgent reallocations of SDRs is through IMF mechanisms (which would greatly limit the influence of EU and Africa on how SDRs are actually spent, such as for food crisis). The EU could then: 1) ask for IMF mechanisms such as the Resilience and Sustainability Trust to make food security and food systems a priority investment area; 2) launch the EU's own 'SDR equivalent use mechanisms', that is, EU member states could take advantage of their increased reserves through the IMF's USD 650 billion SDR allocation and opt to provide a range of financially equivalent solutions to SDRs reallocation, including concessional loans, grants and guarantees, to support African countries more directly.

17 For example, the EU envisioned that EU member states would match its funding under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) whereas member states plus Norway and Switzerland contributed comparatively minor amounts. By the end of 2021, EUTF resources amounted to around €5.1 billion, of which €623.2 million were additional resources from EU member states and other donors. For a discussion on the politics of funding see Castillejo 2016.

18 These are large resources; for instance, in May 2022 the World Bank announced USD 30 billion in existing and new projects to help respond to the global food crisis.

Beyond partnership and solidarity reasons, mobilising a level of resources that is adequate to address structural factors behind a crisis and strengthen partners' resilience should also be seen as more cost effective than financing increasingly frequent and severe crisis responses and recovery pathways. This emerges clearly from COVID-19 and the climate crisis, and applies to food systems resilience as well (Kray et al. 2022).[19]

Improve methods and instruments

The **political attention and sense of urgency** that permeates times of crisis should help to improve the processes and channels used to support partners' responses. This concerns, in particular, local ownership of interventions, EU coordination and agency around relevant internal and external policy frameworks, and implementation modalities for the financing instruments employed.

The processes and instruments chosen to deliver the support to African countries should **guarantee the local ownership of crisis response**. This is a particular concern, for example, for the Team Europe initiatives and in a policy environment where EU priorities have become more prominent under the 'policy first' principle. In the case of food security and systems, this can be done by funding targets that align with Africa's own existing plans, from Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme Investment Plans and UN Food Systems Summit National Transformation Pathways at national level, to the African Development Bank Emergency Food Production Facility at continental level.

The Team Europe approach could be brought a step further, for example to **enhance coordination and coherence among various domestic and international policy areas** beyond development aid, such as trade and climate finance initiatives. For instance, EU trade policies that promote imports of soybean and palm oil from Africa, contributing to deforestation and affecting water and smallholder farmers there, are counterproductive, in a context where improving food security in Africa requires stronger resilience of local ecosystems and better support to smallholders (Tondel et al. 2022). Moreover, climate finance from Europe should devote substantially more resources to increasing the much-needed support for adapting Africa's food systems to climate change (Knaepen 2022).[20]

EU blended finance schemes, including the Agriculture Window of the EFSD (that preceded the EFSD+), have struggled so far to attract financing for the agricultural sector. These schemes should be better equipped to fund agricultural transformation and increase access to finance for marginalised stakeholders. To more effectively benefit smallholders and small and medium enterprises working with food, EU and European development finance institution providers of blended finance should alter their funding allocation criteria to stimulate more favourable investment decisions by the related private investors for small-scale producers and women in particular, reduce minimum ticket size for investments in agriculture and increase the flexibility of interest rate and repayment schedules.

6. Conclusion

The EU is facing concurrent crises that challenge its ability to respond swiftly and at scale domestically and globally. Following the Russian invasion, support to Ukraine headlined the EU agenda and has absorbed much of its flexible resources and political energy. The complexity of the invasion's impacts, combined with ongoing recovery from the

[19] The costs for climate adaptation action in Africa for instance are about USD 15 billion (0.93% of regional GDP), a fraction of the cost of inaction, which could rise to more than $201 billion (12% of GDP).

[20] The paper provides 10 recommendations on how to do this and facilitate a change of direction from finance, policy and practical perspectives, ahead of the mid-term review of the EU's external financing instruments in 2024.

COVID-19 pandemic and the EU's own institutional and financial limitations, have strained the EU's capacity to respond to the food crisis. Even though food security became a geopolitical priority for the EU, and despite efforts to increase EU flexibility and responsiveness to unforeseen events under the NDICI-Global Europe, the EU response to the global food crisis is financially limited when compared to need and to its own stated objectives.

Team Europe and the Global Gateway should help to respond at scale, on time and comprehensively to future crises, including carving an emergency response and being a credible player to build long-term solutions. The EU institutions alone can achieve only so much and the crisis shows the limits of looking at the EU as a donor of last resort when multiple crises strike. Team Europe and the Global Gateway aim to give more political visibility, leverage additional resources and build on European (EU plus member states) collective added value. Team Europe and Global Gateway have the highest political backing seen in recent years to move European collaboration a step (or more) further.

The mid-term review of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and of the NDICI-Global Europe will be a key process to reassess if the current EU budget provides the basis to articulate common responses to common challenges in a more demanding and contested international environment. The scale of the Ukraine crisis has also highlighted the need for a broader revision of the whole Multiannual Financial Framework, including proposals for new types of revenue and new EU own resources.

There are several ways the EU can improve its crisis response capacity, especially in Africa. The EU emphasis on both the emergency response as well as long-term solutions and its focus on trade and multilateral collaboration are sound. With respect to the 2022 food crisis, **addressing local long-standing structural vulnerabilities can strengthen the resilience of African food systems to future shocks, including climate change**. This would entail strengthening resilience by ramping up investments in African food systems, facilitating regional trade, and diversifying African diets (Rampa 2022).

The EU can support this by building a stronger strategic vision and partnership with Africa, including better addressing African demands and managing the spillover effects of its own policies, such as the Farm to Fork Strategy. Boosting available finance by activating SDR assets, through the EFSD+ and better linking these to the Global Gateway, especially under the Africa-Europe Investment Package, will also be key. Attention should go to improving methods and instruments to support partners' responses, namely increasing ownership, using blended finance for sustainable and resilient food systems and enhancing coordination between policy areas. It is essential that these objectives are sustained over time, on top of the ongoing emergency response and when the limelight on the food crisis fades.

The future environment is likely to be more volatile. Various factors increase the risk of more volatility ahead, including democratic decline (Herre 2022), geopolitical rivalries, demographic growth mixed with economic slowdowns and the surpassing of planetary boundaries. European politics is also becoming more volatile and less predictable where it comes to international engagement. Crises are likely to become more complex and interconnected – ranging from health to energy, from domestic to international fallouts. **As a result, the EU will have to adapt and use the whole range of its internal and external policies and instruments to address the effects of these crises. And to address how the global and domestic spheres increasingly influence one another.** Yet, the pressure to deliver for domestic constituencies over catering to international demands is likely to increase and difficult decisions will need to be made. Ultimately, the EU's ability to respond adequately to successive and mutually reinforcing crises will determine the extent to which it can achieve its ambition of being a credible geopolitical actor.

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