

As Climate change continues to have a growing impact in several developing countries mostly in Africa, governments, international development partners and industry should invest in sustainable food cold chains to decrease hunger, provide livelihoods to communities, and adapt to climate change, according to a new report released Saturday.

The purpose of the food cold chain, according to experts is to maintain products in a consumable state.

The report launched by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) at the 27th Climate Change Conference currently taking place in Sharm El Sheikh finds that food cold chains are critical to meeting the challenge of feeding an additional two billion people by 2050 and harnessing rural communities' resilience, while avoiding increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Latest estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations show that apart from improving food production and food security, the development of the cold chain facilitates food loss reduction while helping meet market requirements for quality and safety.

The number of people affected by hunger in the world rose to 828 million in 2021, a year-on-year rise of 46 million.

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The report was developed in the framework of the UNEP-led Cool Coalition in partnership with FAO, the Ozone Secretariat, UNEP OzonAction Programme, and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition.

"At a time when the international community must act to address the climate and food crises, sustainable food cold chains can make a massive difference," said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP.

"They allow us to reduce food loss, improve food security, slow greenhouse gas

emissions, create jobs, reduce poverty and build resilience – all in one fell swoop.”

According to the report, developing countries could save 144 million tonnes of food annually if they reached the same level of food cold chain infrastructure as developed countries.

As post-harvest food loss reduces the income of 470 million small-scale farmers by 15 per cent, mainly in developing countries especially in Africa. Investing in sustainable food cold chains would help lift these farm families out of poverty.

Commenting on these trends, Qu Dongyu, Director-General of FAO said:
“Sustainable food cold chains can make an important difference in our collective efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”

“All stakeholders can help implement the findings of this report, to transform agrifood systems to be more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable – for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life for all, leaving no one behind,” Dongyu said.

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