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An Entire Planet Hungry for Answers

| An interview with Professor Jennifer Clapp
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How do we solve global hunger?

It's a common misconception that the reason that people go hungry in the world today is that we don't produce enough food, and that's not actually the case. The world produces around 2800 calories per person per day which is an enormous amount of food, and that amount of food that is being produced globally is actually rising. The problem with food insecurity in the world is that people don't have access to the food, it's not that it's not being produced. And in fact today we have around 800 million people on the planet who are chronically under-nourished. That means that they're not getting enough calories on a daily basis to maintain a healthy and active life.

What are you researching?

My research also looks at the ways in which global economic relationships, sort of at the international level, affect the sustainability of food systems and the food that we eat on a daily basis. There's enormous inequity within the global food system where we have some regions producing more food than they consume, and other regions are actually becoming what we call food-import-dependent. In other words, they don't produce enough food to feed their own population. And so international trade in food items is of course important, but it also contributes to what we would call distance in the food system. And that basically means not just the physical distance between production and consumption, but also the conceptual distance where we don't really know a lot about some of the food that we might purchase in the supermarket, for example.



How can we help?

Individual engagement with the issue is extremely important. And individuals working together are playing a big role in putting pressure on the system and the global corporations in particular to, in a sense, reduce the distance. That could be either through certified sustainable supply chains or it could be eating locally. Both of those kinds of responses make a difference in terms of making the food system more sustainable.