

GOMUN 2026 OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

Study Guide

Food and Agriculture Organization

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Released October 2026, 1st Edition

COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) is a specialised agency of the **United Nations (UN)** which aims to pursue endeavours connected with **socio-economical issues of nutrition and health.**

It was established after the Second World War in 1945 in Quebec, Canada. Since many countries faced a number of difficulties such as food shortages and poverty this organisation was meant to aid with the issue and to this day remains a functioning body of the United Nations.

First Topic: Use of Starvation as a Method of Warfare

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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The intentional use of starvation against civilians as a method of warfare is strictly prohibited under the **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)** and is criminalised as a war crime under **Article 8 of the Rome Statute**, for both international and, following a 2019 amendment, non-international armed conflicts.

According to the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),** respecting IHL principles - specifically distinction, proportionality, and precaution - is important to preventing and mitigating conflict-induced food insecurity and famine. These rules are legally binding for all combatants and have been reinforced by UN Security Council landmark decisions, such as **Resolution 2417 (2018)** on conflict-induced hunger and **Resolution 2573 (2021)** on protecting civilian infrastructure.

Despite these legal prohibitions, starvation and the deliberate deprivation of essential supplies continue to arise in contemporary armed conflicts. The humanitarian and food-security response involves organisations such as **the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**, which works to monitor and address food insecurity, protect agricultural production and livelihoods, strengthen food systems, and support recovery in conflict-affected areas. FAO also provides technical assistance and humanitarian support to communities affected by conflict and other crises.

KEY TERMS

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) – Set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict.

Principles of IHL (Distinction, Proportionality, Precaution) – Regulate the conduct of hostilities during armed conflicts to limit suffering and protect civilians.

Rome Statute – The treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC).

International Criminal Court (ICC) – Investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international

community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) – A neutral, independent organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for people affected by armed conflict and other ways of violence.

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) – A global, standardized tool used by governments and aid groups to measure and classify the severity of food crises and malnutrition.

Weaponised starvation – The intentional use of depriving people of food and water as a method of warfare or political oppression.

Siege – A military or police operation where an armed force or officers surround a fortified place, town, or building to cut off supplies and force the defenders to surrender.

Scorched-earth tactics – A military strategy of destroying everything that allows an enemy military force to be able to fight a war.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Starvation is a **deprivation of essential nutrients needed to sustain life** – resulting in rapid weight loss, organ failure, and mass death. As an instrument of war, however, starvation is a deliberate attempt to undermine, destroy, or subjugate populations through the deprivation of fundamental life-sustaining resources. Starvation is an effective tool in warfare, as it exploits the vulnerability of the human body. In modern conflict zones, weaponised starvation rarely appears as a simple refusal to supply food. More often than not, weaponised starvation takes **multiple forms** - each of which serves to **systematically decimate** the population of a besieged territory. **Encirclements, blockades, and the destruction of import infrastructure** (naval, road, rail, and otherwise) are all effective methods of bringing a region to starvation. Combatants may also target sites and infrastructure vital to civilian survival, such as grain silos, bakeries, water treatment facilities, and power grids. By using scorched-earth tactics - burning crops, poisoning wells, and slaughtering livestock - warring parties can quickly strip an entire region of its ability to feed itself. This destruction is often compounded **by deliberate interference with humanitarian relief**, where blockades, administrative hurdles, and direct attacks on aid workers are used to engineer **artificial famines.**

Deliberate starvation has repeatedly been **used as a method of warfare,** particularly through sieges, blockades, forced confinement, and the deliberate restriction or destruction of food and water supplies. During the Second World War, Nazi German authorities deliberately imposed conditions of starvation on Jewish populations confined in ghettos. In the Warsaw Ghetto, for example, German authorities sealed the ghetto, tightly controlled the movement of food and goods, and imposed rations that were **insufficient to sustain the population.** The use of starvation through siege was also documented during the Bosnian War. Bosnian Serb forces besieged Sarajevo for almost four years, **restricting access to food, water, electricity and other necessities.** International humanitarian organisations struggled to supply the civilian population as land routes and other supply channels were obstructed. In the Srebrenica enclave, Bosnian Serb forces controlling the surrounding territory obstructed humanitarian supplies, producing severe shortages of food and medicine and contributing to starvation among the civilian population. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia documented repeated obstruction of humanitarian aid and, in the months preceding the enclave's fall in July 1995, increasingly **desperate shortages of food, water and medical supplies.**

Starvation remains **an active method of modern warfare**. In several active conflict zones across **Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory,** besieging forces use encirclement and resource deprivation to subvert civilian populations. As documented by international NGOs, the tightening of blockades, disruption of trade routes, and targeting of aid corridors have caused many deaths from malnutrition, starvation, and dehydration.

TIMELINE OF THE TOPIC

1945 – Founding of the FAO

1949 – The Fourth Geneva Convention

1977 – Additional Protocols I & II to the Geneva Conventions. The explicit prohibition of starvation as a method of warfare is formally established in international law.

1998 – The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)

2004 – FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food

2004 onward – Development of the IPC (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification)

2018 – UN Security Council Resolution 2417 - condemns the use of starvation as a method of warfare

2019 – Rome Statute amendment on starvation in NIACs (non-international armed conflict)

2021 – UN Security Council Resolution 2573 - addresses the protection of essential infrastructure for civilians' survival

PAST ACTIONS

Creation of FAO – The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was created in 1945, shortly after the Second World War. Its mandate focused on improving nutrition, agricultural production and food distribution and helping to achieve freedom from hunger

Geneva Convention IV – Occupying powers have obligations regarding food and medical supplies, and must facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid when the population is inadequately supplied

Humanitarian responses to Nigerian Civil War/Biafran War (1967–1970) – The blockade of Biafra contributed to severe food shortages and mass starvation. International relief organisations attempted to deliver food despite the conflict and restrictions on access. US diplomatic records from the period estimated that relief programmes were feeding around 1.5 million people per day in Biafran-controlled areas at one point.

Additional Protocols I & II – Protocol I, Article 54: prohibits starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. Protocol II, Article 14: prohibits starvation of civilians as a method of combat in qualifying non-international armed conflicts.

COUNTRY POSITIONS

The United States of America

The US has not ratified Additional Protocol I or joined the ICC, but it has repeatedly supported the principle that civilians should not be deliberately starved. During the Biafran War (1967–70), the US supported large-scale international relief efforts and debated whether it should push Nigeria harder to permit food deliveries into Biafra.

Russia

The Soviet Union contributed to the 1932–33 famine in Ukraine, whose causes and legal classification remain politically contested. During the Second World War, Nazi Germany's siege of Leningrad caused catastrophic starvation, while the Soviet government itself was responsible for severe wartime food deprivation in other contexts. Modern Russia is party to the Additional Protocols but not the Rome Statute.

Israel

Israel is party to the four Geneva Conventions but not Additional Protocol I/II or the Rome Statute. Its policies toward Gaza have generated extensive international controversy over blockade, restrictions on supplies and allegations of starvation as a method of warfare. UN Special Rapporteurs and other bodies have accused Israel of deliberately using starvation in Gaza; Israel rejects such characterisations and argues that its military actions are directed against Hamas and that it facilitates humanitarian assistance.

France

France has generally supported the Geneva-law framework and international criminal accountability and has participated extensively in humanitarian operations.

Canada

Canada has repeatedly participated in famine-relief operations. During the 1980s Ethiopian famine, Canada sent medical personnel, relief supplies and military transport aircraft; in 1988, Canadian forces airlifted 8,025 tonnes of food and supplies to Ethiopia.

Saudi Arabia

The Saudi-led coalition's restrictions on Yemeni ports, airspace and imports have been repeatedly criticised by UN agencies and humanitarian organisations for worsening food insecurity. Saudi Arabia has rejected accusations that it intentionally starved Yemen and has argued that restrictions were necessary for military/security reasons.

China

China supports the international prohibition on starvation and is party to the Additional Protocols, but it is not an ICC member.

India

India has experienced the Bengal famine of 1943, which occurred under British colonial rule. Modern India has generally supported humanitarian assistance and IHL but has not joined the ICC. During the 1971 Bangladesh crisis, India provided substantial food and relief to refugees

Switzerland

Switzerland initiated the 2019 amendment that made intentional starvation of civilians an ICC war crime in non-international armed conflicts.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ANSWER

- How can FAO protect food production and agricultural infrastructure during armed conflict?
- How can humanitarian aid reach civilians in the harmed regions when conflict parties restrict access?
- How can FAO reduce civilians' dependence on emergency food aid by supporting local food production during prolonged conflicts?
- How can FAO improve the IPC to detect conflict-induced food crises before they become famines?
- How can FAO safely collect agricultural damage data in active conflict zones where access is restricted?

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Second Topic: Discussing Possible Usage and Impact of Synthetic Food

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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Synthetic food is a newly emerging topic in the world of food and agriculture. While it presents possibilities for improving food security and further expanding options for feeding the world's growing population, it also poses risks. It lacks several of the basic contaminants found in traditionally produced foods, which might sound beneficial but could undermine the immune systems of those who consume it. Furthermore, its introduction poses several questions regarding its role in the global supply chain.

KEY TERMS

Biotechnology – The use of living things, especially cells and bacteria, in industrial processes.

Synthetic biology – Field of research in which the main objective is to create fully operational biological systems from the smallest constituent parts possible, including DNA, proteins, and other organic molecules.

Cultured meat – Meat that is produced by culturing (= growing) animal cells using scientific equipment.

Bioengineering – The process or science of designing and making devices and materials to solve problems relating to biology, medicine, and medical care.

Plant-based protein – Protein that comes from plants instead of animal products.

Food security – The fact that a place is able to produce or obtain enough food to feed its population.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Synthetic food is a term describing the production of chemically cultured nutrition, which could potentially solve many of the issues we, as humankind, face in this day and age. Synthetic is a vast term and refers to practices such as cultivated meat or plant-based alternatives. As you may see later on in the timeline, the usage of chemicals in nutrition appeared 200 hundred years ago

and it has only developed ever since. As food is an indispensable part of cellular metabolism we need it to survive and since we now face problems such as over-population, climate change and other inconveniences, we must find a way to prevent food-shortage and somehow become more sustainable.

One way to achieve such matters is to use our scientific knowledge and try to find a healthy way to gain what we need such as plant-based proteins. Even though synthetic food sounds like a flawless solution to everything there are some problems that deserve a place for discussion such as its impact on people employed in agriculture, raises questions of food security and its production can be environmentally demanding.

Producing food using biotechnology and other scientific approaches is indubitably a great way to work out potential food shortage, however if we take for example cultivated meat or perhaps even vegetable we hit a problem. People employed in areas working with livestock products could potentially, due to the growth of synthetic food, lose their job because the demand would decline.

Another issue with synthetic food is that it is made in laboratories, therefore the products lack the basic contaminants, which would be found in normal food. This might not seem like an issue when in reality the human body should learn to fight these contaminants as it provides valuable assets to the immune system.

In conclusion synthetic food could be a great tool for us to prevent very dangerous situations, however there are still some legal and ethical questions to discuss concerning the issue.

TIMELINE OF THE TOPIC

1809 – French chef Nikolas Appert has discovered modern food canning.

1862 – French scientist Louis Pasteur developed pasteurisation - a chemical process that removes harmful microorganisms from foodstuffs - which shows that we can use science in the food industry.

2013 – First cultivated meat burger was presented and eaten - it was created by Mark Post, a dutch scientist.

2020 – Singapore has officially approved cultivated meat for commercial sale.

2023 – The United States of America have approved cultivated chicken.

PAST ACTIONS

EU Novel Food regulation – States that foods which were not eaten before the year 1997 cannot appear on the free market without authorisation, in practice since 2018.

Life Assessment Cycle (LCAs) – Scientific method that takes into account many factors in order to determine the environmental impact of a product. Governments and researchers have applied this method to compare alternative food with conventional agriculture.

Adaptation programs for farmers – Many Member States have started various types of support programs to help farmers and people employed in the agriculture sector to adapt to changes.

COUNTRY POSITIONS

The United States of America
The United States of America recognise synthetic food as an emerging field of science and they do see its potential usage of synthetic food however they don't particularly see it as a way of total replacement for conventional farming. It is necessary to mention that some states of the United States have banned cultured meat. The US does support research, yet they remain quite conservative in some matters.

The People's republic of China
The People's Republic of China also recognises synthetic food as a great technological and scientific achievement, they believe that these new methods should complement already existing and established agriculture, not replace it. China supports ongoing research and greatly contributes to it, yet emphasises food security and calls for regulations concerning this particular situation.

Republic of France
While the Republic of France does support scientific advancement, they chose a cautious approach towards the matter. The republic of France is very keen on their agricultural aspect of the economy which is why they approach synthetic food as an extension of farming. They advocate for a proper safety synthetic food regulations and legal framework.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has a very similar stance towards synthetic food as the republic of France. They are very much in favour of research and innovation, yet they proceed with caution and make sure to implement a legal framework.

Singapore
The Republic of Singapore is one of the most supportive countries considering synthetic food. They have invested big money into research and became one of the first countries to approve sale of cultivated meat. However we must mention that the Republic of Singapore emphasises safety and regulatory measures. Even though they do greatly support synthetic food, they are implementing food security networks.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ANSWER

- How can we determine and regulate the environmental impact of synthetic food?
- How can we ensure that synthetic food won't have any long-term negative effect on the human body and how can we possibly monitor it?
- Should there be international safety standards for cultivated meat and other novel foods?
- What can be done to prevent potential loss of employment concerning people working in agriculture?
- Who should invest into the research considering synthetic food and how should the money distribution be approached? Should international cooperation play a role in the matter?

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